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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

2nd Global Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy

Strengthening Institutions to Address Climate Change and Advance a Green Economy

Yale University, 17-19 September 2010

Information Note and Call for Papers

Overview

The 2nd *Global Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy* will take place at Yale University, New Haven, USA from 17-19 September 2010 in the margins of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Summit, 20-22 September, New York. Focusing on the theme of *Strengthening Institutions to Address Climate Change and Advance a Green Economy*, the event will take stock of and examine the role of institutional structures and decision-making procedures in fostering (or impeding) low carbon and climate resilient development. Papers and discussions will cover various levels of governance (i.e. global, regional, transnational, national, sub-national, and local) as well as specialized governance topics, including governance of climate change science, financing and forestry. Anticipated outcomes of the conference include a research agenda and enhanced knowledge sharing to better understand the openness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of institutions engaged in action to address climate change. Scholars and experts are invited to submit abstracts for proposed papers by **15 May 2010**. Those wishing to attend as participants must express an interest by **15 June 2010**. For information about the application process, please visit <http://www.unitar.org/egp>.

The Emergence of Climate Change Institutions

Responding effectively to the global climate change challenge requires an unprecedented transformation of economic and social development. Institutions play an important role in mediating this process. In response, and given the growing political importance of the climate change issue, the number and diversity of institutions and organizations engaged in climate change governance and promoting a green economy have expanded constantly.

At the global level, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), supported by independent scientific synthesis from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is seeking agreement on long-term global policy action and innovative solutions. These include heightened efforts to promote “reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation” (REDD), whose importance and focus emerged from Copenhagen as a consensus. More recently, the UN General Assembly has endorsed the concept of a green economy and sustainable development

governance as overarching topics for the 2012 Rio plus 20 Conference, with climate change being an important dimension. At the regional and inter-governmental level, UN Regional Economic Commissions and other groupings of countries (e.g. the G 20, BASIC¹ countries, etc.) seek to foster harmonized policy commitments and implementation among countries with common interests. At the transnational level, independent, at times private networks are emerging in areas such as carbon financing or forestry. At the national level, new formal institutions are set up, such as the UK Ministry of Climate Change and Energy, or Indonesia's National Climate Change Council with the goal to raise the profile of climate change in national and sectoral development planning. Finally, sub-national authorities and initiatives (e.g. the C40 cities network, TACC initiative²) increasingly engage in "territorial" climate change action at the provincial and local levels.

Despite the important role that institutions and organizations play in shaping a transformation to climate resilient and low carbon development, knowledge gaps remain concerning how institutional factors such as membership, transparency and stakeholder engagement rules, as well as informal institutional rules shape the dynamics of decision-making and, through this, decision-outcomes and implementation. Equally important, there is limited understanding of the intersection (Gunningham 1998) or interplay (Young 2002) between institutions at various levels of government and across government sectors, or what Ostrom (2007) refers to as "nested structures of rules within rules, within further rules." Finally, given the growing mobilization of civil society, questions arise concerning how stakeholder engagement rules foster (or impede) climate resilient and green development.

Theoretical Context

According to Douglas North, institutions provide the "rules of the game in society," or more generally, "the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990). By regularizing rules of engagement, institutions stabilize the behavior and interaction of agents, create predictability, and, hence, help avoid conflict (March and Olsen 1989). Yet, institutions are not necessarily neutral mechanisms. By providing a source of constraint, reward, or punishment, they affect how authority is constituted, exercised, controlled, and redistributed (Olsen 2007). By controlling whose voices get heard institutions may recognize certain actors and exclude others. Or, by defining "vocabulary" and the legitimacy of arguments, criticism, or justification, institutions can define whose claims of justice are accepted (March and Olsen 2006). All these perspectives suggest that institutions influence outcomes by becoming structures of power (Moe 2005). John Ferejohn observes (2003) that a significant part of political contestation is concerned with preserving or altering institutions to achieve political goals and that, therefore, "something valuable must be at stake in them."

¹ BASIC countries include Brazil, South Africa, India and China.

² Territorial Approach to Climate Change

Conference Objectives

With the emergence of climate change as a key policy issue, existing institutions must innovate and adjust to achieve more effective climate change governance (Meadowcroft 2009). Yet, given the dispersion of environmental governance research in various academic disciplines, limited interdisciplinary analysis and knowledge-sharing has taken place to date on how institutions and their stakeholder engagement rules affect policy-processes and action to address climate change and foster a green economy. Similarly, there has been limited interaction and knowledge exchange between academics and policy makers on these matters. As countries and international bodies continue to reform institutions and establish new institutions in response to the global climate change challenge, sharing knowledge on the effectiveness of institutions and governance structures is considered important, timely, and of significant policy relevance.

