

EAMF 2018

Panel Session 5

Evolution of the Environment: Imminent disaster or transition to green economy?

Moderator **Christopher de Vere Walker**, an authority on the power sectors within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), said that half the glaciers in the Tian Shan mountains around Almaty had gone and if nothing was done to halt global warming they would have completely disappeared by 2050: yet there were still people rejecting climate change.

President Trump had withdrawn from the Paris climate agreement but French President Emmanuel Macron had invited American scientists to a meeting to “make our planet green again.” Was the agreement dead with the United States’ withdrawal?

French National Assembly member **Thierry Mariani** said it was not. “194 countries including China, India, Russia and the European Union want to continue. The United States may be one of the worst countries in the world for greenhouse gas emissions but another American President may decide to return to this agreement.”

Thierry noted that there was no plan B to save the planet. The Paris agreement was the only success of former French President François Hollande and it was a great symbol.

Nobel Peace prize laureate and Vice President of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, **Mohan Munasinghe** of Sri Lanka said one of the unpleasant truths about climate change was that while the developed countries were the worst polluters it would hit the poor hardest. “Those who did not cause the problem were going to suffer for it, so those responsible should show leadership.”

Mohan added that in 2012 we used 150% of the planet’s capacity and if nothing was done by 2030 we would need two planets to sustain ourselves. 8 per cent of the world’s population were using the same amount of resources as 3.7 billion of the poorest. The wealthiest people must share more of the burden and help the poor.

Arnan Kashkinbekov, Deputy Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Board of the International Centre for Green Technologies and Investment Projects, said at the moment 60% of the country’s power came from coal but the Kazakh government had ambitious plans to transfer to renewable energy sources by 2030. The construction of a 50 megawatt oil-fired power station in the north of the country would help achieve this goal.

Ivan Blokoy, Greenpeace Russia Expert and Programme Director, said satellite information showed Russia had lost 4 million hectares to forest fires but the government had only admitted to losing 1.4 million hectares.

Award winning Indian journalist, Environment and Green Economy Analyst **Devinder Sharma** said it was not sustainable to continue farming sugar cane and rice in India because they needed vast amounts of water.

There were other problems for farmers, the economic pressures were so great that even in the Punjab which had one of the highest levels of farm productivity in the world, more than 16,000 farmers had committed suicide over the last decade because most of their earnings went in debt. For some farmers their debt was more than their income year on year.

Christopher de Vere Walker also discussed plastic pollution. The United Kingdom was already charging for the use of plastic bags and in France legislation had been introduced so that all supermarkets used paper bags.

[END/ta]

