

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Farmers' Rights and the CBD 1
- A Farmer Speaks 3
- Farmer Seed Fair 3
- Announcements of Side Events 4
- Bird Walks 4

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



It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.

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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, LucjaWisniewska, Kennedy Orwa, Hassan Sachedina, Pamela Cunneyworth, Anne Daehling
Journalist: Wandera Ojanji

Submissions to ECO: NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

A Fair COP for Biosafety, Farmers' Rights & Food Security?

By Don Redding, ITDG

On her eight acres of earth, 90 kilometres from the nearest tarmac road, with nothing but scrub between her and the dusty, hungry regions of Wajir, Somalia and the Ogaden to the north, Jane Kirambia scratches out a living.

Last year, when the rains failed again, her margins were squeezed tight. Her husband's wages as a schoolteacher saved her from selling any of the animals, but it was a close call.

Yet Jane is a success. She and her three children did not starve, nor did they depend on relief. The animals remained healthy, and this January her crops were once again standing tall in the field. Close attention to her science explains why.

She intercrosses her produce, using nitrogen-fixing cowpeas between the rows of grain, and mixing grains within one plot to ensure the soil is not exhausted. She pens her animals at night, using the dung for organic manure. She maintains a small nursery, continually experimenting with new plants - mango seedlings this year.

She expands the family diet by finding new ways to support vegetables in this harsh dry climate. The latest is a drip irrigation kit - little more than a bucket draining into a length of hose with regularly spaced holes - which has produced a bumper crop of tomatoes.

continued on page 2

A Farmer Speaks

"When we heard about this opportunity to come to Kenya and talk about how we farm we wanted to come and show our seeds to the people at the conference. But when we got to Harare, we were told by the authorities that we could not take our seeds outside of the country. We were told that they were not good enough for Zimbabwe to export. We were surprised! Are these our seeds? If not, whose are they? We often get our seeds from our friends in other places, and we wanted to share our seeds. Can anyone explain to us why we cannot take our seeds when we travel?"

Meshak Mutapwa, farmer from Zimbabwe



Above all, she maintains variety. Jane Kirambia grows up to ten varieties each of sorghum, millet and maize. Many of them are locally developed, locally adapted varieties known only by dialect names and mysterious to research institutes. By growing them together, she is spreading her risk and increasing her options.

A variety of grain crops means she won't starve if one fails. It also prevents a concentration of killer pests. Local adaptations mean her varieties may be better suited to the soils, the aspects, and most importantly the drought conditions found in Maragwa location in northern Kenya, where she and 20,000 others live.

So while 16 million people across East Africa are said to be at risk of famine, Jane and her family are unlikely to be among the statistics - despite a climate in which, as an ITDG project manager puts it, "four out of five rainy seasons may fail".

Farmer nurturing agricultural biodiversity in his field. Photo by Panos.

If the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers like Jane Kirambia are under threat, it is not necessarily from the weather. The greater menace may be the loss of agricultural biodiversity -

the vast range of seeds, soil microbes and animal forms which have been developed and managed by these farmers over centuries.

Jane and her peers have no words in their language for 'agricultural biodiversity', yet it is the stuff of life itself. It provides the livelihoods for up to 80 per cent of the population in Kenya and developing countries like it. More than that, it provides the food security for a quarter of humanity.

Some 1.6 billion people make ends meet thanks to farm-saved seed. Yet a small handful of multinational companies now control the commercial seed trade around the world. The industrialised farming model, involving production for sale, monocropping, and dependence on commercial seed and associated chemical packages, and which is promoted and protected by international instruments from the World Trade Organisation's rules to the structural adjustment policies which force developing country governments to emphasise export crops, is rapidly pushing its way into the last corners of the market.

If farmers in Maragwa have a poor year, they must get new seed from somewhere. Whether it is government relief or the market, it will be commercial seed, with a limited number of varieties produced for a generic goal of 'higher yield' which takes no account of conditions in this or any other individual locality. It will be promoted by government and local authorities, by national seed institutes and commercial agents.

As a result of this model, up to 70 per cent of some seed varieties has been lost this century. The recent coming to market of genetically modified crops, claiming to 'feed the third world', is but the latest of the commercially developed false dawns.

There are some answers to these threats. Some are local. Jane and her neighbours have set up community seed banks where local varieties can be stored and later loaned to members for the next planting. Every March they participate in a seed fair inspired by ITDG where they can exchange their varieties and knowledge with other farmers from the location.

But for such grassroots efforts to succeed with any real scope across developing countries, they need to be backed by a new approach to sustainable agriculture, and to protecting farmers' rights to continue developing and benefiting from the genetic resources for agriculture which they themselves have developed, without fear of the biopiracy, patenting of life forms, and intrusions of externally-driven 'miracle' crops. And that policy approach in turn needs an international instrument as powerful as the WTO to recognise and protect it.

As Jane clears her fields for the next planting, over 170 national delegations are here to discuss the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) at the fifth Conference of the Parties (COP V).

So far the CBD has mainly been used to protect 'naturally occurring' life forms in, for example, original wetland areas. But increasingly it has begun to recognise the special nature of

agricultural biodiversity – special because it has been developed by people, to sustain people. And like the WTO, the CBD is a global instrument which is legally binding upon its members.

Had the WTO started a new round of trade talks last November in Seattle, agricultural trade, and the international property rights which have slowly but surely permitted biopiracy, would have been re-regulated to the further detriment of developing country farmers. Following Seattle's failure, the space has opened for the CBD to come into its own.

At this conference, the same nations who are members of the WTO can set a rather different policy direction. They can sign up to, and bring into force a Biosafety Protocol which will allow countries to protect their smallholder farmers by refusing to accept GM imports. They can recognise the paramount importance of agricultural biodiversity and commit themselves - and some global finance—to plans of action to support it.

That means backing farmers like Jane Kirambia, building their capacity and their institutional support to manage agricultural biodiversity, and in the process to sustain their own livelihoods and the food security of their communities against threats like the current East African drought.

To add a little extra pressure, ITDG, ActionAid and their partners will be bringing farmers from across Kenya and other countries in the region to the heart of the policy process, to tell the delegations what support they need. And in the very venue of COP V itself, will hold a seed fair to show the policy makers what their reams of rhetoric on agricultural biodiversity are really about.

The farmers, in collaboration with ITDG, Action Aid and other partners, invite delegates to the official opening of the seed fair, in the lobby of the UNEP building, Gigiri on 15th May 2000 at 1.00pm.

Farmer Seed Fair



What is it?

Every year, after the harvest, farmers come together for a day to display the season's crops and seeds.

Why?

The seed fair give recognition to farmers' local crop varieties, and encourages them to conserve and share a wider variety of crops in the fields. The fair also provides an opportunity for all farmers in the community to exchange or purchase seeds from the exhibitors. It provides a forum for farmers to share existing local knowledge and skills in farming

Official opening of the Seed Fair

Lobby of the UNEP Building

15th may at 1:00 p.m.

Lunch will be served.

Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- The Farmers Seed Fair Sponsored by ITDG, ActionAid and other partners will be at the UNEP Lobby at 1 o'clock on 16th of May.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. Location to be announced at the ELCI display table, and in future editions of ECO.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Palm (or Jacaranda?) Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-convened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:
Tuesday, May 16: Traditional Knowledge and Agricultural Biodiversity
Wednesday, May 17: Dryland Biodiversity
Thursday, May 18: Inland Water Biodiversity , Clearing House Mechanism
Friday, May 19: Agricultural biodiversity, Identification, monitoring and assessment
Monday, May 22: Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23: Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24: Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25: Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

Bird Walks

Bird walks will be offered by Nature Kenya for COP attendees from 8:30-9:30 on Thursday, May 18 and on Tuesday and Thursday May 23 and 25 on UNEP campus. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building, in front of the business centre.

Saturday Morning, May 20, Special Bird Walk for CBD COP delegates and resident Nairobi birders. Meet at National Museum car park at 9:00.

Wednesday Bird Walk: Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

Pot Luck Outing, May 21: Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, i.e., 21 May. Bring a picnic lunch (most hotels can provide if asked), binoculars, field guides, etc. and meet at 9:00 am at the National Museum car park. Those attending decide on the venue - hence "Pot Luck".

ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL



Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- World Bank & Forests 1
- Farmer's Seed Bank Project 3
- Announcements of Side Events 4
- Bird Walks 4

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



It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.

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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Lucja Wisniewska, Kennedy Orwa, Hassan Sachedina, Pamela Cunneyworth, Anne Daehling

Journalist: Wandera Ojanji

Submissions to ECO:

NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

World Bank and Forests: Blind Eye to Destruction?

By Simone Lovera
Sobrevivencia/Friends of the Earth-Paraguay

Imagine you run an institution, which has to spend a substantial amount of money every year and you are constantly being criticized for the social and environmental destruction, that money causes. After many years of being bashed, you decide to develop an ambitious new policy to address the destruction of at least one important set of ecosystems, forests. Yet, 10 years later you discover your very own staff is massively ignoring your very own policy.

What do you do? Do you make sure your own staff implements your own policy or do you weaken the policy and turn back to the destruction of the old days?

These are the main question at stake in the ambitious World Bank Forest Sector Policy Implementation Review and Strategy, which is currently being implemented.

Of course, the World Bank itself would be the last institution on earth to properly analyze whether its economic policies contribute to its so-called number one objective. There is abundant proof of the opposite. The fact that forest destruction forms a major cause of poverty, especially amongst women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized people, has simply been ignored. Forget indigenous

continued on page 2

people and other forest-dependent people: forest conservation is a global luxury, local communities in developing countries cannot afford. Another fact, which is often ignored in this respect, is that many logging companies are as local to the forest they exploit as a penguin to a tropical forest.

Meanwhile, it is fascinating to see how large-scale plantations are defended with the argument that they would relieve

pressure from natural forests, while no words are spent whatsoever, on the question of how to address unsustainable consumption levels of timber products.

Logically, overproduction leads to lower prices and thus higher demand, which makes tree plantations part of an ever-increasing production and consumption.

But these successes for sustainability are no successes for the Bank, as no staff member can expect a positive career move from a project he or she was not able to implement due to the limitations of the 1991 Policy.

From this point of view the 1991 Policy has undoubtedly failed to boost the forestry department of the Bank, and it is understandable that people in the forestry department itself see their work as 10% of the Bank's portfolio, but 80% of the Bank's headaches. Or, as someone from the Environment Department once described, "one has to be an idealist to remain in a position where one constantly has to stop his or her colleagues from

as asking whether a hurricane can save Mozambique. Conservation oriented activities tend to be even less profitable monetary terms as the most important benefits of forests tend to be enjoyed by people who do not have the money to pay for them such as indigenous people and many other forest-dependent people. This is why the few conservation projects which seem to be economically successful, such as eco-tourism, tend only to provide

benefits to others who can pay for them.

Yet, the Bank can only direct its money to governments and ask politely for some participation of civil society.

The OED concludes that this participation can often be

summarized as "too little, too late", although it should be noted that some of the Bank procedures have facilitated NGO/IPO participation in government projects (e.g. natural resources management), which would otherwise have been entirely closed to them. But the World Bank obviously is not the most appropriate institution to provide grants to the small- and micro-scale community projects that have delivered the most promising results during the last decade.