Taking in account the above considerations, the 2nd Global Conference on Environmental Governance and Democracy aims to:

- Take stock of existing knowledge and research concerning the interface of institutions, stakeholder engagement, and effective decision-making and action to address climate change and advance a green economy.
- Identify institutional features and stakeholder engagement practises that are conducive in fostering climate resilient development and a green economy at different levels of governance.
- Identify research gaps and develop a research agenda to advance institutional analysis that can help to address real world policy problems and challenges.
- Explore opportunities for sustained sharing of knowledge on climate change and green development institutions and governance among the academic community and policy-makers.

Conference Themes

The conference will address a number of specific themes, grouped within two clusters. The first cluster is concerned with different levels of governance and the linkages among them. The second cluster deals with specialized topics, including governance of climate change science, financing and forestry.

Levels of governance

1. *Global, Regional and Intergovernmental Governance:* How do institutions that facilitate climate change governance at the global, regional and intergovernmental level (e.g. the UNFCCC, IPCC, UNEP, regional bodies, transnational networks, etc.) perform in terms of effectiveness, openness, transparency, and accountability? What

are the opportunities to enhance these institutions and to strengthen the coherence of global climate change governance within the international environmental governance architecture?

2. *National, Sub-national and Local Level Governance*: What institutional structures and mechanisms are emerging at the national, sub-national and local level to address climate change adaptation, mitigation and advance a green economy? How do these institutions perform in terms of stakeholder engagement and in fostering effective action?
3. *Multilevel Governance*: What issues of climate change adaptation, mitigation and green economic development require coherent multi-level governance? What are key challenges to achieve such coherence and how can effective stakeholder engagement across levels of governance be achieved?

Specialized governance topics

1. *Governance of Climate Change Science*: What are features of effective institutions and governance processes to generate scientific climate change knowledge at the international, national and local level, respectively? What institutional factors may impede effective governance of climate change science?
2. *Governance of Climate Change Financing*: Given the significant financial transactions that will occur under a new climate change regime, how can institutions assure transparency, accountability and equity of financing, both at the donor/investor and recipient level?
3. *Governance of Climate Change Forestry*: Given the prominent role that forestry issues are playing within the new international climate change regime (i.e. REDD+), how can institutions assure the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of climate related forestry governance? What are good governance practices and how can related challenges be addressed effectively?

Submission of Abstracts

Scholars and experts are invited to submit abstracts of 400-500 words for conference papers. Abstracts may either feature a *case study* that covers a specific topic under one of the conference themes. Or, they may introduce a *discussion paper* that provides a state-of-the-art theoretical or empirical analysis that addresses a specific question, or group of questions covered by the conference. The final Conference Program will be developed in July 2010 following a review of the abstracts. The Program will include a combination of plenary presentations, panel discussions and working groups.

The application deadline for submitting an abstract for a paper is **15 May 2010**. For further information how to access the online application process and submit an abstract, please visit <http://www.unitar.org/egp>. A number of authors will be invited to prepare a full conference paper of about 15 pages. Authors will be notified by mid-June. All invited papers (about 50-60 in total) will be included in the conference proceedings. Taking into

account the time available on the conference schedule, 20-30 authors will be invited to present a synopsis of their paper on a panel within the official program. It is planned to publish a book featuring selected papers from the conference.

Participants Application and Conference Fee

About 150 participants with diverse backgrounds and affiliations from around the world are expected to participate in the conference. Given limited space, interested persons are invited to express an interest to participate in the conference by completing an online application **by 15 June 2010** through <http://www.unitar.org/egp>. Applicants will be notified by mid-July 2010, if their application to participate has been accepted. Criteria for selection include regional coverage, ensuring a balance of scholars, policy makers and experts, and timely expression of interest.

The conference fee is USD 350. The fee covers the conference materials, meals, transportation from the hotel to the venue, and a hard copy of the conference proceedings. Conference participants are expected to cover their transportation to and accommodation in New Haven. In selected cases, the conference organizers may be able to waive the conference fee and subsidize transport and/or accommodation. Priority will be given to support scholars and experts from developing and transition countries who have been invited to speak at the conference.

Partners

The Conference is organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Yale University and through partnerships with several organizations engaged in climate change governance. These include, to date, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. Financial support for the event is provided the Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Fund of the MacMillan Center at Yale, and the Oscar M. Ruebhausen Fund of the Yale Law School.

Conference Secretariat

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