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TOWARDS PARIS 2015

THE CLIMATE DEAL WE NEED

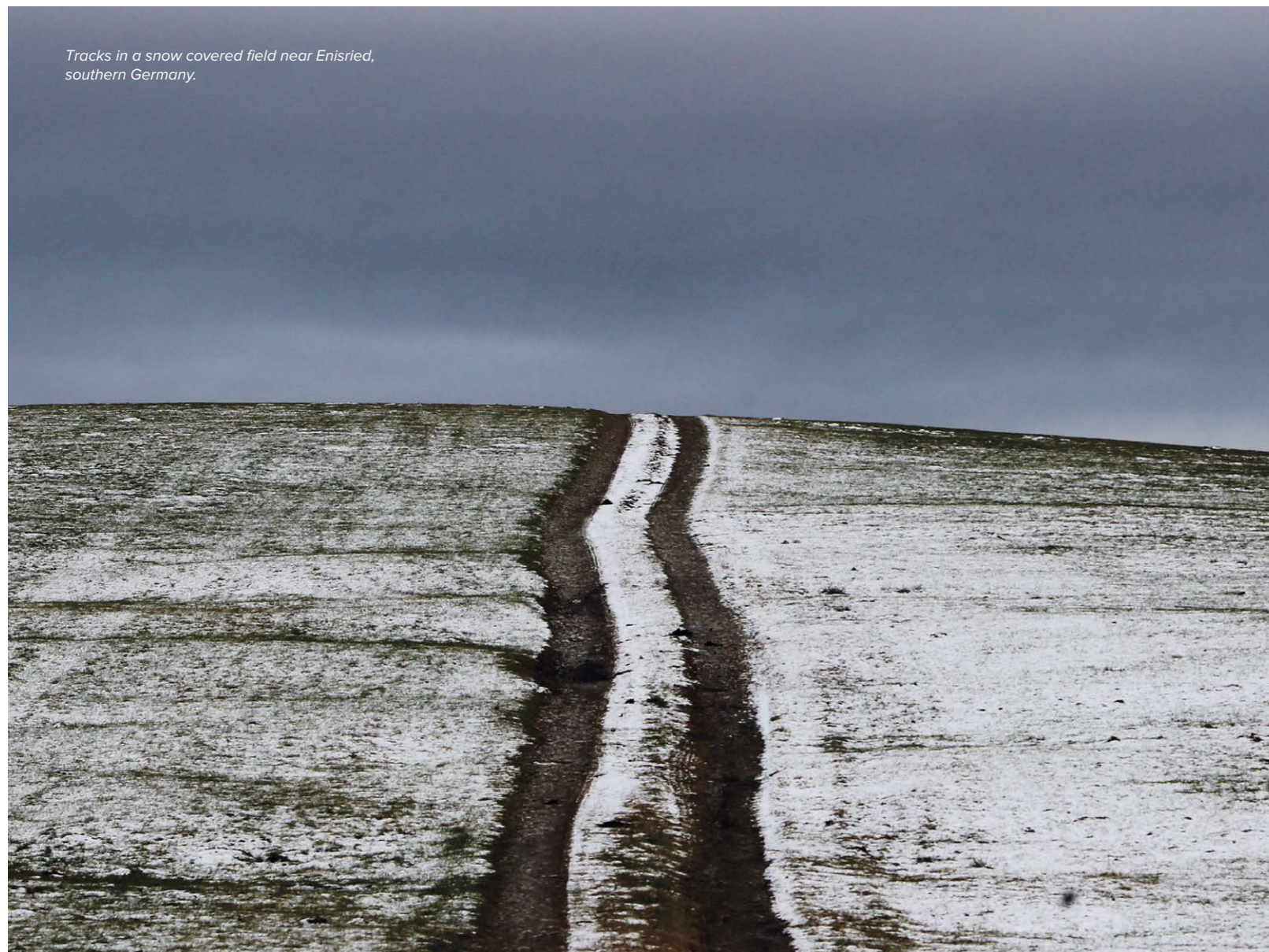
Why a new international agreement on climate could be key to fighting inequality, ensuring food security and tackling the migration emergency



TOWARDS PARIS 2015: THE CLIMATE DEAL WE NEED

Getty Images (5)

Tracks in a snow covered field near Enisried,
southern Germany.



