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ECO is currently being published at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan coordinated by the CBD Alliance. The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

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Nagoya: Opportunity for a biodiversity-based forest definition

World Rainforest Movement

COP10 provides the CBD with a good opportunity to come up with a serious definition of one of the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth: forests.

Until now, most national and international bodies have uncritically adopted FAO's definition of forest, which not only fails to adequately describe what a forest is, but also allows the inclusion of monoculture tree plantations.

On October 4th, the FAO released the full report of the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010. If all the arguments put forward over the years for demanding the exclusion of tree monocultures from the definition of "forest" were insufficient, we believe that this report provides some very good arguments in this respect.

For instance, the way in which the FAO deals with two very similar tree monocultures: rubber and oil palm plantations.

Rubber Plantations

Until 2000, rubber plantations were NOT forests according to FAO, but since then they ARE. Why? "Because of their increasing significance as a supply of fibre for wood industries." Which means that a forest is defined by FAO solely by its capacity to produce a single product: wood. While rubber tree plantations produced only latex, they were not forests, but, when the price of rubber slumped and many producers started chopping down the trees and selling them as wood, they suddenly become forests. Does that mean that they are now excluded as "forests" again since rubber prices have gone up again?

Oil Palm Plantations

While palm trees are typical components of tropical forests, oil palm plantations are NOT defined as forests because "oil palm is an agricultural tree crop", e.g. they do not produce wood. In the tropical African context, it is absurd that plantations of a native tree species (oil palm) are not defined as forest while plantations of an alien tree species (rubber) are considered to be forests.

The above distinctions appear to be in contradiction with FAO's extremely simplistic definition of forest: "Land spanning more than 0.5 hectares with trees higher than 5 meters and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds in situ. It does not include land that is predominantly under agricultural or urban land use." According to FAO, that is a forest.

Unless FAO defines what "land that is predominantly under agricultural use" means even in its own logic either all tree plantations should be included or all should be excluded from being defined as "forest". Why is the production of oil palm an "agricultural" activity while the production of wood by a eucalyptus plantation is not?

Why are olive tree plantations not "forests" while pine plantations are such? Simply because the FAO says so.

A second set of arguments provided by the FAO report is related to its definitions of "afforestation" and "reforestation". According to FAO, afforestation implies the planting of trees in non-forest areas, while reforestation means planting trees in areas previously occupied by forests. In both cases, the FAO defines the result as the establishment of "planted forests": "Forest predominantly composed of trees established through planting and/or deliberate seeding".

Continued next page



Forest definition continued

Such an “afforestation” is in fact the destruction of native vegetation (usually grasslands or savannas) and its substitution by a plantation of a (usually alien) tree species. However, instead of classifying this as establishing an “agricultural tree crop” for harvesting wood it is categorized as “forest”. Why? Simply because such plantations produce wood which, according to the FAO, is what a forest produces.

Where most people assume that reforestation is the restoration of forests by planting native species they would be wrong. In the vast majority of cases, “reforestation” implies the planting of monocultures of alien tree species (pines, eucalyptus, acacia, gmelina, teak, etc.) in forest areas. A diverse tropical forest area can be bulldozed and replaced by a single tree species – alien or native- and nothing will have changed for the FAO. In its own words: “Where part of a forest is cut down but replanted (reforestation) ... there is no change in forest area.”

Such narrow approach clearly serves the interest of the pulp/paper and wood industries, but it runs counter to the interests of local communities whose means of livelihoods - forests and grasslands - are destroyed under the guise of “planting forests”.

FAO’s insistence to define wood-producing monocultures as “planted forests” hides the impacts of such plantations on biodiversity. “We are reminded that forests represent some of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth”, says the FAO report. May we remind FAO that what it defines as “planted forests” is defined by many as “deserts of trees”.

The FAO report clearly shows the frightening expansion of such “deserts of trees”, which have “increased by more than 3.6 million hectares per year from 1990–2000, by 5.6 million hectares per year from 2000–2005, and by 4.2 million hectares per year from 2005–2010.” From a biodiversity perspective, this is a disaster, given that such plantations destroy the habitat of millions of native species many of which have not yet been classified by science. FAO, however, welcomes the expansion of these plantations as having “further reduced the net loss of forests”.

These are just a few examples of the arguments unwillingly provided by this FAO report, strengthening the need to exclude monoculture plantations from the definition of “forest”.

