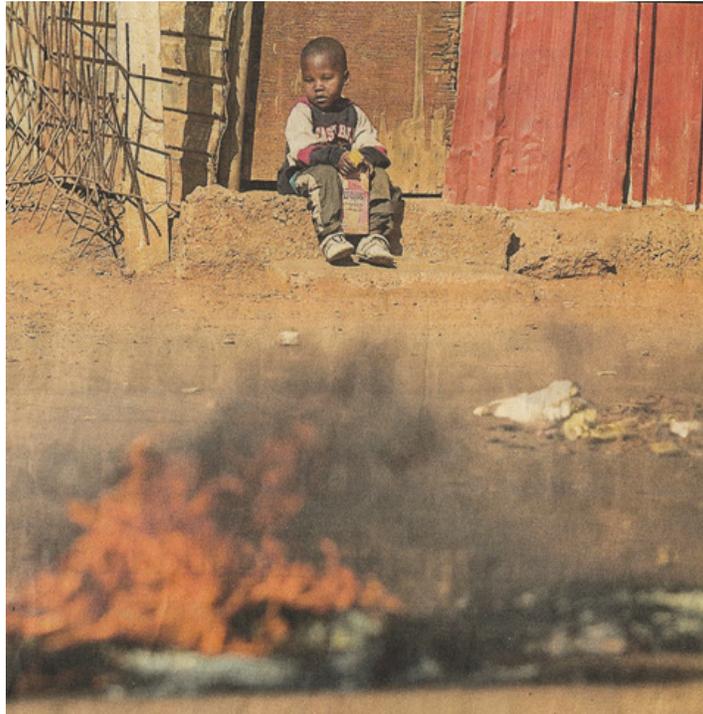


Memo 25/09

Climate alarmism is a runaway fire

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Child in an informal settlement looking at burning tyres. Photo in Beeld 29 July 2009.

I had no sooner sent off my last memo *The end is nigh* on 10 August, when my prediction of imminent droughts was fulfilled. On 12 August our Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs announced that parts of the lower Limpopo River catchment have been declared a water supply disaster area. This is in the far northern region of South Africa. The Albasini Dam that supplies the Louis Trichardt area is only 26 percent full. The Middle Letaba Dam is only 6 percent full.

On Sunday 16 August, prayers for rain were held in George, which is in the southern coastal area of South Africa. The dams in this region are also at a very low level. These two events not only confirm my prediction but also the views of others that global climatic disturbances are on the way. How will they affect the Copenhagen discussions and beyond?

Climate change

This is what the Secretary General of the United Nations had to say earlier this month.

We have just four months to secure the future of our planet. If we fail to act, climate change will intensify droughts, floods and other natural disasters. Water shortages will affect hundreds of millions of people. Malnutrition will engulf large parts of the developing world. Tensions will worsen. Social unrest – even violence – could follow.

This is a very serious message coming from the world's highest elected official. But why did the Secretary General not address these climate change concerns within the wider context of humanitarian concerns instead of making it the greatest threat to our planet, which it is not?

Let me make one point abundantly clear. Since the establishment of the IPCC in 1988 not a single person in South Africa has died as a result of provable climate change. But thousands have died from poverty-related starvation, malnutrition and disease. How dare those who call themselves scientists deliberately suppress this information? How dare they ignore the suffering of all these people? How dare they steadfastly refuse to participate in multidisciplinary studies where their alarmist theories can be demonstrated to be without foundation?

Also, there is also no statistically believable evidence of linkages between climate change, and increases in the occurrence and magnitude of floods, droughts and threats to water supplies.

Climate alarmist tactics are obstructing the right of these people to progress towards the normal lives that those in the western nations enjoy.

Runaway fires

This is the season of runaway fires in the southern hemisphere. The vegetation is dry after the rainless winter. These fires are beneficial in the grazing areas. If you fly northwards across Africa in the early evening there will be numerous twinkles of light from the controlled burning of the veld below you. This is to encourage growth after the first spring rains.

The environmentalists complain bitterly. Think of the countless grasshoppers and other insects destroyed by the fires. [Think of all those locusts and other plagues if they are not!] Farmers control the fires by burning firebreaks early in the season. However, fires can sweep across the firebreaks during high winds and cause havoc.

In our part of the world there are other areas vulnerable to runaway fires. These are the crowded shacks in the informal settlements around our cities. Not only do the shacks consist of flammable material, but in the absence of electricity, the inhabitants use flammable paraffin for cooking and lighting. The shacks are crowded together leaving no room for firefighting vehicles. Unlike those living in the adjacent suburbs, the occupants of the shacks cannot afford insurance. When the fires occur they lose everything that they possess.

There is rising unemployment and increasing poverty in these settlements due to the economic conditions that originated in the affluent countries of the northern hemisphere. Like a runaway fire this global recession has spread out of control across the world. (The countries that caused the economic recession now demand that the innocent developing countries share their burden by implementing costly measures to combat climate change.)

In South Africa, the number of homeless people is rising. These people are clamouring for basic services of housing, water, electricity and sanitation. The government cannot keep up with their demands. As a result another flammable situation is developing. The burning of old vehicle tyres on the streets and obstructing the traffic has become a means of attracting attention and getting their message across.

The affluent nations influenced by heartless and scientifically disabled climate alarmists consider that the rising amount of so-called greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide) discharged into the atmosphere from coal burning power stations and transport, are a far greater threat to national welfare than unemployment, poverty, malnutrition and disease. Nowhere in the climate change literature will you find a balance between humanitarian concerns and environmental concerns.

Instead, while our people are starving, powerful and influential bodies such as the G20 nations, meet regularly at international pleasure resorts to discuss the situation over delicious meals and refreshments.