So let us please not risk losing this natural wealth by opening up primary tropical moist forests for Bank-financed timber extraction again, as some Bank officials propose. Instead, let us expand the precautionary approach to other forests, and ensure that this "risk averse" approach is also applied to other sectoral policies, like agriculture, infrastructure and transportation.

"no words are spent whatsoever, on the question of how to address unsustainable consumption levels of timber products. Logically, overproduction leads to lower prices and thus higher demand, which makes tree plantations part of an ever-increasing production and consumption."

Farmer's Seed Bank Project Enhances Biodiversity

By Wandera Ojanji

It was an amazing display of seed (crop) diversity. The Seed Fair at the Unep lobby organized by ITDG, saw farmers display seeds that many had forgotten, many had never known, ever existed. It was by and large a case of farmers' success in agricultural biodiversity management, utilization and conservation.

But how have they managed to conserve such diversity in times when many species are disappearing, especially in a dryland ecosystem, like Tharaka in Eastern Kenya, where it is very fragile?

Through the assistance and training from ITDG, the farmers formed the Gakia Seed Conservation Group. Through collective effort and information sharing, the group has looked for seeds or crop varieties that used to do well in the area but have disappeared.

The success of the group has been overwhelming as evidenced at the exhibition. In 1997, when the group was formed, the group identified and collected 15 seed or crop varieties. Just three years down the line, they have collected over 40 varieties that had disappeared.

To ensure the sustainability of their project, they have formed a community seed bank from where farmers can easily access the various seed varieties. The group even distributes to non-members as a way of further diversification on various farms.

Because of the initiative, they now have about 50 varieties of sorghum and over 29 varieties of millet, growing in Tharaka.

Amina Njeru, who has been one of the group members and a beneficiary of the initiative now boasts of having, eight varieties of millet, seven varieties of cowpeas, four varieties of green grams,

among other crop varieties. She says her greatest achievement was the acquisition of *mugoi*, and *Mututwa*, millet varieties that had disappeared long time ago when she was still a child. *Mugoi* is very sweet while *Mututwa* is very good for beer making.

Even in her later 40's, and the bias towards modern foods or lifestyle fond memories of her favorite millet and the associated products still lingers on.

And she wasn't the only one with whom the Fair aroused fond memories of the past. The seed and vegetable varieties also touched the Kenyan Ambassador to Japan, Her Excellency Mary Odinga, on display.

She said, "I look with nostalgia to the past when I recall how I used to see granaries of my grandparents filled to capacity with all manner of healthy foods harvested from the same farm that today produces sickly harvest of beans and maize."

In fact, Amina Njeru, while acknowledging the contribution of biotechnology in agricultural diversity, says farmers' ignorance has played a big role in crop failures of some of the introduced varieties, her being one of the victims. However, they have vast knowledge on crop husbandry of their indigenous crops, something that has ensured no crop failures.

For instance, having been impressed by the performance of *Pioneer* and *Kagil* maize varieties, she adopted the varieties on her farm. However, unaware that the varieties can not be replanted, she went ahead and used the seed from the harvest for the next planting. It was disaster. She only managed to get very healthy leafy vegetation, but no grain.

She is indeed very grateful to ITDG for the education and training they are providing, saying that it has not only assisted them in diversification of agricultural crops but has also helped them attain some level of food

Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- The Farmers Seed Fair Sponsored by ITDG, ActionAid and other partners will be at the UNEP Lobby at 1 o'clock on 16th of May.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. Location to be announced at the ELCI display table, and in future editions of ECO.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Palm (or Jacaranda?) Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-convened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Lunchtime Workshop Wednesday May 17 1-3pm (room to be announcement). The Role of Strategic Planning in the Design of National Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing.
- Today- Tuesday May 16, 2000 2pm NGO Tent (Tent 1) Terminator and Traitor Technology Updates by Rural Advancement Foundation International.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:
Wednesday, May 17: Dryland Biodiversity
Thursday, May 18: Inland Water Biodiversity , Clearing House Mechanism
Friday, May 19: Agricultural biodiversity, Identification, monitoring and assessment
Monday, May 22: Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23: Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24: Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25: Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

Bird Walks

Bird walks will be offered by Nature Kenya for COP attendees from 8:30-9:30 on Thursday, May 18 and on Tuesday and Thursday May 23 and 25 on UNEP campus. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building, in front of the business centre.

Saturday Morning, May 20, Special Bird Walk for CBD COP delegates and resident Nairobi birders. Meet at National Museum car park at 9:00.

Wednesday Bird Walk: Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

Pot Luck Outing, May 21: Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, i.e., 21 May. Bring a picnic lunch (most hotels can provide if asked), binoculars, field guides, etc. and meet

ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL



Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| • Drylands | 1 |
| • Perverse Incentives | 3 |
| • Announcements of Side Events | 4 |
| • Bird Walks | 4 |

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

It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.



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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Lucja Wisniewska, Kennedy Orwa, Hassan Sachedina, Pamela Cunneyworth, Anne Daehling
Journalist: Wandera Ojanji

Submissions to ECO:
NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

Don't Marginalise the Drylands

Summary of the Eastern and Southern African Regional Biodiversity Forum on Sustainable Use of Drylands

Drylands have it rough. We think of them as the second-class citizens of land. We call them "marginal lands", "low potential", or "badlands". They rarely figure as important resources for a developing country in their natural state, even though they are among the most biodiverse areas of the world in terms of species per square metre, and they provide local and national food security. They also make a large contribution toward the production of key food items, such as meat. We treasure the wildlife that flourish in drylands, but we rarely seem to appreciate either the integrity of the whole landscape that supports them or the livelihoods of the people who have maintained this integrity for thousands of years.

Non-governmental organisations, other civil society stakeholders, and government representatives from Eastern and Southern Africa met in Mombasa in February this year to address the CBD programme of work on drylands. This is what they chose to bring to the attention of delegates at the conference of parties:

It is rural people who are ultimately the custodians of Eastern and Southern Africa's rich biodiversity, and drylands around the world. The programme of work should thus be "people-centered", in particular, "dryland-resident centered". Activity 7, the action-oriented activity, begins with a protected area approach, but the forum felt that the emphasis should be put on people and drylands living together.

In many dryland ecosystems in Africa, the lack of ownership and tenure has contributed immensely to the loss of

continued on page 2

biodiversity and degradation of these areas. Imposition of alien land tenure systems has expelled traditional communities from their ancestral lands. Ownership and appropriate tenure empowers communities to assume full control and management of drylands, enhancing the success of many community based natural resource management programmes.

The CBD secretariat has pointed to activities 4, and 8 a and b of the programme of work as those that address ownership and tenure issues. But activity 4 is a knowledge-building, not an action-oriented activity. The issues in relation to land tenure are well-known; more studies will not do much. IFAD, in particular, serves as a clearing-house of information on land tenure. Duplication is to be avoided.

Thus, activities 8 a and b may be among the most critical in the entire program of work, and deserve special effort and initiatives.

The forum saluted the recognition, in activity 9, of working through the promotion of alternative markets and incentive measures to direct flows of investment to drylands.

The sustainable management of drylands depends heavily on water, and wetland management in drylands. There is no clear, focused activity within the drylands program that relates to water, and the forum found this to be a serious omission: dryland biodiversity is inseparable from water management.

There was concern among the participants at the forum that a prejudice against drylands in their natural state is again finding form in the CBD programme of work on drylands, that dryland

biodiversity will likely yet again be relegated to its usual "important, but not really all that important" status. While their unique character will surely be acknowledged, it is uncertain whether discussions today will yield much practical support for the particular needs of dryland ecosystems.

Why is this?

For programmes to be supported by the CBD's funding body, they must show clear evidence of producing "global benefits". Most marine conservation projects can show global benefits because the oceans and seas, in great part, belong to the world community. Forest conservation is often justified on the basis of climate change: by conserving tropical forests, there is desperate hope that we may reverse, or

at least briefly slow down, global warming. But for drylands it is very difficult to show global benefits. They cover vast acreage and are home to significant numbers of people and a rich and diverse flora and fauna. But none of this, if conserved, will necessarily benefit people around the world equally.

Or will it?

As IUCN's Misael Kokwe notes, "One assumes that the criteria

of global benefits was adopted to safeguard against unlimited requests for fragmented actions all over the globe. Even if this were the case, however, one can argue that the earth is an aggregate of fragmented entities. It is as though I have a house, and I knock out a few bricks. I may say, it doesn't matter, it's just a small piece and I have the rest of my house. But if I carry on with this philosophy, knocking out a brick here and a roof tile there, suddenly the whole place will cave in."

Contrary to popular belief: in a square metre of grassland, there is an extraordinary diversity of life, between the grasses, the flowering herbs, the insects and grazing animals that visit, and the many many organisms that live in the soil. In a tropical rain forest, almost all the biomass is held in the leaves and stems. In a grassland, the roots go down into the soil for metres, and life as well extends down far into the ground. There are more species in a meter of arid grassland than in a meter of tropical rain forest, even if the forest is far more diverse over hectares.

Perverse Incentives — A Cause of Biodiversity and Livelihood Loss

From the ELCI Working Group on Alternative Trade

Agriculture forms the basis of Kenya's economy, income and food security — at both national and local levels. But there are many different types of agricultural land uses and practices, which have widely varying impacts on biodiversity (and on people's livelihoods). Many of Kenya's most vulnerable farmers survive because their farming systems are based on biodiversity — the mix of crops that carry them through drought and hard times, the resilience of local livestock breeds that are adapted to the harsh conditions of dry rangelands, the forests and woodlands that provide a source of food, fodder and cash when all other sources fail.

But the components of agricultural biodiversity, and the land and resource management practices that support it, are being lost. One of the most worrying trends in recent years, in terms of both biodiversity conservation and social development, has been the rapid spread of large-scale and commercial farming into Kenya's farmlands and rangelands. We have seen pastoralist populations being pushed into more and more marginal areas by a rising tide of crop farming, we see small-scale producers becoming increasingly pressurised by commercial companies and markets, and we see a devastating loss of the biodiversity that not just provides the basis of local livelihoods and security but also generates immense national and global benefits. These losses cost millions of dollars a year — in terms of lost earnings and employment, in terms of failed crop harvests, in terms of decreased livestock production, in terms of food aid expenditures, in terms of land degradation, in terms of extinct species, in terms of lost opportunities for future developments and applications ... and so on.

This raises an important question: if the loss of rangeland and farmland biodiversity is so devastating in social and economic terms, why is it occurring? One important reason for this has been the whole focus of national economic policies over the past decades. A great deal of time, money and effort has been expended in promoting "modern", arable, agriculture as the best and most proper land use. Even where it isn't, and where markets and prices have had to be artificially manipulated to make it so. Although now decreasing, billions of shillings of government budgets, tax-payers' money and donor funds have been spent on subsidising the

inputs (such as fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation infrastructure, research and market development) which support commercial agriculture. Land taxes have been set at lower rates for private agricultural land than either for extensive livestock ranching or for "conservation" land uses that include trees and wildlife. Modern farming technologies have been exempted from a wide range of taxes, and export crop production has been encouraged through the provision of special facilities for the retention of foreign exchange earnings. Traditional land uses, especially those which are based on biodiversity conservation, have found it hard to compete against these subsidies and preferential treatment.

