

What's the "primary" issue? Sierra Club of Canada

One of the most controversial issues slowing down negotiations of the expanded work programme on forest biodiversity has been the question of the role of primary forests. Some Parties have stressed the special importance of primary (or "native") forests, while others are insisting that the CBD consider all types of forests. While all forests have some potential to contribute to biodiversity objectives, the fact remains that not all forests are equal, and some forests have exceptional value for biodiversity conservation. These forests need special attention within the CBD work programme.

The first line of defense must always be to halt forest biodiversity loss in ecosystems that are dominated by natural events, and where the human impacts of development have not yet altered fundamental ecological processes in a significant way. And this is what the language on primary forests is striving to accomplish. The need for special efforts to conserve primary forests was already recognized in the Forest Principles from Rio, where Article 8(f) calls for the protection of representative or unique forests including, inter alia, primary/old growth forests. This call was reiterated by the CBD at COP2 (Decision II/9, Annex, para 13).

Some delegates have objected that the term "primary forests" is difficult to define, and that there is a need for greater precision and clarity of understanding between Parties about how the term applies in specific national circumstances. True enough, but COP6 is not the place to have these technical discussions. And proposed replacement terms such as "endangered" or "environmentally significant" forests only raise more difficulties than they solve. "Native forests" has also been proposed, and this is certainly a more promising alternative, although it's too broad to adequately capture the need for special attention on forests whose fundamental ecological processes have been relatively unaffected by human activity.

When debating this issue it is vitally important for delegates to keep in mind the key objective, namely the need for *in situ* conservation described in Article 8 of the Convention and outlined in the Preamble's note that "the fundamental requirement for the conservation of biological diversity is the *in situ* conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings". Conservation of primary forests is a necessary requirement in achieving this principle. Other initiatives will also be needed, of

course, and all of these actions must be carried out in a way that supports the sustainable livelihoods of local and indigenous forest dwellers. But delegates are doing a deep disservice to the Convention when they attempt to exclude consideration of the crucially important role of relatively undisturbed forests in maintaining natural habitats and ecosystem processes.

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



Bringing the CBD Home: Crisis in Norwegian Forests

Trude Myhre

participant to the Youth Conference



There are almost no old growth forests left in Norway. With over 3000 species on the Red List in Norway and about a half of them living in the forests, it is obvious that clear-cut forestry and lack of protection in Norway are threatening its forests.

Norway is among the lowest of states in

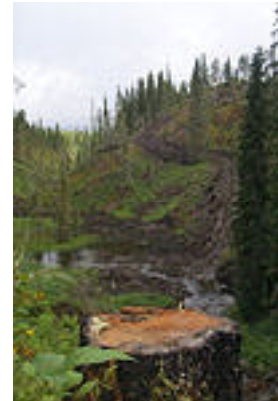
terms of forest protection in boreal forests. Caused by an intensive forestry industry in the country, there is very little old growth forest left. Norway has only protected 1% of its productive forests and the remaining old growth forests are without any kind of protection. It is totally legal to log them. Around the country the last remaining pieces of unfragmented forests are logged. The forest owners can log down the forests with the Norwegian forest law entirely permitting this.

The Norwegian government and politicians are sleeping. Thinking that everything is fine in the forests with 70% of the forest owners are certified by PEFC and the Living Forests standards. But investigations show that the forests are logged harder now than before the certification started. And Environmental organisations like Nature and Youth, the Norwegian Society for Nature Conservation and WWF Norway report frequent illegal clear cutting, violating forest standards.

Biggest threats to Norwegian forests are the building of roads, unsustainable forestry practices such as clear-cutting, and perverse subsidies. The Ministry of Agriculture has three times the money to destroy forest than the Ministry of Environment has to protect it. Subsidies have been used to log down some of the most biological diverse forests. Forests that the Ministry of Environment wanted to protect, but could not find the money to do it.

Norway also uses millions of Norwegian kroner every year to change deciduous forest into spruce forest on the west coast and in the north of the

country. This is direct biological pollution by introducing alien species. Only two out of 16 protected areas in deciduous forests on the west coast are still free of spruce trees. And the spruce is spreading with high speed, taking over the habitats of other types of trees.



Norway has to protect at least 5% of their productive forest, start sustainable use of the forests and eliminate perverse subsidies.

Norwegian forests are part of the boreal Taiga – which is a belt of coniferous dominated forest encircling the Northern hemisphere and making up one third of the worlds total forest area.

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STUMP of the DAY AWARD on Tuesday went to *Brazil*, for:

Consistent obstruction toward agreement on stron and meaningful text in the Forest Biodiversity Working Group.

For not wanting an international priority on illegal logging and related trade.

Supporting the removal of references to the word “ecological” from the text.

Failing to agree on a focus on native or primary forests, instead arguing for the inclusion of all forest types (including plantations??).

