

Memo 09/10

Climate change – the West vs the rest

Will Alexander alexwj@iafrica.com

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‘Sustainable growth first, then we can go greener’. South African Minister of Finance.



Starving child in Ethiopia. During the 1984-85 drought about a million people in this country died of starvation. (Reuters) How can any civilised person, institution or nation elevate unproven environmental concerns above these very real humanitarian concerns?

The IPCC was established in 1988. A week ago the world was faced with its first climate-related decision after endless discussions at some of the world's premium pleasure resorts. The World Bank approved South Africa's loan application. Its motivation was that the prosperity of the region was paramount.

I believe that the decision of the UK, USA, and some EU countries to abstain from voting in favour of South Africa's World Bank loan application was a tactical error that could have far-reaching consequences. I also believe that historians will describe this decision as climate change's tipping point. It has passed its point of no return.

Academies of science

A good place to start is the ***Joint science academies statement: global response to climate change***. I have attached a copy. It was addressed to the G8 nations' summit at Glen Eagles in July 2005. The signatories accepted the IPCC's assessment reports of 2001 and then made further recommendations.

I draw your attention to its comments that adaptation to climate change required worldwide collaborative inputs from a wide range of experts, including physical and natural scientists, engineers, social scientists, medical scientists, those in the humanities, business leaders and economists.

Notice also the statement that the projected changes in climate will have both beneficial and adverse effects at the regional level, for example on water resources, agriculture, natural ecosystems and human health.

Also note the following important paragraph.

Work with developing nations to build a scientific and technological capacity suited to the circumstances, enabling them to develop innovative solutions to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, while explicitly recognizing their legitimate development rights. (My emphasis).

This raises the immediate question. Why did the UK, US and some EU nations object to the loan when their action was contrary to the specific recommendations of the joint academies that included the Royal Society?

The Stern Review

The academies' recommendations to the G8 nations resulted in the appointment of Nicholas Stern, a British senior civil servant and economist to review the whole climate change issue and make recommendations. After his appointment he called for submissions.

I responded to his request. On 24 November 2005 I submitted my 92-page technical report ***An assessment of the likely consequences of global warming on the climate of South Africa*** as well as my United Nations commissioned report ***Risk and society -- an African perspective***. They were ignored.

On 20 February 2006 I responded to another call for comments. It was ignored as were my subsequent e-mails of 5 March and 13 April. I protested and offered to come to the United Kingdom and address a meeting of experts of his choice. It was also ignored. I have attached copies of the e-mails. The originals should be available in the archives of the Stern Review. Please read through them and note the following passage in my e-mail of 13 April in particular.

Current climate change theory and the conclusions drawn from it are seriously in error. Governments that accept the IPCC's position should be aware of this. They should also carefully consider the sociological, economic and political consequences should they undertake costly and economically restrictive measures that are subsequently found to be based on erroneous science. Climate change scientists should also be aware of the potential harm to tens of millions of the poor and disadvantaged people of the world should their recommendations be implemented and later found to be in error. They should also consider the risks to their reputations and

to those of science and scientists in general. I'm very confident of my conclusions.
(Subsequent emphasis.)

Alas, these predictions have come to pass.

Cause of failure

The international collapse of the IPCC, UNFCCC and the Copenhagen discussions, with the consequences predicted in my e-mail to the Stern Review of 13 April 2005 quoted above, can be traced back to a single cause.

The observed multiyear variations in global climate are the direct consequence of variations in the receipt and poleward redistribution of solar energy via the atmospheric processes (fast) and oceanic processes (slow) not global temperature increases. Once this is appreciated then everything else falls into place. Details are provided in my report to the Stern Review. The report will be included in my next memo.

From this it follows that future rounds of international discussions can only lead to further deterioration in international relations. At national level the NGOs and climate change scientists will soon find themselves being accused of ignoring the economic and sociological consequences of their attitudes and pressures.