World leaders will gather in Paris this December for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which could mark the make or break for international efforts to curb global warming. But what is really at stake in Paris? Here is why a new international agreement on climate could be key to fighting inequality, bridging the gap between food insecurity and food waste and tackling the migration emergency.

—by Paul T. Cox

An anthropologist and journalist specialising in agricultural development, he has written for several newspapers, publications and magazines, including The New Inquiry, Al Jazeera and Spore, the magazine for agricultural and rural development in ACP countries.

When delegates from nearly 200 countries gather in Paris this December for COP21, the 21st Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, people around the world will be watching for a deal to be struck to stem the flow of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It has been a long time since so many groups placed so much emphasis on a single meeting. Will there really be some kind of global showdown in Paris?

If there is, it will be about more than just reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and plug-

ging in renewable energy. At stake are issues of equity and inequality, the future of food, and the trajectory of livelihoods everywhere in the century ahead. A potential climate deal is no less than an agreement over “the essentials of life on this planet,” in the words of Camilla Toulmin, outgoing Director of the International Institute for Environment and Development.

Toulmin was one of many voices at the EFC Annual Conference in Milan in May arguing that the ties between climate and life itself are no longer theoretical, but are pulling hard at the edges of global society. She was joined by ▶



A woman carries a bag on her head by a tea plantation at the Makandi Tea Estate in Thyolo, Malawi (above).

◀ Greenpeace Director Kumi Naidoo, who promised that a rising chorus “will push our political leaders and our business leaders to actually break the cognitive dissonance they’re suffering from, where they are in denial about how close we are to the cliff.”

The basic challenge in December will be to agree on a new climate deal that can keep temperature increases by the end of this century to below 2°C, hopefully averting more catastrophic effects. The figure of 2°C is a loose target of convenience that dates back decades, but for most commentators it represents the cliff of which Naidoo warns. (The world currently sits at around 0.8°C of warming.)

In 2009, countries tried to reach such an agreement in Copenhagen. Those negotiations ended in failure, recrimination and six years of hard work to rebuild the foundations of an effective convention. It is fervently hoped that the Paris conference will be the culmination of that fresh start and proof that a truly global solution is possible.

Events leading up to Paris have not made the task look easy. Countries’ promised national climate plans have trickled in slowly so far, and lead-up meetings to refine the negotiating text have not been able to trim it down below 80 pages. But there is one significant difference

from 2009: the near universal urgency of the feeling that something must be done.

The collapse of the Copenhagen conference came down to a deep split between developed and developing countries over the equity of responsibilities that each was asked to take on. Conventional wisdom held that developed countries pump out most of the greenhouse gases, while developing countries soak up most of the impacts. But as economies such as India,

Climate negotiations have been shaped by a logic of rich countries and poor countries, but climate change is actually about people

Brazil and China – now the world’s largest emitter – have taken off, that distinction has failed to hold. Many negotiators will arrive in Paris with the demand that all countries do their share.

However, a promise of US\$100 billion a year from the international community to fund actions by poor countries has only produced \$5.8 billion so far. This so-called Green Climate Fund could get off to a real start in Paris, or it could cede to yet another plan. For Naidoo, this is more than a side deal.

“Without significant increases in support for the people and nations most vulnerable to catastrophic climate change there will be no climate agreement in Paris,” he says. “At a minimum, the roadmap to achieving the \$100 billion in support that was promised six years ago needs to be guaranteed.”

For decades, the politics of climate negotiation have been shaped and constrained by a logic of rich countries and poor countries, but the real story of climate change is about people, today and tomorrow.