FAO says that it “hopes that the information in this report will help broaden discussions on forests”. We believe it does, if FAO would be willing to do so. More realistically, we hope that the corporate-friendly and unscientific forest definitions used in this report will help to stimulate the discussion in other fora –particularly within the Convention on Biological Diversity- to adopt a serious definition of forests that finally excludes the absurd category of “planted forests”.

See full FAO report at

http://foris.fao.org/static/data/fra2010/FRA2010_Report_loct2_010.pdf

Article published in the English edition of WRM Bulletin, N° 159, October 2010,

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World Rainforest Movement - <http://www.wrm.org.uy>

On Forest Biological Diversity

Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition

Comparing the rather meager text on forest biodiversity and the very elaborate text on forests in relation to climate change and biodiversity in the draft decisions, one gets the impression the CBD has more or less handed forests over to the climate convention. Yet, forests represent 80% of the earth's terrestrial biodiversity. We simply cannot conserve biodiversity if we do not effectively conserve forests. We would like to remind people in this respect that REDD, at this moment, is nothing but an issue under negotiation under the FCCC. The chances that a legally binding agreement will be reached at the upcoming Conference of the Parties in December 2011 are close to zero. So remarks by people that the CBD should "implement" REDD are, to say the least, highly premature. We strongly call upon the CBD to regain the lead role in forest discussions. An additional strong reason for this is that the definition that is used until now under the FCCC includes monoculture tree plantations.

The main threat to the world's forests is not that they will simply disappear, but that forests are being gradually replaced by monoculture tree plantations, which has devastating impacts on forest biodiversity and forest-dependent peoples. A comment during the lunch-time event on TEEB is striking in this regard, "planting a tree can never be harmful". Planting the wrong trees on the wrong place, especially invasive trees or genetically modified trees, can cause serious harm, to biodiversity and to the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The rapidly increasing demand for wood for industrial bio-energy production, which is strongly stimulated by renewable energy subsidies, adds significantly to these trends. For that reason, we insist that the CBD takes a lead role in developing an appropriate definition of forests to be used by all members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and we support the proposals by the Philippines and Norway in this respect.

We also hope that the discussion on the impacts of biofuel on biodiversity will take into account the already increasing impacts of industrial wood-based bio-energy on forest biodiversity.

(Article based on an intervention that was not made in the WG yesterday due to time considerations)

What should happen at COP 10 and beyond related to biofuels and bioenergy?

Camila Morena, Friends of the Earth Brazil

Despite all the increasing impacts and threats to biodiversity, language in the CBD actually encourages biofuel development by speaking of the “need to promote the positive and minimize the negative impacts of biofuel production and its use on biodiversity”. Instead, Parties must stick close to the fundamental principles of the CBD, especially the precautionary principle, the ecosystem approach the protection of Indigenous Peoples’ rights.

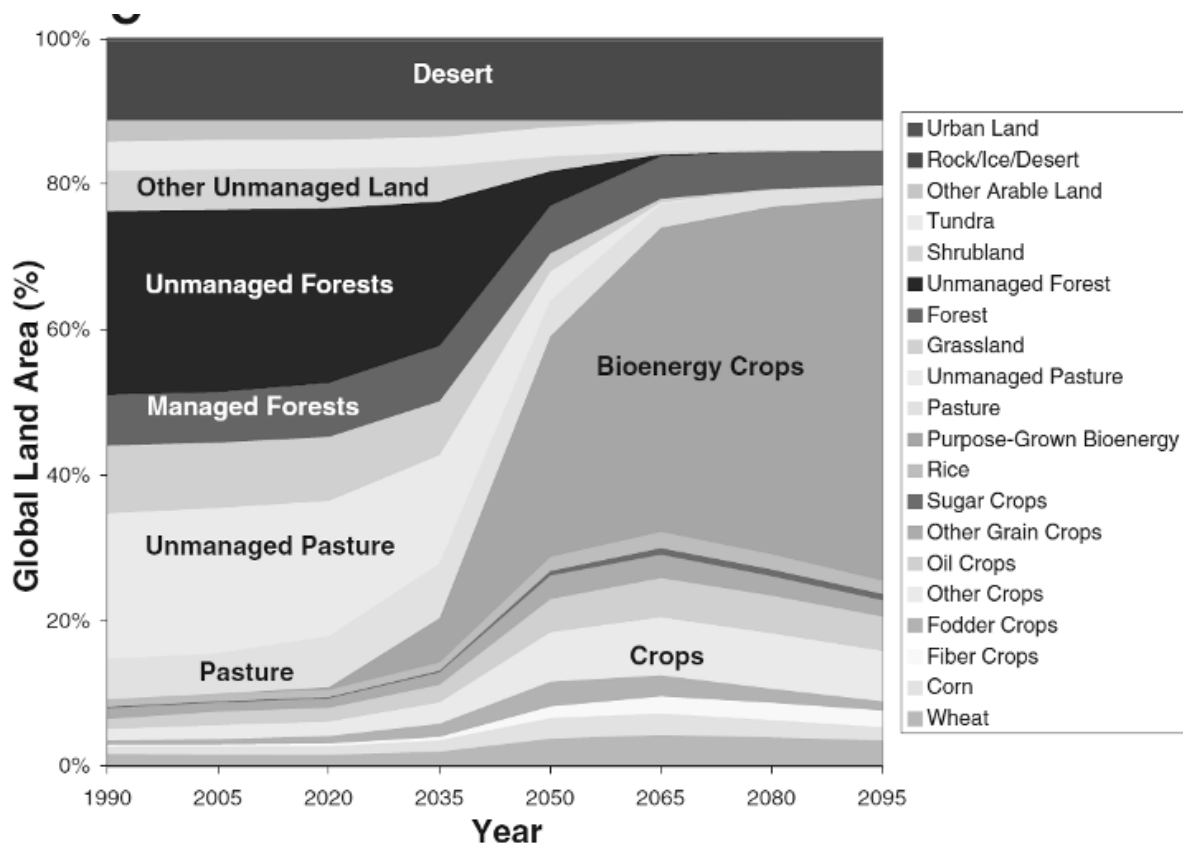
Parties at COP 10 must:

