

# ECO

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**Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.

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Statement

## Global Youth Statement

We stand here representing Global Youth - 40% of the world's population; young foresters fighting illegal logging in Indonesia, young environmentalists protecting marshlands in Benin, young volunteers at National Parks in Germany as well as in Canada, students participating in meetings and pressuring their governments in India and Brazil, fighting for their lands, their culture and biodiversity. This vital work is being done by millions of young people in their local communities, which is why it is so important to share our experiences and to work together. Clearly, the will to conserve biodiversity exists everywhere.

We felt the need to unite our voices and to strengthen our position so that we can be heard and understood by you. Today, we are proud to present the Global Youth Biodiversity Network - GYBN for short - for the first time at a CBD COP. We aim to raise awareness on the immeasurable value of Biodiversity and to provide youth with a unique platform for collaboration.

We have the energy, the motivation, the innovation. You have the experience, the knowledge, the power. We want to work with you, learn with you and be part of the change we want to see in the world.

We are not here just to whine about problems and ask you to fix them for us. We are here because we want to take responsibility for our own future. As we mentioned before, we are already committed with our activities back home in reshaping our future. We want to be understood, to be heard.

This will happen if all parties to the CBD agree - here - to include young people in the decision making process at the local, national and international levels. We need your support in becoming permanent stakeholders by including youth participation in NBSAPs and in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Establishing National Youth Delegations and providing Capacity Building, Training, Knowledge Transfer will ultimately empower us to transform our society. We want to build a society that cares for the environment as we care for our own existence and understands the interdependence among all beings.

We are ready to be transformative. Will you join us?

It's not a coincidence that we are here in India, so let's remember what Gandhi said:

"The Earth, the air, the land and the water are not inheritance from our forefathers but on loan from our children. So we have to hand it over to them at least as it was handed over to us."



# Free-flowing and Biodiversity-rich Rivers

## India's most endangered ecosystems?

*Himanshu Thakkar, Parineeta Dendekar South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP)*

Rivers flowing through Western, Eastern and North East Himalayas and Western and Eastern Ghats are global hotspots for inland and freshwater aquatic biodiversity. India's rivers are among the last global frontiers of rich freshwater biodiversity, including many endangered and threatened species. Nearly 50% of the aquatic plants of the world are recorded in the sub-continent. In freshwater fish biodiversity, India is 8th in the world and 3rd in Asia. Our rivers support the livelihoods of millions of Indigenous Peoples and other communities.

India's riverine biodiversity and more than 10.8 million people, including Indigenous Peoples that depend on fishing, face major threats, but India lacks a strong policy or legal framework for protecting them. Threats include pollution, encroachment, sand mining, deforestation, bad management and large dams. Globally, India has possibly the biggest number of large dams under construction; affecting ecologically sensitive sites, protected areas, Ramsar sites, World Heritage Sites, sacred sites and community conserved areas.

Nonetheless, new dams are still being approved, disregarding community concerns, ecological impacts, expert reports and even unanimous recommendations against dam projects by statutory and government committees.

In terms of the three objectives of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD):

- What is the impact of CBD Decisions on the conservation of biodiversity in rivers in the context of large dam construction?
- To what extent has the issue of sustainable use of rivers and their biodiversity been applied in the context of dam construction?
- What is the impact of the CBD's commitment on benefit sharing by communities affected by dams, river diversion and hydro-power projects?

Unfortunately we could not find any evidence of such impacts in India, although they are urgently needed. In this context, how can CBD decisions on Inland Waters

Biodiversity, the implementation of the Aichi targets and the use of the Akwe: Kon voluntary guidelines for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed to take place on, or which are likely to impact on, sacred sites and on lands and waters traditionally occupied or used by indigenous and local communities (in the context of Article 8j), help protect India's Rivers? A decade after the enactment of India's Biological Diversity Act of 2002, implementing the CBD and other conventions, agreements and action plans (e.g. Ramsar Convention Wetland Rules), there is little evidence that Indian rivers or those dependent on rivers have been protected. In some cases rivers are completely excluded.

We hope the Presidency of COP11 will help Parties to make progressive and bold decisions:

- Define clear norms for participation by affected communities; and help them realise community sovereignty over their biodiversity.
- Obtain Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) from affected communities before any decisions are taken that might affect their access to inland waters and aquatic biodiversity resources.
- Strengthen the reporting framework on Inland Waters Biodiversity by all countries, including India.
- Monitor and learn from reports about work on rivers and dependent communities from all countries.
- Publish best practices studies that show how protection of aquatic biodiversity is essential and possible, without sacrificing the justifiable development needs of affected people.
- Communicate with the UNFCCC to ensure that the current incentivising of destruction of aquatic biodiversity that is now going on in the name of CDM hydro-power projects is stopped.

At present it appears that the CBD fails to influence any aspect of national decision making in the management of the biodiversity of India's rivers; which is proving fatal to our inland waters and aquatic

biodiversity and the livelihoods of river-dependent communities. We hope this COP will make a bold Decision on Inland Waters and stimulate our own government to make the necessary changes in policy and practice before it is too late.

These recommendations have been endorsed by over

60 persons present at the side event on 8 Oct 2012 on “Impact of Dams on Biodiversity: Socio Ecological Dimensions in Changing Climate”, organised by SANDRP and 5 partner organisations: Himdhara (Himachal Pradesh), Himal Prakriti (Uttarakhand), Samvardhan (Maharashtra), River Basin Organisation (Assam) and International Rivers (India).

