

# Environmentalists criticize Canada's defiance over geoengineering ban

BY MARGARET MUNRO, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE    MAY 17, 2010

The Harper government has earned another black eye with environmental groups for taking issue with a proposed international ban on geoengineering.

"It hasn't been one of my days as a proud Canadian," said Molly Kane, of the Montreal-based ETC Group.

Kane, currently in Nairobi for United Nations meetings, was shocked by Canada's tactics late last week when, at the 11th hour, she said Canada broke rank with growing international support for a global moratorium on geoengineering experiments aimed at trying to cool the planet.

There is growing concern about geoengineering schemes, such as whitening clouds to reflect sunlight back into space and fertilizing the oceans to increase the amount of greenhouse gases sucked out of the atmosphere by algae.

Critics are calling for a moratorium on all such trials until international agreements and oversight mechanisms are in place.

According to Kane, Canada raised concerns that the proposed ban might impact carbon capture and storage projects, which Canada is hoping to use to reduce global warming emissions from Alberta's oilsands.

The Canadian delegation to the Kenya-based meetings was led by Ole Hendrickson, a science adviser at Environment Canada. He could not be reached for comment and the department's media office couldn't provide information on the position Canada took.

Supporters of the moratorium are also calling for more openness about the geoengineering research underway in Canada and other countries.

"It's common sense that we don't go ahead with planet-altering technologies without international rules," said Diana Bronson, also from ETC.

The proposed freeze was widely supported by the more than 100 countries attending the UN meeting in Nairobi, said Kane. She said Canada has, in effect, "blocked measures that many other countries worked all week to agree on."

Kane expects Canada's "tactics" could delay adoption of such a ban by dragging out discussions.

The proposed moratorium will be on the agenda again at UN meetings in Japan later this year.

Canada's position reinforces the country's already tarnished reputation at international environmental meetings, said Kane, pointing to the way the Harper government has balked at making deep cuts to greenhouse gas emissions and not met Canada's commitments to better protect biodiversity.

"At some point we are going to have to decide if we playing with the rest of the world, or are we going to continually be stalling," she said.

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