

## ***The Sydney Declaration on Climate Change: What it means***

### **Aspirational target to reduce emissions**

Aspirational, unenforceable targets by APEC member nations have been described by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer as “a political stunt”. Mr Downer said in April: “aspirational targets are code for “a political stunt” and went on to say that “an aspirational target is not a real target at all.”<sup>1</sup> The only thing weaker than an aspirational target to reduce emissions is an agreement to “work to achieve a common understanding on a long-term aspirational global emissions reduction goal” , as has been agreed in the Sydney Declaration.

The real risk is that the Sydney Declaration’s support for aspirational targets undermines the international community’s support for binding, legally enforceable Kyoto targets beyond the first commitment period of Kyoto.

### **Energy Intensity targets**

The Sydney Declaration suggested an energy intensity target of 25% by 2030 with a base year of 2005, or 1% per year over the next 25 years. Most APEC countries, including Australia, China, India, US and Japan all have average energy intensity improvements of well over 1% per year.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the proposed APEC target is business as usual with emissions continuing to rise.

Rather than aspirational, business as usual energy intensity targets, we need binding emissions reductions targets, which are best negotiated through the Kyoto process and will deliver real energy efficiency gains.

### **Asia Pacific Network for Energy Technology (ANet)**

APNet seems to be replacing the failed AP6 forum. The only clear commitment of new funds to APNet is a \$5 million announcement for ‘technology sharing’ from the Australian Government. Again APNet is characterised by its voluntary nature. Technology transfer projects made in Sydney have been heavily biased towards so called ‘clean coal’ technology and renewable energy has been largely absent from discussions. The Sydney Declaration singled out ‘cleaner use of coal’ as an essential element of technology development and transfer, while failing to offer any substantial support for renewable energy.

### **Aspirational goal to increase forest cover in the region**

Again the Sydney Declaration’s commitment on forests suffers from its non-binding, unenforceable nature. Furthermore, it doesn’t prevent the logging of high conservation value native forests and replanting with plantations. If APEC nations wanted to make real progress on forest protection they would work to ban the import of illegal timber into their countries and support efforts to protect old growth forests through a new global mechanism under Kyoto.

### **Nuclear renaissance?**

One of the most substantial announcements to come out of Sydney was the Australia-Russia agreement on uranium export. Unfortunately this deal takes us in exactly the wrong direction as we attempt to shift towards a safe, clean energy future. This deal undermines nuclear non-proliferation efforts, freeing up Russian uranium for export or military use. The Sydney Declaration affirms the role of nuclear power, ignoring the fact that nuclear’s share of global electricity generation will decrease in coming decades, even with an as yet unseen aggressive reactor building program.

Few predict a doubling of nuclear power output by 2050, but even if it did eventuate it would still only reduce greenhouse gas emissions by about 5% – less than one tenth of the reductions required to stabilise atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. And it would produce waste and proliferation problems, and cost more than pursuing energy efficiency and renewable energy.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Downer, 19 April 2007, Monash APEC lecture [http://www.apec.org.au/docs/07\\_MAL.pdf](http://www.apec.org.au/docs/07_MAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ABARE 2006 “Technology- its role in economic development and climate change.  
[www.abare.gov.au/publications\\_html/climate/climate\\_06/cc\\_technology\\_nu.pdf](http://www.abare.gov.au/publications_html/climate/climate_06/cc_technology_nu.pdf)