“Fairness is an issue which covers all time spans and geographies and peoples,” says Liz Gallagher, who leads the Climate Diplomacy Programme at Third Generation Environmentalism. And residents of rich countries are becoming less confident that they will ride out ▶

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

—by Ottavia Spaggiari

Naomi Klein: “Funders need to take responsibility”

Effect meets Naomi Klein, journalist, activist and bestselling author of No Logo, The Shock Doctrine and her latest book, This Changes Everything, in which she explores why the climate crisis is challenging us to restructure the global economy and reshape our political systems.

At the beginning of July you were invited to the Vatican for a two-day conference on Pope Francis’ “green” encyclical ‘Laudato Si’, where the Pope launched a strong critique of the uncontrolled consumerism and irresponsible development that are damaging the environment. Is the encyclical having the impact you expected?

It is too early to tell. I think there are different spheres of impact and influence. Despite having read various speeches of Pope Francis on climate change and inequality, I was still quite amazed by the document itself, by the depth and the willingness to really get at the heart of the climate crisis in a moral way. It is a more radical and transformative document than anything that has come out of many green NGOs and environmental groups. I think its most lasting and greatest impact is that it is going to push the climate movement to go further and dig deeper, because a lot of the groups have played a little bit too safe. This document has been heavily influenced by social movements in the global South. There has been a series of meetings in the year leading up to the encyclical

publication with coalitions of social movements, like, for example, the workers’ movement in Argentina, and this is why the encyclical has such a strong synthesis in terms of criticising an economic system that produces inequality, and also the ecological crisis. I think there has already been a huge influence on the social movements, in terms of encouragement. What I heard when I was in Rome from Latin American social movement representatives is that at a time when social movements are finding themselves in conflict with left-wing governments who they thought were their friends, it is enormously significant and empowering to feel that they have the Pope on their side. However, I do not see it having a similar impact in Europe, for instance, and I hope that this will change. One of the great frustrations of the times we are in is that there’s still a huge amount of compartmentalisation around issues. You have a vigorous anti-austerity movement that almost never talks about climate change, and it’s amazing that the whole Greek crisis could be unfolding and we almost never see the connection made between the brutal austerity policies and the fact that Greece is being pushed to drill for oil and gas in the Ionian and Aegean seas, and the fact that Italy is doing the same, and so are other southern European countries.

This should be a moment of deep convergence between all of the social movements, and this is happening in Latin America. In North America and Europe, the model of social change separates the economy from the environment, and that is at the heart of the problem. *What role can foundations play in changing this model?* From what I have seen in North America, a lot of this compartmentalisation is a direct reflection of the political agendas of the foundations, who expressively want to fund projects and campaigns they can easily measure, and they are often reticent to fund the cultural work that is needed for change to take place. Foundations need to take some responsibilities for this tendency to compartmentalise issues and movements. This is holding us back, because many civil society groups got the message that they needed to just be focused on campaigning on their specific issues, and do not have to work on ideas and on shifting values, which is a longer process. Economics are the tool, but the goal is to change hearts and minds, we have to remember this. We are not going to get the kind of political change we need unless there is an accompanied cultural and value shift, and today we cannot be ashamed of talking about values.



The Rockefeller Brothers Fund's announcement last year to divest from fossil fuels sparked a great debate on climate change and responsible investment in the philanthropic world. Others have followed but, especially in continental Europe, many foundations still struggle to understand the importance of the divestment movement. Why is there still such reticence?

The argument I hear most often is that various foundations are telling themselves different stories about why their work is so important, that it is legitimate for them to do whatever it takes to raise the money. But I believe that would change if there was a clear sense of how divestment creates a political context for the policy changes that we want and need.

The most important thing we are doing with divestment is not bankrupting the fossil fuels companies, but making a moral argument about those profits. If it is immoral to destroy the planet, it is immoral to profit from it, but I would also add that it is moral for the public to have a much larger share of those profits to pay for the transition away from fossil fuels, to clean up the mess, which was the argument that was made about the tobacco companies. What we need to do a lot better in the divestment movement is to clearly map the trajectory.

