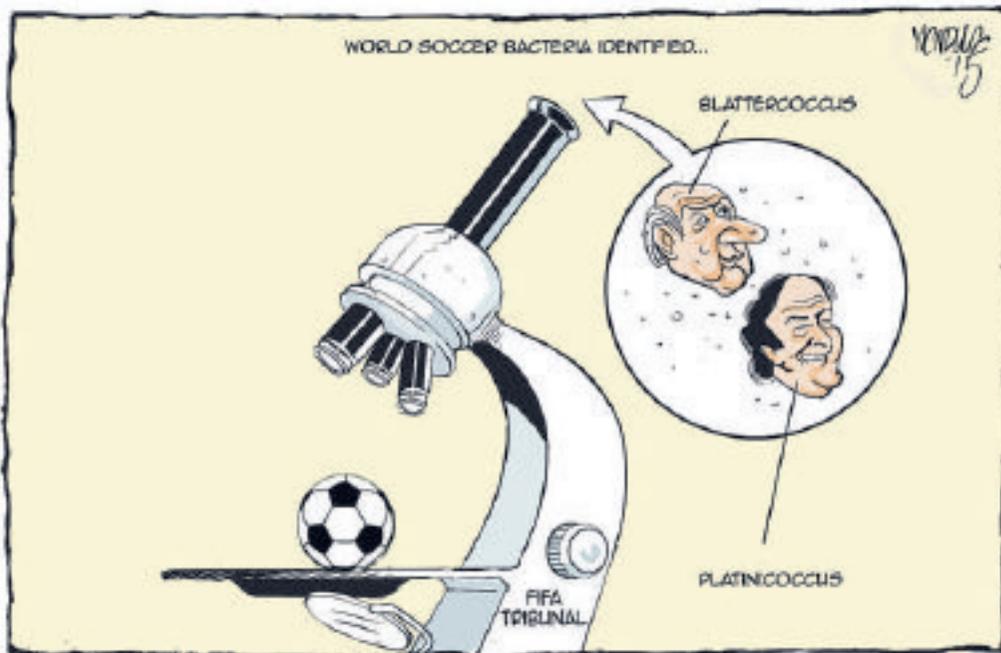


VICTOR'S VIEW



Soccer chiefs Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini handed eight-year ban by Fifa tribunal.

CLIMATE CHANGE PACT IS POLITICAL THEATRE

The beautiful Champs-Élysées is lit with millions of sparkling lights.

This year, they are powered by renewable energy. There is a wind turbine as tall as the Arc de Triomphe, and 440 solar panels take up much of the Champs-Élysées roundabout. One evening during the COP21 climate change conference this month, there was neither sunlight nor wind, so organisers asked those of us strolling down the avenue to power the lights via stationary bikes and hamster wheels.

'Pedal power' delivered great images for the television crews covering the summit. But these 'green energy' bikes amount to a victory of empty gestures over substance and reason – which makes them sadly representative of COP21 itself.

The agreement reached in Paris contains promises that, if enacted between now and the target date of 2030, will cost the global economy at least \$1 trillion (Sh102 trillion) a year – and possibly twice as much if politicians make inefficient policy choices. This makes the agreement the costliest in history.

My peer-reviewed research paper, published in *Global Policy*, shows that the 2016-30 promises on cutting emissions of carbon dioxide will reduce temperatures by 2100 by just 0.05° Celsius (0.09° Fahrenheit). Even if the promised emissions cuts continued throughout the century, the Paris agreement would cut global temperature rises by just 0.17°C. Scientists from

By Bjørn Lomborg

None of the actors is talking about the impact of the actual, concrete commitments agreed in Paris



the Massachusetts Institute of Technology find a similar temperature reduction.

This is why former US Vice President Al Gore's climate adviser, Jim Hansen, who first brought concern about global warming to the public in 1988, called the Paris agreement "a fraud really, a fake" and "just worthless words. There is no action, just promises".

But politicians suggest the agreement will do much more. The agreement concluded at COP21 goes further than the much-discussed target of capping the global temperature increase at 2°C above pre-industrial levels, but actually states that the aim is to keep the increase "well below 2°C," with an effort to cap it at 1.5°C.

This is simply cynical political theatre, meant to convince us that our leaders are taking serious action. But none of the actors is talking about the impact of the actual, concrete commitments agreed in Paris. Instead, they are placing their faith in *deus ex machina*: all the vague vows and rhetoric about what will happen after 2030 and toward the middle of the century.

