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Towards Global Sustainability

Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh

The UN Secretary-General recently announced the setting up of a high-level Panel on Global Sustainability, tasked with “rethinking the development paradigm in a low-carbon world”. This comes with the recognition that humanity is already living beyond the capacity of the earth to sustain it, threatening the Millennium Development Goals of achieving food security, eradicating poverty, reaching education to all, and so on. It explicitly categorises current development paths as “outdated”.

23 years back, a similar group headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland produced *Our Common Future*, a document heralded as a major step in the direction of sustainable development. This was followed by Agenda 21 in 1992, meant to lead the world into sustainability by the 21st century. Both of these, however, have been largely confined to history’s dustbin, with the world headed towards even greater ecological collapse and socio-economic inequity. Will this new initiative break away from this depressing trend?

Interestingly, Mrs. Brundtland is a member of the new panel, and so is the Indian Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh. The panel is headed by the current premiers of Finland and South Africa, and contains several other heads or former heads of state, and a few scientists. What should such a panel conceive of that can take humans away from their current headlong trajectory into ecological suicide? And how should it do so?

To begin with, the panel needs to acknowledge that we can no longer afford to tinker around with purely technical solutions to the challenges confronting us. Whether it is climate change or biodiversity loss, conflicts or poverty, the causes are not technical or technological. The drivers of humanity’s biggest problems are many. They include an unsustainable and irresponsible path of ‘development’ in which the earth’s elements are simply raw material, ecosystems are sinks for our wastes, and people are labour or consumers to be exploited. Other causes include the greed of an elite minority that wants to consume more and more, stoked by a powerful corporations and corrupt governments that benefit from this craving. Current patterns of energy and materials use, and unregulated global trade and financial transactions, are yet other forces driving unsustainability and inequality.

The UN panel has to provide innovative ways of confronting these forces. Undoubtedly some of the answers are technological or managerial, for instance in adopting the latest energy-efficient materials and construction, renewables, and fuel-efficient public transportation. Sustainable farming and fisheries are well established in thousands of initiatives around the world. Decentralised water harvesting for both villages and cities is a no-brainer.

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7 Generations Walk and Hunger Strike

The 7 Generations Walk started on 25th August 2010, and covered a total distance of 800km from Kaminoseki-cho in Yamaguchi Prefecture to Nagoya. The purpose? To spread the message of co-existence and to think about what we want to hand on to future generations.

While we walked, we felt a connection with the land, ocean and sky and realized that we are able to live only because of nature.

Meanwhile, on the morning of 15th October, barges gathered off Kaminoseki-cho in Yamaguchi Prefecture, the planned site of the Kaminoseki nuclear power plant, to begin *filling in the sea*. This place is a biodiversity hot spot, full of endangered species. Also, it’s the gateway of the Seto Inland Sea. The effect of this reclamation and the eventual nuclear power plant is immeasurable.

We have started a hunger strike in protest of the nuclear plant, for the sea and for future generations.

For more information: <http://7gwalk.org> 7gwalk@gmail.com



“Look, bushmeat!”

Peter Ommundsen – <http://capewest.ca/cartoons.html>

Global Sustainability continued

But the bigger picture is in fundamental changes in governance and development paradigms. We need a deeper form of democracy in which each citizen has the right, and the capacity, to participate in decision-making that affects their life. Such decisions need to be based on the twin imperatives of ecological sensitivity, and social equity. As part of this Radical Ecological Democracy, contrary to current economic globalisation policies, each local settlement (rural or urban) is empowered to take decisions for its surrounds. Based on this it can be connected to institutions at ever-increasing scales, for management of larger landscapes defined as much by ecological boundaries as by political and cultural ones. At the international level, the environment and human rights instruments that most countries are signatory to, need to be given the kind of teeth that WTO and other economic instruments currently enjoy. Financial markets, currently transmitting billions of dollars around the globe in split seconds, with consequences none of us can even fathom, have to be reigned in. The UN system should become a United Nations of Peoples, reducing the overarching role of nation-states and bringing back the role of peoples and communities. Curbs have to be put on the runaway consumerism of the rich; why should one family have 3 cars when another ten don't not even have a cycle? Indeed, why should there be private cars at all, when we have the means of creating convenient public transport for all?

