Global Policy Coherence 2009

Governance | climate - finance - trade

Global Governance and Policy Coherence: Before and After the G20 Summit

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The G20 Communiqué[1], the two G20 Declarations[2], the G20 Action Progress report[3] and reports of the four G20 work groups[4] reflect a new power structure arrangement in global governance, but it is not the obvious alignment one might have expected from the pre-G20 preparations. One can see clearly the finance-centered vision for global recovery from the final texts from the London Summit. While the vision is different from the one that is reflected in the original Washington call for the London Summit, it continues a level of global policy incoherence fragmenting the range of major global challenges into discrete and unconnected policy pieces. As such, it weakens international policy efforts to address the interconnectiveness of global crises and, as will be seen below, reduces the efficiency of the international system to deliver solutions to these issues.

In the preparation for the April 2 G20 Summit, there were frequent messages that G20 would be a more inclusive global governance group than the G7/G8 as it included heads of state of some key developing countries and that it could displace the UN as the forum of first choice to address really crucial global problems as it was small enough for effective decisions. This discussion was taking place even as the President of the UN General Assembly reminded countries that the General Assembly should really be seen as the "G192" .

However the G20 did not turn itself into a new institution. The G20 texts announced no on-going plans for a G20 set of related institutions, no G20 secretariat nor even a clear date when the G20 Leaders will meet again this year.

The G20 texts instead do signal a significant re-alignment in the hierarchy of international governance institutions. The text elevates the near financially bankrupt International Monetary Fund (IMF) into a powerful economic force and assigns quite significant policy making and regulatory authority to the Financial Stability Forum, a previously obscure Basel

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[1] Leaders Statement : The Global Plan for Recovery and Reform , 2 April 2009, London, http://www.g20.org/Documents/final-communique.pdf;

[2] Declaration on strengthening the financial system, 2 April 2009, London http://www.g20.org/Documents/Fin_Deps_Fin_Reg_Annex_020409_-_1615_final.pdf and the Declaration on delivering resources through the international financial institutions, 2 April 2009, London, http://www.g20.org/Documents/Fin_Deps_IFI_Annex_Draft_02_04_09_-__1615_Clean.pdf;

[3] Progress Report on the Actions of the Washington Action Plan, 2 April 2009, London, http://www.g20.org/Documents/FINAL_Annex_on_Action_Plan.pdf;

[4] G20 Working Group 1: Enhancing Sound Regulation and Strengthening Transparency http://www.g20.org/Documents/g20_wg1_010409.pdf ; G20 Working Group 2 : Reinforcing international cooperation and promoting integrity in financial markets; http://www.g20.org/Documents/g20_wg2_010409.pdf ; G20 Working Group 3 : Reform of the IMF http://www.g20.org/Documents/g20_wg3_010409.pdf ; G20 Working Group 4 : The World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks http://www.g20.org/Documents/g20_wg4_010409.pdf;

institution now renamed the Financial Stability Board. It is interesting that in the current crisis both institutions demonstrably failed - in the most basic sense - their prior assignments.[5]

This significant re-alignment of power is laid out explicitly in the sections of G20 texts where G20 Leaders assign specific tasks to various international organizations. Annex I collects together all the G20 Leaders instructions addressed to international organizations, modifying words only for ease of reading. The message about the re-alignment can also be seen in what the statements do not say about the roles of other global institutions that could deal with the global crisis. For example this 1-3 June, nine weeks after the G20 meeting, the General Assembly has scheduled a special session "at the highest levels" to examine the financial and economic crisis and its implications for development. However the G20 statement has no reference to this event, even though all of their governments are actively designing the three day conference[6].

Before the current financial crisis, in the non-military sphere there were four tiers of power amongst the international economic, social, and environmental organizations. At the top were the periodic meetings of the G7/G8, G20 and other regional heads of state meetings. These high level heads of government/state meetings often set the tone, and priorities for many other components of the international governance system, even if they did not result in national implementation of the commitments in their final declarations.

