



Oxfam erected 10 human ice sculptures to remind negotiators of the impact climate change is already having, on poor people around the world. Rich countries need to take the lead before hope in saving the planet and its people melt away.

Polluters get the stick at Poznan meet

BY MARIANNE DE NAZARETH

Amidst all the negotiations among countries, the heavy purposeful footfall of 11,600-odd delegates from across the globe through the enormous halls everyday, the daily planned schedule, the strident voices that echo in every hall, that ‘we humans must combat climate change or we are doomed to die,’ there are a lot of interesting side events to break the monotony of the United Nations Climate Change Conference currently on in Poznan, Poland.

Besides the clatter of the pressroom, with hundreds of journalists churning out stories which are being flashed across the globe, one hears an excited babble of voices in French and English, German and Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish, it’s an excited babble of voices one hears through the day. NGOs and side events, lines of exhibits and enthusiastic volunteers shouting themselves hoarse about carbon footprints and gender equality. Coffee and pizza stalls or elegant welcoming cocktail evenings with dainty hors-de-oeuvres. The conference is a mélange of all this and more with a plethora of creative minds working on strategies to catch the attention of at least a fraction of the delegates.

Outside the huge entrance lobby,

parked to one side, is the first solar-powered car to complete a round-the-world trip. It has reached the end of its journey at the UN climate talks. The small two-seater arrived bears the clear message that clean technologies are now available to put an end to global warming. Louis Palmer has driven 32,000 miles through 38 countries in 17 months to become the first person to circumnavigate the globe in a solar car. The 36-year-old Swiss school teacher says the car “ran like a Swiss watch,” proving solar is a viable transportation technology. “I hope that the car industry hears and makes electric cars big time in the future,” he said.

Activists from both rich and poor countries shiver in freezing temperatures with their exhibits outside the venue. Oxfam erected 10 human ice sculptures to remind negotiators of the impact climate change is already having, on poor people around the world.

“For the millions ... already affected by climate change, there is no time for delay at these negotiations. Rich countries need to take the lead before hope in saving the planet and its people melts away,” said Aboubacar Traore, Oxfam’s climate change campaigner.

And hugging the huge trees in the driveway are sculptures made from twigs, branches, vines and sticks which

‘hug’ the trees in playful abandon. These sculptures are by the Tree Hugger Project, reveal Agnieszka Gradzik and Wiktor Szostato, adding, “and we want to remind everyone that we are still very much a part of our natural surroundings. We want to demonstrate that supporting environment friendly initiatives can be done in a fun and non-political way.”

Another interesting side event during UN climate change negotiations, are the fossil of the day awards. Members of the worldwide environmental network, the Climate Action Network, vote for the country judged to have made the worst input to the negotiations. Usually, two or three fossil-of-the-day awards are presented each day to countries with dubious record of blocking progress at the negotiations. The awarded prizes range from little cactus plants at CoP-8 in New Delhi, 2002, to briquettes of German premium quality coal in June 2000, in Bonn.

On Tuesday, Canada was handed its second consecutive ‘fossil’ award from the Climate Action Network, which is given to countries deemed to have contributed least to the climate-change fight. Canada, the US and Australia — the latter two have signed but not ratified the Kyoto treaty — were given the ‘prizes’ for obstructing technology transfer to poor countries.