

2nd Semester 2009 NEWSLETTER-SUMMARY

Is there a better way to start a yearly newsletter than with wishes for the next one ? Since Gilliane returned back late June, 6 months came and went, rich in activities.... But what will resonate in our minds and hearts for a long time, the freshest event : Copenhagen... COP 15 has kept us busy much longer than the 2 weeks on location : 2 months preparing for us and Panapasi, several years for negociators like Ian and Mataio, 12 years of preparatory talks since Kyoto.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 13th : **COP 15 –Half-time.**

A few words summarize the emotions felt the first week : Intense, team work, pride, hope...



At the airport, when we left Paris on December 6th, first good news: our excess baggage was let go for free and landed, 2 hours later, in a green airport: « hopenhagen », advertizing an environmental city. After a few days onsite we realised it was just words : hardly any recycling bins in town and next to the hotel, an office building keeps its lights on days and nights.

2 hours discussion with the hotel receptionist that could not find our booking amongst the delegation's. Same issue with Melton who arrived the night before and was.. waiting. Leaving the issue to solve to the hotel staff, the unfccc agency and Laima, we started walking to the Bella Center in temperature well below 0.

After freezing our hands off in a 2 hour long line, we passed the gate. More line to get inside the building, 2 hours more to get to the security check, then shorter lines to get the paper which will get us the accreditation after having taken a picture. One more line to get the free public transport pass... and we are in the « holy » Bella Center... It was getting late. After checking our exhibit space, we walked back to the hotel. Melton is still waiting. Rooms will be sorted out at 8pm for us and 11pm for Melton who had not slept for 48 hours. In the Cab-Inn hotel, a double room is a 10m2 cabin with bulkbeds. One has to be seated for the other to move. Our voluminous luggage dont help. Dinner ? Walking under freezing rain in a no-man's land we found an oasis: a grocery store ! Cheese sandwiches in front of Danish tv.



MONDAY DECEMBER 7th



On Monday morning, the lines to get in are even longer. Denis, our friend from the ADEME, waited 6 hours to finally give up. Tomorrow we will get our 2000 english comics he had shipped. It does not mean there's no wait with a pink « party » pass but it's easier. The Bella Center goes for kilometers. In 2 weeks, we have not seen it all.



Our booth was up in no time. Mataio had given us free hands : impact, RET, handicraft to which we'll add a couple of the 38 mats Melton asked Tuvaluan ladies to weave.... And for us to sell. « Copenhagen 2009 », « our island our future ». From what we hear and according to the amount of pictures taken, our booth is eye catching.



The Tuvaluan delegation :



Mataio (Environment office), Tauala (metOffice), Melton (climate change), Taukiei for TuCAN & Tango. Us 2 for Alofa, Shuuichi and wife for Tuvalu Overview. Sumeo (disaster) who arrived on Wednesday and the COP's attraction, Tuvalu Government Councillor : Ian Fry.



The press release we sent a few days earlier brought many journalists to the booth from day 1. Taukiei will become our media speaker when he's around. Melton agrees to take turns and officially authorizes us to answer media too « you know everything about Tuvalu ».

At around 9, dreaming of rice and chicken, Melton takes us to a Mexican restaurant in the mall next to the hotel.. where he had seen rice... What we got however only looked like burrito.



TUESDAY DECEMBER 8th



Lines are getting longer and longer for new comers.

11 o'clock, first « stand up » for Ian Fry. He denounces China, India, Saoudi Arabia's lack of ambition : « *We cannot accept an informal process, and therefore, if this cannot be resolved by a procedure, then we call for a suspension of the COP* ». Applaudes shake the plenary room. The President adjourns the session.



Within minutes, around 300 people gathered spontaneously outside the plenary room with panels reading, and shooting : « Tuvalu's way is the real way ». « we stand with Tuvalu ».
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8405051.stm>



Tsunami at the booth : media, NGOs, negociators drop by for interviews, testimonies of support, congratulations, thanks for Tuvalu's courage.

Late afternoon, Avaaz who has been awarding a « fossil of the day » to worst negociators, inaugurates the first COP « Ray of hope » with Tuvalu. Taukiei is there to get the prize: an angel like head decoration.



New media rush on Taukiei, Melton and us two. When we find the time, we'll make the list of media/countries where Tuvalu was heard during COP.

In the evening, Melton and Fanny went to the French Embassy for the Argos exhibition cocktail. There they met with Dominique Campana, ADEME Director of International Affairs, Laurent, Argos photo journalist, our minister for environment's assistant, the French ambassador and her assistant. Dominique to Melton : « Being Alofa Tuvalu's Secretary, I bet you're overloaded with work ! » Melton : « ho Gigi and others are working hard ». Once Gigi translated into Gilliane, everyone burst with laughters.