At the next to the top level was the IMF, the World Bank Group (WBG) and the World Trade Orgranisation (WTO), each within its own sphere -- currency and country level fiscal stabilization, development finance, and trade -- the first-among-equals and the leading institutional authority in their area. All of these institutions have a strong implementation or sanctioning system, be it cross default agreements, politically set loan rates, or a trade dispute settlement body. Clearly these three organizations are more influential, more financially powerful, and more globally effective than, say, the parallel bodies in the UN system such as DESA, UNDP, or UNCTAD. And the three are infamous for not talking or working together so that each maintains supremacy within its own sphere.

The third tier is the UN proper with its General Assembly, General Assembly, the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly and ECOSOC. These bodies receive annual progress reports from other parts of the UN System, convene international environmental conventions, coordinate the UN system in the social and economic spheres, set voluntary

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[5] It is also interesting to note that while one part of Switzerland is seen a global tax haven another district is given the role of headquarters for the solution to the global economic crisis and that while the Washington Consensus is suppose to be dead the Washington institution at the center of the Washington Consensus is assigned to lead the world toward a the post-Washington Consensus period;

[6] Connected to this process, the President of the General Assembly has also created a high-level taskforce chaired by Professor Joseph Stiglitz to advise on the appropriate General Assembly responses to consequences of the financial crisis on development. Gordon Brown arranged for formal meetings between the Stiglitz Commission and the G20 workgroups in the build up to the London session. However there is also no acknowledgement of the meeting with the UN advisory body, even though G20 texts thank other international expert groups;

standards of appropriate behavior in a wide range of areas, and organize global emergency responses to humanitarian crisis. Yet by charter, decisions of the Security Council are the only ones binding on the full membership; the decisions and resolutions of all the economic, social, or environmental bodies of the rest of the UN are soft public law, not legal obligations.

The fourth tier could be seen as including the specialized UN agencies (like the FAO, ILO, UNESCO, and WHO), UN Programmes (like UNEP and UNDP) and ECOSOC Commissions (like those on Sustainable Development, Women, Population, and Human Settlements), each of which acts within its narrowly defined area as the lead voluntary international standard-setting body, as the lead technical assistance body, or as the lead on-ground support system for developing countries. Much of the supplemental financial support for these bodies come from direct grants from OECD governmental aide funds or joint programming with the second tier World Bank Group.

For simplicity this rough division into four tiers does omit powerful regional bodies in global governance such as the OECD and APEC, highly specialized smaller institutions such as the Bank for International Settlements and theme-specific convention bodies such as the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

The hierarchy of the post April 2 G20 system may well be quite different. The first tier is still there -- the periodic meetings of government heads which will continue to be used to define global policy directions and to display unity through common statements and photo ops. The G20 Leaders, as they call themselves[7], will over time supplant the meetings of G7/G8 as the prime heads meeting of the year.

The second tier is now quite different. It consists of a greatly enlarged financially powerful IMF and a new more behind-the-scenes international quasi-central banking structure, the Financial Stability Board (FBS).

The membership of the FSB will, according to the G20 texts, include "all G20 countries, FSF members, Spain, and the European Commission". The current body of Financial Stability Forum consists of twenty-six "senior representatives of national financial authorities (e.g. central banks, supervisory authorities and treasury departments)[8], six

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[7] In diplomatic terms, there are heads of state and heads of government. In some countries these are the same person. In parliamentary democracies, like the UK, the head of state is the Queen while the head of government is the prime minister. To get around this quaint terminology, the G20 have opted for the simple phrase "G20 Leader";

[8] **Australia (**Reserve Bank of Australia); **Canada** (Department of Finance, Bank of Canada,· Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions); **France (**Ministry of the Economy,· Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF), Banque de France); **Germany (**Ministry of Finance, · Bundesanstalt für Finanzdienstleistungsaufsicht, Deutsche Bundesbank) ; **Hong Kong SAR (**· Hong Kong Monetary Authority); **Italy (**Ministry of the Economy and Finance, Banca d'Italia, · CONSOB); **Japan (**Ministry of Finance, Financial Services Agency, Bank of Japan); **Netherlands (**De Nederlandsche Bank); **Singapore (**Monetary Authority of Singapore); **Switzerland** (Swiss National Bank); **United Kingdom** (Bank of England, Financial Services Authority,· H M Treasury); **United States (**Department of the Treasury, Securities & Exchange Commission, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System);

