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ECO is currently being published at the 4th WGRI held in Montreal, Canada. Coordinated by the CBD Alliance, the opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

SUBMISSIONS: *Welcome from all civil society groups. Email to just.tasneem@gmail.com*

CBD Alliance message to Rio+20

To all Governments participating in the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development

The action taken over the next two decades will determine whether the relatively stable environmental conditions on which human civilisation has depended for the last 10,000 years will continue beyond this century. If we fail to use this opportunity, many ecosystems on the planet will move into new, unprecedented states in which the capacity to provide for the needs of present and future generations is highly uncertain.² (Global Biodiversity Outlook, 2010:13)

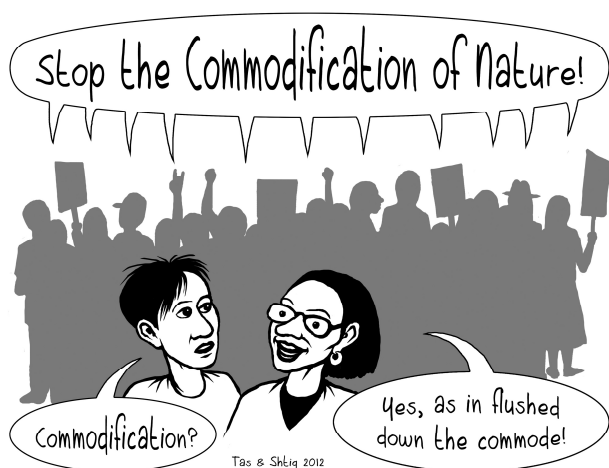
We write to you as the civil society network tracking the issue of biodiversity in Rio + 20 and in other fora, coordinated by the CBD alliance – which works to ensure meaningful civil society participation at the negotiations of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

We join many of you in agreeing that biodiversity is fundamental to our planet's future well being, and to humanity's future on the planet. It is at the heart of resilient ecosystems, which depends upon the rich diversity and interactions of all species. And it is essential for elimination of poverty, food sovereignty, marine diversity, water security, and health and spiritual wellbeing now and into the future. The food we

eat and many of the medicines we consume, for example, depend on the richness of the biodiversity our ancestors, especially our Indigenous forefathers and mothers, have conserved and nourished over the millennia.

As the last Global Biodiversity Outlook paper demonstrated however, biodiversity is now greatly endangered. We are losing soil, landscape, and marine-based biodiversity at breakneck speed. We have no time to waste. Long-standing threats are well known: fossil-fuel dependent industrial agricultural systems; unsustainable forestry practices, harmful subsidies, destructive fishing practices, urban sprawl, pollution and contamination of our atmosphere, waterways and landscapes; and invasive plant, animal, biotic, and marine species.

Newer threats that concern us include: the development of biofuels that are produced in unsustainable ways and threaten the livelihoods of the most vulnerable; the unregulated development of new and emerging technologies such as geo-engineering and synthetic biology; a failure to respect and adhere to



the precautionary principle, and last, but in no way least, the financialization of biodiversity, which implies the commodification of nature and life itself

Biodiversity has deeply intrinsic meaning that also considers social, aesthetic, cultural, spiritual and existential practices and values. How can we place a price tag on that? Similarly, protection of biodiversity must recognize that the stewardship of non-human species and their habitats is essential to maintaining a livable planet. We are convinced that market mechanisms, like carbon trading and other such practices that essentially put a price tag to nature will backfire, accelerating the erosion of biodiversity. There is already mounting evidence of their detrimental impact through activities such as land speculation, 'land grabs' and corruption within payment for ecosystem services schemes. Market-based "green economy" approaches and the financialization of Nature ignore the third pillar of the International Convention on Biological Diversity: **equity**.

Techno-fixes are short-sighted and the benefits short-lived. They allow people to continue unbridled consumption, often at the expense of other species. They benefit the more powerful and rarely meet the needs and rights of the most marginalized, which on this weary planet are the peoples who are our greatest conservers of biological diversity - Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and small-holder farmers, fishers and pastoralists.

In 1992, people came together for the first Rio Summit. Central to their participation was concern for what was happening to biodiversity. In 2012, at the Rio + 20 meeting of governments and peoples from around the world, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, must once again be fundamental to discussions. Isolating biodiversity issues from water, forests, health, agriculture, and urban development issues, etc,

CBD Alliance WGRI Briefings

The CBD Alliance has produced 2 briefing for WGRI 4. These briefings were developed by representatives of civil society facilitated by the CBD Alliance. The briefings are on:

1. [Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-20 \(Agenda item 3\)](#)
2. [Resource Mobilisation \(implementation of the strategy\) and Financial mechanism \(review of GEF-5 and needs for GEF-6\) \(Agenda items 6 and 7\)](#)

It should not be understood as representing the position of the CBD Alliance nor civil Society in general. Rather it is meant to provide background and current information, as well as some viewpoints on key issues for SBSTTA 16 and WGRI 4. The views represented in this paper are those it's contributors.

These are also available on <http://www.cbdalliance.org/sbstta-wgri-briefings-montreal>

would be counterproductive, undermining our global capacity to achieve lasting results. Rather than weakening biodiversity's importance, as seems to be the trend, we call on UNCSD to recognize biodiversity as an overarching and crosscutting issue in the Rio+20 negotiations; it should be closely integrated into all the relevant themes and agenda items

We urge all Governments to include biodiversity issues in all formal and informal deliberations. For our children today and for generations to come, we urge the United Nations, and Parties of the Rio Conventions to place biodiversity at the centre of any plan of action emerging from the deliberations at Rio+20 and within the proceedings of the Rio Conventions in the coming months and years.

The CBD Alliance thanks Swedbio for their ongoing support.

