

Biodiversity provides benefits - it is a public asset, not a service!

Like a naïve slip of tongue or a bad fad, the language of the World Bank seems to have gripped hold of CBD documents. The concepts of “ecosystem services” and “monetary valuation of biodiversity” are everywhere – not only all over the documents but they are key terms in side events and even the Chairman’s opening statement on Monday. This all seems part of a last stance effort to attribute financial values to biodiversity in hope of conserving biodiversity with the help of the most powerful mechanism of the present time: trade. But have market mechanisms automatically guaranteed the conservation, sustainable use, the equitable sharing of benefits, so far? They have not!

The potential problems and conflicts of this language are self-evident. “Ecosystem services” could become regulated by the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services

(GATS). This would regularly lead to situations where poor local communities must compete with bog international corporations richer than whole developing countries for benefits and assets derived from their local ecosystems. They would be always lose the bidding war.

Like a naïve slip of tongue or a bad fad, the language of the World Bank seems to have gripped hold of CBD documents.

Of course ecosystem services such as biodiversity and water have value – more than that they are invaluable public assets, particularly for local communities who depend on them for their livelihoods. The “ecosystem service” vocabulary should not be used naively. The CBD needs more than that from its SBSTTA. The small CDB should avoid stumbling into another conflict with the powers of WTO.

Mark: There does not yet exist a “General Agreement in Benefits and Public Assets” under the WTO, until it does these words are still safe.

During the day on Tuesday China argued for the deletion of paragraph 7(b) (SBSTTA/11/8) as did many NGOs pointing to the unsolved relationships and strictly opposing giving the WTO the final say on what sustainable use in the context of biodiversity really means.



IN THIS ISSUE

Biodiversity as public asset.....	1
SMART forests.....	2
Invasives.....	3
Bits n' Bites	4

ECO has been published by the NGO (non-governmental organisation) community at most Conferences of Parties of the International Environmental Conventions. It is currently being published at the 11th SBSTTA to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada 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 at morning NGO meetings or submit to jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca

NGO MEETINGS
9 am, level 5

Will SBSTTA 11 agree on SMART targets for forests?

martin kaiser – greenpeace

The recent UN FAO Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) again underscored the dramatic loss of the world's last ancient forests. The 'gross' forest loss mainly in primary forests is estimated at much more than 13 million hectares per year globally. The major failure of the UN Forum on Forests in May 2005 to negotiate a legally-binding multilateral agreement on forests has further demonstrated the central role that the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity (FBD) must play in promoting forest conservation, sustainable use and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of these very valuable biological diversity.

Illegal logging, poor governance, law enforcement and related trade are pervasive problems having a devastating impact on the world's forests, local and indigenous communities and the economies of consumer countries. Given the wide-ranging negative effects of ineffective forest management, it is essential that parties to the CBD prioritize tackling these issues as a core part of their activities implementing the work programme. Parties must take into account the outcomes of a number of relevant forest fora and processes when reviewing the programme of work on forest biodiversity and making further recommendations. This includes the outcomes derived from the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) in 13-24 February 2006 regarding the future of an international arrangement on forests, as well as the different Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade processes facilitated by the World Bank.

We welcome the efforts by the CBD to develop targets and indicators for each programme of work in order to measure the success of parties in reaching the 2010 biodiversity target. However, we believe that the current proposal regarding the review of implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity *does not* adequately address the ongoing forest crisis. Based on existing scientific knowledge and data, will SBSTTA 11 be able to develop Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) global targets? Will these targets help us achieve the 2010 target for forests, which are home to the majority of the world's biodiversity, while also respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities?

For example: About 12 % of the world's forests are already protected. Over the last decade, protected areas have become much more than purely nature conservation zones. It is increasingly recognised within

the CBD that protected areas have to reflect the three Convention goals: the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use and the equitable sharing of benefits. A 10% target focusing solely on effectiveness and applied to all forest types falls short in addressing the global forest crises. Therefore at least 20% - instead of 10% - of the world's forest areas should be conserved in protected areas, and these protected areas must have the Prior Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Recognising that the world's ancient forests contain 2/3 of the planet's terrestrial biodiversity, 'primary forests' as defined by the FAO FRA for all relevant ecoregions and forest types should be a major component of these protected areas. The programme of work on forest biological diversity boldly states "The need for urgent conservation action for forests that are ecologically significant and/or most important for biological diversity" (PG?). Hence, the conservation of these forest areas will be a significant contribution to meeting the 2010 biodiversity target.