Unfortunately, like a runaway fire, the situation is now out of control. A firefighting mechanism (the successor to the Kyoto protocol that expires in 2012) has to be established in Copenhagen not later than December this year. The likelihood of success is receding by the day.

The problem

The implementation of measures to reduce these discharges into the atmosphere on a global scale must inevitably adversely affect national economies. The huge and insurmountable problem is how to implement these emissions limitation measures fairly and justly.

Engineers appreciate that in order to measure something in time or space there has to be a datum. The time datum used at Kyoto and generally accepted for the future, is 1990. However, many major economies have increased substantially since then. The 1990 datum has become onerous. So they simply moved it forward to 2000 or even 2005.

This is the first problem. There is no agreed time datum for comparing the proposed performances of the various countries.

Upper limit

We are told that in order to prevent catastrophic future consequences, global discharges of undesirable greenhouse gases will have to be limited to a certain value that has yet to be defined. Let us call it GCO₂.

The obvious equitable allocation would be to divide GCO₂ by the world's population GPOP as at 1990. Each country would then have the right to produce carbon dioxide emissions equal to its 1990 population multiplied by this ratio.

Now comes the problem. The affluent countries, especially the USA, already exceed this allocation while the developing nations, particularly India and China with their large populations, have a long way to go. This is the root of the difficulty. A solution has to be negotiated before the end of November and ratified at Copenhagen in December.

International groupings

There are three major international groupings on the climate change issue. The largest and most representative is the United Nations and its subsidiary organisations the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). The United Nations comprises about 190 nations all with equal rights. The UNFCCC is a political organisation responsible for developing an agreed policy on climate change. The IPCC is responsible for the scientific aspects. It produces a series of reports every five years or so. These are the detailed assessment reports and a shorter overview titled *Summary for Policymakers*.

The second grouping is the G8, recently expanded to G20 group of the world's richest nations. The world leaders of these nations meet every year at different exclusive international holiday resorts. In recent years it has become increasingly involved in the climate change issue but always from the perspective of the affluent nations. It sees itself as a paternalistic donor organisation rather than as a participating organisation. Its priority is the protection of its own interests.

The third grouping is the G77 developing nations. It includes South Africa. It arose as a group to counter the pressures from the G20 nations. Several nations are members of more than one group.

Fasten your seatbelts

All parties appreciate that the possibility of reaching an agreement at Copenhagen, which is now only four months away, is becoming increasingly unlikely. They all understand that the failure is likely to lead to undesirable and unpredictable consequences.

There is panic in the air. The United Nations group (UNFCCC) will meet again in Bangkok in September and at Barcelona in November. Only 15 negotiating days remain. The G20 group is due to meet in September in London and in Pittsburgh in November. Several countries are members of both groups and speak for the wider G77 group.

The underlying science is no longer an issue. It started with genuine concerns that the increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would increase global temperatures with a whole range of undesirable consequences. This was 20 years ago. There are many graphs in the IPCC documents but none showing increasing carbon dioxide levels and corresponding increase in temperature levels. This omission is because despite steadily increasing carbon dioxide concentrations, global temperatures reached a peak in 1998, levelled off, and then started dropping. There have been alarming falls in global temperatures during the past six months. This completely undermines the very basis of climate alarmism.

There is another even greater cause for concern. My studies, together with those of my colleagues, show that the regular, predictable oscillations between widespread flood and drought conditions occur suddenly and dramatically. We are now in one of these dramatic transition periods.

Another observation is that the greater the severity of the event the wider its influence, all the way from afternoon thunderstorms through to global scale phenomena. It is my opinion, shared by others, that we are entering a period of global climatic disturbances. The predicted droughts have already started in South Africa.

It is probably too late for these events to have any influence on the negotiations leading up to Copenhagen. However, if Copenhagen fails and these climatic extremes start biting, the politicians will start looking for somebody to blame. They will not have far to look.

Extracts from reports in CCNet

The following are short extracts from reports published in CCNet of 18 August. They will summarise the international concerns.

CCNet 122/2009 - 18 August 2009 -- Audiatur et altera pars

BONN CLIMATE TALKS MAKE COPENHAGEN CLIMATE TREATY UNLIKELY

The latest round of international climate talks in Bonn last week ended with disappointing results, raising concerns that a lack of progress is now effectively making a comprehensive climate deal in Copenhagen in December unrealistic.
--EurActiv, 18 August 2009

It seems reasonable to conclude that the diplomatic impasse cannot be overcome in Copenhagen or, indeed, anytime soon. What is needed in these circumstances is a calm deceleration strategy that would cool future climate negotiations and take the wind out of the sails of green campaigners. In the run-up to Copenhagen, it will be crucial for governments around the world to come up with fresh approaches and ideas that can lower expectations and manage to direct the permanent stalemate for many years to come. --Benny Peiser, Financial Post, 11 July 2009

India, along with China, South Africa and Brazil, has opposed a new financing proposal to contain greenhouse gas emissions that was presented to the G-20 group of nations at a United Nations (UN) conference on climate change held in Bonn last week. India, on its part, presented a financing framework suggested by the G-77 nations, a group that comprises the developing countries and China. This view says that financing for climate change should be determined in the context of the UNFCCC and not the G-20. -- Padmaparna Ghosh, Livemint, 18 August 2009

Miracle

It will require a miracle to save this whole climate change issue from collapse before the end of this year.

Now is the time for cool heads to prevent the situation getting out of hand. An obvious way out is for nations to appreciate that they have been seriously misled by the climate alarmism charade. They can then quietly drop the whole issue, shrug their shoulders, and assist the disadvantaged peoples of Africa and elsewhere solve the difficult problems that obstruct their progress towards prosperity.

Regards