We hold daily strategy sessions at 9.00 am in Room 'D'. Civil society members are free to join

Going beyond price and seeking the multiple values of biodiversity

- By Isis Alvares, Global Forest Coalition

Many still believe that huge financial “investments” are needed for the “conservation” of biological resources, as shown with the subsidies that international institutions like the World Bank provide for this purpose, but experience has shown that often such ‘cooperation’ has been incoherent with the CBD by funding harmful projects that destroy or deplete natural resources as well as affect Indigenous Peoples and/or local communities. In fact, little is known as to the real financial needs for biodiversity conservation; estimates tend to be very rough and even based on Agenda 21, a document that is already 20 years old.

An analysis on the drivers of forest loss states that addressing the *underlying causes of forest loss does not require a huge financial investment, but rather a **redirection** of the financial flows that currently support bio-energy, large-scale tree plantations, mining and other destructive projects*¹.

Biodiversity clearly has a greater significance for those groups in society who fully interact with it and derive not only their livelihoods but also their spiritual and cultural values from it, than for someone who seeks to offset emissions, for example². However, money is the only “universal yardstick” of value used and understood in our dominant development model³. Therefore, civil society, especially marginalized groups such as Indigenous Peoples, local communities, small farmers, fisherfolks, and women, among others, strongly reject schemes like PES and REDD+, and every other means that financialises Nature. Such measures provide a dangerous simplification of the holistic, mutually beneficial and biocultural relationship communities and individual human beings foster with the environment.

¹ Getting to the Roots: Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation, and Drivers of Forest Restoration, GFC, Amsterdam

² Naidoo & Ricketts

³ Harvey, David. *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996

Some of the risks that have been identified resulting from the innovative financial mechanisms (IFMs) are:

1. market valuations will give a monetary value to those species/processes that are relevant for production, leaving out other key components in making the system work and securing resilience in the future⁴.

2. The current globalized life-style dominated by consumption has little to guarantee regarding conservation as long as demand for forest products (and other ecosystem products, e.g. agrofuels, soy, corn, palm oil) increases at a high rate.

3. The flow of benefits and profits is, once again from South to North – with the South providing the labour and resources, and the North providing the capital investment, and reaping most of the profit and rewards.

4. Existing markets that biodiversity IFMs aim to replicate, such as the carbon market, are already facing problems with crime, corruption, institutional malfeasance and incompetence, compounded by a lack of regulatory oversight and lack of acceptability across and within countries⁵.

5. Uneven power relations mean that new and innovative mechanisms are likely to have adverse implications on the poor and the women, particularly indigenous peoples and local communities.

It is recommended for the CBD to refrain from risky financial sources for biodiversity and forest restoration such as market based approaches,

⁴ Reyers, B et al. 2010. “Measuring biophysical quantities and the use of indicators, *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity: The Ecological and Economic Foundations*, UNEP

⁵ Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) 2011, Submission to the Convention on Biological Diversity relating to innovative financial mechanisms and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities

biodiversity offsets and Green Development Mechanisms. Parties to COP 11 agreed that new and additional financial resources should be coherent with the CBD. In the absence of such coherence, there is a significant risk in mobilizing additional resources that may have a counterproductive effect.

"Upcoming public participatory consultations on the revision and updating of NBSAPs should include open public debate on different finance options for implementation of the CBD at the local and national levels. Such debates should cover a range of innovative options and measures as well as existing tools, including reform of existing taxes and subsidies that may be harmful to biodiversity (such as subsidies to fossil fuels) and the creation of taxes and subsidies that promote the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources". – Forest Peoples Programme recommendation to the CBD. 2011

Biodiversity should not be expected to earn its living in the market

- By Helena Paul, Econexus

On May 2nd 2012 a paper appeared in Nature entitled: A global synthesis reveals biodiversity loss as a major driver of ecosystem change.⁶ It analyses existing data to show that biodiversity loss and extinctions are altering processes fundamental to ecosystem functioning and resilience, with major implications for us all. This is not a new message, but one that has constantly been ignored.

Yet the paper clearly states the authors' conclusion that biodiversity loss is as serious as climate change. The paper's abstract notes: "Higher levels of extinction (41–60%) had effects rivalling those of ozone, acidification, elevated CO₂ and nutrient pollution....Despite the need for more studies on interactive effects of diversity loss and environmental changes, our analyses clearly show that the ecosystem consequences of local species loss are as quantitatively significant as the direct effects of several global change stressors that have mobilized major international concern and remediation efforts."

Once again, this shows that biodiversity, including agricultural biodiversity and related knowledge and practices, as fostered over millennia by Indigenous Peoples, small scale food providers and local communities are fundamental to

humanity's future presence on the planet. In spite of this, we appear to be expecting biodiversity and ecosystems to earn their right to survival by attracting the market. If this is the assumption, we should be challenging the (human constructed) market model, not asking biodiversity to hand its CV to the market valuation experts.

At the same time those developing and promoting new technologies try to reassure us, saying we should not worry about species loss because it will be possible to build new organisms from scratch and make them more efficient than current versions. They say this even though our understanding of ecosystem functions and interactions is still in its infancy.

It is increasingly evident that carbon offsets are a failure, both as concept and reality. Carbon is claimed to be a uniform exchangeable commodity, whether emitted by a smokestack or sequestered in a mature forest. This argument is partial and unsound, adopted more for the convenience of carbon calculators than the true significance of planetary systems versus human economic systems. Biodiversity is clearly not exchangeable, because, as endemism alone demonstrates, it is unique to each location. This means that the proposal to put a market value on biodiversity is so flawed that it should be unacceptable to the CBD.

⁶ A global synthesis reveals biodiversity loss as a major driver of ecosystem change, David U. Hooper et al. Nature

(2012): doi:10.1038/nature11118,
<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nature11118.html>