

## Civil society statement on agrofuels

On June 30<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, over 65 civil society representatives from around the world gathered to discuss biodiversity and justice issues prior to SBSTTA 12. It was a lively event consisting of representatives from small non-governmental organizations, large non-governmental agencies, social movements, local communities and Indigenous Peoples Organizations. The following statement was developed at that event. Although it certainly does not represent all civil society concerns or positions present at the CBD, it does capture the general sense emerging from the weekend.

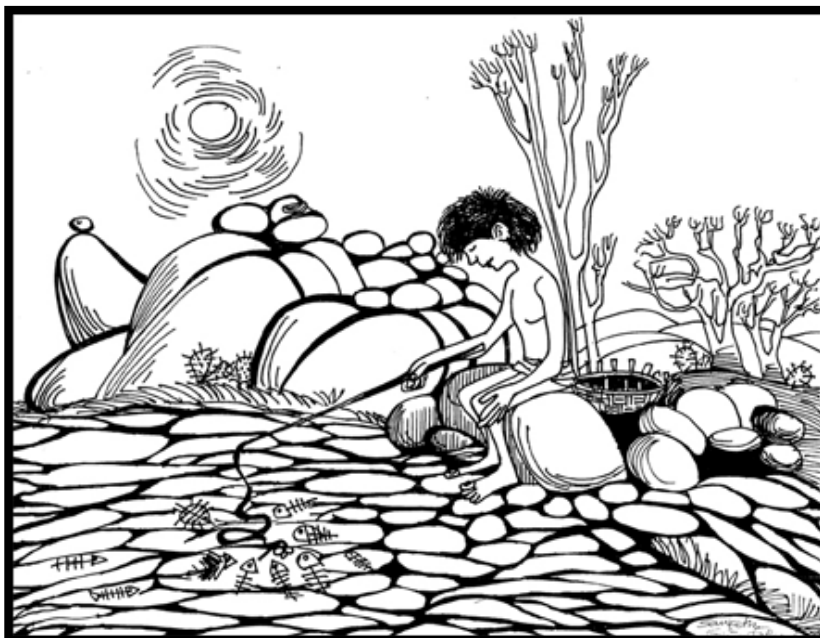
It is widely recognised that climate change is already having a profound effect on biodiversity, ecosystems and peoples worldwide. Future predictions on climate change show that these effects will only exacerbate and develop into further problems. The recent IPCC report gravely forecasted that just a 2°C rise above pre-industrial era levels would result in extinction of between 20-30% of animal and plant species. This statistic is likely well known, and should be a guiding force for the CBD's work this week. Anything that threatens biodiversity must be addressed by Parties to the CBD.

As such, we welcome the CBD's focus on the challenges related to climate change and the need to better integrate climate change activities into its programmes of work. We congratulate SBSTTA for opening the debate on the very controversial issue of biofuels, or more appropriately known as agrofuels since large-scale biofuel schemes are directly linked to industrial agriculture. Indeed, in the legitimate and pressing quest for a solution to climate change, it is absolutely imperative that Parties avoid so-called mitigation responses that will only further biodiversity loss and increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Heralded as a solution to climate change, the production of agrofuels is significantly *contributing* to climate change because large swaths of forests and other valuable ecosystems are being destroyed to make way for large-scale agrofuel monoculture plant and tree plantations. These monocultures, which are strongly being promoted throughout the world, and particularly in the global South, have already a long history of negative social, cultural and environmental impacts, including in countries where there has already been a profound experience with agrofuels, like Brazil and Indonesia.

The gigantic scale at which these agrofuel monocultures are being promoted make it impossible to reduce any of the well-known, documented, and recognised negative impacts which are included in the Secretariat's document. This includes:

- the exacerbation of land-tenure conflicts, impacting particularly upon Indigenous Peoples' rights,
- rural unemployment and depopulation, leading to further expansion of the agricultural frontier into natural ecosystems,
- the increase in greenhouse gas emissions from further deforestation and land-use change for agrofuel plantations,
- the hindering of food security and sovereignty,
- the threatening of water resources,
- the increase in use of agricultural chemicals,
- and the promotion of use of genetically engineered organisms undermining the Protocol on Biosafety, and
- promotion of known invasive alien species, such as jatropha. *(continued on 4)*



### Today's ECO:

1. **Civil society on agrofuels**
2. **Ecosystem approach for our oceans**
3. **India, Jatropha and degraded lands**
4. **SBSTTA notes**

ECO thanks SwedBio for their on-going support!

