

Notes from “Summary” of “Human Development Report 2007-2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World”.

I have just read the Summary of the “Human Development Report 2007-2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World”. “Human Development Reports are an annual publication of the United Nations Development Programme.

[Note: The homepage for “Human Development Reports” is <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>). Introductory information, the full report and the summary I read can be accessed from the following address <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/>. The full report and the summary can be downloaded at no cost. The full report was released November 27, 2007.]

**I have excerpted some passages from the “Summary” which I believe will be both instructive and encouraging to readers.** I realize it is possible that many readers will be familiar with the observations represented by these excerpts. And yet...sometimes we do not appreciate how much good work is being done on many levels of activity in the hopes of contributing every possible effort towards common goals of human welfare, ecological sustainability, and peace. I hope these excerpts will help readers feel that there really are many people making genuine contributions towards the greater good of the whole.

“...non-marginal changes are needed....”

“Several things can be said at the outset: First, non-marginal changes are needed, given the path the world is on. We need big changes and ambitious new policies. Second, there will be significant short term costs. We have to invest in limiting climate change. There will be large net benefits over time, but at the beginning, like with every investment, we must be willing to incur the costs.” (p. 4)

“... distribution of the costs and benefits will be far from uniform.”

The most difficult policy challenges will relate to distribution. While there is potential catastrophic risk for everyone, the short and medium-term distribution of the costs and benefits will be far from uniform. The distributional challenge is made particularly difficult because those who have largely caused the problem—the rich countries—are not going to be those who suffer the most in the short term. It is the poorest who did not and still are not contributing significantly to green house gas emissions that are the most vulnerable. (p. 5)

“(global warming could)...stall and then reverse progress built-up over generations....”

“Looking to the future, the danger is that it will stall and then reverse progress built-up over generations not just in cutting extreme poverty, but in health, nutrition, education and other areas.” (p. 7)

“It raises profoundly important questions....”

“Climate change demands urgent action now to address a threat to two constituencies with a weak political voice: the world’s poor and future generations. It raises profoundly important questions about social justice, equity and human rights across countries and generations.” (p. 8)

“Future generations will pass a harsh judgement on a generation that looked at the evidence on climate change, understood the consequences and then continued on a path that consigned millions of the world’s most vulnerable people to poverty and exposed future generations to the risk of ecological disaster.” (p. 8)

“The real choice facing political leaders and people today is between universal human values, on the one side, and participating in the widespread and systematic violation of human rights on the other.” (p. 10)

“Winning that battle... will require far-reaching changes at many levels....”

Winning that battle (against the threat of global warming) will require far-reaching changes at many levels—in consumption, in how we produce and price energy, and in international cooperation. Above all, though, it will require far-reaching changes in how we think about our ecological interdependence, about social justice for the world’s poor, and about the human rights and entitlements of future generations.” (p. 13-14)

“... rich countries account for almost half of emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.”

“With 15 percent of world population, rich countries account for almost half of emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>.” (p. 14)

“The automobile sector accounts for about 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions....”

“The automobile sector accounts for about 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries—and the share is rising.” (p. 22)

“... estimate... will require rich nations to cut emissions by at least 80 percent....”

“Using plausible assumptions, we estimate that avoiding dangerous climate change will require rich nations to cut emissions by at least 80 percent, with cuts of 30 percent by 2020.” (p. 15)

“... current trends (suggest)... emissions could rise by more than 50 percent... by 2030.”

“On the basis of current trends and present policies, energy-related CO2 emissions could rise by more than 50 percent over 2005 levels by 2030.” (p. 15)

“(What is needed is)... an unparalleled collective exercise in international cooperation.”

“Avoiding the unprecedented threats posed by dangerous climate change will require an unparalleled collective exercise in international cooperation.” (p. 19)

“Successful adaptation policies cannot be grafted on to (dysfunctional) systems....”

“Successful adaptation policies cannot be grafted on to systems that are failing to address underlying causes of poverty, vulnerability and wider disparities based on wealth, gender and location. Dialogue over Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) provides a possible framework for integrating adaptation in poverty reduction planning. (p. 27)

“The world lacks neither the financial resources nor the technological capabilities...”

“The world lacks neither the financial resources nor the technological capabilities to act.” (p. 8)

“Perhaps most fundamentally of all, it challenges the way that we think about progress.”

“The starting point for action and political leadership is recognition on the part of governments that they are confronted by what may be the gravest threat ever to have faced humanity. Facing up to that threat will create challenges at many levels. Perhaps most fundamentally of all, it challenges the way that we think about progress. There could be no clearer demonstration than climate (change) that economic wealth creation is not the same thing as human progress. Under the current energy policies, rising economic prosperity will go hand-in-hand with mounting threats to human development today and the well-being of future generations. But carbon-intensive economic growth is symptomatic of a deeper problem. One of the hardest lessons taught by climate change is that the economic model which drives growth, and the profligate consumption in rich nations that goes with it, is ecologically unsustainable. There could be no greater challenge to our assumptions about progress than that of realigning economic activities and consumption with ecological realities.” (p. 27)

With Kind Regards,

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