The plan is to go from divestment to national and international policies that capture a much larger percentage of the profits from fossil fuels to pay for the transition off the fossil fuels. I think that if that was clearer, it might be something that the foundation world could get behind more. We have to remember that this is not

just about the portfolio.

This is about legitimising profits, and as institutions that have a mandate to act in a way that is in the public good, it is natural for the foundations world to be leaders in tackling climate change.

Divestment is the tool to get to these national and international policies. But we are not going to win this through divestment alone. If you think about the anti-apartheid struggle, divestment was a tool, and sometimes there is more comfort in these actions coming from the private sphere and not engaging with national policies. But we need to do both. We need to do all of it. We need to go on with divestment and work on the policy framework.

What do you expect from the Paris summit? Should we be optimistic?

We need to be very realistic. If we think about where we were at this point before Copenhagen – there were better signs in terms of the willingness of governments in the global South to really fight at the negotiating table.

We had the African bloc pledging that they would walk out of negotiations if they weren't happy with the deal. We had Ecuador and Bolivia both championing the idea of ecological debt. We had really strong negotiators from the G77, strong delegations from the Philippines, but the truth is that what we have seen since Copenhagen is a really concerted effort to pressure governments in the global South to weaken their negotiating decisions.

My hope was that one of the impacts of the encyclical would be that it would strengthen the hand of governments in the global South to

bring back some of those intentions that seem to have weakened. I'm not seeing that yet. To me, the most important part of the Paris summit is that it should be a convergence for social movements. I believe it should be seen as a giant megaphone, a platform for social movements to get out of their boxes and come together to put forward a coherent vision for an economy that tackles inequality, austerity and the ecological crisis at the same time. Moreover there has to be a commitment not to go along with the momentum to present a totally inadequate deal as a victory, because I think there is always that momentum at these events, where everybody comes under a huge amount of pressure to act as if they have had an influence. This is something that funders need to take responsibility for as well.

Funders want to fund success. That is the message that groups get and that creates a false and dangerous incentive for NGOs to claim victory when we do not have victory. We do not have time for that right now.

Funders need to send a very clear message to the groups that they fund, that they do not want a failure packed as a victory, just so that groups can come back and tell foundations that they had an influence.

If this deal results in a huge gap regarding what scientists are telling us that we need to do to keep the increase in temperature below 2°C, we will have to be honest. We all know 2°C isn't safe, and the latest research underlines that we are headed towards 3.5°C with the commitment we have right now. A failure packed as a victory would be a disaster.◊



Rapeseed seen from the air begins to bloom around the trees at Tormarton, near Tetbury, England (above).

◀ the storm. Last year's report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) advised that "climate change impacts are expected to exacerbate poverty in most developing countries and create new poverty pockets in countries with increasing inequality, in both developed and developing countries."

This was a warning that even rich countries could not ignore. "People are starting to understand that climate change is an impact on future growth, not just an issue for the poorest in socie-

In coastal and island regions, rising seas are snatching away agricultural land

ty now," says Gallagher. "This doesn't take focus away from the poorest, but helps amplify what's happening to them in a new lens." This lens of inequality is growing in power. In 2015, the Ford Foundation became the largest donor yet to re-

orient its activities wholly towards the problem of inequality and its prime movers. But how does climate change make the unequal more unequal? In a great many ways, as it turns out.

Extreme weather and drought batter poor households, which are often based in vulnerable places such as floodplains and make a living off the land or water. Facing these risks, poor households invest in safe assets, with little potential for a better future. Diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea proliferate, impairing the cognitive and physical development of the next generation. Increasing food prices, and an influx of new arrivals from the countryside, trap urban wage labourers in poverty. While higher income households can lobby authorities for better policies to protect them, the poor can seldom draw such attention. All the while, discrimination pushes certain groups – such as women, the young and old, ethnic minorities and the disabled – into even more exposed positions.

