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



It is 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

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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

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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.

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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:

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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

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