

European Capacity Building Initiative

In Memoriam Saleemul Huq (1952-2023): Some Personal Reminiscences

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I have known Saleem as a friend and collaborator for most of this century and was promoting the idea of Climate Solidarity Levies at a meeting with representatives of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda when I learned the shocking and truly tragic news that he had passed away. Although he had been hospitalised for a viral infection, he had recovered enough to return home the week before only to be taken from us by what his obituaries ([Dhaka Tribune](#), [The Daily Star](#), [The Guardian](#)) referred to as "a massive cardiac arrest." Saleem's stellar career is well documented, not least in the mentioned obituaries. All I can do is add some personal reminiscences from our interactions over the last two decades.

If memory serves me, which is not always the case anymore, Saleem and I first met as part of a project consortium at the turn of the century, in which we proposed a capacity- and trust-building module for (developing country) climate negotiators. The project proposal did not succeed, but we both felt the module was worth preserving and subsequently founded the ecbi in 2005, with Saleem heading what was then know as the "Workshop Programme" and I the "Fellowship Programme".

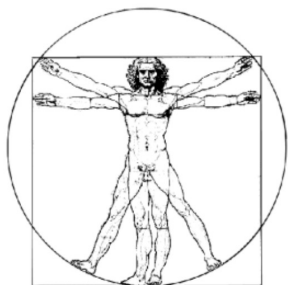
Benito Müller and Saleemul Huq in their bottom-of-the-escalator office at the World Conference Centre in Bonn in June 2023

In order to do our job, he and I used to annex a strategically placed table in front of the Brasserie near the main entrance in the Maritim Hotel in Bonn, where the negotiations took place at the time. On more than one occasion, the strategic position of our 'office' was validated when the late Don Pearlman, Executive Director of the then notorious [coal-funded Climate Council](#) occupied it before we arrived (we usually got it back the next morning -- early birds etc).

Saleem headed the ecbi Workshop Programme until he moved to Dhaka to set up the [International Centre for Climate Change and Development \(ICCCAD\)](#). In 2021, we approached Saleem with the proposal for ICCCAD to take over management of the current "Training and Support Programme" for Phase V of the ecbi, and I was very pleased when he agreed. As it happens, only a few weeks ago, Saleem signed the donor contract that will allow the Programme to begin activities again, following a two-year hiatus. Kishan Kumarsingh, who will be managing the training workshops in the Caribbean, and I were already looking forward to Saleem's participation. Sadly, this was not meant to be. But we will soldier on keeping his memory and legacy going!

Requiesce in pace, care amice!





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A journey in memory of Pete Betts and Saleemul Huq



It has been a sombre journey to the COP this year, beginning with the funeral of Pete Betts in London, where I met some of friends and climate stalwarts (Artur Runge-Metzger, John Ashton, and Todd Stern) and ending the day after in a very moving memorial event for Saleemul Huq in the LDC Pavilion at the COP in Dubai. I have already given my [personal reminiscences of Saleem](#), so here just a few words on Pete. Pete was a formidable climate negotiator both for the UK and the EU. He had a unique sense of humour which I shall miss: we had invited him as the guest of honour to the 2022 Oxford Seminar. He was undergoing brain tumour treatment which had made him gain weight, which in turn led him to start his after-dinner address by saying "Never would I have imagined ever to be as fat as Benito!" Good old Pete!

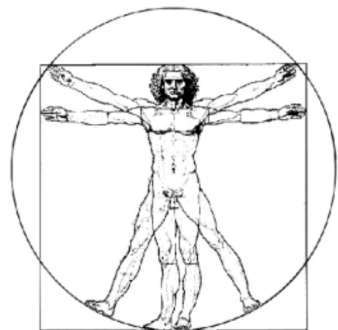
From the funeral I went directly to the airport and the day after to the LDC Group memorial for Saleem. It was the opening day of COP28, which began with a tribute to Pete and Saleem. Saleem would have been extremely pleased that among the first decisions to be gavelled through was on the operationalisation of the new Fund and funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage. In that context I would like to recommend our most recent policy paper on [L&D Pilot Funding Arrangements: The Need to Pilot Innovative Funding Sources and Response Tools](#). As to the rest of the COP, I would like to highlight our own 8 December memorial side event, dedicated to Saleem, on [Climate Solidarity Levies: Innovative Sources of finance for Loss and Damage](#).

Left to right: Artur Runge-Metzger, John Ashton, Benito Müller, and Todd Stern in London

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Kishan Kumarsingh to Head ecbi Fellowship and Trust-building Programme



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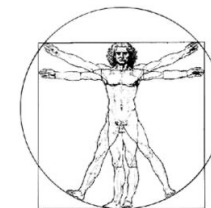


The ecbi Management Group is pleased to announce that Kishan Kumarsingh (Head of Delegation from Trinidad and Tobago) has been given leave by his government to take on the role of Head of the ecbi Fellowship and Trust-building Programme. Amb. Carlos Fuller from Belize has kindly agreed to take on Kishan's previous role as developing country ecbi Chief Adviser.

Kishan has been Trinidad and Tobago's lead climate change negotiator on climate change for the past 25 years. He has held many international positions in the UN climate negotiations, including Chair of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (2005-2005), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (2005-07), Co-Chair of the *ad hoc* working group leading the Paris Agreement negotiations (2013-14), and Co-Chair of the Work Programme on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (2022), as well as chair of numerous other negotiations and groups convened under the UNFCCC.

Nationally, Kishan has been instrumental in defining environmental and climate policy/legislation for Trinidad and Tobago on climate change, including: authoring and coordinating finalisation of the National Climate Change Policy and its update and Trinidad and Tobago's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement; and conceptualising and contributing to the development of a Just Transition of the Workforce Policy and e-mobility policy to create the enabling environment for the energy transition away from fossil fuels.





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