Meanwhile at the Bella Center, alone at the booth, Gigi meets Jorg, a german « climate farmer » who falls in love with Tuvalu and pledges his assistance. He'll be back each day with a new idea. Another new friend, Stephen, a lawyer, offers to help Tuvalu be on the Unesco World Heritage list.

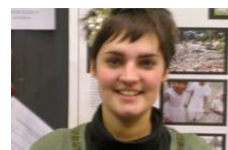
WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 9th

We inform Panapasi about the events and forward some articles for him and the PM who will soon arrive to be aware. Panapasi gives free hands to Mataio and Ian..



Testimonies of support go on for days... Media take turns. Our mailboxes explode with articles referring to Tuvalu's strong position. Another spontaneous demonstration gathers supporters for the Kyoto protocol that many rich countries would like to see disappear. We keep our recycled green note book organized to fit hundreds of business cards, dozens of offers for translating the comic book, testimonies of support... Amongst requests from worldwide media, Gigi answers an hour interview for a US webdocumentary « missionaries for environment ». She came back frustrated with the trainee journalists' repeated request: « can you say that again in 20 sec ? ».

A few Alofa Tuvalu members had announced their presence. Laure, journalist, was there from the start for the newspaper Liberation. Clemmie, a young activist met in Tuvalu, landed from the UK. She can't get into the Bella Center but created a Tuvalu exhibit at the Off-Forum, the KlimaForum. Rachel and Kate are expected later this week.



THURSDAY DECEMBER 10th



At the Plenary session, Tuvalu challenges China.



In the evening, Taukiei makes a presentation organized by a French organisation and CAN International about NGOs' work. On the way back, Fanny and him stop at a French Embassy reception.

Taukiei is introduced to the French Ambassador; to Dominique Campana, always cordial, telling how proud she is that Ademe is assisting Tuvalu; to Pierre Radanne, co-author of the Tuvalu energy study and to French CAN members.



Jorg's Tuesday's idea : oil rig-stations that can host several hundreds people, as temporary shelters.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 11th



Reverend Desmond Tutu calls for action..

Our short king tides video, quickly edited, was presented at the only video festival at Cop15. It made a real hit amongst the small audience. Coming back from the festival, someone was rushing to the booth. Representing a church association, the guy was looking for someone to replace the Kiribati President for a church tv program. Gigi put on an Alofa Tuvalu T shirt and went to sit next to a tall Fijian Reverend :

<http://climate-change.tv/component/content/article/47-inside-climate-change-solutions-interviews/353-gilliane-le-gallic-december-2009>

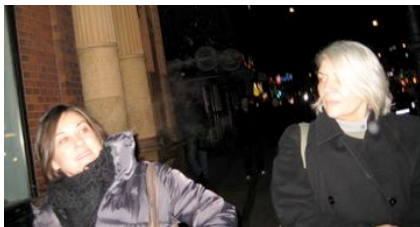
Tuvalu takes issue with the US. *"I woke this morning and I was crying, and that is not easy for a grown man to admit"* <http://primeclasstraders.blogspot.com/2009/12/tuvalu-at-copenhagen-fate-of-my-country.html>

Having realized that Taukiei, accustomed to Tuvalu's 35° was literally freezing, Gigi got him thermal pants. Appointment is taken to buy more for Melton the next morning.

Rachel, arriving from Paris for her magazine « Sciences & Avenir » in the morning and Kate, later in the afternoon from London for a news agency, drop by the booth before rushing to the Media room to catch up with the negotiations train.



The attempt to gather the Alofa “girls” : Laure, Rachel, Kate, Clemmie, and us two for a dinner aborted that night. The evening ended up with a late dinner with Rachel in Tivoli. No news from Kate after we convinced Sumeo to answer her questions but her thankful sms woke us up later at 3 am.



Rachel gives us an update on the current scientific situation..Very pessimistic, she urges us to consider right now ambitious adaptation solutions.

To come back to the COP's essence and to paraphrase what we have been repeating to visitors, if we have to keep hope, as adopted tuvaluans, used to western politicians becoming media professionals, our confidence is getting thinner and thinner.

SATURDAY DECEMBER 12th

After breakfast, in the hotel lobby, Ian improvises a conference for a group of students.