Watching Weasels at the CBD

Jessica Dempsey

It wasn't long ago that the CBD meant nothing more to me than SIDS, ILCs, and GURTS (This is a test: how many people do know what these are? If you do, you might qualify for the title: 'biodiversity elite'). After attending the Global Forest Coalition/ Fern side event Monday night, where they released a report entitled "Status of Implementation of Forest-Related Clauses in the CBD", I realized I was not alone. One of the main findings coming out of the monitoring project shows a large void in both governmental and public awareness of the convention, with most of the knowledge of the CBD within individuals of the 'biodiversity elite'.



The GFC/Fern summary report is based on the input of 21 country monitors who distributed questionnaires to relevant government officials with resulting answers reviewed by civil society organizations. Beyond the lack of awareness of the full spectrum of the CBD requirements, the main findings of the study centre on a lack of implementation of CBD requirements (including reporting), poor strategic guidance by the CBD to the parties, limited sectoral integration, and inappropriate participation of civil society within processes regarding the implementation of the CBD at the national and international levels. For example, while the Netherlands has complied with CBD reports and requirements, the department of economic affairs still had no clue about a binding 'biodiversity' convention, the one we fondly call CBD.

The report makes several recommendations, for example: the adoption by COP VI of: a strategic plan that focuses on the integration of biodiversity into other sectors, including the forestry sector; binding rules related to mandatory and equitable sharing of benefits derived from exploitation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge with specific regards to the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; and the principle of prior free and informed consent for all actions taken under the CBD.

The idea of independent monitoring process and reporting was well received at the side event Monday evening. Several participants in the side event noted the need for more challenging questions, particularly questions that prod at the impacts some countries have on other countries through foreign operations of national companies and high levels of consumption. "Are the polices/companies based in your country impacting forests/biodiversity in other countries?" There is also a need to confront governments with questions revolving around the current system of economic development and globalization - and the disconnect that currently exists between environment and economy.

Within our increasingly interconnected economic world, the state system is showing itself to be wholly inadequate for dealing with pressing concerns such as biodiversity. Even though we have international conventions like the CBD to (attempt to) address state deficiencies, trap doors of sovereignty are hiding within every corridor and hall of the congress centre. Fortunately NGOs, like GFC/Fern, are stepping up to ensure the convention parties do not let the strength of the CBD weasel away through those doors under the guise of sovereign rights. For more information on the report, go to www.fern.org and www.wrm.org. Pick up your copy of the report from the NGO table.

Opening the Door to Participation

Barbara Gemmill, Environment Liaison Centre International, Kenya
and Ritesh Bhandari, Lawyers' Environmental Action Team, Tanzania

In all the bodies and agreements of the United Nations, an increasingly prominent and powerful role is being played by NGOs and civil society and the existing international system is increasingly recognising the role of civil society. An example of the latter is a recent statement by Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, in which he complimented the sector for its courage, character, and vision, and agreed that the UN must begin to open its doors to the active participation of civil society into its processes. Agenda 21 recognised the need for new forms of participation by individuals, groups, and organisations, declaring that the commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups is critical to the effective implementation of the objective of sustainable development.

While changes in civil society participation have been dramatic, they have been informal arrangements. Formal mechanisms for NGO presence and participation (and assessment of performance) at the UN remain very limited, and specific to different organs. Formal procedures have changed little since the founding of the UN and, in the words of the Nongovernmental Liaison Service, "do not readily facilitate the insights, experience and expertise of NGOs as a contribution to decision-making and policy-setting other than as communicated through governments."

Until now, the CBD has also not developed a strategy for liaising with civil society. For the success of the Strategic Plan and the Convention, it must directly address the main players involved in the implementation of the Convention, which includes civil society. The Biodiversity Convention has a vibrant, lively community of civil society actors who actively contribute to policy development and implementation of the convention, but this role is not formally recognised within the strategic plan. An example of a civil society initiative feeding directly into the Convention is the Independent Review and Recommendations for Action of the Global Forest Coalition, presented on Monday evening, and discussed on page 3..

The civil society community around the biodiversity convention has worked to organise itself over the last ten years, albeit in a somewhat ad-hoc manner. While other biodiversity-related conventions (notably CITES and the Ramsar Convention) have developed clear means of engaging and interacting with civil society, the Biodiversity Convention has not. For example, there is no liaison person in the secretariat outside of conferences of parties to handle civil society linkages. The strategic plan at present only indirectly incorporates NGOs, and then only on a national implementation level, when there are many other ways that civil society and NGOs can and do assist with the objectives of the Convention. Clear and functional mechanisms of engaging the role of civil society in the strategic plan's implementation are needed.

Now two recommendations have been made to the Secretariat in the text on Implementation and Operations of the Convention, to increase support for developing country civil society participation in the Convention, and to establish an NGO focal point within the Secretariat. We strongly urge delegates to support these recommendation. The NGO community themselves pledges to work to further strengthen our own organisation and vision for interacting in more substantive ways with the Secretariat.

The FAO SEED Treaty statement that
was presented to COP6 by the NGOs
has now been endorsed by

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organisations worldwide.