

Deforestation down

Some rare environmental good news: the rate of **Amazon deforestation** was down 27% in the year to 31 July 2012, and the lowest rate since records began in 1988. Andre Correa do Lago, Brazil's head negotiator at the United Nations climate conference



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Welcome cut in cutting

in Doha, Qatar, says measures to curb illegal logging had had an impact, and that emerging countries could do more on deforestation and other carbon-related issues if rich nations provided more funding, including to address poverty. Despite the improvement, more than **4,600 square kilometres** of the Amazon rainforest was lost in 2011-12, an area nearly twice the size of Luxembourg.

How to avoid corruption

Executives hoping to avoid large fines or even prison sentences should they get caught up in corruption in foreign countries should read a 120-page guide to the **United States Foreign Corrupt Practices Act**, published recently by the US government. The guide includes case studies, details on the scope of anti-bribery provisions, definitions of terms such as "corruptly" and "wilfully", defences that might be accepted and the penalties that might apply to wrongdoers. Because of the damage done by corruption, enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act is a "continuing priority at the Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission," the guide said. The act's provisions can extend to non-US, as well as US, companies.

Analysis: wind power

Blowing hot and cold

By Rikki Stanchich in Hong Kong

More commitment to wind power could mean hitting global emission reduction targets. But it's looking unlikely

November was an important month for climate change mitigation. The International Energy Agency made a historic first, initiating dialogue on climate change. It advises that to achieve the goal of keeping any global temperature rise to 2C, only one-third of proven reserves of fossil fuels can be consumed before 2050.

All eyes then turned to COP 18 in Doha, and the UK's Department of Energy and Climate Change's long-awaited energy bill. The latter signals a switch away from coal towards nuclear and renewables, particularly wind, but with consumers facing higher bills to pay for new power installations.

With the window of opportunity to stave off runaway climate change narrowing, the stakes are higher than ever. Even so, "the politics don't look very good", says the latest Global Wind Energy Outlook (GWEO) report.

To rein in climate change, annual global emissions must be pared down from the IEA's 2020 business-as-usual scenario of 56bn tonnes of CO₂, to a 44bn tonne goal. Today, however, there is already a "gap" of 10bn tonnes of CO₂ per year between current confirmed national emission reduction targets and that 2020 goal.

"Even if the pledges made in Copenhagen and confirmed in Cancún are met in full, a gap of 6bn tonnes per year remains," notes the GWEO report. Meanwhile, global emissions continue to rise.

Unless market corrections such as efficient carbon pricing and removal of fossil fuel subsidies are made now, the current opportunity to contain global warming will be missed, according to IEA projections.

However, governments continue to back the wrong horse. Subsidies to fossil fuels are now 30% higher than in 2010 and six times the amount received by renewables, according to

the IEA. If these subsidies were removed today, greenhouse gas emissions would be 6% lower by 2050 (according to OECD analysis), and renewables such as wind and concentrated solar power would be cost competitive with, if not cheaper, than coal and gas, says Greenpeace's renewable energy expert, Sven Teske, a co-author of the GWEO report.

Within reach

According to the report, the power sector is responsible for more than 40% of all CO₂ emissions from burning fossil fuels, and about 25% of total greenhouse gas emissions. This makes a compelling case for installation of renewable energy generating capacity.

With political commitment, the 2030 emissions goal can be met and even exceeded, stresses the report. In a best-case scenario, wind energy could meet roughly 24.8% of total electricity demand.

Since 2009, however, growth in the wind sector has slowed significantly. According to the report, "recession in most of the OECD, the lack of EU ambition to 'fix' its emission trading system, fickle policy in the US and elsewhere",



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Still untapped potential

have undermined the sector's growth potential, according to the GWEO report.

Growth is likely to pick up again around 2014. But the Global Wind Energy Council's secretary-general, Steve Sawyer, argues it is unlikely that the best-case scenario can be achieved. Instead, he says it is more likely that 760GW will be installed by 2020, meeting 8.3% of electricity demand, with annual CO₂ savings of around 1bn tonnes. As the report concludes, this is "not sufficient for wind energy to play its full part in combating the climate crisis". ■