

# EDITORIAL

*Affordable energy, in the form of lower prices for petroleum-based fuel, offers opportunities for improved livelihoods and poverty reduction, but at a cost. Even natural gas, although cleaner than gasoline, is not environmentally innocuous. Despite these low prices, the share of energy from renewable sources must expand, if we are to meet international commitments on curtailing the use of greenhouse-gas emitting fuels. In the current market, however, the low prices of conventional fuels may provide an impetus for keeping the status quo that could cause alternative energy to founder.*

*In a recent statement co-authored by Klaus Töpfer, former Executive Director of UNEP, and Ernst-Ulrich von Weizsäcker, former Chairman of the German Federal Parliament's Environmental Commission, it is advised that the assessment of taxes on carbon emissions in Germany is "economically necessary, socially acceptable and ecologically imperative now", with the goal of helping to keep global consumption of fossil fuels in check while buoying markets for renewable energy. Around the world, a variety of measures, including emissions trading schemes as well as taxes on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, have been introduced with the same objective. These and other new policies are needed to keep the international community focused on reducing carbon emissions regardless of the price of oil.*

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*The last known male Northern White Rhino in the world is now protected day and night by armed guards in a Kenyan wildlife conservation area. Unfortunately, many more species may soon be in need of such armed protection. The plight of this species indicates the need for further international action to deal with crimes against wildlife.*

*It also demonstrates the lengths to which humans might go to conserve and breed these last remaining specimens and exhibits a strong political commitment to adopt, coordinate and implement creative approaches to wildlife conservation. Greater respect for all species and greater recognition of their contribution to human well-being could result where local communities are made aware of the importance of their roles as guardians of the wildlife and ecosystems around them. Such true sustainable development would benefit all levels of society.*

*In this light, we must ask "How can so much time, energy and money can be devoted to technological innovation, space exploration or even war and so little directed toward successfully conserving the diverse and vital natural ecosystems here on Earth?"*

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*The fourth of the eight scheduled sessions of the intergovernmental negotiations on the UN's post-2015 Development Agenda is taking place in New York (it will be reported along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sessions in EPL 3-4). Co-facilitator Macharia Kamau (Kenya) expressed his hope that the session will act as a "train station where all of the tracks come together", especially concerning future agreements on issues such as financing for development. He asked that, between now and their deadline of September 2015, delegates maintain the general goodwill that has characterized the process until now. UNGA President Sam K. Kutesa (Uganda) highlighted a number of contentious issues that are yet to be tackled including means of implementation and the framework for monitoring and review.*

*We remain confident that delegates and their home governments will keep their sights on crafting a robust plan that enables optimal implementation through a combination of clear measurement and programmatic flexibility.*

20 April 2015

*- Wolfgang B. Breyer -*