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ECO

Editors: Barbara Gemmill, Wandera Ojanji, Pamela Cunneyworth.

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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 emphasize 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*

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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.

Infact 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 to develop 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.

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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