

Business Day in Poznan

by Yorgos
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Tuesday 9 December 2008 – A whole building in the Poznan International Fair was hired by WBCSD and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) for the Poznan Business Day, co-organised with ten other trade associations.

Global industry's elite were all there: 150 business executives, almost exclusively from US, EU and Japan. There were also government representatives (USA, France, UK, Poland, Denmark, Japan, Mexico, South Africa) and representatives from international organisations (European Commission, OECD, IEA, UN). The meeting was addressed by the US, French (representing the EU), and Antigua and Barbuda (representing the G77) ambassadors to the UNFCCC and Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UNFCCC and chief of the negotiations.

It was quite a good turnout for a single day, especially considering that national youth delegations and NGOs are struggling to arrange meetings with governments who "don't have time".

What business wants

At the event the world's business elite made its basic demands:

- The reform and expansion of carbon markets through the CDM
- Public money - as a remedy for financial recession - for the deployment of existing 'low carbon' technologies and the development of new ones by business
- The inclusion of nuclear energy and 'clean' coal in the CDM and the public funding of their deployment
- Technology transfer for the developing world only through commercial channels, in the form of Foreign Direct Investment
- A 'sectoral approach' for the energy intensive sectors

Unstable moral grounds

The participants agreed that there was no common understanding of the term 'sectoral approach' among the different sectors of industry. Even though, this is clearly their new trick to avoid effective reductions from the energy intensive sectors. In the EU framework it was 'global competition' that meant these sectors needed special treatment. At the global level they still need to work out their arguments, but the message is the same: the biggest industrial polluters want special treatment.

The ICC's Guy Sebban's hackles were raised when the Chair of the UNFCCC Expert Group on technology transfer implied that a certain amount of free licensing of patents to the developing world may be indispensable. "We should stop saying that because the discussion will end up pretty wrong," said Sebban.

This is typical of how business regards the third world. In the session dedicated to the adaptation to climate change - which mainly concerns the least developed countries which are the most severely affected - most of the participants were networking outside.

Receptive ears

But political representatives were quite receptive to these demands and they all underlined the importance of dialogue with business and that this has to intensify in the run up to Copenhagen. "We will only be successful with the engagement of the business community; we need to find new ways to engage better and we are open to your ideas," said the US ambassador. The French/EU ambassador did suggest that dialogue with trade unions was also important (even when the presence of trade unions in Poznan is astonishingly low). But he added: "we have to use all technologies; I shall not name them, but you know what I mean." Nuclear - the unspoken energy source. Addressing the artificial nature of the carbon market, he added: "We have to learn from business how to design markets."

Yvo de Boer tried to comment on the main points of the meeting, after he had been 'briefed by a fly in the wall he had sent in the morning session'. He pointed out that there is "increasingly unclarity regarding what business means with 'sectoral approach'". It remains to see whether he will put it forward when it becomes clearer. He also said that 'there is no surprise' that business stated 'whatever the decisions are they should provide a clear margin for profit'. But, can the quest for profit that brought us to this climate mess, also save us for it?

Corporate takeover to intensify

At lunch, people discussed that in previous COPs business used to form a larger part of the national delegations but now it is more present 'outside'. Closing the meeting, WBCSD president asked for "a more direct dialogue than the one through flies on the wall" and set the aim of a more impressive business day in Copenhagen.

Yvo de Boer said there would be "many opportunities for a useful dialogue with business" over the coming year. A first draft of the Copenhagen agreement is expected to be agreed in Bonn in June 2009. How much will this be influenced by this dialogue?

An urgent task is designated for civil society: prevent the corporate take over of Copenhagen and the procedures up to then.

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The same day the network Climate Justice Now! organised an action in front of IETA building:
<http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=YYrVTs6zFY4>

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Source: <http://climatecrashers.blogspot.com/2008/12/business-day-in-poznan.html> Â