

FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES: THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE CBD

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INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF FORESTS AND COMMUNITIES (INFC)

BASED ON NGO STATEMENT GIVEN ON TUESDAY BY INFC, ENVIRONMENT LIASON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL, SOBREVIVENCIA, WORLD RAINFOREST MOVEMENT, FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL, INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS- GHANA, KALPAVRIKSH- ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP, SPACE FOR NATURE, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S BIODIVERSITY NETWORK, AND GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL

There has been a great deal of talk about community - based forestry within COP 6, whether in the plenary yesterday or within the proposed Programme of Work, as for example Objective 3 of Goal 4 which states "Enable indigenous and local communities to develop and implement adaptive community-management systems to conserve and sustainably use forest biological diversity".

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ECO has been published by the NGO (non-governmental organisation) community at most Conferences of Parties of the International Environmental Conventions.

It is currently being published by the NGO community around the Sixth Conference of Parties of the Biodiversity Convention meeting in the Hague, Netherlands, coordinated by Environment Liason Centre International.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Ashish Kothari, Kennedy Orwa, Samuel Waweru, Jessica Dempsey

All representatives of NGOs are welcome to join the NGO coordination meetings, every morning 9-10am, Carel Willink Hall.

For forest-dependent communities and peoples, this is surely good news. For biodiversity conservation, this focus should also be considered a "good thing", as a very large part of the world's biodiversity is already being conserved in such community-managed forests, constituting a large system of community protected or conserved areas. Many of these people and communities are already employing, in varying degrees, the Principles of the Ecosystem Approach that the CBD Parties are espousing. In areas where industrial forestry has been imposed onto common property forest management systems, the promise of more equitable, socially just forestry is welcoming, especially, types of forestry that will *keep the benefits from forests within communities*, rather than with the shareholders of large forest and forest product companies. More devolved and democratic approaches are essential.

But care must be taken with our applause for the parties to the Convention for considering such progressive strategies for forest biodiversity conservation. We must be sure that the adaptive community-based forest management proposed in the suggested decisions ("Ensure adaptive community-based approaches in the implementation of the programme of work"), adheres to a definition that will make real changes to contemporary governance systems and political-economic arrangements which currently support the destruction of forests and, in many cases, communities.

To begin, *community-based* must translate into more than communities helping states manage *national forests*. Rather, it



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Conserving Forest Biodiversity: What do Canadian NGOs Think?

This article is adapted from a platform recently prepared by environmental NGOs in Canada, and endorsed by 42 organizations, including national organizations such as the Sierra Club of Canada, the Canadian Nature Federation and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, as well as dozens of provincial and grassroots groups.

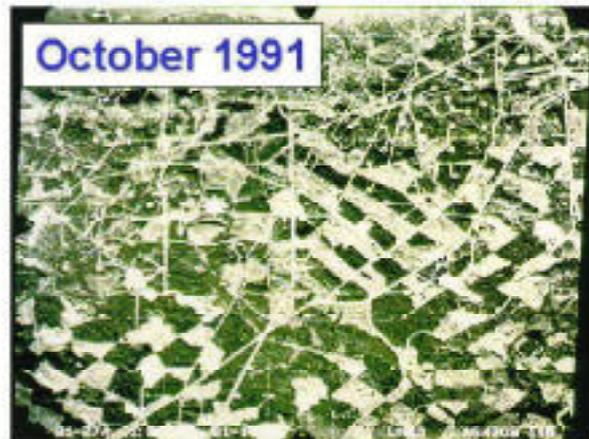
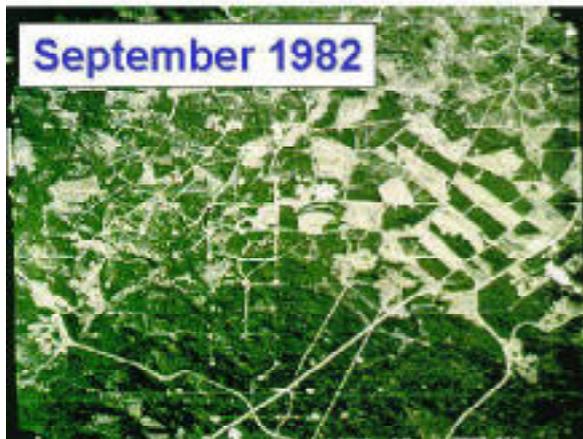


Upper Humber River: Recent clearcutting in old growth boreal forests in Newfoundland, where there used to be balsam fir trees older than 250 years.