ECO has been published by the NGO (non-governmental organisation) community at most Conferences of Parties to International Environmental Conventions. It is currently being published at the 12<sup>th</sup> Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Paris, France 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. **SUBMISSIONS:** Welcome from all civil society groups. Please give to Jessica Dempsey or Swati Shresth at morning civil society meetings or at [jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca).

# Ecosystem approach for our oceans

Greenpeace

The world's oceans, once thought to contain inexhaustible resources, are under increasing threat. Scientific studies over recent years have sent the same message: human activities and our appetite for fish in particular, are putting extreme pressure on marine ecosystems to the point that profound ecosystem changes are being experienced in many parts of the world.

In November 2006, Professor Boris Worm published a study in *Science*<sup>1</sup> that brought the extent of this degradation into stark relief. Looking at marine biodiversity on a global scale, the study showed that loss of marine biodiversity is drastically reducing the ocean's ability to produce seafood, resist diseases, filter pollutants and rebound from stresses such as over-fishing and climate change. The study's projection that all commercial and seafood species are on the brink of collapse was shocking enough to make news headlines across the world.

There is little argument that current fisheries management tools are not only failing to maintain sustainable fish stocks, but are also threatening wider marine biodiversity. We need a fundamental shift in the way that our oceans are managed – a shift away from the old-style fisheries management models towards a model that has the ecosystem approach front and centre. This is vital if we are to assure the health of our oceans for future generations.

But what is the ecosystem approach? And why must marine reserves, off-limits to all extractive and destructive uses, be included as an essential component?

Currently most fisheries management focuses on single species without consideration to the role of the species in the wider ecosystem or understanding the cumulative impact of their own activities. The ecosystem approach on the other hand requires us to consider whole ecosystems at a scale that ensures ecosystem integrity is maintained. And it recognises the complex interactions between species that make up marine ecosystems.

Given that we know so little about the marine environment and how marine ecosystems operate, it is vital that the ecosystem approach is applied in conjunction with a precautionary approach. To achieve this, those who want to undertake activities such as fishing or coastal development must be able to show that these activities will not harm the marine environment *before* any action is permitted. Over fishing, destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling, and marine pollution continue to threaten the biodiversity and health of our oceans. The ecosystem approach should focus on controlling these human activities that impact the marine environment, rather than try to manipulate the way in which an ecosystem is functioning.

Acknowledging our lack of understanding about the complexity of marine ecosystems and the need to take a precautionary approach, it becomes clear that the establishment of networks of large-scale marine reserves must be at the core of implementing the ecosystem approach in the marine environment.

Marine reserves are highly protected areas that are off-limits to all extractive and destructive uses including fishing.

Comparable to national parks on land, they are the most powerful tool available for the conservation of ocean wildlife. They may also benefit fisheries by promoting recovery and reproduction of exploited species. A representative network of marine reserves of sufficient scale will help protect against catastrophes and ensure the long-term health and stability of marine ecosystems.

Greenpeace is calling for 40% of the oceans to be protected by marine reserves. While it seems almost intuitive that we could achieve a high level of marine protection by putting large tracts of marine areas aside from extractive and other uses, it is of comfort that the notion is strongly supported by science. A review of studies in 2003 concluded that between 20-50% of the marine area is required to achieve conservation and fisheries management goals.<sup>2</sup> Worm's study, despite ringing the alarms bells about long term future of fish stocks, also showed that closing areas to fishing by establishing marine reserves increases the abundance, productivity and diversity of species found in the reserves. As well as boosting fish stocks and catch in adjacent waters, marine reserves are also known to promote resilience to overfishing and the impacts of other threats such as climate change.

Real benefits of marine reserves have already been seen. Apo Island is the oldest marine reserve in the Philippines. Twenty years ago, destructive dynamite fishing practices were common. Fishing was fast becoming a poor long-term investment and local fishermen noticed catches were decreasing. The marine reserve has now been in place for twenty years and locals have seen a marked increase in catch levels. Similar stories are told by fishers near other well-established reserves around the world, such as El Hierro in the Canary Islands, St Soufrière in St Lucia, and the Azores. Marine reserves may benefit fisheries by the "spill-over" of animals from inside the reserves, and from the export of eggs and larvae to adjacent marine areas.

While Greenpeace envisages the establishment of large-scale marine reserves on the high seas<sup>3</sup>, a patchwork of small reserves near the coast will be more effective. This difference in scale not only reflects the difference in scale of habitat distribution but also ensures equitable access to fishing resources to the communities along the coast. Implementing networks of marine reserves that benefit small-scale and sustainable fisheries will require the full participation of local communities from inception onwards.