international financial institutions [9], seven representative of Basel international regulatory and supervisory groupings[10], two members from their committees of central bank experts[11] and the European Central Bank. In addition the new Financial Stability Board will also include the G20 countries which were not previously in the Financial Stability Forum, Spain, and the European Commission. The FSB has been given the task of convening 'supervisory colleges' of national authorities to write the new rules for international and national commercial, financial, and business transactions. The FSB is far more immune to public discourse and pressure than the G7/G8 or G20 elected officials. At the moment, I doubt that a G20 country even has even a full mission in Basel. Yet this is where the new global economic rules will be drafted and supervised.

As can be seen from the national constituents of the previous FSF, these bodies are ones which within their own countries often pride themselves on being distant from the political process and domestic public engagement. The enhanced role for FSB then adds an unwelcome level of democratic deficit to the evolving system of global governance. It also adds to the further isolation between those having a role in financial decision-making from those global policy institutions concerned with climate, food, education, housing, gender, or health.

The London G20 Summit concluded its meeting on 1 April. On 2 April the Financial Stability Forum issued a press release announcing that the FSF was closed and that the Financial Stability Board was been established[12]. How were they able to act so fast? The internal governance system of the FSF and now the FSB gives extraordinary discretion to the chair.

According to the second paragraph of the short fourteen paragraph announcement, the " FSB consists of a Chairperson, a Steering Committee, the Plenary with member countries, SSBs [Standard Setting Bodies] and international financial institutions, and a Secretariat. The Chair oversees the Steering Committee, the Plenary and the Secretariat". The following paragraph states "(...) The Steering Committee provides operational guidance between plenary meetings to carry forward the directions of the FSB". And in paragraph 8 the statement says "The Steering Committee's composition is decided by the FSB Chair in a manner that ensures maximum effectiveness in taking forward the FSB's work (...)".

The first announcement from the FSB does contain three other ideas that were not explicitly stated in G20 Communiqués or Declarations. First the terms of reference for the FSB

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[9] Two each from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and one each from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);

[10] Two members each from the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), · International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS), · International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) and one member from the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB);

[11] Committee on Payment and Settlement Systems (CPSS) and the Committee on the Global Financial System (CGFS);

[12] "Financial Stability Forum re-established as the Financial Stability Board", ref 14/2009, 2 April 2009 at http://www.fsforum.org/press/pr_090402b.pdf;

includes "manag[ing] contingency planning for cross-border crisis management, particularly with respect to systemically important firms". The old FSF and new FSB's other functions all address actions by central bank and financial government agencies; this is the first to assert that an international body has any direct role in crisis management "with respect to systemically important firms". It is also significant that the text does not stay within the economic sector of relevance to central banks and financial government agencies (e.g. banks, investment houses, stock brokers, insurance companies) but is far most extensively defined as any "systemically important firms".

The second new idea that FSB will take on a public relations program to gain visibility to their new important global role[13]. The third new feature is a bit strange but it many reflect the degree of internal tension between "national" delegations to the FSB. Paragraph 7 lays out the ground rules for the allocation of physical chairs at the table.[14]

The third tier in the view of G20 Leaders would appear to be the World Bank Group and the WTO, each organization is hardly mentioned in their Communiqué or Declarations. Yes, the G20 Leaders want to help out with developing country finances but, unlike the IMF, the World Bank Group received no additional financial resources. Yes, the G20 Leaders want a good completion of the Doha Round, but no new instructions were sent to their negotiators[15].

The fourth tier is the UN, its funds, programs and the specialized agencies which were told that their contribution to addressing the global financial crises was "to work with other global institutions to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the impact of the crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable". There was also no mention of the study submitted by UN Secretary-General, UNEP and ILO on a greening and jobs-center economic recovery. No role allocated to the UN or the Secretary-General in the new FSB. In short the G20 Leaders said to the UN System "please record what is happening to the poor and most vulnerable but we do not expect the UN system to act on this knowledge".