Collectively, all these ways of manipulating the profitability of "modern" agriculture (or, alternatively, of subsidising biodiversity loss) are termed Perverse Incentives. These are incentives that encourage biodiversity loss, and result in the expenditure of public (and private) money for purposes that are directly in conflict with the conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing objectives of the CBD. And, almost always, are in conflict with the secure and sustainable livelihoods of many of the poorest or most vulnerable sectors of society. They cost a lot of money — both directly, to governments and tax-payers, but also indirectly in terms of the environmental and livelihood costs they incur.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the Conference of the Parties will discuss, under Agenda Item 18.3, Incentive Measures. It is clear that, as part of these deliberations, such perverse incentives must be addressed. Several key organisations, at international, national and community levels have emphasised the importance of identifying, and dismantling, perverse incentives — not just in the agricultural sector, but in all those other sectors of economies that are manipulated at the cost of biodiversity, such as industry, trade, land, water, forestry and mining — and instead replacing them with positive incentives that actively encourage biodiversity conservation. Unless perverse incentives are put clearly onto the global biodiversity agenda, as a matter of urgency, there is little hope that biodiversity will be conserved, sustainably utilised or equitably shared, and rural livelihoods will continue to be undermined, throughout the world.

Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 1.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Palm (or Jacaranda?) Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-covened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Lunchtime Workshop Wednesday May 17 1-3pm (room to be announcement). The Role of Strategic Planning in the Design of National Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:

Thursday, May 18:	Inland Water Biodiversity , Clearing House Mechanism
Friday, May 19:	Agricultural biodiversity, Identification, monitoring and assessment
Monday, May 22:	Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23:	Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24:	Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25:	Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

Bird Walks

Bird walks will be offered by Nature Kenya for COP attendees from 8:30-9:30 on Thursday, May 18 and on Tuesday and Thursday May 23 and 25 on UNEP campus. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building, in front of the business centre.

Saturday Morning, May 20, Special Bird Walk for CBD COP delegates and resident Nairobi birders. Meet at National Museum car park at 9:00.

Wednesday Bird Walk: Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

Pot Luck Outing, May 21: Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, i.e., 21 May. Bring a picnic lunch (most hotels can provide if asked), binoculars, field guides, etc. and meet at 9:00 am at the National Museum car park. Those attending decide on the venue - hence "Pot Luck"

ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL



Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Forests | 1 |
| • Biodiversity and Poverty Alleviation | 2 |
| • Terminator Lives | 3 |
| • LMO Position | 3 |
| • Announcements of Side Eventse | 4 |
| • Bird Walks | 4 |

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



It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.

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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Wandera Ojanji

submissions to ECO:
NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

Forest Biodiversity Under Fire

By Peter Odhiambo, East African Wildlife Society, and Greenpeace International

Globally forests are recognised as the primary residence of the world's biodiversity. Forests harbor about two thirds of the known terrestrial species. Forests are home to the widest diversity of animal species, and are especially rich in birds. They absorb the world's ever increasing greenhouse gasses, and play crucial roles in hydrological cycles. The modification and more significantly, loss of forests in temperate, boreal, and tropical regions are highly significant factors in the current biological diversity crisis. They have the highest species diversity and endemism of any ecosystem, as well as the highest number of known species.

But the conservation of forests has eluded many countries. In the developing countries, the inability of most authorities to provide basic resources and security of tenure for most properties has led disadvantaged groups to go for the only commodity they feel they have a right to own- land. Forest land has been the victim of invasions, allocations, settlement and agricultural development. People see forests as "idle land".

So, what is COP doing about forests? Well, remarkably very little....

On the one hand, since CBD came into force in 1993, forest biodiversity has never been high on the agenda of the COP or the SBSTTA. Work on forest biodiversity has been delayed, deferred, or downplayed, under the pretext that CBD ought to wait for the outcome of other institutions and processes, like the International Forum on Forests (IFF), the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF), the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

On the other hand, this critical biological resource is

continued on page 2

disappearing at an alarming rate, with the bodies or processes charged with the responsibility to correct the situation more or less watching from a distance, including the CBD. Since CBD came into force in 1993, about 100 million hectares of forest cover have been lost world wide. This loss that has occurred in seven years only, is equivalent to the size of Kenya and Malawi combined. Much of the loss, about 70 per cent, has occurred in ancient forests, that are characterized by a relatively very high concentrations of biological diversity. Consequently a whole range of forest-dependent species have been lost or are now under severe threat.

The bottom line is that, despite the many international meetings by these institutions, there has been no substantial change. Forest biological diversity continues to decrease at the same alarming rate. This is the time CBD should take real responsibility in the

conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity, for there is no any other process that focuses on biodiversity. It cannot postpone taking up this responsibility or assign it to any other body or process. We cannot rely on the UNFF, the end result of a highly ineffectual process.

NGOs concerned with forests are now urging the COP-5 to take its responsibility now and ensure that the preparation for COP 6, at which forest diversity will be the thematic area, results in meaningful discussions and pave way for significant and overdue effective action on forest diversity. This will require two changes in the Draft Decision:

- To establish an open ended workshop on forest biodiversity policy mechanisms; and
- To establish the proposed technical expert working group with two additional terms of reference.

Poverty and Biodiversity: Making the Links

by Ashish Kothari

Ever wonder why it is so difficult to convince the mass of people that the CBD is an important convention? The answer is simple--- the CBD still does not communicate and focus on what touches the lives of the majority of the world's population: the imperatives of livelihoods and survival, and the struggle against poverty on the one hand, and affluence on the other.

It is time that the COP started focusing on the critical links between poverty, affluence, and biodiversity. This was the clear message that came across from a hundred NGOs, government officials, and others gathered at the Poverty and Biodiversity workshop of the Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF), 12-14 May, 2000.

Though the issue of poverty elimination is mentioned twice in the CBD, it has not really been the subject of concentrated focus. Today's global economy and development paradigm, including the often ill-informed approaches of financial institutions and governments, create both impoverishment and the loss of biodiversity. This includes the obnoxious over-consumption patterns of the rich in all countries. Ironically, even programmes explicitly oriented towards poverty alleviation often end up creating further impoverishment, as they destroy natural resources on which livelihoods depend.

As the GBF participants stated, poverty needs to be defined much more broadly than simply in monetary terms; it includes "hunger, malnutrition, social and political exclusion, discrimination and violence, and loss of cultural and spiritual values. Conversely, poverty eradication must ensure security of access to adequate food, livelihoods and conditions of health and well-being". Several case studies showed that where such as approach is taken, it is indeed possible to bring together biodiversity conservation and poverty elimination, especially through enhancement of livelihoods based on biological resources.

It is therefore critical that COP5 consider these issues under various Agenda items, including Ecosystem Approach (17.1), Financial and Economic Aspects (18.1), Access (23) and Education (18.5). In addition, poverty should run as a cross-cutting theme in all the work programmes of the CBD.

Without such a focus, the CBD will unfortunately remain a convention of marginal interest to the billions of the world's poor and marginalised people.

Terminator Technology still alive!

Patrick Mulvany, ITDG

We thought Monsanto and the Life Industry had rejected the technology; that the CGIAR had outlawed work on it; that the public sector was opposed. But what do we learn from RAFI at their lunchtime briefing on Tuesday, that:

- 7 new patents have been taken out on seed sterility technologies by biotech corporations and universities since the scandal was exposed 2 years ago.
- 43 patents on trait specific technologies (T-GURTS) have been filed
- That USDA has refused to back off its patent claim on the original Terminator Technology
- That the CGIAR, while rejecting seed sterility technologies, is 'silent' on trait-specific technologies.

Public outrage is not enough – we need intergovernmental action.

As one delegate asked, “Why is there any question about the CBD deciding that it should be banned. What are waiting for... it will be the same bad technology in 2 years' time and by then it might have been commercially released. Why don't we just ban it now?”

Also in the WTO, on moral grounds (TRIPs Art 27.2) it could be banned.

So why the delay?

There was a call from the floor for civil society organisations to bring pressure on their governments to ban Terminator and Traitor technologies. Let's start with the delegates...

Our thanks to RAFI – keep up the pressure; keep sending us the latest information!

Genetically Modified Organisms A Threat to Food Security and Biodiversity

Are Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) or the Living Modified Organisms indispensable in feeding the world, protecting the environment and reducing poverty in developing countries?

The companies behind these biotechnologies believe this is the answer to the problems.

However, the Regional Alliance for Conservation policy in Latin Living America and the Caribbean (ARCA), say NO. According to them, these technologies only answer to the need of biotechnological companies of intensifying the dependency of farmers on these products and other farm inputs prescribed by sister or same companies.

Under these technologies, for instance, a farmer is heavily dependent on the genetically modified seed for planting that is protected under the intellectual property rights, as opposed the ancient times when farmers could reproduce, share or store seeds.

Concerned about the effects of these technologies on food security and other health dangers associated with these technologies, ARCA has made its position clear on the subject. Their Position is:

To ratify and implement the Biosafety protocol.

To support the Precautionary Approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Biosafety protocol, being consequent with the defence of the genetic patrimony and the

possible biological and social economic impacts of the LMO.

To demand the agreements and considerations about biosecurity and environment are not subordinate to the commercial agreements and considerations, making necessary to explore the relations between AMUMA and the OMC agreements. To establish a moratorium for the cultures, field trials, and direct use of LMO until enough scientific data about security have been established, and the countries have regulatory procedures to avoid the risk in the transport, handling and use.

To promote and strengthen scientific research about the impacts of LMO in the biologic diversity and culture of the country, with special This is a project that is bound to change the status of biodiversity management, utilization, and conservation in the countries where it will be implemented. Kenya for instance, has achieved very little despite the numerous initiatives to combat land degradation and policy formulations aimed development the drylands.

Land degradation and extensive loss of indigenous vegetation is still on the raise. Now the project intends to turn the tide.hasis in the Origin Centers
To support the creation of local capability to make a followup and monitoring of LMO.

continued on page 4

To promote the public research, complete and independent about the future of agriculture and food security, taking into account a wide range of scientific findings and the environmental, sanitary and socio-economic impacts.

To establish conservation programmes for native resources and to support the culture and commercialization of seeds and products.

To demand the advanced informed agreement procedure previous to the LMO introduction.

To define specific places for field trials and liberation of LMO and to count with a register with public access by country with all places where LMO are or have been introduced.

To demand the separation and labelling of LMO products and its derivatives in the short term.

The following undersigned members of ARCA, approve the present position:

CADERAN, COSTA RICA

Cederana@sol.racsa.co.cr

COMTE NACIONAL

PRO DEFENSA DE LA FAUNA Y FLORA CODEFF, CHILE

Info@codeff.mic.cl

Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 1.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Jacaranda Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-covened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Lunchtime Workshop Thursday May 18, 2000 1-3.00 p.m. Room 8, UNEP Building. ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY. An Agricultural biodiversity Briefing and Book Launch. Topics for discussion: Agricultural Biodiversity, Farmers Rights, Terminator Technology and Biosafety, Farmer-led Conservation, and two book launches, as well as one video launch.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:

Friday, May 19:	Agricultural biodiversity, Identification, monitoring and assessment
Monday, May 22:	Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23:	Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24:	Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25:	Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL



Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Indigenous People's Caucus 1
- Defending Agricultural Biodiversity 3
- Announcements of Side Events 4
- Bird Walks 4

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



It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.