Worm's 2006 study should be a wake up call to us all. If we take action now, the oceans possess the potential to rebound; if we do nothing, we will witness further fisheries collapses and marine degradation. We must ensure that we don't repeat the mistakes made on land that have resulted in large scale biodiversity loss in front of our eyes. Large scale marine reserves must be a part of how the ecosystem approach is implemented. It is the best chance we can give our marine environment to not just survive, but to thrive.

<sup>2</sup> Gell F.R., and Roberts C.M. 2003. Benefits Beyond Boundaries: The Fishery Effects of Marine Reserves. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 18:448-455.

<sup>3</sup> Greenpeace has as a proposal for a global set of marine reserves on the high seas. <http://oceans.greenpeace.org/en/our-oceans/marine-reserves/roadmap-to-recovery>

<sup>1</sup> Worm B et al. (2006) Impacts of biodiversity loss on ocean ecosystem services. *Science* 314:787-790

# India, Jatropha and 'degraded lands'

As heard loud and clear in plenary yesterday, India wants to expand agrofuel plantations of jatropha on 'barren and degraded lands'. Indeed British Petroleum is set to make an investment of US\$9.4 million in a project in Andhra Pradesh state that aims to produce biodiesel on a mass scale. The project is expected to utilise around 8,000 hectares, categorised as wasteland, for jatropha plantations. A private carbon offset program, "Plant Jatropha" (see <http://www.plantjatropha.com/>), encourages individuals to 'offset' their carbon footprint by 'planting jatropha' in India, which, they argue, will mitigate the climate crisis while supporting "rural extremely poor and marginalized communities" (from website) with the "huge potential to alleviate soil degradation, desertification and deforestation by greening the vast wasteland" (from website).

But...some Indigenous and local communities in India have been contesting the category of 'barren and degraded lands' or wastelands. Two points are worth mentioning here. First, many arid and semi-arid *ecosystems* have been classified as 'barren and degraded'. However, these areas are often inhabited and used by communities, who themselves do not consider them to be barren nor degraded. When these lands are categorized as such, this opens them up for jatropha plantations, or other so-called land

'improvements' that the community may or may not support.

Secondly, more than often the driving force behind truly barren and degraded lands is bad land management practices by governments. Large amounts of forest lands in India, including lands cultivated by communities, have been leased out to mining companies for extraction of ores and minerals. Once the extraction is over, these lands have been laid bare without allowing for any kind of natural regeneration to take place. It will be in the best interest of ecosystems and biodiversity to allow these areas to regenerate with native species, not be further colonized by an invasive species known to crowd out other species and spread rapidly. Finally, being an exotic species, the propagation of Jatropha may be in direct contravention of India's environmental laws, specifically the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Biodiversity Act, 2002 - all of which prohibit introduction of invasive, alien species.

Does India really want to continue with their jatropha expansion plans? Or perhaps the precautionary principle should be employed here, and a full consideration of the rights of local communities and Indigenous Peoples living on these so-called 'degraded lands'.

## Meet an 'observer': Sena Alouka



### **ECO: In your view, what is the main biodiversity issue in Togo?**

Biological Diversity is the exclusive provider for the survival for communities in Togo (West Africa). In recent years unfortunately deforestation, large scale monoculture (coffee and cocoa), inappropriate farming systems (supported by so-called 'agro-experts') and lack of local communities in the management of protected areas, have resulted in a rapid decline of species and habitat destruction.

### **ECO: What is your organization doing to address this?**

Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement, the organization I am involved with, has been conducting research to understand the underlying causes of biodiversity loss from a bio-cultural perspective. Based on the findings, each year we organize, a nation-wide event called 'cultural biodiversity week' aimed at exploring and restoring proper use of traditional ecological knowledge. As a member of the West African Coalition for the Protection of Genetic Heritage (COPAGEN), my organisation has an extensive education program aimed at raising awareness around the need for preserving every single element in the web of life. We have recently developed an ecotourism project with the aim of enabling local youth to

discover hidden ecological treasures of their country and learn simple ways of adopting eco-friendly behaviour.

### **ECO: Tell us a bit more about your organization.**

Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement is the biggest ecological youth led non profit organisation in Africa. With headquarters in Togo, it has 13 international representations all over the world. Its' aim is to 'involve young people and local communities in the sustainable development process while ensuring social justice for all'.

### **ECO: What is your appeal to SBSTTA 12?**

I would urge SSTA participants to remember children who will inherit this planet and prioritize precautionary approaches *now*.