It is these many individual vulnerabilities that will keep the distinction between rich countries and poor countries alive, says econ-

12
million

migrants are expected to leave their homes every year due to climate change, according to economist Ingmar Schumacher

onomist Ingmar Schumacher. “There is evidence showing that most rich countries have been growing, poor countries have been either getting poorer or stayed at a similar income level, while middle income countries have either converged into the rich or the poor group of countries,” he says. “Climate change, as it most strongly affects poorer countries, has the potential to make middle income countries converge into the poverty trap.” His research has also shown evidence that climate-related inequality is leading to migration, and he predicts roughly 12 million environmental migrants will leave their homes in sub-Saharan Africa every year by the end of this century.

The arena in which these socio-economic disasters play out, more than in any other, will be in the fields of the world’s farmers. Here, the effects of a changing climate will make themselves felt from all directions. In coastal and island regions, rising sea levels are snatching away agricultural land. Everywhere else, drought, heat, disappearing groundwater, floods, storms, insect attacks and disease outbreaks can all result from climate chaos.

Warming temperatures will make some colder regions more suitable for farming, but for the planet as a whole there is not much good news, and researchers predict declines in yield for nearly every major crop. The effects are already being recorded in major farming regions, such as Russia, where wheat yields have fallen 14 per cent, and China, where maize production has dropped by 7 per cent.

A source of early optimism in climate science was the CO2 fertilisation effect: more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere makes many plants grow faster. Yet the hoped for world of supersized plants and lush harvests is fading as other climate impacts take their toll. Worryingly, recent studies are showing that crops grown in a high CO2 atmosphere build up diminished stores of protein, iron and zinc, even when fertiliser is applied, raising the possibility that tomorrow’s food could be less nutritious than today’s. Malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity are what climate change feels like for many of

the world’s people. Along with these comes the pain of spending more money on less food. In countries like Malawi, where the poor spend nearly 78 per cent of their income on food, price shocks are as devastating as a flash flood.

Global agricultural production grew 2.1 per cent per year in the last decade, but is expected to slow to 1.5 per cent in the next one. This will not feed the world. The solution could be to farm more land – but ploughing up more forests and grasslands will only diminish carbon stores and accelerate climate change even more. Real solutions must allow farmers to grow more food, sustainably, on the same land. This strategy, known as yield improvement, has pre-

As the connections between climate, equity and food security grow clearer, foundations are teaming up to address all three

vailed since the 1960s, and without it total human carbon emissions would have been 34 per cent higher. It has to be sustained.

It is not enough to ask whether farmers can adapt: they already are.

Farmers are growing different kinds of crops, changing planting dates, adopting more conservative water and soil management practices, sharing resources and accessing new information networks. The tools exist to keep food on the table. But all farmers need the resources to adopt and perfect these tools. For example, in developing countries only 10–20 per cent of landholders are women, even though more and more agricultural work is being done by women on other people’s land. If women had the same resource access as men, estimates suggest that they could increase their yields by 20–30 per cent and reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12–17 per cent.

As the connections between climate, equity

and food security grow clearer, foundations are teaming up to address all three together. Foundation Charles Leopold Mayer is targeting this nexus while preparing to welcome partners to its native Paris in December. On food security, says Director Matthieu Calame: “We are supporting policy advocacy at the European level in order to obtain a sustainable food policy and not only an agricultural policy, sustainable local food systems implemented by municipalities and participatory breeding as the best way to maintain and improve the resilience of agriculture.” Meanwhile, the foundation is pushing directly for an equitable climate deal in Paris. It co-founded the COP21 Funders Initiative to support civil society activities surrounding the event, and is planning a conference on food and climate change alongside the negotiations.

Another partnership making a difference at COP21 will be the International Politics and Policies Initiative (IPPI), created by the European Climate Foundation and other partners in 2013.

