



Around Europe

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Images: QCEA and Blatant World

Nobel Peace Prize goes to EU

On 12 October, the world was informed that the European Union had been awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace prize. Reactions varied. As one commentator tweeted, it is easy to complain about human rights when you have them. Europe has had over six decades of peace internally, but complacency would be dangerous. We must ask ourselves if our prosperity contains the seeds of conflict: arms trade, overuse of natural resources, buying from governments that violate human rights, etc. Follow QCEA via our blog and Twitter (@QCEA) to continue reflecting on the seeds of war in Europe today.

Alexandra Bosbeer

Plotting Europe's Route to a Sustainable Future

We cannot expect European Union (EU) energy and climate targets for 2030 to be agreed until 2015 at the earliest, according to top EU climate official Jos Delbeke. In a conference this month, Delbeke, the Commission's Director General for Climate Action, predicted that discussions on future targets will not take place until after the next European Parliament elections, scheduled for 2014. This implies that it could be as late as 2016 before any concrete targets are set, and it means that Europe could lose vital momentum in moving towards its ambitious yet essential 2050 objectives.

A number of recent warning signs remind us that we can ill afford to lose the momentum that we have gathered so far in mitigating climate change and reducing energy and resource consumption. According to NASA, the Arctic has lost more sea ice this year than in any other year since records began in 1979. In addition, according to the International Panel on Climate Change, if we do not succeed in changing the status quo, in just over four years the world will reach the point at which it becomes likely that the world will exceed the 2°C warming limit. This limit is thought to be the threshold beyond which climate change would become dangerous to life on the planet.

With regards to consumption, in 2012 the people on earth consumed a year's worth of the world's resources before 22 August. This means that, for the remaining third of this year, we are reducing the earth's natural 'capital' of resources from which we build our livelihoods and our

economies, rather than living off the 'interest'. To compare: ten years ago, a year's worth of resources lasted the human population into October, and, as recently as the 1970s, a year's worth of resources still took us at least a year to use. In other words, in the 1970s, we were still living within our 'means', using no more in one year than the earth replenished. 2012 was the first year that this threshold was crossed before the year was two-thirds out. It is clear that decisive action towards a sustainable and low-carbon future cannot wait.

EU Member States are currently working to achieve by 2020 a package of three climate and energy goals, agreed in 2008. These are:

- a 20 per cent reduction in EU greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels;
- an increase in the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20 per cent; and
- a 20 per cent improvement in the EU's energy efficiency.

In a recent policy dialogue, Philip Lowe, Director General for Energy, indicated that Europe is on track to reach two of the three targets, but stated that some 'ifs' remain regarding the energy efficiency target. However, even if we succeed in reaching all three targets, our work will not finish in 2020. The

2020 targets form part of a longer-term 2050 'roadmap' which charts a course towards reducing Europe's CO₂ emissions by 80-95 per cent compared to 1990 levels before 2050. Europe cannot maintain steady progress on this long journey without the help



Targets act as signposts or milestones on Europe's route to a sustainable and low carbon future. (Image Ian Wilson)



of milestones to guide it on its way, and, for this reason, ambitious targets for the year 2030 are essential. The postponement announced by Jos Delbeke is disappointing because it is vital that we establish, and start working to achieve, these new targets as soon as possible.

One of the key ways in which delaying the 2030 targets may affect our progress towards 2050 is by fostering uncertainty amongst those investing in renewable energies, such as wind and solar power, as well as in other green technologies such as energy efficient transport and construction. According to a report published by Bloomberg New Energy Finance this month, global investment in renewable energies fell by 20 per cent in the third quarter of 2012 (and by 29 per cent in Europe), signaling that 2012 will be the first year in eight years that world investment in this field has decreased. A major advantage of new long-term targets is that they will provide companies with a projection of the future demand for green technologies, giving them more confidence to invest in these areas. This green investment stimulates innovation and creativity and brings down the cost of green initiatives, thus making sustainable development increasingly efficient and feasible.

Putting into place new 2030 targets now will also allow those making decisions at a national and local level to begin their work towards achieving these objectives straight away. Many decisions made today, such as the construction of a new coal power station or the opening of a new airport runway, will not be

decisions that can easily be undone between now and 2030. It is therefore important that national and local leaders have these next milestones in sight in order to avoid making wrong turns that lead to increased consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and resource use.

Finally, targets for 2030 agreed by the EU Member States will become an important tool in campaigning and advocacy, allowing the public and non-governmental organisations to measure the performance of decision-makers and hold them accountable for policies that appear to be inconsistent with the pledges that they have made.

International policies normally reflect a compromise of forces; but we hope that in time, the pressure of events and public opinion will gain the upper hand.

Strong 2030 targets are needed now, and we should continue to push for this. If as Jos Delbeke suggests, decisions will not be made before the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, the voice of the European electorate will be important in deciding how ambitious the targets are. We will - and you can, also - encourage both MEP candidates and voters to show vision and responsibility on this urgent matter.

Ultimately, as the Italian Renaissance sculptor, poet, and engineer Michelangelo said, the greater danger for us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark. Unfortunately, time is not on our side

Bethany Squire

The 2020 targets form part of a longer-term 2050 'roadmap' which charts a course towards reducing Europe's CO₂ emissions by 80-95% compared to 1990 levels, before 2050.

Drones are Coming: Are we Ready?

Commanding a battalion of armed robots on the battlefield may be the stuff of science fiction, but remotely operated, programmed vehicles (drones) have in fact been around for a long time. We can trace their development in the air back to the beginning of military flight itself. By the end of the First World War, Siemens laboratories in Germany had produced unpowered gliders capable of travelling several miles before dropping a 2000lb (900kg) payload. By the 1950s, the US was using remotely piloted and autonomously operated Cruise missiles. They are a precursor to the modern unpowered military aircraft of today, alongside unmanned aircraft used by the United States in Vietnam in the 1960s and by Israel in the Palestinian Occupied Territories starting in the 1970s.