- (1) Reaffirm that biodiversity and ecosystems are basic to our survival and their resilience and restoration is fundamental. All forms of government incentives for industrial bio-energy should be classified as perverse incentives and must be removed.
- (2) Not give any incentive to large—scale biofuel production
- (3) Support a moratorium on commercial use and environmental releases of synthetic organisms, as partly proposed by SBSTTA 14.

The use of dangerous synthetic organisms are clearly becoming the new industrial platform basis to second generation biofuels. As for example, the case in Brazil, where the Amyris company was able to approve – in a record time frame, about only 8 months - in February 2010, at the National Technical Commission on Biosafety (CTNBio) a synthetic yeast for the production of fuels and chemicals. Fuel produced with this synthetic organism is being currently use in a test basis and is announced to be commercially available in 2011/2012. Despite of historical disrespect for the environmental regulations and human rights violations associated to the large scale production of sugar cane in Brazil, the country continues to promote sugar cane based ethanol as a clean alternative and as even as an advanced fuel.

Brazilian Civil Society has released a national recommendation to COP 10 requesting that Brazil – honoring its historical commitment to the CBD process – guarantee the precautionary approach to biofuel production. Any exception to this principle would open a dangerous precedent, and would corrupt the spirit of the Convention. More than ever, when we celebrate the UN International Year of Biodiversity, parties should by no means let trade concerns be mainstreamed in detriment of the protection of Life and the future of Biodiversity.

(Developed partially from the TOP 10 for COP 10 briefing papers, at <http://www.cbdalliance.org/top-10-for-cop-10/>)



Forecast of future land use by Marshall & Wise et al, published in Science, 324, 1183 (2009)

Russian Federation Indigenous Peoples perspectives on the Cop10 negotiations

Десятая Конференция сторон по Конвенции о биологическом разнообразии – CBD/COP10

The following article details the concerns Indigenous Peoples from Russian speaking areas have in their region, and also share with other Indigenous Peoples. Priority areas include protected areas, inland waters, traditional knowledge and links between climate change and forest biodiversity. The issue of traditional knowledge and access to traditional foods, and many other issues addressed in the convention - all very important for the life of the indigenous peoples of the world, so within the next two weeks, representatives of Russian indigenous peoples will work actively in the process

CBD/COP10 октября – в День борьбы с бедностью, в г.Нагоя, Япония начала свою работу Десятая конференция Сторон, посвященная Конвенции о биологическом разнообразии CBD/COP10. Конференция проходит один раз в два года, и собирает участников со всех стран подписавших ее. В настоящий момент Конвенцию подписали 193 страны.

В этом году участие в конференции приняли более 8000 человек, из них 178 представителей коренных народов мира, представили все регионы - Азия, Африка, Арктика, Латинская Америка и страны Карибского бассейна, Северная Америка, Тихоокеанский регион, и регион Россия.