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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Wandera Ojanji, Pamela Cunneyworth.

submissions to ECO:
NGO representatives are invited to submit articles and announcements to ECO via the following:

- 1) e-mail: barbarag@elciafrica.org
- 2) labelled 3.5 diskette or written document. Drop off in box marked "ECO submission" at ELCI display area in the corridor.

INVOLVE US OR WE WILL PULL OUT

Indigenous People's Caucus Speaks Out

By Wandera Ojanji

The Indigenous Peoples' Caucus is threatening to pull out of the Convention on Biological Diversity unless the Convention appreciates their concerns and effectively facilitates their full participation in access and benefit sharing, management, utilization, and conservation.

They are accusing the convention of turning around and instead of being a tool for protecting or enhancing biodiversity, it has now become a tool for not only exploiting the biological diversity, but also the indigenous Knowledge.

"We don't want to be involved with a convention that exploits the resources" was the terse warning from Fred Fortier of Indigenous People's Biodiversity Information Network (IBIN). In essence, the convention should emphasis on conservation, benefit sharing and access, and sustainable utilization.

Ester Camac, the Director of Association Ixcacavaa, an indigenous people's NGO in Costa Rica, laments that very few of the proposals are focussing on conservation or loss of biodiversity.

The bone of contention of the Indigenous People is Article 8(j). They feel the principles of the Article are being manipulated by the multinationals/ bilateral giants and governments to exploit their knowledge and resources, and not for conservation.

Article 8(j) stipulates, "*Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity*

continued on page 2

and promote their wider application with the approval involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

According to Fred Fortier, the biggest problem is the lack of effective legislation to ensure or support the full involvement and participation of indigenous peoples or for the conservation and utilization. People are likely to be denied access and benefits of the biological diversity.

The legislation is supposed to offer guidelines and protection to the biological resource, its utilization and conservation. Yet the indigenous people, who are custodians of this resource, and actually identify themselves with it, have been shut out in the process of implementing the principles of the Article.

The Indigenous Peoples Forum on Biodiversity is particularly concerned that governments want to implement the programmes of work and yet they have not been fully involved.

The programme of work of Article 8 (j) has consequently become controversial between governments and indigenous peoples' organizations.

The national governments that are supposed to facilitate full participation of the indigenous people appear to have different priorities in so far as conservation and utilization, or access and benefit sharing are concerned.

The Caucus feels the economic interests are the first priority of national governments. The governments appear to be serving the interests of multinationals that entice them with high tax

payments, at the expense of conservation or sustainable utilization. They appear not even consider the impact on the resource or how it will affect access and benefits previously enjoyed by the custodians, the indigenous people.

The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Biodiversity is now pushing for a moratorium bio-prospecting until proper or effective mechanisms for protecting indigenous peoples territorial rights or use of resources in such areas are put in place. They are urging other delegates to support the moratorium to stop the

exploitation of indigenous knowledge and the biodiversity resource by bio-prospectors.

In fact according to Professor Stephan Schnierer, Director of Indigenous Australian Peoples, the bio-prospectors and the multinationals have now resorted to unorthodox means of

exploitation of the indigenous knowledge and the biological resources. He says that they send spies into areas of interest under the disguise that they are just researchers out to learn the culture and lifestyles of the indigenous people, while in actual fact they are bio-prospecting for the multinationals. They use the illegally acquired indigenous knowledge for the development of their pharmaceutical products.

The Indigenous Peoples Forum are also calling upon CBD to have the tasks ahead implemented on principle. Indigenous people should be respected. Most importantly, COP should provide sufficient economic resources to guarantee full participation of indigenous people throughout the discussion processes and implementation.

Article 8(j) stipulates, “Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

Defending Agricultural Biodiversity

Patrick Mulvany, ITDG

COP 5 has one of the most important tasks, and a real challenge before it today. It has to decide about how to develop its work on Agricultural Biodiversity. The Draft Decision text is deficient in various details. It does not stress sufficiently the need for a farmer-centred programme.

Agricultural biodiversity is central to both environment and development: Agriculture is the largest user of biodiversity; Farmers are the main ecosystem managers; and Agricultural biodiversity which provides for sustainable production of food, biological support to production, and ecosystem services.

The Agricultural Biodiversity Programme of Work must be farmer-centred if it is to be effective. It must stress and promote: Farmers' guardian role in conservation and sustainable use; Empowerment of farmers; Counteracting the spread of unsustainable agriculture; Farmer-driven research and development.

The CBD must actively collaborate with farming communities and their institutions as principal partners.

Specific textual changes have been proposed by NGOs in the GBF15 report (final page), covering the need for additional clauses in each of the four elements of the proposed programme of work, each addressing the need for farmer-centred approaches and practices.

There is a need to ensure that reports to COP 6 cover all the above aspects and demonstrate the way in which the Convention is really reflecting the demands, aspirations and needs of farmers and that meaningful incentives are provided to them to enable them to continue their role in managing agricultural biodiversity on which universal food security depends.

Many specific details are included in the landmark Decision III/11 on Agricultural Biodiversity, that cover not only the Programme of Work but also, a description of the problems and possibilities of different agricultural systems and the need to mitigate the negative impacts of industrial agriculture on agricultural biodiversity, the relationship with WTO, encouragement to the FAO to complete the negotiations on the International Undertaking.

The International Undertaking is being renegotiated by countries through the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. But, given the distinctive nature, origin and problems of PGRFA and the farmers' knowledge embodied in these, the IU will need to provide a framework which simultaneously permits free access and exchange, through a multilateral system of access to the resources, and implement internationally recognised Farmers' Rights.

The COP Decision should ensure a pro-farmer IU is submitted to the next COP as a legally binding instrument.

This COP should ensure that its decisions on Agricultural Biodiversity are consistent and coherent and linked through specific references in the Decision on Agricultural Biodiversity.

CBD should support farmers' efforts to Sustain Life on Earth: to maintain the functions and integrity of Agro-ecosystems through the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity. A good Decision on Agricultural Biodiversity that loses none of the gains made in previous Decisions and adds a farmer-centred focus to the CBD's work, will be a good step forward.



Announcements

- All delegates who have not received Nature Kenya/BirdLife International postcards on threatened birds of East Africa can obtain a set at the BirdLife international/Nature Kenya stand.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 1.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Jacaranda Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items
- Parallel conference:
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS, TRADITIONAL MEDICINES & LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES OF THE NEW MILLENIUM, May 16-19, ICRAF, Lundgren Auditorium, co-covened by Environment Liaison Centre International and Global Initiative for Traditional Systems of Health.
- Upcoming topics of ECO, for which we invite articles, are:

Monday, May 22:	Alien species, Education and Public Awareness
Tuesday, May 23:	Global Taxonomy Initiative, Impact Assessment
Wednesday, May 24:	Biosafety and Biotechnology
Thursday, May 25:	Summary statements from NGOs on the operations of the Convention

Bird Walks

Bird walks will be offered by Nature Kenya for COP attendees from 8:30-9:30 on Thursday, May 18 and on Tuesday and Thursday May 23 and 25 on UNEP campus. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building, in front of the business centre.

Saturday Morning, May 20, Special Bird Walk for CBD COP delegates and resident Nairobi birders. Meet at National Museum car park at 9:00.

Wednesday Bird Walk: Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.

Pot Luck Outing, May 21: Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, i.e., 21 May. Bring a picnic lunch (most hotels can provide if asked), binoculars, field guides, etc. and meet at 9:00 am at the National Museum car park. Those attending decide on the venue - hence "Pot Luck"



ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Only Fifteen Experts to Carry Forest Biodiversity? 1
- CBD Implementation 1
- Taxonomy Is More Exciting Than You Thought 3

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

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

BIODIVERSITY: TALKING IN CODE (public unawareness...)

A deafening silence greeted the start of the 5th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The press and the public, at least in Kenya and I suspect elsewhere, do not seem able to come to grips with the new word – biodiversity – or the immense potential of the Convention for income-generation, nature conservation, technology transfer or social justice. Inside the beautiful UN compound, delegates talk in code and acronyms, while outside, the press and public remain baffled and the potential unfulfilled.

Some questions arise:

Is it important to reach the public? I believe that an informed public is the strongest ally of the Convention. **How can it be done?** Glossy books and websites do not reach most people; an effort must be made to translate both concepts and jargon, in a medium accessible to the public. **Who should do it?** Technocrats and communicators need to join hands, as neither is likely to succeed alone.

When do we start? How about tomorrow?

The relationship of CBD with WTO and FAO: The Way Forward an NGO statement

COP 5 has been urged to ensure that the fundamental objectives of the CBD are not undermined by the TRIPS Agreement of the WTO. CBD should support fully negotiations of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources of the FAO and consider them as complementary. These parallel international processes have different implications for access to genetic resources and benefit sharing.

This was the resolution of NGOS viz:

Third World Third World Network, Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Council for Responsible Genetics, SEAICE, Diverse Women for Diversity, ECOROPA, Greenpeace International, CODEFF/Friends of the Earth Chile, and Washington Biotechnology Action Council, Kalpavriksh, India and Resaerch Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology.

The NGO have made two proposals for these purposes:

First COP 5 should send a strong message to the TRIPS Council of the WTO on the question of intellectual property rights (IPRs) over biological resources. "We believe that IPRs over biological resources and patents on living forms will have serious and adverse implications for access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits. Indeed, it will undermine the very objectives of the CBD."

The developing countries in the WTO have already made it very their opposition and rejection to the patenting of living forms and their deep concerns over the incompatibility of the TRIPS Agreement with the CBD.

continued on page 2

The NGOs urge COP 5 to strongly support the position adopted by these developing countries. This is particularly important given that the TRIPS Council will be considering the review of Article 27.3 (b) in June. Article 27 (b) requires countries to allow for patenting of certain biological resources.

“We believe that this will be an important opportunity for COP 5 to preserve the objectives of the CBD. In this regard we support the Norwegian proposal for active participation by the CBD in the TRIPS Council considerations.”

The Consortium further recommend that COP 5 call on the WTO member countries in the review of Article 27.3 (b) to clarify the following:

One, that plants and animals as well as micro-organisms and all other living organisms and their parts can not be patented and that natural processes that produce plants, animals and other living organisms shall be excluded from patenting; and

Two, that any *sui generis* systems for the protection of plant varieties can provide for the following:

- the protection of the innovations of indigenous and local farming communities in developing countries, consistent with the CBD and the International Undertaking in Plant Genetic Resources;
- the continuation of the traditional farming practices including the right to save, exchange and save seeds, and sell their harvest; and
- prevention of anti-competitive rights or practices which will threaten food sovereignty of people in developing countries, as is permitted by Article 31 of the TRIPS Agreement.

Thirdly, that the implementation deadline for Article 27.3 (b) be extended to take place after the completion of the substantive review of Article 27.3(b).

The NGOs also urged governments impose a moratorium on issuance of IPRs over biological materials or over knowledge on the use of biological materials that may have been

obtained from collections held in international banks or other deposit institutions where such materials are freely available. The IPRs should be cancellation, where previously granted.

The moratorium should also apply where such may have been obtained without the prior informed consent of the country of origin or inconsistently with the provisions of Article 15 of the CBD.

The second proposal relates to the negotiations on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in the FAO. The aim of these negotiations is to secure an international undertaking, which is adapted to be in harmony with the CBD. The FAO and the COP decisions have already agreed on the mandate and scope of these negotiations.