The use and development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for military use has grown exponentially over

the past two decades. It is now estimated that there are 76 governments worldwide (and even some paramilitaries) who possess military drones. However, aerial drones are not always weaponised and are not limited to use by governments for surveillance or attack. In fact, they are increasingly being developed and used for civilian application. In a recent working document, the European Commission reported that there are currently over 400 projects in 20 European countries developing aerial drones for non-military commercial use.

Civilian drones vary significantly in size and type. Smaller models, which can be less than a couple of feet (two-thirds of a metre) in

diameter, can be freely purchased today by public and industry. These off-the-shelf products often carry cameras; such drones are currently being used by police in the UK. Larger drones are not often allowed



An armed military drone
Image: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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Some Words of Reflection

October marks the end of ten years at QCEA for Representatives Liz Scurfield and Martina Weitsch, and the close of two years for Policy and Advocacy Officer Paul Parrish. QCEA supporters reflected on their contributions:



“Reliability and vision”



“Efficient and cheerful”

“Your light has illuminated dark and dingy corners, and made us stop and think about what we are doing.”



“What I admire most about Liz, Martina and Paul is that they're able to link sound Quaker idealism with sound political and organisational pragmatism - and that in an almost perfect blend. There are many idealists without the proper sense of pragmatism - and there are many pragmatists without the proper idealism. Both groups are lacking a vital component to move forward. Liz, Martina and Paul were able to make lasting contributions precisely because they possess both these vital qualities - which was noted well beyond Quaker circles.”

“Earnest, passionate, committed, knowledgeable”

“Friendship”



“I am also grateful for their willingness to explore new territory, even when controversial, and bring enormous professionalism and energy to the work.”

“A wise old Swedish Quaker man once said the following about a very active but modest Swedish Quaker woman: “She’s like a steel spring in a jelly pudding”. That also sums up Liz and Martina’s determination to never give up. You can indeed be likened to steel springs (that keep bouncing back and never tire) in the jelly pudding of the EU machinery.”

“...the work that you have tirelessly brokered and the relationships you have helped build between civil society and the EU institutions.”

“Inspiring”

“Professionalism and energy”

“These three devoted themselves with loving energy to the task of keeping Quaker House running. They combined vision and practical firmness with personal contact, and achieved outstanding results.”



“Radiating the awareness that everything must be in order at home before we reach out to others with proposals for improvement or criticism.”

Passing the baton: new and outgoing staff together at Quaker House. Clockwise from top left: Alexandra Bosbeer, Martina Weitsch, Viviane Nolf, Gordon Matthews, Xavier Verhaeghe, Bethany Squire, Chris Venables, Liz Scurfield, and Paul Parrish.



“You made a difference.”
“Go well”



access to European airspace because the technology is not yet considered safe. BAE Systems, for example, recently flew a commercial airliner using UAV technology, but a pilot was on board in case things went wrong. Whatever their size, their relatively low production and maintenance costs makes the introduction of drones into civilian airspace only a matter of time. The lack of appropriate safety measures is currently the main obstacle. UAVs will need to 'sense and avoid' other aircraft, and 'learn' how to pick out emergency landing locations without a pilot onboard.

The Commission working document mentioned above considers that the development of remotely piloted air systems (RPAS) has the potential to "boost industrial competitiveness" and to bring "important benefits to European citizens and the European economy as a whole". From "precision agriculture and fisheries, digital mapping, and air quality management" to undertaking "risky flights into ash clouds or in proximity of nuclear or chemical plants after major incidents", the Commission makes clear that it sees broad potential for the civilian drone market.

Civilian drones may prove beneficial, as is shown by the examples above, but there is some cause for concern. Firstly, improving drone technology will remain at the forefront of military research. Drones were first developed to build military capability, and this is still the reason that many governments and militaries around the world are investing in the technology. The distinction between civilian and military research and development is a difficult line to draw, and this is very clear in the development of aerial drones. The technology that is being produced to allow civilian drones access to European airspace will inevitably provide benefits to military research programmes and thus to military drone capabilities. Secondly, there are important privacy issues concerning the use and spread of aerial drones in domestic air space. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) warns that drones could "profoundly change

There are almost as many acronyms as there are types of drones. Here is an explanation of those commonly used:

Drone

A generic term for any vehicle functioning without a human operator on board. It may be directly controlled by a remote operator or be working autonomously according to a pre-determined programme. This can be on land, in the air or underwater.

UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle)

A term referring to an aerial vehicle with no human operator onboard. It may be directly controlled by a remote operator or be working autonomously.

UAS (Unmanned Aerial Systems)

A more recent term used to emphasise the significance of the infrastructure that UAVs require: command and control datalinks, operator stations, and the ground support equipment for launch, recovery and maintenance. UAS refers to the vehicle together with its supporting infrastructure.

RPAS (Remotely Piloted Air Systems)

A term used mainly in industry to highlight that drones are 'piloted' at all times. Even if operating autonomously without direct human control, they are flying according to some predetermined programme and are under the supervision of an organisation or individual who is responsible for its actions. The type of aircraft referred to is the same as a UAV.

the character of public life." The ACLU is actively campaigning for limits on when, by whom and for what purpose drones can be used. Finally, there has been some concern that the availability of military drones is affecting the way societies and states think about war, and perhaps even eroding democratic checks on the use of force. Striking with drones rather than putting 'boots on the ground' may avoid the democratic scrutiny previously given to state aggression.

It may be a long time before we see clearly how, why and by whom drones are used, but the implications for militarisation, privacy, and democratic safeguards on war are worrying.

Chris Venables



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