At the heart of this is a fundamental change in values: from competition to cooperation, from individual profit to social good, from homogeneity to diversity. As also a change in indicators of welfare and prosperity: from material accumulations and monetary incomes to health and well-being, food and water security, happiness, stable social relations, education.

If it is to evolve such paradigms, the UN panel must adopt a widely consultative public process. It has to learn from the thousands of experiments already showing that such a sustainable and equitable path is workable. Especially important would be to hear the world's beleaguered indigenous peoples and other traditional communities, many of which still live lives that are far more sustainable than those of 'global' metropolitan citizens, yet who face continued marginalization and impoverishment. Unfortunately, the Panel does not have a single representative of such communities, nor of civil society organizations that have been leading the search for a saner future.

The task before the panel is difficult and complex, but not impossible. We can only hope that the panel is able to show the courage and leadership needed to facilitate the voices of sanity spread across the world, and synthesise them into breakthrough visions of global sustainability. There is no greater challenge confronting us all.

How much money's on the money?

Helena Paul, EcoNexus

Working Group II began discussing the final of the tripartite 'package' yesterday: financial resources. Brazil noted that resources for biodiversity must be new and additional and commented on the harm done by subsidies, such as agriculture (207 billion USD). Certainly the redirecting of subsidies could yield a huge sum for biodiversity conservation, and Parties should pursue this strategy without delay. India emphasised the failure of developed countries to fulfil their financial commitments and proposed they should give 10 billion USD by 2012 and then 30 billion annually until 2020 for the implementation of the new strategic plan.

The Philippines associated with the statement by Brazil, and also expressed their concern about innovative financial mechanisms. They noted that payments for ecosystem services are complex and costly to calculate and set up (later echoed by Colombia) and that the green development mechanism is a bit too close to the clean development mechanism. Other countries also expressed concern about this mechanism. The delegate from the Philippines also made a critical point regarding GEF funds, emphasizing that extensive co-financing is not something to necessarily celebrate as many developing

countries often must use loans to access the funds (later supported by East Timor).

Several Northern countries took the opportunity to remind everyone about their 'generosity' with the latest GEF replenishment, and a few also indicated their keen support for innovative financial mechanisms (i.e. EU, Norway). But it is clear that many countries in the Global South are calling for justice and the fulfilment of commitments by the developed countries, many of whom seem stuck in denial. The EU needs to show some moral authority and help to get things moving. Further delay will be fatal. Every day species are vanishing and ecosystems are losing their capacity to support us. As the Global Biodiversity Outlook so clearly says, if we fail to act, "many ecosystems on the planet will move into new, unprecedented states in which the capacity to provide for the needs of present and future generations is highly uncertain."

Let's have some real, predictable, additional financial commitments, you so-called developed countries! The world is watching.

New York Times Bestselling author Raj Patel on the limits of pricing and valuation:

"The increased mismanagement of the planet's resources is almost inevitable when profit driven markets set the terms of value. It is possible to quantify some of the hidden costs behind prices, and this should happen, *but the overall solution to the misallocation of society's resources is not to start slapping prices on everything*. There are some things that can't be captured by a single number, but still need management, and the only way that can happen is through democratic politics. The answer to the market's valuing of the world at naught is not a democracy run by experts, but the democratization of expertise and resources" (From *The Value of Nothing*, p. 171).

Unfair share, uncertain futures

Shalini Bhutani, GRAIN and Kanchi Kohli, Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group

Unequal shares of the world's biological diversity amongst countries also creates unequal relations. At the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) negotiations so far have failed to conclude the Access and Benefit Sharing Protocol as a basis for sharing both genetic resources and the benefits from them, uncertainties remain. Meanwhile in the national space and at the local level, communities have been living uncertain futures.