Furthermore, it is important that countries take strong measures to ensure that their demand for forest products does not fuel the ecologically unsustainable and socially inequitable harvesting of these goods. It is important, therefore, that we include targets and indicators for unsustainable consumption and sustainable production, like the proposed indicator found in SBSTTA/11/INF/3 'Ecological footprint of consumption patterns for forest products'.

As FAO FRA frequently assesses the status of the world's forests and deforestation rates, it should be easy for SBSTTA11 to agree on measurable and timebound targets and indicators. We propose that the gross rate of forest loss and conversion to other land uses should be reduced at least by half by the year 2010 based on the data of the FRA period 2000-2005.

The implementation of the CBD regarding forest biological diversity is key for the achievement of the 2010 target. SBSTTA 11 should make recommendations (to COP 8) that adequately address this fact, based on sound scientific guidance.

Invasive Alien Species and Trade

Stas Burgiel – defenders of wildlife

Invasive alien species (IAS) are plants, animals and pathogens introduced outside of their natural range and whose establishment and spread can adversely impact other species, habitats and ecosystems. The problem of IAS is closely linked to global trade in two ways. First, the movement of goods through trade provides pathways for IAS to spread. Sometimes species are introduced intentionally, in other cases unintentional introductions occur when a species “hitchhikes” to a new place. Common pathways for unintentional introductions include ship’s ballast water containing exotic aquatic organisms, timber harboring insects, livestock infected with diseases and tourists’ boots carrying seeds or other detritus. As global trade increases, the number of unintentional introductions increases for a variety of reasons:

- increased trade leads to more chances for introduction of IAS;
- more introductions lead to a greater probability that an IAS will become established;
- increased variety of goods and means of transport increases the potential array of species and their pathways;
- more frequent trade to a wider range of countries increases the rate and variety of potential introductions; and
- faster modes of transport may improve an organism’s chances of survival while in transit.

The discussion of pathways for invasion at SBSTTA-11 in many cases relates directly to trade, yet there is little direct mention of trade in the documents as the underlying impetus for the movement of invasive alien species around the world. Recognizing this disjunction, a coalition of NGOs has formulated a project focusing on “clean trade” and the integration of measures to prevent introductions of invasive alien species with international trade rules.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) and its constituent agreements, specifically the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) establish the overarching framework for the conduct of world trade. Yet, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the SPS Agreement itself set forth a centrally important principle of international law on which countries can base their IAS prevention schemes – the precautionary principle. The principle holds that lack of scientific

certainty is not a reason to postpone cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation if serious or irreversible damage is threatened. Although controversy surrounds the precautionary principle in the broader trade and environment debate, in the arena of IAS it is fairly straightforward: if countries choose to, they may utilize the precautionary principle in crafting and, if necessary, defending IAS preventive measures. Incorporation of the precautionary principle informs the subsequent development of domestic regulations, particularly in the areas of: national measures that are stricter than international standards; transparency; equivalence; consistency; least trade restrictiveness; use of scientific evidence; risk assessments; and the use of provisional measures in cases of uncertainty.

Even for countries with relatively ample resources, addressing the threats of IAS is a significant challenge. For many developing countries, managing IAS presents an additional demand on an already limited pool of resources. The WTO’s Doha “development” round of negotiations recognizes the problems faced by developing countries, yet promises little assistance for implementing strong national measures to prevent IAS introductions. In any future discussions on capacity building with the Global Environment Facility or the WTO, the CBD should take a central role in ensuring that SPS measures encompass threats to biodiversity. Ultimately, strengthening the ability of developing countries to prevent IAS introductions benefits the global community in terms of more secure ecosystems and safer international trade. For more information on this project, please contact Stas Burgiel, Defenders of Wildlife (sburgiel@defenders.org or sburgiel@myway.com).



