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"As a USD law professor teaching and researching climate, water, energy and good governance, I brainstormed with graduate students that approached the UNEP booth interested in pursuing careers that encompassed climate," she said from Copenhagen. "Many country delegates stopped by for UNEP materials and to debrief after the Monday (Dec. 14) interruption of proceedings. I spoke with at least 10 African country delegations regarding their hopes for renewed consensus building."

In addition to assisting organizations like UNEP and the National Wildlife Federation with events and activities, Burleson has participated in several meetings during the course of the conference, which concluded Friday, Dec. 18.

The consensus, she believes, is that people throughout the world want governments to heed their calls for help and eliminate processes contributing to climate change.

"I remain optimistic that light will shine through these short days in Copenhagen," added Burleson, "and together the international community will find peaceful middle ground that effectively responds to our collective climate changes challenge."

The USD professor kept a log of her activities during the conference, and shared them with the Plain Talk:

Observations from Cop 15 (Dec. 15)

I hit the decks running at Cop 15 heading into meetings with no sleep straight from the airport. The World Resource Institute provided an excellent framework for the finance debate between creating new institutions to distribute resources versus employing existing international institutions. Former US Congressman Dick Ottinger and I followed this with a lunch and briefing by the Climate and Energy Funders Group. Together with the Climate Action Network, delegates from a number of foundations (ranging from Rockefeller to Doris Duke) pooled collective understanding on how to effectively finance climate mitigation, adaptation, and innovation collaboration on environmentally sound technology.

Forest Day events gathered stakeholders and decision-makers on REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries). I met with a diverse range of United Nations representatives, scientists, economists, academics, and civil society non-governmental delegates. I found this forum to be an incubator of transnational cooperation. Dinner with the Climate and Energy Funders Group led to several great conversations on implementing the Bali Action Plan (1. Mitigation, 2. Adaptation, 3. Technology Transfer and 4. Financing).

Having walked roughly 10 miles and stayed up until 2 a.m. to respond to my delegation listserv and an array of Cop email, I felt in a daze arriving at the Bella Center before dawn. It was worth it, however, for the 20 minute wait to clear security as the lines left many delegates waiting in freezing temperatures for hours.

My National Wildlife Federation delegation reported that many left when tensions grew. On the inside of the Bella Center, delegates rushed to find 8 a.m. briefing meetings. A Chinese youth delegate happily shared his perspective on the proceedings to date. Helping the United Nations Environmental Program with their booth and side event materials on adaptation, I had the chance to talk one on one with over 50 country delegates, NGO representatives, and a general cross section of Cop 15 participants.

As a USD law professor teaching and researching climate, water, energy, and good governance, I brainstormed with graduate students that approached the UNEP booth interested in pursuing careers that encompassed climate. They shared their observations on the impact that civil society was having on the international climate proceedings and on the cooperation occurring between public private players.

I shared my UN involvement from pre-Rio through Copenhagen including findings as a co-author of a UNEP

book entitled GREENING WATER LAW. United Nations observers shared their understanding of Cop developments and coordinated joint side event logistics on core themes.

My favorite meeting of the day involved UNEP representatives and several scientists strategizing on environmentally sound battery technology options for the future. Many country delegates stopped by for UNEP materials and to debrief after the Monday interruption of proceedings. I spoke with at least 10 African country delegations regarding their hopes for renewed consensus building.

I helped the National Wildlife Federation put on a side event on Amazonian Forestry issues, coordinating participation by a Brazilian governor (who navigated the long lines into the conference just in time for the presentation). As part of the National Wildlife delegation, Larry was able to obtain entrance into Al Gore's organization's new film "Climate of Change." Gore personally gave an inspiring introduction to the film. Having worked with him at COP IV to the Rio Conference in 1992, I was heartened to see him at the core of bringing civil society into meaningful participation with international decision-makers.

We stand at a cross-roads. As a UNICEF delegate to the Bali Climate Conference, I had a heightened sense of the urgency of agreeing upon a shared vision in an inclusive process. Good governance encompasses transparency, representation, and public participation. Efficiency and Equity can both be achieved here in Copenhagen with the requisite trust and political will.

In the mid-afternoon on Monday, Dec. 14, I witnessed the central hall of the Bella Center become the venue for a blue rain poncho clad intervention by civil society supporting Africa. Roughly 60 people began yelling "We stand with Africa, Kyoto Targets Now." They held signs that reiterated these statements and were soon surrounded by cameras as the entire hall filled with thousands of participants stopped to take note. It remained orderly and did not take on the level of tension of the participants unable to enter the Bella Center.