In supposed implementation of the CBD, India finalised its Biological Diversity (BD) Act in 2002. This was meant to streamline procedures when biological material was sought to be accessed or transferred for research, commercial activities or intellectual property applications. In 2003 India's National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) was set up in Chennai to implement the BD Act. The necessary administrative rules – the Biological Diversity Rules - were issued by the concerned Environment Ministry in 2004. While the CBD makes access *subject to* national legislation, it also prescribes that national laws should *facilitate* access. In line with that the NBA has by and large indeed worked to 'regulate' access to biological resources, rather than deny it. The NBA has granted approval to over 325 applications seeking access to varied forms of agricultural and wild biological material.

Each of these approvals is followed by an agreement laying down conditions for the use and the terms of benefit sharing. The intention is the distribution of wealth generated and a fair share of benefits guaranteed for local people when any local resources or traditional knowledge from their areas is so utilised. In most such instances, no benefit sharing has been determined. In a few instances where it has, it has meant a 5% recovery of 'administrative and service charges' by the NBA. A clear example of this is the access to non-pathogenic strains of the bacteria *Bacillus* and *Pseudomonas* from Kalakkad Forest Area in the state of Tamil Nadu by Novozymes Biologicals Inc. When this happened, there were no guidelines to determine benefit sharing. Such guidelines are still in draft form and leave much to be desired by peoples.

In another instance in 2007, the NBA entered into two agreements with PepsiCo India Holdings Private Ltd, an US multinational company. These 'benefit sharing' agreements related to commercial access and third party transfer of *Kappaphycus alvarezii*, a particular type of Malaysian sea weed. The company paid INR 3.7 million to the NBA for this particular type of dry sea weed accessed around the the Gulf of Munnar, in the in Tamil Nadu. PepsiCo signed a yearlong agreement with the NBA to export this to Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines for commercial utilisation in the food and cosmetics industry.

When this approval was given and the agreement was signed, the State of Tamil Nadu neither had any local BMC nor the required Tamil Nadu State Biodiversity Board. Admittedly there was no mandatory consultations at the

village level where potential 'benefit-claimers' - as defined by the law - were identified or engaged. However, according to the Rules, the NBA got its 5% processing fees, just like before with Novozymes. In reply to a *Right to Information* application, in July 2010 the NBA admitted that the money received from Pepsi is "yet to be ploughed back to the benefit claimers". The delay is explained by the fact that guidelines for utilisation of such payments deposited in the National Biodiversity Fund are yet to be finalised.

But there is more to this story which goes back to 2004 when Asian Development Bank (ADB) offered 'Tsunami Assistance' to India. In the planned implementation, over 200 micro-enterprises were conceived of and multiple women's groups were federated into societies. They were to focus on the production of commercial activities for e.g. amongst others sea food, dairy and sea weed products. It is this ADB part loan part grant to India that in the end helped PepsiCo sea weed cultivation plans by ensuring the company contract growers! PepsiCo also facilitated bank loans to the coastal communities through the State Bank of India. Therefore, not surprisingly, in its Agreement with the NBA, PepsiCo suggested that the local communities are already getting *benefits* from it on this sea weed cultivation programme. The company states that it provides training to the women, facilitates bank loans and guarantees a buy back from the SHGs.

In such instances, if a company can cite pre-NBA benefits, why can the NBA not point to the pre-NBA approval profits from sea weed export? However, the agreement was signed by an authorised representative of the NBA, presumably accepting the logic of the company. Is this a fair share of the benefits according to the CBD, even if one has put aside the issue of biodiversity justice? And what happens in all other instances where the commercial purpose has not been cited upfront?

In 2008, the NBA signed an agreement with the Dolphin Institute of Biomedical and Natural Sciences in the state of Uttarakhand for the transfer of anaerobic fungi isolated from rumen liquor, faeces and saliva from a number of domestic or wild ruminants to Mascoma Corporation, USA. With no commercial purpose stated upfront, there was no determination of benefit sharing. So how does one control the use of the fungi by Mascoma - an energy biotech company, that might develop second generation biofuels it develops from the material accessed earlier?

So the world may or may not get an ABS Protocol and a country may have its ABS law, but there are no guarantees that agreements signed thereunder will be life-changing for people. Or that biodiversity conservation will be guaranteed either. For countries arguing for a legally binding Protocol on ABS to be *subject to national legislation*, it is critical that the said legislation is pro- its own people and their living world.

