

Fossils, security and conflicts

Panel I - Seminar in Helsinki (20-21 September 2006)

Petteri Taalas, Director Regional and Technological Cooperation for Development Department of the World Metrological Organisation, showed the dramatic worsening of the impacts of climate change.

Matti Vainio of European Commission's DG Environment presented, what he described as, a "eurocentric" view of how to tackle climate change. He stressed that energy efficiency is the most important and effective measure in order to ensure we achieve the goal of a maximum increase of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Mr Vainio was, however, challenged by the green audience when he stated that "*it would be very difficult to go beyond 20% of renewables in the fuel energy in the EU*". Furthermore, he maintained that nuclear will continue to be part of the energy mix, together with an emphasis on carbon capture and sequestration, an end of the pipe technology, which will be important contributors to future emissions reductions.

Dr. Lester Brown, Director of Earth Policy Institute, stressed that a global economy based on current average energy consumption in the US is not sustainable at all. He then elaborated on the biofuels euphoria which could endanger global food security:

"Oil prices could be an indicator of our global civilisation. Consider this: now almost everything we eat can be converted into automotive fuel. And once the price of oil surpassed \$60 a barrel last year, the business of transforming wheat, corn, soybeans and sugarcane into fuel for cars instead of food for people became hugely profitable. Ultimately, this dynamic risks driving up world food prices, destabilising governments in low-income nations and disrupting global economic growth. This latter does now work in convincing economists and governments from industrialised countries that we must act on our addiction to oil."

Marie-Hélène Aubert, Green MEP, focussed her intervention on conflicts resulting from our addiction to oil:

"A key political question is definitely how to manage [oil] in a democratic and peaceful manner [through] the rarefaction of oil resources." One of the innovative solutions she suggested is to elaborate a European and global pact aimed at getting rid of oil, in all its aspects, i.e. not just looking at the technological options. "The main driver of such a pact must be promotion of peace."

Satu Hassi, Green MEP, who chaired the session, offered some conclusions: *"All speakers agree that climate change is a worsening problem and that energy efficiency can deliver half of the needed reduction. All also agreed that the technology is there. The question is therefore 'How to make market, companies and people to chose the right one.'*

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