

FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER AT THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: "CLIMATE DISRUPTION"

Threatens People, Planet, & Profit - Right Now

By Omar L. Douglass

According to Laurent Fabius, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the problem of climate change spans the moral, economic, social, and political spectrums. Speaking extemporaneously at a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations on Monday, September 22, 2014, Minister Fabius spoke about climate change and COP21 – the upcoming UN Conference on Climate Change. The conference to be held in Paris from November 30 – December 11, 2015 is tasked with reaching a universal agreement among all member nations to drastically reduce carbon emissions.

Following a clear trajectory, the Minister laid out the framework by which next year's UN climate conference will address the various components of the climate conversation. "More and more people [and private companies] are understanding that it's not only a moral necessity, but an economic good investment, because it's the place where the improvements in productivity and rates of return can be excellent."

Fabius stated there will be four pillars to COP 21 (the 21st yearly session of the Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)). First, the organization is to come up with a legally binding international agreement

establishing a comprehensive plan on climate – including reduction of global carbon emissions. The second element is to secure commitments from member governments to implement the action plans that each are to submit at the conference. Third, the use and utility of finance and technology to facilitate effective participation will be implemented. Fourth and finally, appeal to different sub-governmental and economic sectors for tangible commitments.

Q: Why are ministries of foreign affairs leading this effort to address Climate Change?

LF: "The answer is simple. It's not only a question of environmental technique, it's a question of peace or war for water. It's a question of migrations, because of the extension of deserts. It's a question of being able to get food to people. It's [about] a catastrophe for all series of things."

As if these "things" weren't difficult enough without being exacerbated a hundredfold per each incremental increase in the Earth's temperature.

"It will be very difficult to convince the international community to go into that direction, but it's probably one of the most important challenges we have to face."

THE POINT: Not only is climate now a permanent component of foreign policy per se, some countries are buckling commitments to reduce carbon into the driver's seat of their respective policy agendas.

"And, therefore, as citizens, it's a real challenge. And each of us, in our different positions, we have to consider what we can do. Obviously -- and we are discussing it -- you have to combine ideal and reality, because we are dealing with real things."

In fact the rapid change in climate, relatively speaking, mirrored France's own foreign policy concerning the conflicts in Iraq, Syria and the greater Middle East.

Finding the policy is the first step. Implementing the plan is the next challenge which is a struggle that cannot be won without the greater collective effort of the global community of nations.

With war and pestilence literally raging in the background context of the speech, it was seemed obvious that the discussion was set to change, despite the clear eyed conviction of Minister Fabius to present the dangers that come with the rising temperature of Earth's surface.

When the discussion turned from climate policy to its effect on security, the conflict in Iraq and Syria was the particularly auspicious



French Foreign Minister
Laurent Fabius

consumer of the conversation. The trouble with "Daesh" - as Mr. Fabius refers to ISIS was clearly on everyone's mind. Time ran short, which oddly highlighted the minister's general opinions around the fact that an increase in the global average temperature contributes (directly) to the creation of conflict and displacement of people living in close proximity to such strife.

The rationale is effectively that energy policy is really foreign policy anyway.

Talking with president, Daniel H. Yergin, Minister Fabius said that to date, "European [energy] policy has not been very efficient." Despite the impact of notable influencers like Russia and Ukraine, the Minister suggested that a more comprehensive and re-research-centered strategy would better serve Europe and thereby the wider global community as well.

Like the science-based approach of the U.N. climate change conference, Mr. Fabius outlined the elements of a successful energy policy: "Europe must be competitive, sustainable and secure." Fabius went on to discuss various sectors of the global energy economy. Of these, the sub-topic of interest.. was nuclear. 78% of France's power comes from nuclear, but it only produces 1% of the world's carbon. This compared to the U.S.'s.

As France is one of the world's heaviest users of nuclear energy, Minister Fabius offered his unique take on its presence in the developing world when asked by meeting moderator David Yergin. To great extent, the experience and credibility enables/em-powers France to be one of the leading mediators between governments and what Minister Fabius describes as a struggle against a clearly present cli-

mate "catastrophe."

To be clear, Minister Fabius denies all denial of the fact that there is a significant problem. Needless to say, Fabius quickly dismissed as 'unhelpful' the idea that people in the United States "don't believe" that human-made carbon pollution is having a substantial im-pact on the persistent rise in Earth's global temperature.

Referring back to DaeshThe Minister's conclusion: the rise and flux in tempera-tures and less predictable weather conditions have led and will continue to contribute to the creation of new conflicts while making existing ones even worse, due to...increased scarcity of resources, unex-pected natural disasters and

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responsive/evasive action by governments and global industry resulting in a tightening of security and more restrictive capital markets?

Like LB says, the debate is over among serious people who are poised to take action – well people who are taking action NOW.

The Earth's surface has heated up an average of 1.4 degrees since 1880, and two-thirds of that warming has happened since 1975.

Another way to say it,



from 1880 to 1975 (95 years) the surface of the Earth rose a little over half of one degree in temperature. But in the last 39/40 years,(1975 to 2014), the Earth's temperature increased almost one full degree.

His thoughts also echo a recent report issued by The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The panel was put together by the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO). In a press release from March 31, 2014, the IPCC stated:

The effects of climate change are already occurring on all continents and across the oceans. The world, in many cases, is ill-prepared for risks from a changing climate. The report also concludes that there are opportunities to respond to such risks, though the risks will be difficult to manage

with high levels of warming.

The report concludes that responding to climate change involves making choices about risks in a changing world. The nature of the risks of climate change is increasingly clear, though climate change will also continue to produce surprises. The report identifies vulnerable people, industries, and ecosystems around the world. It finds that risk from a changing climate comes from vulnerability (lack of preparedness) and exposure (people or assets in harm's way) overlapping with hazards (triggering climate events or trends). Each of these three components can be a target for smart actions to decrease risk.

WILL BE CONTINUED IN NOVEMBER ISSUE