The forests of Canada are currently in crisis. In many areas from coast to coast they are being logged at an unsustainable rate and in most cases are managed primarily for fiber output, without sufficient regard for maintaining forest ecological integrity. In the past decade Canada has made numerous international and national commitments to conserve forests as fully functioning, viable ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations. Yet the actual implementation of these important commitments has been half-hearted and ineffectual.

The Sixth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will develop an expanded Programme of Work for forest biodiversity. This is a major milestone and an important opportunity for Canada to act on its commitments. It will require a

new vision for the conservation of forests and forest biodiversity, along with a detailed work plan to implement that vision. This new vision must involve commitments and effective action in several key areas.



A time sequence series of aerial photographs of a region of northern Alberta, showing the combined impact of clearcut logging and oil and gas exploration and development.

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1. In order to preserve and protect Canada's primary forests and wild spaces Canada must:
 - a) Complete a national network of representative protected areas with adequate buffers and corridors to maintain ecological integrity.
 - b) Manage existing protected areas to ensure their long-term ecological integrity.
 - c) Ensure that the "conservation first" principle is applied in areas of primary forest and high conservation value forests.

 2. In order to maintain biodiversity in managed forests Canada must:
 - a) Maintain habitat to ensure viable populations of all native species.
 - b) Ensure that there is adequate ecological connectivity between protected areas.
 - c) Manage all forests according to the principles of ecosystem-based management.
 - d) Restore fragmented and degraded forests.

 3. In order to respect and provide for Aboriginal and treaty rights Canada must:
 - a) Accelerate the resolution of land claims and outstanding legal issues
 - b) Implement full consultation with Aboriginal peoples in all forest resource management decisions

 4. In order to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits from forests and forest biodiversity, Canada must:
 - a) Increase benefits from forest resources and management opportunities for Aboriginal and local communities
 - b) Create new Aboriginal and local community forest tenures, guided by ecosystem-based management principles.
 - c) Make resources available to assist Aboriginal and local communities to achieve sustainability while conserving biodiversity.

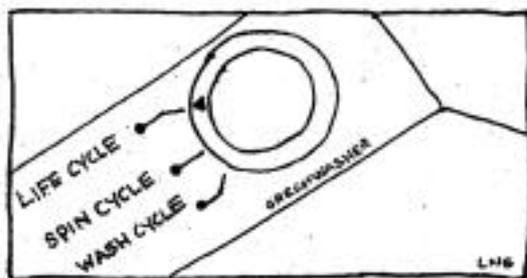
This vision is intended to offer support and encouragement for international consensus at COP6 on a strong and effective forest biodiversity programme. It is endorsed by 42 conservation organizations in Canada. *In The Hague: Kevin Scott, Spaces for Nature/CBT, tel. 703648846, room 213. In Canada: Rachel Plotkin, 613-241-4611, plotkin@magma.ca*

Let the Poor Pay for the Excesses of the Rich

Ashish Kothari

Once again, the burden of saving the earth falls on the poor. This time, in the Expanded Program of Work on Forests (COP/6/1/Add.2) Goal 4, Objective 2, is "Prevent losses caused by unsustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest resources". Apart from the strange fact that the word "timber" is not mentioned at all in the actual activities proposed to achieve this Objective (it's all about non-timber forest produce), this section is notable in listing actions relevant only to local communities using forest resources. These communities are supposed to be assisted in making their resource uses (bushmeat, firewood, etc) sustainable. There is no mention here of the voracious appetite of northern country consumers, and of their rich counterparts in the south! Nothing to check the greed of the world's rich, who consume hard and softwoods from unsustainably logged forests from all over the globe.