The outcome of this re-alignment is increased concentration of global governance in two international finance institutions. Both of these organizations have a long standing tradition of very limited public engagement and both of them have national constituency bodies that pride themselves on being independent from national political process, from the commercially important business sectors, and from national civil society organizations.

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[13] The FSB will (...) engage in stronger public relations outreach to raise the visibility of its work and role in the international financial system (para 13);

[14] Paragraph 7 states "Seat assignments in the FSB Plenary reflect the size of the national economy, financial market activity and national financial stability arrangements. Delegations with more than one seat have one member seated at the back. Members sitting at the back have the rights of the table. Representation at the table can be changed according to topic";

[15] Given the often cited references to the negative effect of trade protectionism in the Great Depression, it is a bit surprising that the G20 Leaders did not ask WTO to take on a greater role in monitoring protectionist recovery actions and avoiding new forms of trade protectionism;

What to do about this evolution in the global economic and social governance ? It is clear that there is a need to think outside the Basel-Washington box for new ways to open the door for public participation in global economic decision-making. Some of the options might include strengthening the G192 and UN legal role in economic governance; seeking open meeting rules for all the Financial Stability Board meetings; establishing UN system liaison offices with the FSB; insisting on joint board meetings between global economic bodies with those in the social, productive, or environmental area (e.g. that the IMF Governors should be expected to officially participate in the next UNFCCC COP); creating parliamentary committees to provide instructions to the national monetary institutions 'representing' them at the FBS, and arranging to establish an NGO center in Basel. It also means that changes in the inequitable voting rights at IMF are more important the long standing campaign for changes in the governance at the World Bank and that governance of TNCs should be brought back on the table. It also means that any new structures for global and national governing systems should have greater, not less participation, by those structurally marginalized by the pre-crisis systems (i.e. indigenous people, women, children, least developed countries, low lying and island countries, and non-white peoples).

Back in Washington at the October meeting, the G20 Leaders also asked their ministers to prepare properly for the next G20 Leaders meeting in London, opening speculation that the vision for the London G20 included a call for a new Bretton Woods II. The G20 Leaders identified five areas for urgent attention: (1) strengthening transparency and accountability [in the financial markets]; (2) enhancing sound regulations [on the financial system]; (3) promoting integrity in financial markets; (4) reinforcing international cooperation [across all segments of financial markets]; and (5) reforming international financial institutions. (The full text of their request is in annex 2.) In effect the G20 Leaders were reflecting their vision of a recovery that is finance, finance, finance centered. They were arguing in effect that if they can fix these financial matters, then 'good' globalization will be back on track. The October banking-centered vision for recovery was so constrained that it did not even address any issues relating to 'real economy' of production, the housing bubble, unemployment, let alone development, climate change, food security or any other significant dimension of the global crisis.

The October G20 request was translated into thematic taskforces whose scope and membership, as noted above, were focused on narrowly defined matters regarding the financial markets. Over the course of the five months between the October G20 session and April G20 sessions, European Leaders and Washington tussled publically over relative emphasis of stimulus vs global regulation while some developing G20 members felt marginalized by the London-Washington nexus in the preparatory process. In the end, the airing of a Bretton Woods II quickly quieted down as that approach presumed broad agreement on explicit global market intervention and a regulatory approach. The five themes were assigned to four work groups, which met numerous times and prepared the requested inputs to the April G20 meeting[16].

[16] See footnote 4 above;

The reports of the four G20 expert groups remained Wall St/City centered. They certainly did not rise to the complexity of the vision of the leading march of ‘delegates on the street’ who converged on the City the day before 1 April meeting. These marchers were lead by the four "Horsemen of the Apocalypse" representing the inter-related global concerns on war, financial crimes, climate change, and poverty.

The finance-restricted vision in the reports to the G20 Leaders is in fact more limited in scope than that put in place by the Italian government, the 2009 chair of the G7/G8. The Italian Government scheduled a eight preliminary ministerial meetings to the July G7/G8 meeting so as to open the door for the consideration of a wide range of issues relevant to the global world. These ministerial meetings involved officials from ministries/departments of finance, environment, labor and social policy, justice, development, agricultural, energy, science and technology, and foreign affairs.