However a sharp division has emerged among countries. One group, which is being fully supported by the NGOs, wishes to see farmers and other stake holders have free multilateral rights to access to, and benefit sharing from, genetic resources they have developed and used to maintain food security. The other group supports bilateral arrangements and the encroachment of IPRs into these areas.

Consequently, the Consortium is urging COP 5 to give its support for an International Undertaking, to be brought to the next COP as a legally binding instrument. It is hoped the International Undertaking will ensure:

- Multilateral access to these genetic resources for current and future generations, outlawing intellectual property claims on any of the materials or the genes contained therein, or knowledge in the system;
- Benefits are linked to the end use of resources (their contributions to seeds, breeds and food security) and that the benefits to farmers are commensurate with their historical and present contribution to developing resources underpinning food security; and
- Farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell seeds and other propagating material and, in the case of seeds and other materials restricted by national law, the right to sell them in their customary manner and markets.

Action Now on Invasive Alien Species: Implement Article 8(h)

By Rich Blaustein, *Defenders of Wildlife*

Today, the world has a rare opportunity to take necessary measures to address the major cause of species loss worldwide: alien species. In its afternoon session Working Group I of the COP will discuss this urgent problem. Decisive action must be taken now. If COP V is serious about addressing this accelerating cause of biodiversity loss, it must go beyond accepting the commendable guiding principles on alien species put forward at SBSTTA V. Specifically, it can begin the development of a draft Protocol and, importantly, strongly endorse the work of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), providing it with a clear mandate for its second phase.

Why do we need an Alien Species Protocol?

An Alien Species Protocol to the CBD would provide the global community with an effective response to the trans-boundary problem of alien species by ending the uncoordinated and inadequate policies with which communities and nations deal with this continuous problem. It is a global problem that needs a global response.

A CBD Alien Species Protocol would:

1. End the known fragmentation of policy and legal responses to alien species disasters and irremediable damage.
2. Establish specific legal obligations between Protocol Parties.
3. Boost national capacity building to combat alien species problems.
4. Provide the basis for equitable relations in knowledge, technology, and law relevant to alien species.
5. Provide legal guidance to communities, nations, and regions that are either new to the issue of alien species or bewildered by the problem.
6. Address liability and trade issues.
7. Raise global consciousness of the alien species problem and enhance political will to deal with it.

In short a CBD alien species protocol would raise the issue up the global political agenda and provide the entire world and all her peoples with a fair means to address this urgent global problem.

Strong Support for GISP

The COP must do more to support the GISP as it commences its Phase II. The final decision on alien species should do more to express its acknowledgement of the essential work of GISP, and strongly encourage GISP to move forward at its September synthesizing meeting into its phase II work. The GISP program has played a vital role in understanding and addressing the alien species problem throughout the



water hyacinth on Lake Victoria

Action COP V must take:

- Begin the process for drafting an Alien Species Protocol to the CBD
- Adopt the Interim Guiding Principles on alien species
- Strongly endorse the work of GISP and give it a clear mandate for GISP phase II

world. It will serve as a crucial source for ideas and diverse responses in the future. This COP should make clear its confidence in and support of the GISP process and program.

The alien species problem

For those who are new to the problem of alien species, they are the primary cause of species loss worldwide and are the second leading cause of biodiversity loss. Only the direct destruction of habitat is commonly viewed as a greater threat to biodiversity and

some observers argue that the biodiversity degradation caused by alien species is the greatest single threat to global biodiversity. The ways alien species invade and wreak destruction on habitats and other species is insidious and often beyond comprehension. Invasive alien species that are introduced into ecosystems in which they have no natural predators or other biological controls very often: outcompete indigenous species for space, food other resources; predate on indigenous species; and introduce new diseases to which indigenous species lack immune defenses.

continued on page 4

The destruction wreaked by these alien species is massive. Two examples may serve to illustrate here: In New Zealand the Australian Brush tailed possum has caused massive deforestation, while in Africa water hyacinth works its way into water systems, preventing local peoples from using their precious water. These two examples are among numerous others in which alien species invasions have caused severe environmental degradation.

Alien species cause more than just ecological damage. The cost to local farms, villages and nations that are operating corrective programs worldwide runs to billions of dollars. Alien species also enter industrial and commercial processes, causing huge economic losses. In the United States, for example, zebra mussels, an alien species that strangles native mussels and enter commercial and industrial pathways, are estimated to have caused billions of dollars in damage by 2002.

Although the situation is critical, it is not hopeless. Action can be taken, but it must be taken now, and the CBD is the place - the sole place - where it can be taken on a comprehensive global level. In fact the CBD has a responsibility to take such action. Article 8(h) of the CBD text directs parties to "Prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species." This is not a mere suggestion; it is the articulation of an obligation, a responsibility that must not be avoided if the world is to truly address the biodiversity crisis. Up till now, CBD Article 8(h) has not been realized, and most often it has been either avoided or ignored.

COPV's Responsibility

The time to deal with the problem of alien species is now. Otherwise the situation will become even more critical. By commencing the process of drafting an Alien Species Protocol at COP V the parties to the CBD will show that they will help the nations throughout the world, rich and poor, in building their capacity to address this serious threat. Genuine support and strong endorsement for GISP, by strengthening the draft decision language on alien species, is also imperative. If these measures are taken, the 5th Conference of the Parties will go down in CBD history as the moment when parties began to live up to an obligation they all agreed to - namely Article 8(h) - and acted with foresight and commitment to protecting the world's biodiversity for all peoples.

Announcements

- Birdlife International/Nature Kenya lunchtime side-event on 23 May. BOOK LAUNCH...Lunch and drinks will be provided.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 1.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Jacaranda Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items.



ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Only Fifteen Experts to Carry Forest Biodiversity? 1
- CBD Implementation 1
- What is a BioNet? 1
- Taxonomy Is More Exciting Than You Thought 3

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

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

Bio-NET-INTERNATIONAL: A Global Cost-Effective Response to a Taxonomic Crisis in the Developing World

By Wandera Ojanji

Sustainable management and wise use of biodiversity presupposes a sound knowledge of the identity and interrelationships of its constituent organisms which requires good and adequate taxonomic capabilities. These are however lacking in most, if not all, developing countries where the need for sustainable management and use of biodiversity is most urgent.

Before you can access anything, leave alone the biological resources, you need to know or rightly identify it. Having the correct identification name gives the access to relevant and correct information. A wrong identification leads to a false and irrelevant information, that may not only deny you the benefits

continued on page 4

Only Fifteen Experts to Carry Forest Biodiversity Through to COP-6? Not Possible!

a statement by:
Birdlife International*Defenders of Wildlife* Diverse Women for Diversity*Ecoropa*Ecoterra*German NGO Forum on Environment and Development-WG on Biodiversity*Greenpeace International*Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Network*Institute of Biodiversity*ITDG*Environment Liaison Centre International

The CBD is the only globally legally binding instrument on forest biodiversity, and only the CBD provides accountability of national action related to forest biodiversity.

Forest biodiversity will be one of the main thematic areas on the agenda at COP-6. COP-5 has to ensure a thorough preparation between now and 2002. We are very concerned about the limited discussions at COP-5 in this regard. Although a small Ad-hoc Technical Expert Group of fifteen participants reporting to the SBSTTA would be a step forward, it is not sufficient. It can neither take into account the expertise and views of

continued on page 2

The CBD - on its road to implementation?

by Peter Herkenrath, BirdLife International

The Convention on Biological Diversity has been in force for 6 1/2 years. It has established its bodies as well as a number of work programmes. With 177 parties, it is widely accepted, and many countries have initiated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. So, everything's alright? Obviously not.

continued on page 2

1. Revision of the programme of work towards strong action-orientation.
2. Compliance mechanisms for the implementation of the work programme.
3. Analysis of gaps in forest biodiversity law and law enforcement on the national and international levels.
4. Evaluation of forest biodiversity.
5. Review and synchronisation of COP decisions on thematic and cross-cutting issues, such as agricultural biodiversity, access and benefit-sharing, incentive measures, and Article 8(j) which are relevant for forest biodiversity.

6. Socio-economic aspects of forest biodiversity, including forest biodiversity products and market access and international trade of those products.
7. Development of elements which allow to prioritise forests with regard to their quality and biodiversity value.
8. New and additional funding options for forest biodiversity.

Finally, we consider the ecosystem approach as an indispensable tool for conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity and urge you to use the ecosystem approach as the overall principle for work on forest biodiversity.

The CBD has not been able to stop the loss of biological diversity through, for instance, the rapid destruction of globally significant ecosystems like primary forests or drylands. People are losing the natural resources they depend on, species continue to get to the brink of extinction, and the genetic diversity of crops and their wild relatives is seriously reducing.

What can be done? No doubt, the implementation of the convention must be the strong focus for the next years. Last year's Intersessional Meeting on the Operations of the Convention (ISOC) focused on the question of how to improve the bodies and mechanisms of the CBD in order to allow for better implementation. The result is a number of proposals for COP 5, ranging from a strategic plan for the convention, clearer guidance to the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups and a Scientific Assessment Mechanism to the establishment of a Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI). The latter especially has proved to be contentious. Listening to the discussions at ISOC and last week at COP 5, there were not many arguments brought forward for why an SBI would turn the tide of loss of biodiversity. Not many parties were talking about the underlying causes of the global biodiversity crisis, an analysis of which might lead to more inspiring ideas than the establishment of just another time and resources-

consuming body under the CBD. What about issues such as economic, financial and trade conditions, unsustainable consumption, unequal distribution of wealth, unresolved land tenure problems, inadequate cross-sectoral integration of biodiversity issues within decision-making bodies or the lack of respect for the knowledge of indigenous and traditional communities?

It is certainly necessary to strengthen the existing bodies of the convention to make their work much more effective. A strategic plan would be helpful if seriously implemented. In addition, the convention should build partnerships with other institutions, agencies and organisations. This is essential to keep biodiversity on the global and regional agenda. We don't want to see the CBD living its life as an island of peace and happiness while other more powerful institutions are continuing to undermine the objectives of the convention. We are convinced that the existing memoranda of understanding or cooperation are already strengthening the case of our convention and we hope that new ones will come into life, as well as other effective forms of cooperation.

A crucial point is the involvement of civil society. Indigenous bodies, local communities, non-governmental organisations, business, scientific institutions and the wider public all need to be part of the process globally, regionally, nationally and locally to establish the momentum that is needed for effective implementation. This is where the investment of the scarce resources is really needed.

Taxonomy Is More Exciting Than You Thought...

(Editor's note: in striving to cover most of the topics covered by COP, we have been stumped by the Global Taxonomy Initiative...no NGOs are tracking this one closely, *yawn, snore!* But taxonomist friends (not generally from the NGO sector) have preferred some information, highlighting how taxonomy can advance many other agendas, so long as we know what we are talking about)

The ability to identify - whether a friend from a foe, an edible from an inedible mushroom, or a Number 1 bus from a Number 96 bus - is fundamental to survival. In the fields of food production and medicine, farmers, doctors and scientists need to be able to identify the causal organisms which constantly afflict people, animals and crops. Yet the science which is dedicated to identifying the organisms with which we share this planet - taxonomy - has a very low profile. To the layman, taxonomy tends to be regarded as a dry, academic discipline of little relevance except as a source of names for organisms being studied. However, to anyone engaged in any of the biological sciences - particularly agriculture, horticulture, conservation or medicine - accurate identification is essential.