Yet, many NGO delegates were critical of the handling of public participation. Up to 100,000 individuals marched on Saturday in support of international cooperation on climate change. Amnesty International condemned leaving people bound for 4 hours forced to sit on city streets in freezing temperatures, arresting nearly 1000 and then releasing all but a handful. The general sense was that responding to a few brick throwers should not risk the safety and civil rights of civil society at large. Many delegates are now torn between trying to attend Bella Center proceedings and risking unrest as rumors circulate that protests might hinder access at the venue.

All non-governmental delegations have been required to reduce their delegations by two thirds. Some delegations are coordinating via Skype meetings while others are shifting their focus to Klimaforum09 events.

As I write on Tuesday Dec. 15, I am able to watch snow flurries swirling around Tivoli's roller coaster rides, while helicopters circle above. I can hear people yelling and sirens calling. Local warning systems are needed the world

over to provide accurate advice for people on the streets as natural or political events unfold. I am suppressing a foreboding, as someone who could watch the smoke from the towers on 9/11 and listen to days of hovering helicopters. I remain optimistic that light will shine through these short days in Copenhagen and together the international community will find peaceful middle ground that effectively responds to our collective climate change challenge.

Dec. 16

The peacefully permitted protest scheduled to start at Taarnby Station and walk to the Bella Center had yet to impact ingress and egress to the proceedings when I reached the Bella Center by 7:30 this morning. I was able to go right in. Many country delegates spent the night in the center as negotiations went around the clock. The RINGOS (Research and Independent Non-governmental Organizations) quickly filled a large conference room to negotiate the distribution of remaining passes into the conference.

Process rather than substantive treaty language has consumed many delegation's time and energy. The RINGOS gave passes out to those who had been attending RINGO meetings.

I find myself saddened by the development of civil society splintering into RINGOS, BINGOS, ENGOS, etc. Scarce resources certainly lead to conflict, but it is access to a seat at the negotiating table or to adequate water, energy, and stable climate.

By mid-morning a coalition of delegates within the Bella Center marched outside in solidarity with the 4000 individuals gathered at the gate seeking participation in the proceedings.

As a National Wildlife Federation delegate, I joined the Climate Action Network (CAN) REDD meeting to assess the latest Cop Decision text on forestry. We agreed upon general recommendations regarding remaining bracketed language that should be removed from the text and discussed who could share these recommendations on the ministerial level. I was able to do so with Senator Kerry. His speech raised spirits and set a progressive tone. I also thought highly of the UN panel discussion on climate displacement and the CAN panel discussion on US energy policy, an issue that has involved greater political bipartisanship of late than climate legislative efforts.

Passing members of the press who were editing footage of the morning's demonstrations on their laptops was sobering. Delegates tried to keep each other informed as to what was occurring outside. Public transport to and from the Bella Center was suspended for part of the day as demonstrations in the City Center and outside the Bella Center sought to impact the climate change proceedings. The deliberative process at the ministerial level inched along, weighed down by domestic political realities of respective representatives.

IUCN held a reception and dinner in the elephant house of the Copenhagen Zoo - symbolic on several levels. An old legend tells of five blind men who come upon an elephant. Touching it's side, the first concluded that an elephant is like a wall. Feeling it's tusk, the second decided that an elephant is like a spear. Grasping it's trunk, the third insisted that

an elephant is like a snake while the fourth felt the Elephant's leg and knew that an elephant is like a tree. The fifth man held the elephant's tail and said that an elephant is like a rope. The lesson that I take away from this timeless story is that collective understanding can transcend confusion and can facilitate cooperation.

Dec. 18

I gave a presentation at Copenhagen University yesterday morning, followed by participating in the WWF arctic forum. The Sami, Athabaskan, Inuit, dialogue was among the best discussions this week, year, or decade. Indigenous communities need to have a seat at the negotiating table. While they are more eloquent in English (often their third language) they are not always connected via webcast and face-to-face forums are important to building ties that bind in the urgent struggle in the Arctic.

At lunch today my USD student delegate, Pace's Dick Ottinger, and Columbia's Michael Gerrard strategized best teaching practices in teaching Energy Law. In addition to facilitating youth involvement in emerging international law, I have been able to film a broad cross section of Cop 15 (from Kerry's speech to the Arctic Forum), footage beyond that being webcasted of the heads of state speeches. Real public participation can keep decision-making legitimate via representative and transparent processes.

International consensus building has never been simple. Building trust and understanding can result in collective agreement to mitigate, adapt, collaborate on innovation, and finance these measures. We have been reminded this week the wise words of Ben Franklin that if we do not hang together we will surely hang separately. Consensus building involves diplomacy, a deliberative process that is alive and well. Whole forests have been felled publishing literature on treaty making in particular and the legislative process in general.

