

Poor nations claim victory at climate talks

Negotiators at climate talks in Bali on Monday agreed on the details of a fund to help the most vulnerable nations adapt to climate change.

The adaptation fund, generated through a 2% levy on transactions between parties participating in the Kyoto Protocol's emissions-trading mechanism, has been accumulating for several years. But it has not yet been activated because countries could not agree on which body would approve the projects to be included in the scheme. They have now settled on the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The decision is a victory for poor countries and small island states, which had argued that the fund, currently administered by a multilateral environmental-funding agency based in Washington DC, should have its own board and governance system. So far, the emissions-trading mechanism has generated US\$67 million for adaptation measures.

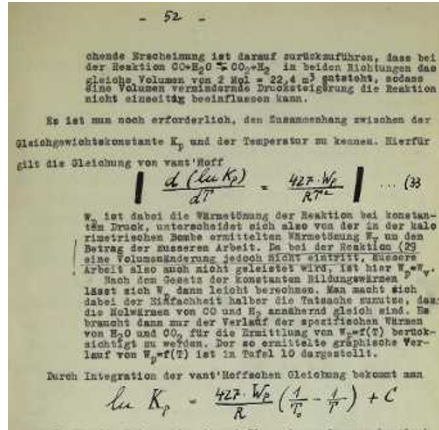
Meanwhile, scientists in Bali called on governments to stabilize global emissions well below 450 parts per million of carbon-dioxide equivalents in the long term, their most concrete recommendation to politicians so far. Higher concentrations

would mean that climate change may become unmanageable, they warned in a formal declaration issued on 6 December.

'Heated bidding' for rocket scientist's thesis

A formerly top-secret document produced by controversial rocket scientist Wernher von Braun for his PhD dissertation sold for US\$33,000 at auction in New York last week.

The 166-page thesis, *Design, Theoretical and Experimental Contributions to the Problem of the Liquid-Fuel Rocket*,



Wernher von Braun's PhD thesis sold for \$33,000.

was classified as 'top secret' by the Nazi government and, although written in 1934, was not published until 1960.

After working on rockets for the Nazis during the Second World War — his exact motivations are still debated — von Braun was spirited to the United States to work on missiles. He later became the first director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.

After what the auction house Bonhams describes as "heated bidding", the thesis sold for \$3,000 more than its original estimate.

Switzerland launches systems-biology initiative

One of the world's largest systems-biology research consortiums, known as SystemsX, has been launched in Switzerland.

The federal government has committed 200 million Swiss francs (US\$177 million) to the project, half of which will support technology platforms at an ETH Zurich department based in Basel, which is also home to several large drug and chemical firms including Novartis and Roche.

The rest of the money will fund researchers at eleven universities and research institutes — or industry bodies — which will have to match those funds with their own money.