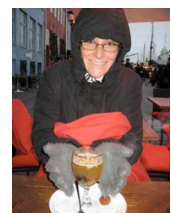
On our way to the Bella Center, we help Melton choose some warm clothings. Gigi feeling naked without her 3rd eye, we get the smallest, cheapest video camera, shaped like a gun. That day, similar to other week days, exchanges with the whole planet from morning to night will be filmed. We are now showing the King Tides video more systematically with unpredictable reactions. That night a Chinese girl bursts into tears and diplomats from various countries advice us to screen the segment in Plenary session.



Meanwhile outside the Bella Center, one major event we wished we were there to film, gathered more than 70000 people, amongst them Clemmie and Laure. Almost 1000 people got arrested at this giant street demonstration...

COP 15 2° half- SUNDAY DECEMBER 13th

Day off, slept late, Christmas market along the marina and glogg (hot wine) at one of the outside tables under a heater and a wool blanket.



MONDAY DECEMBER 14th

That day we are informed that Unfccc will be reducing the number of observers allowed inside the Bella Center. From over 10000, before the end of the week, NGO members will be down to 90 ! Outside the Center, since Saturday, street demonstrations are severely repressed. Again hundreds are arrested, attached for hours with no other option but to pee on themselves.



« We are people, who are you ? »

At night, « partial girls dinner ». It was nice seeing Clemmie again and meet her friend Alex. With us too : Jorg. Rachel who spent all day in the woods, met us later.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 15th : Interviews and questions, the rythm is still dense. In the afternoon, Fanny attends a quick meeting at the French Lycee, to discuss with the headmaster and decorate the room where tomorrow Nala Ielemia, our patron, will answer student questions. For gigi : booth keeping and bollywood interview for Indian national News.



The PM, Apisai Ielemia, Nala, Pasuna and Solofa arrived that night along with Panapasi. It was nice seeing everyone. A briefing is organized. It will last till well after midnight

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 16th



Was it because of the room or mood changing ? For months, that morning, a side event at the french lycee has been planned with our partner ADEME. Well,... that morning we did not hear the alarm.. Day light woke us up at the exact time when Fanny was expected at the School and Gigi supposed to pick up Nala. Out we are in the snow, without any coffee. Understanding the problem, the headmaster started the film. Phew.. Fanny arrived just in time for the end of the film.... Nala and Gigi shortly after.



A miracle and a real success. Rich and moving debate. Kids had studied the subject and came up with very sensible questions, sensitive enough to shed tears. The debate was followed with a round table. 4 students who had followed the negotiations stressed the urgency to radically and immediately change our way of living.

The Headmaster was very pleased with his Tuvaluan necklace and Nala got a book about the French Embassy building.... All in Danish.



Back at the Bella Center, the challenge was to get Nala's badge. The taxi dropped us 300 meters from the gates. With temperature below 10, they seemed long to Nala despite the thermal undershirt. We were allowed to wait inside for Nala's document and she was able to get back to Apisai on time for his statement.



« We know that there are offers of fast start funding. But no amount of short term finance can buy our long term future....We are ready, the millions of people watching this process are ready. Let us together, create a historical moment in time and sign. For Tuvalu's sake and for the sake of humanity, let's seal the deal, right here, right now ».

Seeing the number of interview requests and the PM being well disposed about the idea, a press conference is planned for the day after, with the complicity of Nanette and colleagues at Sprep and the Unfccc office. Before going to sleep, a release is sent to our media listings.

Leaders of big states are announced for the following day. From now on, pink badges won't let holders get into the plenary sessions anymore. Grey badge, in limited number, have to be gotten. Delegation members ousted from the session gather around the tv sets where they only can complain to their neighbors of misfortune. The number of observers allowed is also drastically reduced. On the 90 observers passes planned for Friday, only 54 members of NGO worldwide. The Center resonates like an empty shell. On the deserted booths we read : « How can you decide for us without us ».



THURSDAY DECEMBER 17th :

In the morning, most of the heads of big states land in Copenhagen. The skies turned from blue to snow. Roads are closed, planes are delayed. Our pink badges still give us access to the Center where we find ourselves almost alone. We finalize preparation for the press conference planned for 1pm.



At 12.45, the Mexican President decides he needs the room we had booked. A president being higher in the UN hierarchy than a PM we have to accommodate. Quickly warnings are posted and announcements made via the Unfccc sound system postponing our press conference to 1.30. 10 mn later, the Mexican meeting is over and we are urged to start our conference.

Some of the journalists who arrived at 1pm, might leave as we told... The fact is : the room is full and the journalists who arrived at 1.30 after the conference started came by the booth later to listen, on our gun-camera, the beginning of Apisai statement. This brought another gust of articles praising Tuvalu, the tiny brave nation.



