# How China and America can work together to solve climate crisis - ACTIVIST ALERT

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
09 December 2011

Announcing:
Debt-for-Nature Coalition for US and China (DNCUSC, or DNC)

So you thought, "we're screwed. The UN Climate Change Conference talks in Durban were a pre-ordained failure, and no progress is possible for who knows how long."

Fortunately, there is a way to immediately begin bypassing nationalistic and corporate power-tripping in Durban and at the UN. It relies on a win-win-win grassroots, bottom-up resolution, starting at the local level.

In this package, U.S. residents are incentivized to cut individual greenhouse gas emissions -- say, by taking up bicycling to replace driving. Such energy-quantifiable steps are taken in order to reduce the debt owned by China. Here's why this makes sense to a broke, little-respected, over-extended U.S. government, and to the emerging giant China, in the post-cheap oil world:

China would write off a large amount of U.S. indebtedness, as done in the practice called debt-for-nature swap. Thus, China-- the world's top emitter -- would be able to claim carbon-emissions reduction credit it will soon want. Carbon reduction by China and all other nation-signatories will be required in the post-Kyoto Protocol global agreement. China has low per-capita greenhouse gas pollution, and thus feels that the U.S. -- as long-time number-one emitter -- needs to lower its high per-capita emissions.

With the U.S. enjoying debt reduction, China enjoying carbon credits, and Americans rewarded through incentives to cut energy consumption and sequester carbon, everyone wins. All other nations win too, as this debt-for-nature proposal, if successful, could break the climate talks' deadlock and resuscitate the Kyoto process. Additionally, the increasingly belligerent tone between the U.S. and China -- perhaps relating to strategic oil in the Pacific ocean, after the U.S. had less than spectacular success for petroleum in Iraq and Afghanistan -- would soften, thanks to a new treaty between the climate-altering titans.

For making it worthwhile for the U.S. to meet the goal of energy conservation to achieve a much lower carbon footprint while cutting back foreign oil addiction, China not only gets Kyoto-style credit but can work toward its additional strategic reductions for a more resilient economy. For example, the country could be better positioned to install more renewable energy systems. It is already the top solar panel maker in the world. It would be tragic if China chose to do the minimum to qualify for its carbon reduction efforts on the backs of hard working Americans. So China should be required to honor the Kyoto spirit by slashing fossil fuels combustion, while pursuing renewable energy and efficiency -- even though the country will have gained, for little effort, vast carbon credits from its U.S. deal.

An attraction to this debt-for-nature swap is the immediate relief on our besieged atmosphere: 2010 was an alarming example of maximizing emissions, so 2011 was unsurprisingly one of hottest years in history. An ice shelf's near total melting in northern Canada was a shocker. Our problems are just beginning, and climate scientists confirm this by starting to give up on the possibility of seeing temperature-rise get under control this century.

Lifestyle change involving energy curtailment is the fastest way to slash carbon emissions. Maximizing renewable energy systems in the future is worthwhile to work toward now, but to put all effort toward a technological fix, without slashing emissions now, loses precious time as the planet heats up. We don't want to be guilty of "too little, too late."

Individuals can publicly resolve to do their part now to begin (or further) their emission reduction, and urge others to do so via the city-council resolution process. The resolution is a mechanism that would also call for state and national adoption of the goal of emissions reduction via the debt-for-nature swap, through bike-riding, growing food more locally, sail-transport of freight and passengers, etc. Individuals can be tempted through incentives, such as getting relief on student loans, qualifying for more food stamps, enjoying local discounts by "participating patriotic businesses" that support the resolution, etc.

In addition to the local resolutions and grassroots movement to slash per-capita emissions, the state and federal governments can join in the carbon-reduction effort in any way that works. The government would reorient policy toward debt reduction via energy conservation -- with a bonus of better national physical fitness for lower health-care costs, by driving less and gardening more -- stemming from low-polluting behavioral change. Let us imagine also the improved financial health for the U.S. economy, with a stronger social safety net, thanks to China's exercising its real need for global emissions target-reduction through obtaining carbon credit.

Ways that the U.S. would enact more energy-efficient policies are on all levels, including cargo shipping, jet travel, building insulation, and agriculture. Specific programs would include depaving of parking lots and driveways, reducing product-packaging, and re-forestation and other carbon sequestration. U.S. citizens would also be rewarded for having fewer offspring by losing tax breaks for bearing more dependents. The birth rate in the U.S. is comparably very high for an industrialized country, so why encourage creating more consumers of the least energy-efficient population on Earth?

The concept for a U.S.-China debt-for-nature swap entered the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, during the debt-ceiling crisis of last July. At the same time, China's reporting on the same crisis included the debt-for-nature concept, mentioning sail power as one of the tools to reduce carbon emissions [by reducing horrendous bunker fuel use]. The link to the China financial press story: Finance.EastMoney.com. The link to my original story, containing an international law professor's endorsement of the concept: China's Debt-for-Nature Opportunity for Virtually Bankrupt U.S..

Debt-for-Nature Coalition for US and China

For Culture Change to propose a Debt-for-Nature Coalition for US and China (DNCUSC, or DNC), when we are just a small organization (although frequent participant in UN climate meetings), was not our preferred intention for moving the concept forward. But our behind-the-scenes networking in Washington, D.C., and encouraging activists and nonprofit groups to take the project on, has not yet resulted in fast promotion of the idea through the climate change protection community. So, if you want to see it happen, run with it:

For an example of a resolution, see what the coalition World Oil Reduction for the U.S. Gulf (WORG) was launching just before the BP blowout was capped off Louisiana in 2010: WorldOilReduction.org, a model perhaps for debt-for-nature support.

Hints on climate-protection lifestyle changes (and preparation for petrocollapse) are in our 12-year old Pledge for Climate Protection. The Pledge and The WORG resolution both appear in Songs of Petroleum: the Autobiography of Jan Lundberg, Independent Oil Industry Analyst and Eco-Activist.

Thanks for considering. If you wish to join the DNUCSC as an individual or organization, send an email to info@culturechange.org. Feel free to write up the resolution language for city councils, and we will post the ideas and names forming the coalition. Don't forget to forward this article to any climate group or city council member, via email, Facebook, Twitter and weblinks, and print it out for city-council submission: culturechange.org/cms/content/view/803/1.

Write letters to the editor and to any reasonable government officials. If a successful campaign comes out of this Activist Alert and follow-up work we have already encouraged by others, the world may breathe easier. Stop a runaway greenhouse effect, for the Earth is beautiful and life can be sweet.

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Thanks to Bill LeBon for suggesting the title of this article.