Not only are delegations finding authentic offsetting measures, they are providing legal expertise depended upon by country delegations. United Nations conferences, the Olympics, and other gatherings that bring the international community together can be essential to dispute resolution and global cooperation. We can dedicate a Cop 15 memorial forest, we can live our lives in as meaningful a way as each of us knows how, we can build on each other's genius to find common ground to achieve sustainable development.

It is wonderful that climate change is being prioritized by heads of state and necessary that it remain on the global agenda (not a given). Building on the momentum of Copenhagen can result in collective action to protect carbon sinks, mitigate greenhouse gases, and finance adaptation and environmentally sound technology cooperation. These can be worked on individually as well as collectively.

CHAMBER CHAT

Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce & Development Company
116 Market Street, Suite 103
Vermillion, SD 57069
605-624-5571
vcdc@vermillionchamber.com
www.vermillionchamber.com

Chamber Business:

The VCDC will have a Vermillion Area Information Booth in the DakotaDome lobby during the 27th Annual Dakota Farm Show on Jan. 5, 6 and 7. If you have a brochure, menu, coupons, etc., that you would like available for the Farm Show exhibitors and visitors please drop them off at the VCDC office at 116 Market Street, Suite 103 or call Ann at 624-5571 by Dec. 30. This is a perfect opportunity to let visitors know about your business!

The Vermillion Area Chamber & Development Company office has relocated to the Market Street Professional Building at 116 Market Street in Suite 103. Please stop by and see us at our new location. Look for us under the water tower!

This Weeks Happenings!

- High School Boy's & Girl's Basketball Snowball Classic at Winner, Saturday, Jan. 2 TBA.
- USD Women's Basketball at Colorado State University-Ft. Collins, CO, on Saturday, Jan. 2 at 3:05 p.m.

Next Weeks Happenings!

- USD Men's Basketball at Kansas State University in Manhattan, KS Sunday, Jan. 3 at 12 noon.
- USD Women's Basketball at Iowa State University in Ames, IA Tuesday, Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
- High School Girl's Basketball at Sioux City East Tuesday, Jan. 5 at 4:30 p.m.
- Seventh/Eighth Grade Boy's Basketball vs. Yankton Thursday, Jan. 7 at 4:15 p.m.
- High School Boy's/Girl's Basketball at Parkston Friday, Jan. 8 at 5 p.m.
- USD Men's Basketball vs. Cornell University Friday, Jan. 8 at 7:30 p.m. at DakotaDome.
- High School Gymnastics at West Central Friday, Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m.
- JH Wrestling at Mitchell Saturday, Jan. 9 at 10 a.m.
- High School Wrestling at Brandon Valley Saturday, Jan. 9 at 10:30 a.m.
- High School Gymnastics at Stanley County Saturday, Jan. 9 at 12 p.m.
- USD Swimming/Diving at Washington College in Key Largo, FL, Saturday, Jan. 9 all day.
- USD Men's Basketball

vs SIU-Edwardsville Saturday, Jan. 9 at 7:30 p.m. at the DakotaDome.

Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendars!

• Chamber Night with the Musketeers Friday and Saturday, Jan. 15 and 16. The Sioux City Musketeers will recognize all Siouxland area Chambers and their communities that are at the game on Jan. 15 and 16.

For more information or to purchase your tickets contact Rhonda Johnson at 712-251-1587.

• Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Jan. 18, 2010. Registration has begun for the 2010 MLK Day of Service. Volunteers, groups, or individuals as well as site leaders to help facilitate the projects are needed. Pre-register at <http://sites.google.com/site/mlkday2010/> to volunteer and email sdmlkday@gmail.com if you are interested in being a site leader or have a project idea. For information, call 605-677-6338.

• Preservation Wednesdays - The Clay County Historic Preservation Commission and the Clay County Historical Society are presenting the second Annual Series of Historic Presentations. A presentation by Will Schweinle entitled "Vintage Tools" will be at 7 p.m. at the public library on Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010. The presentations are free and open to the public.

• Book Blab at the Vermillion Public Library will be held in the Community Room on Thursday, Jan. 21 from 6 to 8 p.m. Adult readers will share favorite authors and books and discover some new ones with other book lovers. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

• Fun & Games at the Vermillion Public Library will be held in the Community Room on Saturday, Jan. 23 from 1 to 4 p.m. Adults and youth ages 12 and up will play board games and put jigsaw puzzles together. Drinks & snacks will be provided.

• Clay County ACS Relay for Life, Sunday, Jan. 31 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Dakota Dome. Sponsored by the Clay County ACS and the USD Campus Against Cancer organization. For more information, contact Wess Pravecek at 624-5352.

Does your business or organization have an event you would like included in the Chamber Chat? If you do, please call us at 624-5571 or email us at vcdc@vermillionchamber.com.

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