

in which the protection of natural resources is of fundamental importance. One thing is certain: with this decision, Correa's left-wing government has forfeited its status as a beacon of environmental protection and lost a great deal of trust on the international stage. In the future, the Ecuadorian government's loud protests against the capitalist industrialised nations at climate conferences will lack a great deal of their former credibility.

In the wake of the Yasuni-ITT decision, the Correa government's position on alternative energy sources will also come under close scrutiny. The decisive question will be whether here too political necessities of a budgetary nature are allowed to hold sway.

GUATEMALA

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On this year's Earth Day, which is celebrated in numerous countries on 22 April, the cartoonist from the Guatemalan daily newspaper *Prensa Libre* drew a gloomy-faced globe being cooked in a large pot over an open fire. To either side stand the leaders of India, China, the United States and Russia in a nonchalant pose for a selfie alongside the overheated planet, which is giving off small clouds of steam. No Europeans are to be seen around the fire; they are presumably busy elsewhere with damage control. The message is clear: Guatemala is aware of climate change and has a good idea of who is responsible.

In the general popular perception, there is no doubt as to the existence of climate change. The taxi driver grumbles that the rainy period is not nearly as clearly defined as it used to be, making the weather totally unpredictable. Citizens complain of the rising heat, saying that it never used to be such a problem. They perceive a trend towards longer dry and hot periods and more extreme rainfall.

There is some media coverage of the IPCC reports published in March and April 2014, but it is generally based on international press reports from news agencies. In addition to global consequences, such as the international tensions expected to result from water shortages caused by climate change, the impacts for Central America are also highlighted: water scarcity in semi-arid regions, floods in urban areas, declining food production and an increase in diseases spread by mosquitoes.

Various government bodies, research and consultancy institutions and environmental organisations are involved in efforts to combat the effects of climate

change and also actively devising possible potential preventive measures in this field. However, a realistic assessment is that although these issues are being addressed, environment and climate are not considered a priority at the government level.

In December 2009, the National Climate Change Policy (*Política Nacional de Cambio Climático*) was published by the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources. The policy covers the topics of education and training, technology transfer, risk management, reducing vulnerability, improving adaptation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In September 2013, Congress approved the framework law to regulate vulnerability reduction, obligatory adaptation to the effects of climate change and the mitigation of greenhouse gases (*Ley Marco para regular la reducción de la vulnerabilidad, la adaptación obligatoria ante los efectos del cambio climático y la mitigación de gases de efecto invernadero*). The law establishes the National Fund for Climate Change and the National Information System on Climate Change (both administered by the environment ministry) and the National Council for Climate Change (under the supervision of the country's president).

A number of initiatives have also been launched at regional and Central American level. Of particular significance was the presidential summit on climate change held in May 2008 in Honduras. The national presidents of the Central American Integration System (*Sistema de Integración Centro-americana, SICA*) allocated tasks to national and regional institutions. Under this initiative, the Economy of Climate Change in Central America project is being implemented by a number of regional institutions. One of the fruits of the summit is the Regional Strategy on Climate Change, which prescribes measures by government

bodies, the private sector and civil society in the fields of vulnerability and adaptation, mitigation, institutional development and training, awareness-raising and international efforts.

One component of the Guatemalan environment ministry's national policy on climate change is the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This is connected to the current efforts to expand the use of renewable energies and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

With the 2013–27 energy policy, an update of the 2007 strategy, the Guatemalan Ministry for Energy and Mines plans to become a major electricity provider in Mesoamerica (Central America and Mexico). The aim is to develop the electricity supply while taking environmental aspects into account, and measures to reduce vulnerability towards climate change are also foreseen. The policy calls for diversification of electricity production, with the inclusion of renewable energies – the same approach as that of the environment ministry. The top priority of the planned package of energy policy measures is supplying the country with competitively-priced energy and cheap fuel, followed by extraction of the country's own oil reserves, energy-saving measures and reducing the consumption of firewood.

The impression is given that the expansion of renewable energies – the main focus is on hydropower, followed by solar and (to a lesser extent) wind energy – is not primarily due to climate change, but rather to the need to reduce dependency on oil imports and higher international prices for raw materials. At present, electricity is generated mainly from imported oil derivatives (almost 50 percent), with electricity from domestic hydropower plants taking second place (around 35 percent).

There is still plenty of potential for hydropower plants in Guatemala. However, plans for new plants repeatedly lead to social conflicts and protests on the part of local and indigenous communities. As a result, switching to hydropower is no straightforward task.

Meanwhile, Guatemala is still pursuing the goal of supplying all of the country's population with electricity. Of Guatemala's 15 million inhabitants, 2.5 million have no electricity connection. Firewood is still used extensively. Even in areas which are connected to the grid, some people continue to cook with wood fires.

There is sporadic awareness of the German energy transition in Guatemala. Some parts of society are familiar with Germany's increased reliance on renewable energy. This is viewed critically by the corporate sector in light of the higher prices brought about by the shift. However, Germany's know-how with regard to renewables is highly valued, in particular in the fields of wind energy and water management.

Guatemala is a signatory to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol. At the 2010 UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, South Africa, Guatemala was classified as one of the countries most in need of international support in dealing with the effects of climate change. It is also among the ten most vulnerable countries in the world. Accordingly, Guatemala regards itself as one of the countries most affected by climate change during negotiations on multilateral climate policy, and requests solidarity from the international community. Which brings us back to the beginning: it is others who are stoking the fire.