IIFB Updates

Marine and coastal dependent Indigenous Peoples call on the Parties to recognize traditional water management systems.

“We have some grave concerns regarding the decline of fish stocks and unsustainable practices of over-fishing and depletion of marine resources” – IIFB

Indigenous representatives continued to lobby to include indigenous perspectives into the discussions in the context of Marine and Coastal Biodiversity they emphasized the need for the Convention to:

- guarantee Indigenous Peoples full and effective participation in marine and coastal policy design, development, implementation and monitoring at all levels.
- ensure that Indigenous Peoples maintain their rights to traditional lifestyle and sustainable management of marine and coastal resources in accordance to their traditional knowledge that has been in practice for thousands of years.

Indigenous Peoples also prioritized having Input Into the Strategic Plan calling for consistency with other International Instruments

Indigenous Peoples urge the Parties to implement the revised strategic plan in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In line with the recognition of indigenous peoples and their rights in the UN system since the CBD was adopted, particularly the UNDRIP, we recommend that the CBD terminology ‘indigenous and local communities’ that was adopted in 1992 be now updated and changed to ‘indigenous peoples and local communities’ in synergy with other UN instruments. The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) recommends that the terminology ‘indigenous peoples and local communities’ should be used throughout the revised strategic plan and all COP10 Decisions.

It is also imperative that the rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should be entrenched in the implementation of the revised strategic plan. We therefore call for the addition of paragraph 3. bis as follows:

3 bis: *Urges* Parties to implement the revised strategic plan in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We are also concerned with the proposal to use words such as ‘our natural capital’ in the vision of the strategic plan. Natural capital would limit nature to its dry commercial value, which is in fact the main cause of biodiversity loss. Recognising and protecting the cultural, social and spiritual values of nature would ensure a more secure and longer term commitment by humanity to protect and sustainably use biodiversity.

Indigenous Peoples representatives were also active at the CEPA Working Group

The IIFB Working Group on CEPA recognizes that indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination. Indigenous Peoples shared various activities carried out during the International Year on Biodiversity as well as CEPA products including an animation, a short film on indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge, and biodiversity, a global indigenous portal including biodiversity related information, etc...

The IIFB side event organized in collaboration with the Secretariat titled “Indigenous Peoples Celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity” highlighted the various CEPA activities of Indigenous Peoples from Asia, Africa, the Pacific and Russia.

“The Last Blue Wilderness”, a short film, premiered here in Nagoya and shares the views of indigenous peoples of the Pacific on the conservation of biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and climate change. A compilation of short videos were also shown and that expressed the lack of information and consultation with indigenous peoples by the national government on Reduction of Emission of Degradation and Deforestation (REDD).

The painting of the knowledge and conservation of biodiversity of the indigenous children of Russia decorated the side event four walls.

CEPA is everything for human life

Masahiro Kawatei Japan civil network for CBD Outreach WG

During the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB), many organizations are actively promoting the importance of biodiversity. HOWEVER, the fact that we failed to achieve our 2010 target is telling us that it is still not enough. Raising Public Awareness is an important component of achieving the New Strategic Plan and we must not stop our effort after the IYB is over. We have three proposals:

- (1) Each Party should develop its own CEPA concept with a clear “Action Plan”. The Japan National Committee for IYB (Life on earth Committee) introduced several good concepts i.e. “living together with nature” that contributed to raising awareness to the public. That type of effort could be further emphasized for the implementation of other countries NBSAPs. Such an ‘Action Plan’ could also help to identify the issues and obstacles facing each Party in achieving the target.
- (2) All Parties should bring their own CEPA best practices to COP11 in India so that we can move forward to build stronger global CEPA strategy. This will optimize each country’s resources and enable us to support each other to achieve OUR target for 2020 – to save OUR biodiversity for the future Earth.
- (3) In order to reinforce this movement, CEPA should be clearly recognized as an important component in NBSAP and its strategic report should be recommended. It will trigger to extend awareness of CEPA from government to media, and from media to all citizens.