A dinner is organized with the whole delegation. We hop in 3 cars to get to the restaurant. On the way, Panapasi gets a call from Ian who had been told about an impromptu meeting with a small group of leaders. The PM had not receive any invitation and Ian was asked to leave the room. The PM, Panapasi and Pasuna make a U turn to get back to the Bella Center and check what that was all about.

Officials were working on a text. They made it clear that Tuvalu had nothing to do here and refused to give copies. It was probably one of those meetings behind closed doors that led to the Copenhagen Accord - a product of only a few leaders! The delegation returned before the end of the dinner, in time for a « family » picture.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 18th- 1.5 to stay alive - COP Win by default



GiGi woke up to get out of a nightmare.. At first sight, it did not seem related to the piteous, calamitous COP issue : A witch reigns on a propety which belonged to gigi's mother and on 20 people living there. At first gigi enjoyed visiting the garden property till one of the resident requested violently more priviledges. Only then did she realize this was her home, her land not theirs. Refusing to face a conflict she gave up and woke up.

It kind of illustrate the discomfort/frustration, palpable the last days at Cop. With a verbal agreement which put at more risk Tuvalu and many other territories. Lands, homes are threatened to be lost because of the short sight, egoism and greed of some.

To add on to this not too merry vision, amongst visitors of the day : a 2m tall devil, eyes popping out of their globes, spitting his convictions : no climate change, no sea level



rise, no acidity in oceans... He was physically frightening and very irritating. To keep from beating him up, we chose to beat a retreat. Fortunately he was the only negationist in 2 weeks if we except an handful of Larouche supporters outside.

Last room changing for our stay. We end up at the 14th floor in a captain room, around 90 cm2 more spacious than the previous one... for 30 euros more and no breakfast.



On today's schedule : to spend a little time with Nala at the booth, to organize the luggage and make sure the unsold mats will fit, to insure the shipment of boxes of documents and dismantle the booth. The reality was a bit different : we suddenly got swamped into selling mats. 10 in a few minutes. Nala could not believe her eyes... Soon after, she left for the airport with Apisai, Solofa, Pasuna and Melton.

Panapasi made the trip to the airport with them and came

back 6 hours later. Their plane, victim of the weather, was delayed by 5 hours. They all missed their connecting flight.

All week, day after day, one after the other, small states fold under the relative weight of big countries checks.

Put back to perspective the sums they are speaking about equal a computer cable per capita.



At 3 am : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8422770.stm>



Earlier that evening, press conferences were happening everywhere. Obama took everyone by surprise. Journalists were running down the halls, observers gathering around tv's. A reporter from the L.A. Times harassed Panapasi who was eager to get back to last the plenary. GiGi calmed the journalist down & answered her questions.

We dismantled the booth when the session opened at 3 am. Mataio offered mats to the security team who « had never met such a nice delegation ». Carrying 4 bags, our feet sinking in the snow, we walked till the Hotel, very pleased to find our beds and filled with a wide range of feelings..



DECEMBER 19th, SATURDAY MORNING- COPENHAGEN



At around 1 pm, on our way out, we saw Ian discussing with a group of islanders. From behind the glass door we were commending his energy and good mood after yet another « white night ». With a smile he introduces us to the group, someone clicks a picture and he disappeared with his luggage, straight from the Plenary to a plane.

Some comics books are handed out to our new friends. A few others were left on the hotel documents display.

At the airport, Ian is waiting to check his bag. This time our 3rd eye immortalized him disappearing in the crowd. Last but not least touching surprise :



One airport hall is hosting a children work exhibition about our planet. Many globes, pieces of art with eloquent messages for our leaders, inside plexiglass boxes. Suddenly looking straight into our 3^e œil, at the feet of one planet about ocean : « Our planet under Water », our comic book, exhibited here too.

SATURDAY EVENING-PARIS:

TV News : Sarkozy saved COP15. In Germany, it is Merkel, Brown in the UK and Obama in the US. Everyone wants to stay king in their own kingdom and play national hero. Nothing has been accomplished despite the millions of tons of CO₂ emitted. No deal is better than a bad deal. How do we call a bad deal which is not signed ? Wind ! Despite the disappointment, we feel better after than before the trip. We enjoyed very much working together with the team. We met the whole world. We were moved by the energy felt all along, inside the Bella Center, and outside where citizens of the world fought the cold and the cops blows... We are proud of Tuvalu's determination and hopeful that the amplitude of this worldwide commun energy will translate into a binding agreement and faster concrete actions in 2010.