For more information contact: Tel: +228-2200112, Email: [yvetogo@hotmail.com](mailto:yvetogo@hotmail.com), [www.org-jve.org](http://www.org-jve.org)



# SBSTTA notes

## 'Scientific Observations'

### *Conference 'services' vs. high art*

While SBSTTA delegates are experiencing some 'questionable' conference services (i.e. incredibly expensive and overly packaged side event food, five computers for hundreds of people, no soap in the bathrooms, no water in coolers and fountains), civil society groups are enjoying an original Joan Miro mural in their room. The contradictions never end at CBD meetings...

### *Kudos*

Kudos out to all those Parties who recognized the need for the Working Group on 8j to consider the impacts of agrofuels on indigenous and local communities.

### *Indigenous delegates left homeless in UNESCO*

Some Indigenous delegates were surprised when they arrived at SBSTTA and discovered they did not have a meeting space as per the norm.

## Side Events of Note today:

### *Agrofuels: Contributing to Global Warming Through Massive Destruction Of Ecosystems*

Tuesday, 3 July, 18:15 – 19:45

Room: Salle XI (SS Foyer)

The event will address the existing and potential impacts of agrofuel production on forests and other ecosystems, and Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Representatives of farmer's movements, Indigenous Peoples Organizations and NGOs from Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Papua New Guinea, the US and other countries will share their real-life experiences with the impacts of the current agrofuels boom. They will also share their views on the feasibility of proposals like agrofuel certification, and reiterate their call for a precautionary approach. Presentations will be followed by debate. There will be English – Spanish interpretation

### *The Health Dangers of Genetically Modified Foods and a Case Study of Failed Policy and Safety Assessments*

Tuesday, 3 July, 18:15-19.45

Room: Salle VI (SS Foyer)

With input from more than 30 scientists over the last two years, at least 20 adverse reactions and 45 theoretical risks of GM foods have been identified. Gene-spliced foods and crops have been implicated in thousands of sick, sterile and dead animals, thousands of toxic and allergic-type symptoms in humans, and damage to virtually every system studied in lab animals. As new information about the DNA and genetic engineering has emerged, numerous assumptions that were used as the basis of safety claims have been overturned and many additional ways that the technology can produce unpredicted side effects have been identified.

## Reality check on agrofuels

As we saw on the first day of SBSTTA, biofuels, known more properly as agrofuels, have been rising up the agenda extremely fast, with conflicting reports of their role in mitigating climate change and the impacts of their production. At the same time, civil society groups and indigenous peoples in the global south have become increasingly vocal about the negative impacts on their lands, their biodiversity, food sovereignty, cultural and spiritual integrity of the push for agrofuels. Many have already suffered the impacts of large-scale monocultures for years and see that agrofuels are increasing the pressure for new monocultures.

A number of groups have therefore come together to produce a **report: Agrofuels – towards a reality check in nine key areas**, written especially for SBSTTA 12 (available on NGO table). The report centres around nine questions on the multitude of assumptions being made about agrofuels, such as:

1. Do agrofuels really mitigate climate change?
2. Are agrofuels a promotional instrument for GE crops and what biosafety risks do they pose?
3. Second Generation Agrofuels: How do unproven promises of future technological fixes shape the present debate?

4. What is the real impact of agrofuels on rural development and jobs?

5. Is there a link between agrofuel monoculture plantations and Human Rights Violations?

6. Do current 'Sustainability Certification' initiatives for biomass/agrofuels form a real and credible solution?

### *Launch of a Call for Moratorium*

These group are so concerned about the impact of the EU targets for agrofuels and the impacts they are already having, that the authors of the report and several other NGOs from around the world are calling for:

**an immediate moratorium on EU incentives for agrofuels, EU imports of agrofuels and EU agroenergy monocultures**

It can be found at [www.econexus.info](http://www.econexus.info) where instructions about how to sign up can be found. The moratorium call has already attracted over 100 signatures from organisations around the world.

## Civil society statement continued from p 1.

All these issues will pose additional threats to biodiversity, climate change and people.

Parties must not blindly promote these agrofuel technologies without at least:

- applying the precautionary principle,
- undertaking a full, comprehensive assessment of all impacts including social, cultural and environmental aspects, which includes indigenous and local communities' concerns, and
- establish a sound policy framework where research and technology assessment come first before rushing headfirst into a so-called quick fix solution to climate change.

The stakes are high for the CBD this week. We all know that if the current agrofuels boom continues unchecked, it will be impossible for Parties to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. We call upon you, the Parties to the CBD, to make history, and effectively address large-scale agrofuels for what they are, a threat to biodiversity, climate change, and humanity.