Some of the products of taxonomy include:

Names - an internationally agreed system for naming organisms is used which allows all who use or work with natural diversity to indicate precisely which organisms they are concerned with when contributing and/or seeking knowledge. **Identifications** - by using the unique characteristics of individual species or organisms to distinguish one species from another. **Identification keys and systems** - devices which provide means knowledge about them. relationship between groups of "family traits", specific evolutionary origins, which pest status, etc., of newly **Distributions** - to show where world in different ecosystems ecological niches.

What's the problem?

A tremendous number of the described, or entered into the But information about what is access outside of a major Global Taxonomy Initiative the CBD as a means of building the world, so that everyone can

taxonomy provides for understanding biodiversity. The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and BioNet International share many goals with the GTI, but have different origins. One of the tasks facing the CBD is to sort out how to get the best synergy from these and other initiatives to resolve the "taxonomic impediment."

Taxonomy (also called systematics) is the science dedicated to discovering, identifying, naming and placing organisms in their correct position in the evolutionary spectrum of biodiversity. It is the science that gives unique names to individual species of organisms, allowing communication across geographic and cultural gaps. The name of an organism is the key to all that is known about it, and gives access to knowledge on how to conserve it if it is beneficial, or to control it if it is a pest. Taxonomy underpins all other biological sciences.

to identify organisms and link to **Relationships** - uncovering the organisms and recognising behaviour characteristics and enable predications of habits, discovered species. different species occur in the and in smaller habitats and

world's species have not yet been international taxonomic system. already known can be difficult to museum or herbarium. The (GTI) has been proposed under taxonomic capacity throughout benefit from the foundation that

Over the last ten years, privatisation has caused many institutions that formerly provided free identifications to start charging for their services. Meanwhile, many taxonomic posts have not been replaced as staff has retired. Thus, getting accurate identifications, especially on organisms from tropical developing countries, has become increasingly expensive and difficult in recent years. This has caused problems for many agricultural, forestry, and conservation management issues that depend upon accurate identifications.

Examples of the importance of taxonomy

Taxonomy is vital to biological control, and played a key role in the control of cassava mealybug in Africa with a parasitic wasp, control of water hyacinth in many places with beetles, and, most recently, control of pink mealybug in the Caribbean. Taxonomy is vital to the use of organisms in environmental monitoring programmes, as indicators of ecosystem health, and to the quality of quarantine inspection and protection of crops. Taxonomy is vital to public health. For example, characterisation of species complexes amongst mosquitoes that need to be managed in different ways.

The international communication system provided by taxonomy can help protect against biopiracy. Taxonomy, and herbarium specimens, provided vital evidence in the recent rejection of the patent on ayahuasca (Banisteriopsis), by helping to document claims of the indigenous people. Taxonomy can also help prove geographic origin of organisms or samples.

BioNet, con't

of the resource, but prove dangerous. The acquisition of necessary taxonomic services from expert centres of the developed world has proved to be too costly and not practical on a sustainable basis. The only cost effective and practical solution is for the developing countries to become realistically self-reliant in taxonomy through sub-regional Locally Organised and Operated Partnerships (LOOPS). LOOPS enable South – South cooperation, that is, pooling and sharing of existing taxonomic skills, collections and records, and infrastructures followed by North-South partnerships for institutional strengthening and human resource development.

BioNET-INTERNATIONAL, a global network for taxonomy, is the global response to the taxonomic crisis in the developing world, occasioned by the coincidental withdrawal of free biosystematic services formerly available to developing countries at the expert centres of the developed world and the dramatic increase in the need for taxonomic services following the Earth Summit of Rio in 1992.

The main purpose of Bio-NET-INTERNATIONAL is to pull, share and the use of existing taxonomic resources in the various sub-regions of the developing world through Technical Co-operation Networks like LOOPS and SOUTH-SOUTH cooperations. The purpose of BioNET-INTERNATIONAL is not just for the identification of the biodiversity resources. The identification is means of contributing to environmental conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through inventorying, monitoring and wise management of ecosystems and habitats, prevention of pollution, bioprospecting and development of green products, and equitable sharing of benefits in accordance with the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Its contributions have also been felt in the provision of sustainable health and wealth of humankind, especially in rural communities, eradication of poverty and disease and promotion of equitable access to resources and opportunities.

This is expected to enable the transfer of taxonomic information, skills and expertise and new technologies from the expert centres of the developed world to the relevant institutions in the LOOPS through donor-funded programmes for institutional strengthening and human resource development.

Announcements

- Invitation to a lunchtime at COP 5 ON Important Bird Areas of Africa – priority sites for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Speakers from Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, Nature Kenya, Nigerian Conservation Foundation and the BirdLife International Secretariat. Today, May 23, 2000. 13.00 – 15.00 hrs: room 7. Lunch will be provided.
- Taxonomic Exhibition at the the National Museums of Kenya Herbarium, starting today May 23, 2000 to Friday May 24, 2000. Time 10.00 am to 1.00pm in the morning and 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm in the afternoon. **ENTRANCE IS FREE FOR COP 5 DELEGATES**. REGISTER YOUR INTEREST AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM DESK IN THE CONFERENCE EXHIBITION AREA. The National Museums of Kenya houses the National Centre for Bio-diversity with a wide range of both national and regional specimens.
- Tourism Workshop. Critical Information: Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity. Today, May 23, 1.00 –2.00pm
- Morning bird-watching tour on UNEP grounds, 23 May and 25 May, 8:30 to 9:30 am, organised by Nature Kenya. Meet at the main entrance to the UNEP building at 8:30 am, or ask for directions from the Nature Kenya/BirdLife International stand.



ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Top Marks for Theory 1
- Cultural & Spiritual Values 1
- Conference on Medicinal Plants 4

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

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

Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity

Ruth Liloqula,
an Indigenous Person from Kukumaquina
Tribe in Solomon Islands

To me and the society to which I belong and identify with, as an indigenous person, and a woman, spiritual and cultural values of diversity – must be taken into account when one talks about conservation and sustainable use.

In my society, the role of women and men in conservation, in respect to the gifts of nature, is given equal importance and value, which the modern world finds difficult to support and recognize.

continued on page 3

Top marks for Theory, but a Disaster in Practice

By: Patrick Mulvany, ITDG

The world's press and in particular the European press was last week raging about the incidental planting over the last 2 years (and therefore at least the last 3 or 4 planting seasons) of oilseed rape mixed, contaminated, call it what you will, with seeds containing genetically engineered constructs not approved for use in Europe. The seed company concerned, Advanta Seeds and the UK Ministry of Agriculture knew by mid April of this contamination of the crop growing in the field and the seed in the distribution chain. While Advanta sent out the message to halt sales of Hyola, the variety that had been cross-pollinated with Round Up herbicide resistance genes at the seed bulking stage in Canadian fields, the UK sat on the information for a full month.

As the news broke across Europe, the range of reaction displayed by both the press and the governments of the 5 countries directly involved may indicate their bottom line attitude to the Biosafety Protocol. The Canadian press seem to have gone a long way towards understanding the European public, as well as hearing the warning bells as the right of Canadian farmers to plant the most marketable (non-GM) oilseed rape is steadily eroded. Over 70% of OSR in Canada is now

continued on page 2

transgenic, and the cross-pollination that has occurred in this particular case is estimated to have taken place over a distance of 800m, which is further than industry guidelines for commercial growing and SCIMAC regulations for field tests and farm scale trials.

The French and German press have been perhaps swifter than their governments in understanding how the public would react to yet another safety scandal in European farming, while the British were lambasted this weekend by their own appointed advisory body, English Nature, for failing to inform the public immediately. In fact, if the British had made public the information more promptly, then many farmers could have avoided planting the contaminated variety this spring as heavy rain delayed planting in the UK until the beginning of May.

Aided by a BBC news article that may well have been lifted straight from a MAFF press release, the British position has been to play down any risk, endorse the harvesting of the crop and meanwhile institute spot checks for agriculture seed purity from June. Until now they have only done spot checks on food grade commodities.

The more cynical here in Nairobi see press releasing the story a week before the Ministerial signing of the Biosafety Protocol here tomorrow as a blatant trivialisation of its core principles.

Only the Swedes seem to understand the fundamental points of law. They have ordered the immediate destruction of the crop.

Robert Andren, an official from the Swedish delegation said 'If a variety hasn't got consent in the EU, it is illegal to use it. If any given variety has not been filed for approval in the EU, it means there has been no risk assessment, so we simply do not know if it is safe or not. This is a perfect example of the need for the Precautionary Principle, and this is what we have acted upon. We had problems 2 years ago with a field test of transgenic OSR, when the company involved, Swalof Weibull found that instead of 2 transgenic lines, their samples contained 4 lines, which the Canadian seed company had not informed them about. This crop was also destroyed.'

It makes a mockery of the law, and the de facto moratorium at present in place in EU, if any of the countries where these accidental releases have occurred do not immediately follow Sweden's example. To play down the illegal status of this crop, and encourage its harvest shows their complete unwillingness and incapacity to address the issue of liability and financial redress.

The fact that Europe is a centre of diversity for oilseed rape, as well as an area that has some considerable problems with volunteer OSR escaping the fields and colonising our roadsides must scream a message to the rest of the world that we are neither caring nor competent in the preservation of our biodiversity. Countries of the South, who are so much richer than us in terms of genetic resources have been taking particular interest in the story, as the idea that the North will lead the way in Biosafety implementation wears a little thin.

The Secretary of State for the Environment for Portugal (who currently hold the EU presidency) Rui Goncalves freely conceded this morning that in the light of stories such as this, there may be a pressing need to tighten the current legislation in a number of areas. He said that even if a system for exporting country responsibility and liability redress was implemented, it would not function in practice without a robust mechanism for widely available testing, traceability along the entire supply chain and a real investment in capacity building, even for industrialised countries.

For any individual farmer looking for compensation, they might like to look up a salutary tale of some US cotton farmers, who it took over 2 years to be awarded compensation by the court against Monsanto – and that in the most litigious country on Earth. Which is maybe why it was the Like Minded group, and African countries in particular who pressed for strong practical language in the Biosafety Protocol, enshrining the Precautionary Principle at its very core. One day, the world will come to thank them from the bottom of their hearts. In the meantime, European nation states need to put their theory into practice, if their signatures are to mean anything at all.

Biodiversity is the very core of my existence, and that of my community. As a member of my community, my tribe and my biodiversity, I identify with my father, mother, brothers, sisters and my extended families, through blood ties and land ties, clans and tribes. I identify with the land that is given to me, that of the tribal community, with the trees, the streams and the rivers that run through it, with the living and non-living things that are found in them, the birds and the many creatures that are in the forests, and the spirits of the trees and the land of my ancestors, that use it as their home after death.

These live in vicinity, to protect and guide in the way in which I use and respect my biodiversity, and to redress me for misuse and abuse. I also identify with the sea and the creatures that live in the sea such as the turtles, the crocodiles and the dolphins.

The biodiversity in the land acts as my calendar for when to plant, to hunt, to fish, to refrain from harvesting, and what to harvest.

As an indigenous person, the spiritual nature of the biodiversity, maintains my linkages to ancestors long gone. The forest is not just the forest, but it is the place where I walk and fend on the same land where my ancestors walke. It is where I touch base with the spirits of the trees and other biodiversity, and where I touch base with my ancestors in times of trouble, sadness, and happiness. It is a place where I touch base with the supernatural for my wellbeing.