MEA - what overconsumption?

Maybe the delegates from Canada and Australia have not had time to pick up one of those handy pocket-sized ecological footprint booklets published by WWF and the Global Footprint Network. Within that booklet, the ecological footprint of Canadians is listed at just over 6 hectares per person (8th on the list of nations) and Australia comes in at just under 8 hectares (4th of all nations). The booklet also notes that the available sustainable capacity of the earth is approximately 1.8 hectares per person, and this does not take into account the needs of other species.

In the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment discussion Tuesday morning (WG I), Canada and Australia felt compelled to ask for the only paragraph addressing a major driver of biodiversity loss – unsustainable consumption – to be removed from the text. Paragraph 9 in (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/7) reads:

“Cognizant also of the impacts of the inequalities in the use of resources and the implications of this imbalance for the drivers of biodiversity loss, urges Parties to address unsustainable consumption patterns that impact on biodiversity, bearing in mind the common but differentiated responsibilities of States consistent with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and decides to consider this issue further at its ninth meeting.”

As the statement made by the Humane Society International in WG I yesterday rightly noted:

“Unsustainable consumption patterns represent the underside of attempts to achieve true sustainability. Too often, consumption and production patterns are justified in the name of sustainability without any evidence being put forward to demonstrate that they are truly sustainable. Unsustainable international trade in wildlife, for example, creates inequalities when the revenue from that trade goes disproportionately to middlemen and dealers. If the CBD is committed to promote sustainability it must also, of necessity, address unsustainable consumption. We therefore suggest that as long as the CBD continues to work with MEAs like CITES, which deals directly with wildlife trade, addressing unsustainable consumption patterns is a valid responsibility of the CBD and the SBSTTA. We therefore suggest that the Parties retain the full language of Paragraph 9.”

Maybe someone needs to slip the delegates of Canada and the US a reminder that their citizens consume 3 to 4 times more than the sustainable level and at least 6 to 8 times more than many countries such as Somalia, Haiti and Nepal.

Taxonomists have difficulties with the three objectives of the CBD

Taxonomy is one of those words that just sounds boring - “tax-yawn-omy”.

On Monday, however, it was anything but boring for the few who actually follow the issue. Just the name of the lunchtime side event – “DNA barcoding and the democratization of taxonomy” – was enough to scare the pants off any suspicious NGO delegate. Barcodes are used in shops, you know. The Consortium on the Barcoding of Life is sequencing fractions of a species’ DNA which allows clear taxonomic identification. But where will the reference specimens be stored? For which use can these specimens leave their countries of origin and ownership? What if the type of use changes?

ABS issues were not even mentioned at the meeting: no Prior Informed Consent, no Mutually Agreed Terms. Individual researchers may be very decent persons with good motives, happy that their talents are finally appreciated. But what if they feed a resource suction machine which cannot guarantee compliance with all three objectives of the Convention? What is so democratic about that?

In the afternoon, Working Group I discussed the Global Taxonomy Initiative. Identifying species is clearly central to aims of the CBD. But why suggest to remove the paragraph related to Article 8j and to the fair sharing of benefits. (SBSTTA/11/5 para 6c)? Fortunately countries like Ecuador, Nepal and Finland opposed the deletion. The US however offered that the Corso for Barcoding of Life will provide capacity building for taxonomists worldwide.

P O E T R Y

“no se quien eres, pero
una cosa te pido,
no te vendas
...
No, aire
No te vendas
Que no te canalicen,
Que no te entuben

Que no the encajen
Ni te compriman,
Que no te hagan
tabletas,
Que no te metan en una
botella
Cuidado!”

-- Pablo Neruda

“I don't know who you are, but,
I ask you one thing
don't sell yourself
...
no, air
don't sell yourself
so that they do not canalize you
so that they do not put you in a
pipe

so that they do not put you in chains
and neither compress you
so that they do not make tablets of
you
so that they do not put you in a
bottle
Watch out!”

-- Pablo Neruda
(our translation)