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Fossil Awards 'bring it' to Canada

Environment Minister Jim Prentice issues the challenge

Barcelona, Spain, November 6, 2009: On the concluding day of the UN climate talks in Barcelona this week, Canada was named not only 'Fossil of the Day' but also 'Fossil of the Week', by the Climate Action Network International (CAN-I) – a global coalition of over 450 leading non-government organisations who monitor progress at the UN talks.

The satirical award – said to be 'as prestigious as it is dishonourable' – is given daily at the UN talks to those nations judged to be 'the best' at blocking or stalling progress in the global climate negotiations.

The first-place 'Fossil of the Day' award was given to Canada, for 'slandering the good name of the Fossil of the Day.'

In an interview yesterday, Canadian Environment Minister Jim Prentice declared : "Well, if the price of having strong, capable, tough negotiators at the table is being singled out and given 'Fossil of the Year' awards, then so be it. Bring it on,"

Anna Keenan with Avaaz.org, the flamenco-dressed game show-host presenter of the Barcelona 'Fossils', is very happy to take up the Minister's challenge.

"'Bring on' what exactly?" she asked. "More droughts in Western Africa and in the Canadian Prairies, more forest fires in southern Europe and in British Columbia, or more heat waves in India and in Southern Ontario? That's what we'll get if Canada keeps stubbornly blocking the UN climate talks.

"Canada is the single worst country in the industrialized world at these negotiations. One would think that they would show some sign of remorse for abandoning their Kyoto Protocol commitments, but no, not Canada. Not only do they refuse to tackle the massive pollution and GHG emissions arising from the Tar Sands – which is responsible for almost 50 % of the GHG increase in Canada since 1990 – but the government also has plans to increase tar-sands production 5 folds in the coming decades."

"Canadians should start bracing themselves for climate impacts if the government that installed Jim Prentice – a dirty, tar-sands aficionado – as Environment Minister remains at the helm for too long. Remember – the next election is never too far away."

The second-place Fossil was awarded to both the EU and Japan, for resisting a 5-year 'commitment period' for next set of climate targets, and pushing for 8 years instead. Many climate-vulnerable nations support the shorter period because it coincides with the 5-yearly publishing of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and allows scientific targets to be adjusted sooner rather than later if it is deemed necessary by the science.

"Eight years is a very long time in politics," said Leon White, a young climate activist from New Zealand. "Locking in the weak targets for eight years is, quite simply, unacceptable, when we have the opportunity to review them sooner. Why block agreement on this matter when other countries agree a second 5-year commitment period is just fine?"

The third-place Fossil was awarded to both Japan (again!) and Canada, for blocking consensus on having only one base year in the Kyoto Protocol.

The Climate Action Network's states that to make things simple, clear, and consistent, Annex 1 countries need to express their emission reduction commitments the way they now do under the Kyoto Protocol – compared to 1990 levels. Japan and Canada had proposed that multiple base-years should be used – 1990, 2000 and 2005.

"If Canada and Japan like spreadsheets so much, they should go play on Excel, not complicate what should be a straightforward commitment," said Mr White. "This would make it clear that both Japan and Canada's emissions have gone up, not down as they promised, since 1990. We won't accept trickery with numbers."

The Climate Action Network (CAN), a coalition of over 450 NGOs worldwide dedicated to limiting climate change to sustainable levels, regularly judges and presents three 'Fossil of The Day' awards to the countries who perform the worst during the past day's negotiations at UN climate change conferences. The Fossil-of-the-Day awards were first presented at the climate talks in 1999, also in Bonn, initiated by the German NGO Forum.