For these many values, it's the place where using part of it, I must give thanks to the spirits that live on it, the spirit of the trees and other biodiversity that must be destroyed or asked to live.

The spirits of the biodiversity have given us valuable knowledge for our survival and well being. With this strong belief in my culture, the knowledge that my ancestors may have died with, is never lost.

When the time is right, and a suitable member of the family or tribe is identified, the spirits of our ancestors will give that person the knowledge. Important traditional knowledge is never lost because of the spiritual value that we put on the spirits in our biodiversity.

For me, and my indigenous people, biodiversity in its entirety is a world where spirits of nature exist, where our sacred sites are, where our plants, and animals live, where the sun's and the moon's rays impregnate the earth so that it can give birth to new life and say farewell to those that have passed on to the spirit world all around us, and where the woman baths the earth with blood while giving birth, and giving her the equal responsibility of an equal partner with her husband to bring up their children to respect and care for biodiversity in order that it

will also care for them and their children and that of their children.

It is my sincere belief that it is time for biodiversity programs to give equal priority to the spiritual and cultural value of biodiversity.

This is the view that most

indigenous people touch base with and it provides the tangible reasons for conservation we identify with. It means the survival and sustainable use of our resources, our identity, culture and existence.

People must learn to have great respect for our biodiversity, and the spirits that live in it, and take care that our dealings with her, and never violate her integrity. We need to ensure that there is a balance between all things, the spirits of nature, of our ancestors, of our animals and trees, our culture and identity.

“It is my sincere belief that it is time for biodiversity programs to give equal priority to the spiritual and cultural value of biodiversity.”

Conference on Medicinal Plants, Traditional Medicine and Local Communities of Africa: Challenges & Opportunities of the New Millennium

Environment Liaison Centre International

The conference focused on the identification of the current status of traditional health care in developing countries, and the threats posed to it by cultural change, lack of legal and economic policies and environmental degradation.

The main topics covered were:

- 1) The place and role of traditional health care systems and traditional medicines in public health;
- 2) Intellectual property rights, development of medicinal plants, genetic resources and drug recovery;
- 3) Sustainable use, trade and conservation of medicinal plants;
- 4) Status of research and its contribution to local primary health care and to sustainable use and development of medicinal plants, traditional medicines and pharmacopoeia.

The conference worked towards a contribution to the outcomes of COP 5 on issues relating to indigenous health knowledge and protection of IPR and biodiversity. It assessed the status of the traditional medicine sector in order to consolidate/disseminate information from fragmented research initiatives, and advised action and coordination in the supply and sustainable development of medicinal plant production.

Priority diseases were identified as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Areas of major concern include the lack of official recognition of traditional health practitioners in many countries, and the inadequacy of conservation policy.

Announcements

- Birdlife International/Nature Kenya lunchtime side-event on 23 May. BOOK LAUNCH...Lunch and drinks will be provided.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 1.
- NGO representatives wishing to help put ECO together can meet at the Jacaranda Room at Landmark Hotel, at 8:00 p.m. each evening. This venue is also available to NGOs wishing to hold meetings in the evenings to address upcoming COP agenda items.
- "Towards Regional Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: Lessons from the East African Cross Border Biodiversity Project" hosted by ACTS. Wednesday May 24, 1:00 Lunch is provided.



ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Ecosystem Approach 1
- GMOs: A Threat to Food Security ... 3
- Invasive Species 4
- Announcements 4

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

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

Correction

In yesterday's top story, 'Top Marks for Theory, but a Disaster in Practice', we erroneously attributed the authorship to Patrick Mulvany of ITDG however the story was written by Joyce Hambling. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused.

Ecosystem Approach - Really?

By: Dave Pritchard, BirdLife International

Paying more attention to ecosystems must be a good thing. We have an array of legal and policy instruments which seek to safeguard species populations, natural resources, air and water quality and even habitats, but almost none whose focus of attention is ecological processes. Regard to those, and to the ecosystem as a functional unit of management, could be envisaged as the core of an "ecosystem approach" to espouse through the CBD.

But this seems a long way from what the Convention has sought this week to adopt. The exhaustively debated "principles", appended to a conference decision, include a range of important ideas which countries have felt a need to promote in some coherent way. However the relationship between some of these principles and the idea of paying more attention to ecosystems is far from obvious. Why should decentralising management to the lowest level, for example, necessarily serve ecosystems better than its opposite? Bizarrely we can effectively find its opposite in the same text, where another principle speaks of appropriate spatial scales and promotion of connectivity between areas.

continued on page 2

The point highlighted by some delegations, that the principles are intended to be used as an integrated package, may cause difficulties here. On the other hand, one can see the desirability of guarding against individual elements being invoked for a vested interest, out of context, as the “CBD-approved approach”. (After all, context is perhaps what the ecosystem is all about).

Praise is due to delegations, led again by the Seychelles, who have strongly underlined the fact that the ecosystem approach does not preclude other approaches, such as biosphere reserves, protected areas and single-species conservation programmes. The idea that an urgent single-species programme, for example, could be rejected for funding because such a programme is not seen as fitting the “ecosystem approach”, would surely be a bizarre consequence of a supposedly state-of-the-art set of pronouncements from the only global convention to deal with the whole of biological diversity.

A further example is now before us, in the study

on complementarity between the CBD and the Convention on Migratory Species, tabled as a conference information document. Efforts to address the conservation of certain migratory wild animals, not only at the level of single species, but also distinct migratory populations of a species, or groups of related species, may need to have their scope and parameters defined by the migratory ranges, migration corridors or bird “flyways” used by those animals. This could involve a chain of ecosystems or a chain of countries, in some cases spanning the highest to the lowest latitudes and altitudes. Adherence to an “ecosystem approach” as the dominant organising principle might be quite inappropriate in such cases.

The CBD parties have struggled creditably to articulate a package of important ideas for framing more coherent action than in the past. But it seems somewhat questionable whether what they have produced belongs under the title of an “ecosystem approach”. Perhaps that is the portion of the text which should have attracted suggestions for amendment.

Genetically Modified Organisms: A Threat to Food Security and Biodiversity

By Wandera Ojanji

Are Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or the Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) – plants and animals – indispensable in feeding the world, protecting the environment and reducing poverty in developing countries, as the biotechnology engineering companies allege?

“No. They actually are designed for the opposite.” This is position of a growing body of scientists, farmers, NGOs, institutions, and governments opposed to the GMOs. They state that the introduction of GMOs to developing countries, will exacerbate inequality and prevent the essential shift to sustainable agriculture that can provide food security and health around the world. In an open letter to the delegates to the fifth Conference of Parties (COP 5), on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), over 310 scientists from both the developed and developing countries demanded a moratorium on the use of GMOs or LMOs. They are extremely concerned about

the hazards of GMOs to biodiversity, food safety, human and animal health.

“We call for the immediate suspension of all environmental releases of genetically modified crops and products, both commercially and in open field trials, for at least five years; for patents on living processes, organisms, seeds, cell lines and genes to be revoked and banned; and for a comprehensive public enquiry into the future of agriculture and food security for all.”

They argue that GM crops intensify corporate monopoly on food. In order to protect their patents, corporations continue to develop Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs), like Terminator and Trait-specific technologies.

Terminator technology makes seeds sterile in the second generation, preventing farmers from saving and replanting seed, which is what most farmers do in the Third World. Under these technologies, for instance, a farmer is heavily dependent on the genetically modified seed for

planting which is protected under the intellectual property rights, as opposed to the ancient times when farmers could reproduce, share or store seeds.

Rural Advanced Foundation International considers the terminator technology, the most offensive application of agricultural biotechnology to the 1.4 billion people who depend on farm-saved seed. Trait-specific GURTs are technologies that make it possible, using an external inducer, to switch on and off specific characteristics of a plant such as resistance to diseases. The result of this is that farmers will be obliged to apply particular chemicals to ensure that their crops thrive.

This is not only increasing farmer dependency on chemicals and the genetic engineering companies, it is also driving many farmers to destitution. A consortium of over 25 NGOs at the COP 5 warn that this is a dangerous diversion that is preventing the essential shift to sustainable agriculture that can guarantee food security and health around the world. "Beyond being an admission that genetically engineered crops are not safe, biosafety at the expense of food security is not an acceptable trade-off"

The consortium is worried. Currently, almost all of the major companies that control the agricultural engineering technology markets – like AstraZeneca Novartis Monsanto of the USA and Advanta Seeds of UK - have patents on the Terminator technology. And despite promises by the biotechnology companies last year to abandon the technology, 50 new GURT patents have been issued. The consortium claims that AstraZeneca has already admitted to conducting field trials on GURTs.

The scientists want the patents banned because they threaten food security, sanction biopiracy, of indigenous knowledge and genetic resources, violate basic human rights and dignity, compromise health care, impede medical and scientific research and are against the welfare of animals.

To the scientists and the Regional Alliance for Conservation policy in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARCA), these technologies only answer to the need of biotechnological

companies of intensifying the dependency of farmers on these products and other farm inputs prescribed by sister or same companies. The scientist say the technologies are a source of many problems like drop in crop yields, increased herbicide use, erratic performance, and poor economic returns to the farmers."

A survey, *Evidence of the magnitude consequences the Roundup Ready Soybean Yield Drag from University based Varietal Trials in 1998*, carried out on 8200 field trials of the most widely grown GM crops – herbicide tolerant soybeans – revealed that they yield 6.7 per cent less and required two to five times more herbicide than non-GM varieties. Products resulting from GMOs can also be hazardous. For example, genetically modified Bovine Growth hormone, injected into cows in order to increase milk yield, not only causes excessive suffering and illness for the cows but also increases IGF-1 in the milk, a substance linked to breast and prostate cancers in humans.

The scientists also feel that the form in which genetic modification is currently practiced is inherently unsafe. Secret memoranda of US Food and Drug administration revealed that it ignored the warnings of its own scientists that genetic engineering is a new departure and introduces new risks. Interestingly, the first GM crop to be commercialized – the Flavr Savr tomato - did not pass the required toxicological tests, according to the secret memorandum. Some GM potatoes in the UK have also been found to be toxic, an effect the research scientists, Dr Arpad Pusztai and his collaborators attribute to genetic transformation during the making of the GM plants.

Invasive Species : The Second Biggest Threat to Biodiversity

By Wandera Ojanji

One of the greatest threats to both managed and natural ecosystems throughout the world is the growing number of harmful alien species that invade the ecosystems. The invasive alien species, where they strike, have profound, negative impacts on biological diversity at local, regional and global levels. They are the second largest cause of biodiversity loss after habitat destruction.

The invasive alien species pose serious economic and ecosystem challenges. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes the seriousness of the problem and consequently calls upon governments to face up the challenge. Article 8 (h) of the CBD calls on governments to “prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats, or species.”

The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), a collaboration between UNEP, CABI, IUCN and SCOPE, in consideration of the urgency to comprehensively tackle alien species and the grave threat that they pose to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components have a proposal to COP 5.

They are urging COP 5 to provide a workable mechanism to continue the CBD’s work on alien invasive species issue after COP 5 and in time for inclusion in COP 6 discussions.

This can be achieved by the COP 5 requesting the secretariat to develop a detailed and realistic workplan with explicit deadlines and financial implications to address the tasks identified in the recommendations.