Конвенция о биологическом разнообразии является очень важной для коренных народов.

Главный вопрос на **CBD/COP10**, для всех коренных народов и местных общин, является статья **15 (ABS)** конвенции.

Это стратегическая для коренных народов статья, так как большинство сохраненных генетических ресурсов находятся на территориях проживания коренных народов и знания их возможного использования в различных сферах жизни являются традиционными знаниями коренных народов. Исторически проживая на территориях традиционного природопользования, коренные народы не могут полностью пользоваться ресурсами, находящимися на своих же территориях, ловить рыбу в тех количествах, которые необходимы для проживания, охотиться на зверя и птицу, заниматься собирательством. Тем более, при использовании этих территорий, природных ресурсов или знаний коренных народов государством или любыми другими компаниями, коренные народы проживающие на этой территории не получают от этого ни каких выгод, только одни убытки. Поэтому **Статья 15 о доступе к генетическим ресурсам и предварительного согласованному разделению выгод на равноправной основе так важна для коренных народов.**

Проблема «Биоразнообразие и изменение климата».

Особо сильно изменение климата ощущается в районах проживания коренных народов – арктическая тундра, тайга, леса амазонки и засушливые зоны Африки. Именно в этих местах наиболее сильно ощущаются изменения в природе, в связи с изменением климата. Так, например, в Арктике в результате потепления климата, которое вызвано жестоким загрязнением от деятельности газо- и нефтедобывающих компаний, выхлопными газами и т.п. исчезают арктические виды растений и животных, меняется их образ жизни, привычки и повадки. Растения меняют модель роста. Аборигены опасаются, что не смогут приспособиться к новым условиям, стремительно меняющейся окружающей среды. Вместе с исчезновением растений и животных, исчезают и традиционные знания, связанные с собирательством, традиционной медициной, обработкой шкур и т.п.

Вопрос изменения климата очень сильно переплетается с вопросами биоразнообразия лесов, традиционных знаний и др.

Очень важным является вопрос «Биоразнообразие лесов».

Все представители коренных народов мира, отмечают необходимость сохранения леса, для сохранения биоразнообразия, особенно в связи с проблемами выходящими из изменения климата.

Например, Арктический, Российский и Азиатский регионы, выдвигают тему сохранения лесов как один из главнейших приоритетов - без сохранения лесных массивов не возможно остановить изменение климата. Необходимо наращивать лесной потенциал, как одно из средств в борьбе с изменением климата, сохранять и возрождать лесные ресурсы и бороться с незаконными рубками. Необходимо полное участие коренных народов в вопросе сохранения лесов. Особые опасения вызывает то, что на местном уровне коренные народы почти не привлечены, а их традиционные знания сохранения и управления лесов практически не используются. Необходимо активизировать потенциал коренных народов и привлекать их к управлению лесами, а так же активно использовать традиционные знания, в том числе и для их сохранения.

Для региона Россия, помимо вышперечисленного, важнейшими вопросами являются следующие:

Особо-охраняемые природные территории. Для коренных народов он так же приоритетен - на сегодняшний момент, в этом вопросе происходит много взаимодействий коренных народов и органов власти, но достигнутых успехов пока очень мало.

Вопрос сохранения внутренние воды и их биоразнообразия так же важен как и прибрежные экосистемы. Коренные народы очень озабочены тем, как используются и загрязняются водные системы и уничтожаются их водные биоресурсы. Зачастую от этого зависит выживание целого народа.

Вопрос традиционных знаний и доступа к традиционной пищи, и многие другие вопросы рассматриваемые в конвенции – все это очень важно для жизни коренных народов мира, и поэтому в течение предстоящих двух недель, представители коренных народов будут активно работать в процессе CBD/COP10

!Side Event Today!

Getting It right: Incorporating Social Aspects Into MPA planning and Implementation

Across the world communities have demonstrated that they can conserve and manage coastal and marine resources, drawing on traditional and local knowledge systems and the strength of their social institutions.

What does it take for such initiatives that benefit both biodiversity conservation and social wellbeing to be recognized and supported? What can be done to address the flaws inherent in top-down, target-driven, non-inclusive processes? What are the links between the social impacts of marine protected areas (MPAs) and the sustainability and protection of marine and coastal biodiversity?

Venue: Room 234A-Building 2-3rd Floor

Date: 21 October 2010

Time: 16:30-18:00 hrs