Yet one can see in the final London G20 Communiqué, that while the G20 Leaders were straining to figure out how to move significantly beyond the narrowly defined financial focus.

The final communiqué

(a) recognized in paragraph 3 that this “crisis which has deepened since we last met [and it] affects the lives of women, men, and children in every country” (but it did not then include any gender or child focused action items in their proposals);
(b) pledged in paragraph 4 to do whatever is necessary to “ build an inclusive, green, and sustainable recovery” (but did not subsequently endorse any of the widely circulated plans for a Green New Deal[17]).
(c) reaffirmed in paragraph 28 a commitment to address the threat of irreversible climate change, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and to reach agreement at the UN Climate Change conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 (but did not include any G20 consensus instructions to their country negotiators, which, at it happened, were meeting at the exactly the same time in Bonn on the post 2012 agreement); and
(d) stated in paragraph 27 that G20 Leaders will make the transition towards clean, innovative, resource efficient, low carbon technologies and infrastructure (without announcing any new global clean-energy initiative or institution or specifying any new financial support for these activities to UNDP, World Bank, UNFCCC, UNIDO or similar multilateral body).

What the G20 Leaders did probably exacerbated policy incoherence at the national level between the very important government departments dealing with the ‘economic crisis’ and those government agencies assigned to the ‘climate crisis’ and those other parts of government responsible for the ‘social safety net’ or other societal requirements. And the new international

[17] e.g. The Global Deal: Climate Change and the Creation of a New Era of Progress and Prosperity, Nicholas Stern;

hierarchy of organizations will most likely reinforce the hierarchy of ministerial power in capitals between the economic ministries/departments and central banks from the those parts of government dealing with social, educational, health, and climate matters, to mention a few areas. This policy incoherence at the national and international levels will make it more difficult to move the 'real' economy and the consumption patterns to a low-carbon centered global economy, build an inclusive sustainable recovery, or a gender-balanced and child-centered economy.

What can then be done about the lack of global policy coherence in the G20 Leaders statements? It is clear that the policy incoherence at the national and international level severely hinders the development of a global policy system that could equitably govern globalization. As recently formulated by the Global Policy Coherence 2009 Expert Group[18], there are really three different levels of response to the current extent of global policy incoherence.

At the highest level, one could reformulate the vision of a BWII initiative from a Bretton Woods II plan into a Better World II Initiative. In the Better World II approach, one could define what are the best visions and goals for international relations that are appropriate for the first part of the 2000s, recognizing that existing international system has been largely built out of the experience of World War II, the 1930s Depression, colonial history and the militarily powerful nation-states in the late 1940s. A Better World II policy approach would seek to articulate a new set of the first principles that somehow captures a sense of equity in international relations, a commitment to global poverty reduction, a commitment to a healthier planet, a respect for multi-cultural realities, and other values along with the practical lessons the world has learned in international organization governance since the end of WWII. In this sense the centrality of a global system in a Better World II initiative would replace the centrality of finance capital in the Bretton Woods II plan. This vision coherence would mean a challenging global process. It would require developing a consensus on values and ideas that need to underlying a new set of international organizations better able to 'manage effectively' the process of globalization and the survivability of the planet's natural system.

A second tier approach, let's call it a Reconstruction Approach, would start with the existing international organizations, nation-states, multinational corporations, and international civil society structures and examine their terms of references and goals. Reconstruction of the directions of the organizations focused on food (FAO), education (UNESCO), industry (UNIDO), environment (UNEP), etc could reinvigorate a broad range of global institutions, not just the finance-based ones, so that their mandates and the institutional interpretation of their mandates takes account of globalization in all its dimensions, the severe problems of global inequality in basic needs, deteriorating natural foundation, and failed-market based economy. Such a strategic coherence policy review could contain explicit language on inter-organizational responsibilities rather than the current standalone, overly specialized structures held together by periodic meetings of their chief executives.