In this otherwise excellent programme of work, the only mention (and that too, is indirect) of the consumerism of the northern countries, increasingly exported also to the south, is the need to "to develop awareness of the impact of consumption patterns" (Goal 3 Objective 1). Ah, so while poor communities are expected to take action to restrict their meagre consumption, the rich will only be obliged to "become aware" of their consumption. And then maybe, once they are aware, they will be nice enough to reduce their impact on the world.



It all comes out in the wash..

What the Programme of Work forgets to mention, of course, is that perhaps by the time northern consumers become "aware", the only forests that will be left are the ones converted into their furniture, paper and paneled houses.

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means securing long-term access and tenure rights over forests to forest-dwelling communities (including indigenous peoples and local communities). At the most basic level, it addresses more fundamental issues of power and governance over forest lands and resources, and of livelihood security. It seeks to move beyond the industrial and bureaucratic model of forestry, a model that unfortunately necessitates conservation of only remnant scraps of biodiversity in fragmented protected areas.

Community based management, as sketched out above, will redress the imbalance of centralised power by enabling local and national governance structures that give local people *real* authority and control. It will reconcile indigenous and local rights with state sovereignty. It will go beyond sustainable development, which tries to merely “manage” or “reform” *unsustainable* patterns of economic growth to “developing sustainability”, which supports or creates institutions that are *inherently sustainable and socially just*.

For a biodiversity strategy to be successful, it *must* support complementary and alternative community-based models that embody a full range of values: social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and ecological. Only then can we realise the promise of ecological sustainability, economic vitality, and political renewal.

Biodiversity Activists target European Patent Office
Two weeks of fertile resistance in The Hague by Joyce Hambly, GEN

At 12.30 pm on Tuesday at the European Patent Office in Rijswijk near The Hague, The Netherlands, activists from around the world brought the EPO's personnel a message in their lunch break. While a samba band has occupied the main hall of the building, climbers are high up attaching a banner stating 'No patents on Life. Resistance is Fertile.'

Who has the right to control the planet's biological resources? Despite heavy opposition, the EU has gone ahead with granting patents on genetic material, living organisms and their parts and components - the privatisation of what used to be a public resource - the biodiversity that is life on earth.

"We condemn the role of EPO in promoting patents on life out of self and business interest," states Ralph van den Duin, a Dutch samba player. "This lunchtime event brings into action what the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, now taking place in The Hague, is blatantly failing to do: to put an end to the privatisation of the genetic commons and the exploitation of traditional living knowledge."

The action is part of the two week biodiversity countersummit Resistance is Fertile. "We are organising events to promote and discuss ideas that are actually from the grassroots throughout the next two weeks. I'm especially excited about the next weekend, when we get together with farmers from around the world. I'm hoping to get to see some other perspectives," says Mr. van Duin.

Central Press contact: <http://www.resistanceisfertile.org>

Enough is enough: No Patents on Life!

For many decades, life science companies have been scouting the world in search of genes in microbes, plants, animals, and human populations that might be commercially valuable in the biological marketplace. The US and other governments have allowed companies to lay claim over thousands of genes in the form of intellectual property rights. Some of the consequences of patents on life include: * 'Biopiracy': what many see as the theft of their genetic resources by private companies from industrialised countries. This includes the exploitation of the genetic resources of indigenous peoples and the knowledge of their uses. * Farmers' rights are being destroyed: presently (Northamerican) farmers are being sued by multinationals for having patented seeds on their land, despite the fact that often they got there by contamination in the first place. This will soon be commonplace around the world, both North and South. Among those working with(in) the CBD, and in other international fora, the awareness of the adverse consequences of life patents is growing. However, the legislative structure of the CBD seems powerless and unwilling to counter this development.

Biodiversity is not for sale, nor is it free. It is priceless.

NGO Meeting 9-10 am

4 Carel Willink Hall (follow signs from near cybercafe)