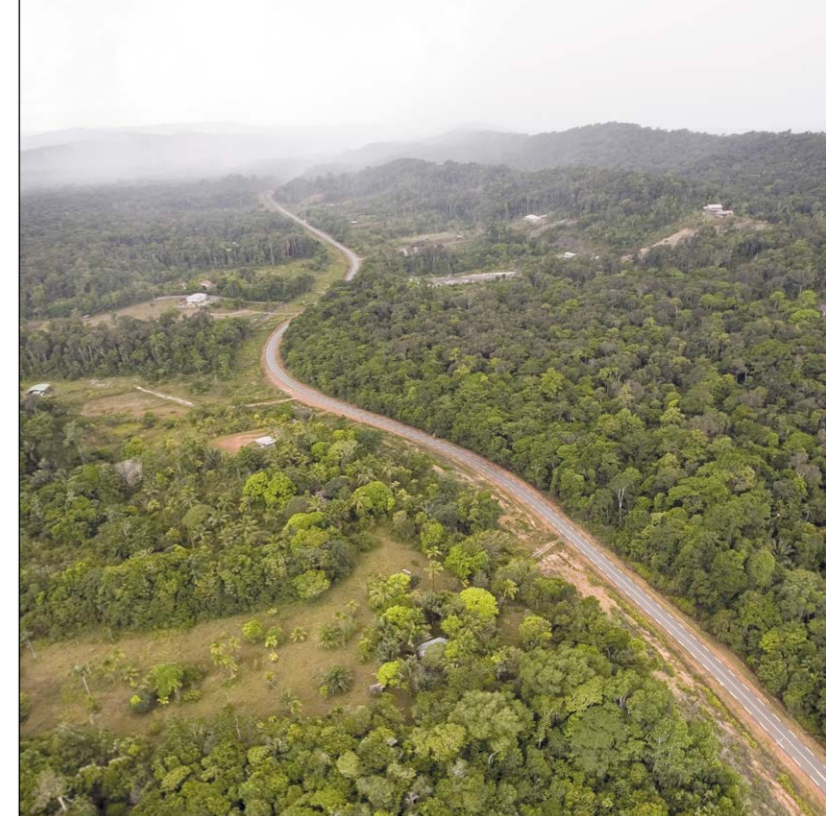
“IPPI is focused on using the ‘Paris moment’ to increase the scale and pace of change,” says Jennifer Morgan of the World Resource Institute. “We have focused particularly on ensuring that Southern voices are well represented.”

After the conference, “there will be an immediate need to maintain the momentum to keep governments and non-state actors engaged and ensure that they honour and follow up on their commitments,” says Morgan. “Civil society has a very important role to play here.”

Commitment, more than hope, is the favoured outlook for the coming talks.

“Of course, everybody in Paris has in mind the 2009 Copenhagen failure,” says Calame. “Hence it might be wiser not to put all our hopes, energies – and money – in the intergovernmental negotiations. Other stakeholders are worth watching and supporting.” Calame has more faith in networks of local authorities and civil society groups, which are gaining huge momentum. “COP21 could be a tipping point for a climate justice trans-local movement,” he predicts.

Paris, then, is not going to be the end of the search for equitable answers to climate change,



Aerial view taken of French Guiana's Amazonia, one of the world's natural treasures.

but it might be a real beginning. Kumi Naidoo stresses that non-government actors have led every step of the way.

“Civil society and foundations have played a central role in opposing dirty energy and building momentum for the shift to clean energy. Likewise in the fight against deforestation,” he says. “European foundations, I believe, have a particular moral responsibility to show moral courage at this moment and recognise that what is needed now is not simply the question of system maintenance, system protection and system recovery... what is needed is system innovation, system redesign and system transformation.”

This will be true long after 2015 goes into the history books. In Camilla Toulmin’s words to the EFC Annual Conference: “When we wake up on January 1, 2016, there will be plenty to keep us busy, including dealing with all the climate impacts already built into the atmosphere.” Success in Paris will be by degrees – but for climate impacts, every degree matters. “I am confident that we can achieve a deal on climate in Paris in December,” said Toulmin. “It won’t be as good as it needs to be ... but we need that deal.”

2°C

the target limit of global temperature increase

2.1%

the growth of global agricultural production registered in the last decade, but it is expected to slow down to 1.5%

only 10-20%

of landholders are women in developing countries