

This edition of Focus is dedicated to the broad topic of Sustainability, and is immediately concerned with COP 17 or, to give it its full title, the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Durban in November and December of this year.



Francis Antonie is the Director of the Helen Suzman Foundation. He is a graduate of Wits, Leicester and Exeter Universities. He was awarded the Helen Suzman Chevening Fellowship by the UK Foreign Office in 1994. From 1996 to 2006 he was senior economist at Standard Bank; thereafter he was director of the Graduate School of Public Development and Management at Wits University. He is the founding managing director of Strauss & Co.

The immediate challenge which the Conference faces is future global responses to climate change. In his address to the informal ministerial consultations on COP 17 – which we reprint here – President Zuma enunciated the principles which have, in the past, formed the basis of climate change negotiations, and which should serve as a guide to a credible response to the challenges of climate change. These include: multilateralism, environmental integrity, common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, equity, and honouring of all international commitments and undertakings. As President Zuma notes, a central concern of COP 17 relates to the extension of the Kyoto Protocol, in operation since 2005, which has provided a framework for discussions and interventions around carbon emissions.

In his reflections on President Zuma’s address, Andy Smithen commends the President’s concern about climate change and stresses the importance of *equity* in the President’s address. He draws attention to the President’s allusions to a link between climate change and other environmental concerns, and emphasises that the focus cannot be on climate change in isolation. He warns that there exists an inherent danger of oversimplification in focusing on a single issue.

Tasneem Essop draws our attention to the important role which leaders and leadership will play in COP 17. She is forthright in her assertion that our leaders failed us in Copenhagen in 2009, and while there was some progress made in Cancun last year, she fears that there may now be a backward slide in negotiations. While the outcome of Copenhagen was the Copenhagen Accord, this agreement suffered a crisis of legitimacy and credibility even as it was crafted. Its failure to be adopted represents a failure of leadership. Her paper represents a clear call: not only do the Parties need to agree on a global goal for emission reductions, but this goal must be an ambitious one. A sense of urgency informs her reflections and her conclusion is forthright: Durban needs to secure the future for a comprehensive agreement, and it needs to lock in the progress that was made in Cancun.

Crispian Olver, discussing Rio + 20, brings to bear his considerable professional experience gained as Director-General in the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. He reflects on the difficulties inherent in any attempt at true *global* governance, suggesting that the present system of environmental governance has not kept up with the rapid changes of globalisation. The challenge he poses is that the current model of economic growth is also inextricably linked to resource consumption, environmental impact and carbon emissions, and that we need to find new models which decouple these impacts from growth, and chart a more equitable and sustainable developmental path.

Johann Scholtz and Dawid de Villiers review the ‘carbon economy’ and carbon trading in South Africa. As they point out, there is a great deal of uncertainty and risk in the carbon market – given the unresolved future of the Kyoto Protocol. Notwithstanding this, they put forward an important case that the carbon market may be mature enough to survive even if the Parties to COP 17 are unable to agree on an extension.

Justin Smith, drawing on his experience in the corporate sector, suggests a business case for sustainability. He observes that market research internationally indicates that a growing number of consumers are interested in *where* the products they purchase come from and *how* they are produced – the case being that consumerist pressure does alter corporate strategy.

Nikisi Lesufi considers the hard choices we face in ‘greening’ the South African economy. He focuses particularly on mining and the impact it has – both on economic development and growth, and on the environment. His call for a ‘fact-based’ approach is important in a debate which can so easily spiral into the realm of rhetoric.

Melita Steele takes on the global climate denialist campaign. She suggests that climate change presents the greatest current threat to the planet but, by the same token, it provides an extraordinary opportunity to embark on a course of truly sustainable development. She calls for an *Energy [R]evolution*.

Anthony Leiman, while admitting that climate change is a fact of life, suggests that it is not at all clear how South African policy-makers should react to it. He suggests that, while the ‘green alternative’ of renewable energy is a prospect devoutly to be wished, the opportunity cost may be politically untenable, and he makes the barbed comment that the search for sustainability should begin with a realistic search for perspective.

Finally, Jacklyn Cock offers a radical critique of the sustainability discourse. For Cock, the entire sustainability discourse has been appropriated by neo-liberal capitalism. She brings to the debate an impassioned plea for a notion of *justice* to be introduced into the discourse around climate change and sustainability, and she makes a forthright point concerning the *economistic bias* which emphasises growth at the expense of equity and the environment.

We conclude with three reviews: Richard Steyn on Paul Gilding’s *The Great Disruption: how the climate crisis will transform the global economy*; Joubert Botha’s review of Stuart Jones’s and Robert Vivian’s *South African Economy and Policy 1990–2000: an economy in transition*; and Ewen McLay’s review of David Richards’ and Greg Mills’ *Victory Among People: lessons from countering insurgency and stabilising fragile states*.