The climate change scientists have steadfastly refused to support the badly needed multidisciplinary discussions. They will now have to pay the price. I will deal with this in detail in my next memo.

Apportioning blame

I have no inside information. This is my view. Many will disagree.

It is understandable why the enquiries into the University of East Anglia's CRU have been light in their criticisms. The blame goes much deeper, starting with the Stern Review.

For a start what were Nicholas Stern's terms of reference? Why were my submissions to the Stern Review totally ignored? My 92-page report was solidly based on science. It was far more detailed than any submissions from other sources could have been.

Who initiated the deliberate campaign to denigrate all those who dared challenge climate change theory? This practice was universal and not limited to the UK. I have been personally exposed to it. There can only be one reason for this policy. They had something to hide.

Why did the Stern Review deliberately ignore my submissions and possibly others in similar vein? Whatever the reasons, chickens are now coming home to roost. The view from this distance is that the UK political parties and the government have made irreversible commitments based on recommendations by academic institutions that include the Royal Society and the UK Met Office. There is no way that they can retreat from this position with dignity.

Equally, the international position is hardening. Until now the opposition has been based on political and economic grounds. The underlying science itself has not yet been successfully challenged.

I leave you with a puzzle. Why was my detailed submission to the Stern Review based on scientific grounds ignored without explanation? This omission has caused tremendous and possibly irreversible damage to international relations. This whole climate change issue is based on provably false science.

The future

The World Bank loan is in accordance with the recommendations of the academies of science. What then is the purpose of yet another round of pleasure resort gatherings leading up to the next UNFCCC conference in Mexico at the end of the year? It must be clear that there is no way whatsoever that the developing nations will be persuaded to adopt economically damaging emissions control measures. The opposite is now happening. The BASIC nations (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) have already formed an alliance. Last week there was a meeting in Brazil of the heads of state of the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China) that was also attended by South Africa. A situation is now developing of the West versus the rest. This holds risks for the continuation of world peace. This is one battle that the West cannot win.

Other factors have yet to be accommodated in the climate change equation. The NGOs were almost unanimous in their opposition to South Africa's World Bank loan application. There was also opposition by a group of US politicians. Our climate change scientists were quiet for a change. Our Water Research Commission has gone into hibernation.

As I demonstrated in my submission to the Stern Review all these objections are based on provably false climate change science. (See the italicised quote from my 13 April 2005 submission above and my 92-page report.)

Until now current climate change science has been virtually unchallenged. How long will it be before the major developing nations start producing their own assessments on the lines of my submission to the Stern Review?

Another relevant factor is a conflict between environmental concerns and human livelihood concerns. The World Bank's decision elevates human livelihood concerns above environmental concerns for the first time at this level.

The whole situation is far more complex than the parties appreciated up until the end of October last year. Since then this whole climate change issue has collapsed. How will this all unwind?

There is little more that I can do other than to observe the fulfilment of my predictions with sadness.

Attached documents

I have attached copies of the Academies statement (*Academies.pdf*) and my emailed responses to the Stern Review (*Stern responses.pdf*) to this memo.

Because of its size I will distribute my report ***An assessment of the likely consequences of global warming on the climate of South Africa*** (*Execsum.doc*) in a separate memo. I will also include the data set that I used in my analyses in computer readable format (*HYDROMET.TXT*). I will delay its distribution for a few days so that the message in this memo can sink in.

Until then, you may consider comparing these documents with the report of the Stern Review as well as those of other institutions that followed the IPCC route including those of the University of East Anglia that precipitated the Climategate scandal.

In the interim you may wish to seek answers to the following questions.

1. What were the Stern Review's terms of reference?

2. Why did the Stern Review ignore my submissions without explanation? This is very important. It goes to the very heart of this climate change issue. If the Review had acknowledged that there were alternative views, the whole international conflict and the ignominious consequences to the Western nations would have been avoided.