This should be done in collaboration with GISP and other relevant partners like FAO and WHO.

Announcements

- The Ecosystem Conservation Group meets from 9-12 noon in room R-311.
- During the CBD, there will be an NGO coordinating meeting each day at 9 am. in Tent 2.
- Meeting of the German Deputy Minister with NGOs will occur between 11-13 In conference room 7.
- “New Zealand - Setting priorities and designing projects’ meets in the UNESCO room.



ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

Office for Africa
P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org

THE LAST ECO

The Voice of the NGO Community at the Fifth Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 10 FRIDAY MAY 26, 2000

WHAT'S INSIDE

- NGO Statement to Ministers 1
- Reflections on COP5 from:
 - Joyce Hambling 2
 - Peter Odhiambo 3
 - Wangari Maathai 4

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

It is being published at CBD COP V by Environment Liaison Centre International.

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

ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Wandera Ojanji

ENVIRONMENT LIAISON CENTRE INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 72461
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel. 254-2-562022
Fax. 254-2-562175
barbarag@elciafrica.org



NGO Statement to the Ministers

given by Wangari Maathai on the part of the Civil Society Organisations who have coordinated their activities at this COP

May we remind all of us that the disastrous trend of biodiversity destruction has yet to be slowed down and stopped. The loss of components and cohesion of biodiversity shakes the very bedrock of our biosphere, of lives, livelihoods, cultures, values, agricultures, wildlife, forests, waters, communities and our very ability for peaceful cooperation at all levels.

Sufficient capacity to reverse this brutal trend cannot be built by any one level or agent only. It can grow and be cherished at all levels involving all diverse talents necessary. We, therefore, need public participation, political accountability and transparency and forceful efforts at consistency. In this spirit we focus on the following issues:

Biosafety

First of all, we wish to congratulate all Parties for the adoption of the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. The past five years is testimony to the Parties' efforts and commitment to the process, particularly the African Group/ Like-Minded Group of countries, whose efforts secured the first international agreement that regulates GMOs. We are very pleased to note that over 60 Parties have put their signature to the Biosafety Protocol. We urge countries to sign it, ratify it and implement it. We are concerned about substantial transboundary movement of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) that is taking place in the interim, especially the dumping of GMOs onto developing countries as food aid. This undermines the very spirit of the Protocol .

continued on page 2

Production of ECO is made possible by the support of the Finnish and Canadian governments, and CORDAID.

Just last week, news broke of the large-scale accidental planting over the last two years of GM-contaminated oilseed rape in Europe, a centre of diversity for rape and related species. This is a further alarming example of the gaping holes in current GM regulation and implementation. We need stricter segregation and labelling, testing, traceability, monitoring, enforcement, liability and compensation and real adherence to the Precautionary Principle. We commend government decisions to destroy these crops.

In the interim, before the coming into force of the protocol and the applicability of all its provisions, we urge COP 5 to call for a moratorium on the transboundary movement of GMOs. This will allow time for developing countries to build sufficient capacity for biosafety. We urge COP 5 to call for a ban of GMOs in food aid. Further, we call for a cessation on current research and development of all genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs).

Access and benefit sharing

We urge COP 5 to ensure that the fundamental objectives of the CBD are not undermined by the TRIPS Agreement of the WTO and also, to ensure complementarity with the negotiations of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources of the FAO.

In this regard, we urge COP 5 to take action in two areas:

WTO-TRIPS Agreement

We urge COP 5 to send a strong message to the TRIPS Council of the WTO that the provisions of the CBD should take precedence over the TRIPS Agreement, specifically Article 27.3(b). We believe that IPRs over biological resources and patents on living organisms are unethical and will have serious and adverse implications for access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of benefits. Indeed, they undermine the very objectives of the CBD.

The majority of countries in the developing world have already expressed at the WTO their rejection of patents over life forms, and their deep concerns over the incompatibility of the TRIPS Agreement with the CBD. We therefore, also urge COP 5 to send a strong message of support for the position adopted by these countries.

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources

We urge COP 5 to send a strong message of encouragement to the FAO to achieve the speedy conclusion of the on-going negotiations on the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in the FAO. Farmers' and other stakeholders' multilateral access to, and benefit sharing from, genetic resources they have developed and used to maintain food security must be protected. Farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell seeds and other propagating material and, in the case of seeds and other materials, the right to sell them in their customary manner and markets must be preserved. These aims could be fulfilled by the adoption of the International Undertaking as a protocol of the CBD.

Mr. Chairman, we assure that we will apply our talents responsibly to fulfill the objectives and aims to empower this small, but very important convention.

When Reality is more Than Political Rhetoric By JOYCE HAMBLING

So COP 5 is nearly over, with only a few blunders in diplomacy, a signed protocol, leaving us a few steps closer to an International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (IU), and a somewhat poorer language.

Although many crucial themes have been debated at length here at COP 5, others have hardly been mentioned – and even Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs) was nearly passed over.

But the crux of the conference, for many, has gone on in the meetings and contact groups on access and benefit sharing. A quote from the American Seed Association in 1980 spells it out; "our (national) economic security depends on continued access to the world genetic resources."

In a century where the patents are the new collateral and where genebanks in the industrialized North hold more accessions or variety samples than in their centers of origin and diversity, the issue of access seemed to focus more on the continued facilitation of the plun-

dering of genetic resources by transnational corporations than the capacity building of local communities to reintroduce and to reinvigorate their stolen heritage in situ.

Which brought the words benefit sharing rushing out the same breath, the syllables collided together like some magic spell. As discussions focused increasingly on the legal frameworks to ensure an equitable percentage of financial profits would be shared with individual communities, many wondered whether even 50% of nothing would buy a hill of beans.

A few clear voices reminded us of the immeasurable value of cultural and biological diversity that is woven into the fabric of the lives of indigenous people and local communities all over the world, that no amount of money could replace or compensate for, and that the right to continue living is symbiosis with their environments must be sovereign over financial remuneration. These voices, from Columbia, from Central African were a tiny minority here, although they speak the thoughts of the disenfranchised who make up so much of the earth's population.

As parties quibbled over individual works rare into the night on the text of Article 8 and related provisions, many faces were missing. The Maasai, who formed so integral a part of the entertainment at official functions here, were absent. So too, were the francophone Africans, as no translation was facilitated. Others, too many to mention, were also nowhere to be seen.

The Spanish speaking indigenous peoples had their English to Spanish translation paid for, at least in part, out of their pockets.

So, as the discussions ran until midnight on how best to insure the full participation and consultation of indigenous people and local communities, the irony and embarrassment for the CBD dawned on many of us. By definition, the entire process of this Convention always has to be fluid, evolving and perhaps its most exciting potential stems from this. As the issues under discussion have an increasingly vital impact on people's lives, it is essential that the CBD build its own capacity to involve them in this first, fundamental process towards new paradigms for continued life on this planet.

It's not been all bad though. The entire conference was seen at some point or other avidly reading the daily tabloid rag, supported

by industry. It was consistently the worst journalism I have ever read (with the possible exception of the Sunday People in the UK) and apart from attracting a potential legal action from a collective of people it erroneously featured, its only other impact was to give us a good laugh and waste a couple of innocent trees. Apparently, the journalists who applied their talents to its production were getting paid higher rates than if they had written for the Nation or the Standard.

I guess they are not the first people to sell their souls for thirty pieces of silver.

Outside of the grand and respectful conference halls, the farmers who I talked to from Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Sudan inspired me with real affirmation that the work I do has the mandate of ordinary people. They, women and men who feed their children and grand children on plots of land of two or three acres, farmed organically, told me of the many varieties of beans, maize, bananas, sorghum and millet they grow, through saving seed and intercropping. Their self-reliance and obvious food security is and will be the backbone of a positive African future.

In truth, they hold an essential part of agricultural biodiversity in their hands, and just speaking for myself, they have my complete confidence.

Why the Non-committal stand on Forests?

**By Peter Odhiambo
EAWLS**

Forests are understood to be important solutions to the conservation of biological diversity equation. However, this understanding has not been translated to a solid commitment to their conservation.

The need for an open ended working group on forest biodiversity policy mechanism has been downplayed to a 15-member technical experts groups. After consultations in IPF and IFF, it would have been more logical for adoption of a full programme of work to be reviewed at the COP6 of CBD.

UNEP is fronting aggressively for the UNFF. The forum is said to be (or will be) action oriented. For

continued on page 4

everyone who knows too well the operations of the UN, it may not escape the notice that the UNFF will be preceded by international and regional workshops across the globe as forests continually disappear and become degraded.

It will again be a long time before forest resources and services are valued and accounted for at the various parties' (national) level.

One may ask, when will be the local communities and NGOs be taken on board in the UNFF process?

Finally, the proposed funding for forest biodiversity conservation activities is a little funding. The Voluntary Funding Mechanism – where funds will be identified locally- may impede more than enhance the process. This is for the simple reason that most governments are or have been unable to appreciate and account for the value of forest resources and services to inject new funds for the conservation.

So Far So Good on Access and Benefit Sharing: But will Governments And Multinationals Live Up to the Expectations?

By Wandera Ojanji

Professor Wangari Maathai has termed discussion on Access and Benefit Sharing very fruitful. In particular, she has hailed the decision by the delegates to COP5 for accepting in principle the protection of biological diversity through working with governments and local communities. She says this will ensure the local communities are not exposed to exploitation from the "experts" and collectors.

The importance of the principle is that it calls on the "experts" on and/or collectors of the biodiversity resources to have some moral responsibility, and not to pirate, as it has been in the past. As a delegate from India observed, to patent any genetic material, you must state where it came from.

Maathai also commends the COP for adequately addressing the issue of the political responsibility of governments to protect the biological resources. The lack of political responsibility for many years has made it very easy for multinational companies to come and under the guise of collaboration with government and research institutions, to steal our biological resources.

"What is needed now is the knowledge, education and awareness of the local communities and the political power from the governments to conserve our biological resources. The governments should be vigilant and not allow political expediency to stall biodiversity conservation."

However she is concerned about the extent to which there will be political and moral responsibility by the politicians and corporation needed in the conservation of biodiversity.

'Will the governments use the research institutions to protect our farmers or expose the farmers to dangerous or unproven GMOs? Will the multinationals which are driven by profit have the moral responsibility or respect towards all forms of life or will the profit motive override this responsibility and therefore continue to experiment with our lives, all forms of life, and consequently destroy our biodiversity?'

She also considers the adoption of the Precautionary Principle as one the great achievement of the COP5. Under the principle, genetically engineering companies or those with the knowledge about the Genetically or Living Modified Organisms (GMOs or LMOs) can now be held responsible for releasing the organisms in the environment. This will force the multinational to be cautious.

While acknowledging the importance of biotechnology in agricultural biodiversity and food security, she cautions against wholesome acceptance of scientific innovations. Some of the innovations or experiments can go wrong or may actually be to the detriment of mankind. 'Scientists have the capacity to do a lot of harm to human kind. Think of HIV/AIDS and the nuclear bomb. These are scientific innovations gone soar. This is the crop of scientists that we have to be weary about. Biotechnology is now being misused.' She observed.

She reiterates that the Precautionary Principle is very important to African, because this is the continent that is easily misused. They do not have the capacity to effectively protect herself from modern pirates. Her major concern is that our research institutions may be compromised.