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[18] For further information on the Global Policy Coherence 2000 project of the Institute for Environmental Security (The Hague) see http://www.envirosecurity.org/gpc/outline/;

The strategic coherence review could also re-prioritize the hierarchy of relations between the various international regimes, shifting the hierarchy of relations from the new G20 Leader's four tiered approach toward one that place other organizational structures at the center of international relations. For example in terms of addressing the globe's physical health, an issue ignored in the post-WWII period, the Reconstruction Approach could mean that a new strategic coherence between the existing dispersed and fractured MEAs, UNEP, and the Commission on Sustainable Development. Some other specific options that could be considered in a Reconstruction Approach include a restructured international negotiation process for pressing global matters widening the range of national ministries/departments to encompass both the specialized offices and the associated economic offices; a revamped negotiation process that permits human-to-human (vs. pre-written text to pre-written texts) exchanges between participants[19]; and a new convention on the law of conventions that secures that future negotiation processes have enhanced public participation and media access[20].

A Fix-It-Up Approach, the third possible direction, would focus on getting coherence on policy and programs between and among the existing international governance organizations and their domestic national ministries and departments. Unlike the Reconstruction Approach, the Fix-It-Up repair Approach would not start from a re-examination of core mandates and institutional structures but would endeavor to make the existing configuration of institutions work better than they are in their current mode of operation.

A functional coherence Fix-It-Up approach recognizes that governance systems in most OECD countries were designed to be fragmented in order to allow 'competing ideas' to be developed and tested and in order to prevent a concentration of power in any one part of government. The international system largely reflects these separate national bodies for each specific public policy realm - food at the FAO, environment in UNEP, education in UNESCO, trade at the WTO and UNCTAD, labor in ILO. The separate organizational histories also reflect the crisis-of-the-day that created each institution. One element of this history is that the older economic ministries/departments and their international organizations tend to over power newer ministries/departments, such as those dealing with climate change matters. Today this lack of practical level coherence has become a significant public policy crisis as the magnitude of the implications of global climate change and the depth of the global financial depression make clear. In fact one can say that the lack of coherence between competing institutions and policy paradigms at the national and international level is now hindering opportunities to craft meaningful and effective interventions for either of these crisis.

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[19] Alex Evans and David Steven, **Shooting the rapids: multilateralism and global risks,** A paper presented to heads of state at the Progressive Governance Summit, 5 April 2008 http://globaldashboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/04/Shooting_the_rapids.pdf;

[20] replacing the existing Vienna Convention on Conventions;

After the G20 London meetings, the net result does appears to be an over-concentration of global governance in two international finance institutions, the beginning of an internal recognition by the governing elites that all is not well with a banking-centric global governing system; yet a continued unwillingness to act to enhance global policy coherence with all its multi-dimensional aspects. There will be another G20 Leaders meeting later this year. Let's see what it produces.

Annex I

Tasks assigned to international organizations by the G20 Leaders

(informal summary - Based on the 2 April 2009 London texts)

Annex II

Original terms of reference for the G20 strategy for global recovery

Both lengthy annexes are available on the
website of the Institute for Environmental Security at :

www.envirosecurity.org/gpc/publications/GS_Annexes.pdf

About the Global Policy Coherence 2009 Project

The Global Policy Coherence 2009, a project of the Institute for Environmental Security (The Hague), aims to improve the compatibility of existing trade and financial regimes with the new post 2012 climate change agreement. The project involves an international Expert Group, an on-line information packet and an active listserver community Access to GPC2009 reports and registration is available at http://www.envirosecurity.org/gpc/

The first phase of the GPC2009 project is to bring to light additional examples of how pre-existing rules and practices in the trade, finance, and monetary systems create contradictory influences on the operation of a sound and effective global climate regime. The second phase of the project is to develop proposals that could be considered by those in institutions of public trust to enhance the mutually supportive functions of the various international regimes or, if necessary, to mitigate the policy incoherence in these areas. The project has prepared a policy-calendar that exhibits the fragmentation and incoherence between the agendae in 2009 of the climate regime, the trade regime, and finance/monetary regimes http://www.envirosecurity.org/gpc/calendar/calendar.php

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About the Institute for Environmental Security

The Institute for Environmental Security (IES) is an international non-profit non-governmental organization established in 2002 in The Hague, in order to increase political attention to environmental security as a means to help safeguard essential conditions for peace and sustainable development.

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