The US is a prime example of how far-fetched this drama is. It's no sure bet that if a Republican succeeds President Barack Obama in 2016, even the next four years of promised carbon cuts will happen. It's even more ludicrous to suggest that promises with a due date of 2050 will be fulfilled by whoever is president after 2030.

The Paris agreement features pledges on greenhouse-gas emissions from developing countries, in exchange for which they will receive huge sums of cash from richer countries. The poor countries will certainly take that money, and some of it may even be spent reducing emissions. But the world's poorest don't want solar panels or wind turbines: they have much more immediate needs, not the least of which is for modern energy – which mostly means more access to fossil fuels. It seems likely that by 2030, we will recognise that much of this money-ground has done very little to help global warming.

So, the Paris agreement is a phenomenally expensive but almost empty gesture.

The really important news

from Paris was the announcement of a Bill Gates-led renewable-energy innovation fund. The fund is needed because, despite the arguments of the green-energy lobby and climate activists, today's inefficient, intermittent solar and wind sources are not yet ready to take over from fossil fuels. Indeed, the International Energy Agency estimates that the world paid \$84 billion (Sh8.5 trillion) to subsidise solar and wind power last year, and it expects that 25 years from now, we will still be paying about \$84 billion in annual subsidies.

We need to take other actions, too, like ending fossil-fuel subsidies. But the smartest long-term climate policy is the one envisaged by Gates: to invest heavily in research and development to push down the future price of green energy. The promise made by Gates, together with 20 countries, to double R&D funding to \$24 billion (Sh2.4 trillion) annually by 2020 is a fantastic development – exactly what is needed. However, much more must be spent to bring forward the arrival of a breakthrough.

Until then, activists and politicians can cynically proclaim their 'triumph' over straw-man enemies and global warming itself. But, like those on the stationary bikes in the City of Light, they are spinning their wheels and getting us nowhere.

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Tree planting by schools helps restore forests

BY GEORGE ACHIA

LAND and environmental degradation is one of the most serious challenges affecting the country, causing an estimated annual loss of \$390 million (Sh38.9 billion) or three per cent of the GDP.

The government has singled out the environment, water, and sanitation as among the major drivers of Kenya's socioeconomic well-being.

Kenya's ambition to become a middle-income country is enshrined in Vision 2030. The delivery of this target is driven by a series of five-year, medium-term plans, the first of which ended in 2012 with remarkable achievements in land and environment management.

The second medium-term plan outlines priority projects and programmes within the environment, water and sanitation sectors, with an overarching goal of attaining a clean, secure and sustainable environment by 2030.

During the COP21 meeting in Paris, Kenya committed to reducing its emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. Kenya's tree cover stands at 7.2 per cent against a target of 10 per cent, while more than two-thirds of Kenya's power is green.

The recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, like Kenya's economic blueprint, come to fruition in 2030. The SDGs identify what needs to be done by countries to protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, and the strategy to combat desertification and reverse land degradation.

Two weeks ago, KenGen Foundation, Better Globe Forestry and Bamburi Cement came together to launch an innovative environmental conservation project that would steer the country to achieve her targets as outlined in the MTPII under environment, water and sanitation pillars.

Dubbed Green Initiative Challenge, the project involves working with schools to increase forest cover within their compounds and the surrounding communities. The project aims at addressing environmental conservation by planting trees in approximately 460 acres with 324,300 tree seedlings, as well as 113,956 fruit seedlings.

The project is designed to encourage and enable schoolchildren to participate in environmental activities by developing small forests and woodlots within their compounds for multiple benefits.

Through the GIC, the three organisations are working together with schools around the Seven-Forks power stations to raise environmental awareness.

The trial project, which began two years ago, enlisted 81 schools, and already boasts of small forests and woodlots that are slowly changing the schools' compound environment.

Reflecting on the SDGs, the project has entered its second phase through an expansion aimed at greening 919 more schools in Kitui, Machakos and Embu over the next 10 years.

The objectives include raising the awareness and participation of schoolchildren in environmental conservation; providing schools with renewable source of wood fuel, thereby reducing pressure on surrounding forests; contributing to reducing greenhouse gases through carbon sequestration; and controlling soil erosion by increasing topsoil infiltration and reducing runoff.

Through this expansion project, community members are encouraged to establish 'household woodlots' and are trained on sustainable rainwater harvesting and storage techniques.

The project is designed as a challenge to participating schools with prizes awarded based on the highest survival rate of seedlings, and use of innovation in management of the forests. The best-performing schools stand to benefit from scholarships and infrastructural developments, including water tanks and rainwater-harvesting systems among others.

The GIC is a move in the right direction in complementing and supporting government initiatives aimed at addressing environmental conservation.

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