9 October 2012

## **An Appeal on behalf of Civil Society regarding the proposed golf tournament of COP Delegates at the Hyderabad golf course**

*Dear Delegates to CBD COP11,*

We welcome you to our city and look forward to a conference of sharing of information, knowledge and creating new channels of communication between people.

We, the civil society, are disturbed to learn from press reports that a two-day golf tournament has been organised by the Hyderabad Golf Association, for the CBD COP11 delegates. This tournament has been backed by the Tourism Department of the State Government stating the Golf Course as a government project. The construction and functioning of this golf course has, however, adversely affected the ecology and the local heritage site: - Naya Qila Fort.

It is important to note that since the construction of the golf course the local water bodies have shrunk in the area and the natural landscape has been completely modified by changing the contours of the area. These changes have been in violation of various laws and court orders like the AM & ASR Act 2010, and the court order of June 2010 that stated that grassing of the golf course could only take place if it did not change the contours of the area.

The construction of the golf course has also affected the structure and functioning of Naya Qila. The construction of the golf course resulted in levelling of the fortification for the use of the golfers at the expense of the structure of the heritage site. The rightful free access to the fort has been curtailed even though free access was guaranteed by the MOU of the site.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed with the Andhra Pradesh High Court challenging the location of a golf course in Naya Qila

The Heritage Conservation Committee stated that the golf course would significantly affect the site and were opposed to creating the golf course inside or within 30 metres from the boundary walls of the Golconda Fort precinct.

We hope that these facts will help you decide whether to attend this tournament, or keeping in mind the objectives of the CBD and this conference, to decline the invitation as a mark of protest against the destruction that this golf course has created.

This side event was left out of the printed list.

**Synthetic Biology:  
Potential Impacts on the  
Conservation and Sustainable  
Use of Biodiversity**

**today, 18:15, Room 2.02**

**Daily NGO meeting**

**8:45 hrs**

**NGO Room 1.02**

***CBD Alliance would like to thank Swedbio for their continued and ongoing support.***

***We would also like to thank Christensen Funds for supporting the participation of CBD Alliance candidates at the COP11.***

## About Forests, Budgets and the CBD Underdog Mentality

*Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition, Paraguay*

COP11 might become the conference that declared the CBD more or less irrelevant for the estimated 80% of terrestrial biodiversity that is represented by forest ecosystems.

Forests already received a minimal treatment at CBD COP10, but at least Parties decided on some important recommendations to the Secretariat to assist countries with the implementation of the CBD expanded program of work on forest biodiversity and, in hidden terms, to elaborate a decent definition of forests that excludes monoculture tree plantations. This forest workprogram was originally welcomed as a milestone in international forest policy. But 10 years later, it seems this milestone has turned into a moss-covered old pebble that is easily overlooked in the jungle of international forest-related agreements. In any case it is clear the Secretariat itself is overlooking this pebble, as the COP11 draft decision on forests is just as absent as a senior forest program officer in the Secretariat. The draft decision on agenda item 13.2 on forests states that this item is dealt with under the agenda item 5.2 on cooperation with other organizations, as if CBD would no longer have a mandate to do something on forests itself. Worse, when we turn to the draft decision 5.2, we only find a bracketed text that regretfully there was no money to do something on forests, but that voluntary contributions are welcome.

So much for implementation, implementation and implementation.....

This does not imply that forests do not feature in the draft decisions, as no less than 6 pages of the draft decision are wasted on entirely non-binding guidance on the integration of biodiversity into entirely voluntary safeguards for REDD+, a forest policy which is currently being elaborated under the UNFCCC. Obviously, there were voluntary contributions for that part of the CBD's work. The message could not be clearer: forests are no longer an ecosystem that falls under the mandate of the CBD, they are just a forest carbon stock that falls under the mandate of the UNFCCC. And Brazil's attempt to clearcut this agenda item (they are obviously already practicing for their highly criticized new Forest Code) will not prevent

that, once again, many long hours will be spent this COP on REDD-related weasel words.

Of course, some delegates who are already concerned about the overloaded COP agendas might be happy this tricky issue is removed from their busy agendas. However, they should be really concerned about this precedent. First of all, it should be clear that their work on other agenda items will have little relevance for 80% of the planet's terrestrial biodiversity if forest policies are determined by the UNFCCC instead of the CBD. Secondly, there are similar trends to hand over marine biodiversity, agricultural biodiversity and threats to biodiversity like geo-engineering to other bodies.

And last but not least, the case of forests makes it crystal clear that it is no longer the COP that decides what the priorities are for the CBD. Rather, the COP makes a pre-selection by producing a large number of decisions, and subsequently donor countries and, increasingly, corporations and large conservation organizations are allowed to pick and choose which of those decisions will benefit from their voluntary contributions and thus be implemented. Decisions that are less to their liking, such as the COP10 decisions that dealt with forests as an ecosystem rather than a carbon dump, are simply not being implemented.

So perhaps this always bureaucratic-sounding item of the Secretariat's budget and whether it will be funded through core contributions or voluntary gifts has turned into the most important agenda item, if COP11 is to focus on implementation of ALL the decisions of the CBD.



View of the status of the CBD's work on forests. W. Menne