

COP 9 Honour Roll

Biggest CBD Party-poopers: Canada and Brazil

Most precautionary part(ies): The African Group

Most clueless head of state: Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper whose high-level speech and simplistic slide show revealed his elementary grasp of biodiversity.

Best Euphemism: “consistent with international agreements” = WTO rules!

Business as usual award: Australia, have you noticed a change in government?

Most common word by the Canadian delegation: voluntary

Contortionist award: for PRRI’s outlandish interpretation of the precautionary principle. (Editors note: Given the scientific uncertainty of their science, NGOs unanimously call for the suspension of any further release of “Public Research and Regulation Initiative (PRRI)” at the CBD, including in open field trials at negotiations.)

Not walking the talk: EU for not abandoning its 10% agrofuel target in light of all the research and growing international controversy.

Most consistent and principled: Norway, special thanks for insisting we should not be cramped into corners by the WTO and very limited definitions of biodiversity.

Best evidence the CBD Secretariat needs more funding: the fragile trophies Ahmed Djoghlaif awarded to heads of state (Earth delicately balanced on a stick...earth fell off).

Most Valiant Effort to Democratize: Brazilian civil society delegate Camila Moreno and Cassandra Smithes for translating for Latin American delegates in the biofuels contact group, and elsewhere.

Most appropriate badge color: Grey, for industry.

Most Proactive Neutrality: to delegate from Switzerland on forest biodiversity

Best Sandwich: still looking, can’t see past the sausages.

Business and the UN: A Primer

James Rowe

The international business community's interest in the UN intensified in 1976 when a number of post-colonial states, organized through the G-77, began pushing for a legally binding code of conduct for transnational corporations. The code would have helped equalize an uneven global economy – a haunting reminder of the colonial era. The code would also have increased business costs for TNCs operating in the Global South. For this reason the code was vigorously opposed by business, primarily the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

The code was ultimately killed, but since then business groups like the ICC have kept a closer eye on the UN, keen to slow regulatory efforts that might increase costs for their constituents. The alternative to binding regulation they have consistently pushed is voluntarism: voluntary self-regulation, and voluntary intergovernmental mechanisms lacking monitoring and enforcement. Their rationale is clear: these voluntary mechanisms can soothe public concern while doing little to force an *internalization* of costs (pollution, morbid wages) that business prefers sticking with society and nature (indeed these *externalized* costs are a key source of their profits).

This voluntary agenda was successfully pushed at Rio in 1992. It was rolled out again in the wake of worldwide global justice protests in 1999 when the Global Compact – a voluntary code crafted jointly by the ICC and UN -- was unveiled. Indeed every time there is a groundswell of concern over growing inequity and ecological degradation, and the UN looks poised to take regulatory action, business has been on the doorstep – and increasingly in the living room -- pushing voluntarism.

This brings us to Bonn where industry representatives are hungrily prowling the Maritim to ensure their paths to privatized profit are not

bracketed. And thanks to the heroic efforts of their predecessors industry lobbyists needn't push hard – as evidenced by the ceaseless hoopla over 'Business and Biodiversity' it is clear the UN is welcoming them with open arms.

Why? Industry's interests are clear but why is the UN – from the CBD Secretariat upwards – so eager to engage industry? One key answer is that the UN has an ideological agenda of its own. During Kofi Annan's tenure as Secretary-General a sincere – if naïve – view emerged that business could be transformed through non-confrontational engagement. If this view could be traced to one person it is John Ruggie who served as Annan's assistant from 1997 until 2001. Ruggie is a Harvard professor of international affairs whose best-known research is on the power of norms or ideas to transform the world (norms like gender equity, human rights etc...). In crafting the Global Compact – a voluntary code corporations can sign onto -- his bet is that the process will accelerate the spread of corporate social responsibility norms. The ultimate hope is that the corporation's singular focus on profit will be destabilized, making room in the business world for other motivations like the promotion of social and environmental well-being. If companies sign onto the Compact for reputation management reasons they are still tacitly admitting that business has responsibilities beyond the bottom line. Ruggie's wager is that an accumulation of these admissions will slowly transform what society expects of business.

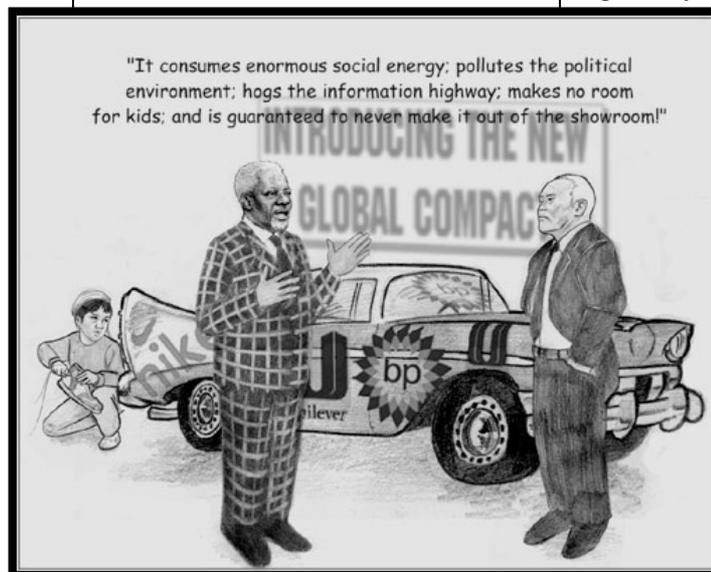
As a member of the CBD Secretariat reported during COP9 preparatory meetings, there are two ways of dealing with industry: containment and engagement, and containment has always failed. There are of course other ways of challenging the primacy of industry, but the representative had a point: as long as the profit-motive drives markets there will be incentive for business to undermine protective regulations (they benefit society and environment but slow capital accumulation). In this context Ruggie's desire to inject progressive norms into commercial calculations is intelligible, if incomplete.

If the UN's strategy – clearly manifest at the CBD Secretariat – is going to do more than further corporate control over international decision making two key factors need considering:

1) TNCs are currently driven by the profit-motive. This motive will continually make cutting ecological corners attractive. The UN should be more willing to chide and disengage from companies that do. Disengagement can be a form of engagement.

2) The growing number of social enterprises – companies driven by social agendas even as they operate on the market (Grameen Bank etc...) – need to better organize themselves. It would be powerful were there an International Chamber of Ethical Commerce to destabilize the ICCs legitimacy as 'the voice of business.'

Civil society can and should facilitate this organizing. In the mean time the UN should prioritize partnerships with enterprises that place ecological and social flourishing at their core, enterprises that are *genuinely* transforming the meaning of markets.



More Report Cards: Some Standouts

Brazil: Smart But a Schoolyard Bully - three years detention

Africa (Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Liberia, Ghana and Ethiopia): set to go to the head of the class

Zambia: Shows most promise

Indigenous Peoples: Most patient and thoughtful participants

EU: Flexible yet shrewd: B for effort, but slow learner on agrofuels.

Germany: Flunks geography, must learn that there are 53 countries in Africa (ps. "German East Africa" will not suffice)

Australia: Flunks swimming, took a dive for ocean fertilization

Business: In the wrong school. Too often found singing "Bebop Lula we've got the Moola"

Cultural Diversity for Biodiversity Conservation

Ellen Woodley

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes that biodiversity conservation takes place in the context of human culture. Excluding communities from the management of natural resources potentially violates their human rights, puts their cultural systems at risk, and creates conflict rather than cooperation.

Human cultures have co-evolved with the use of natural resource niches, creating and maintaining interdependence between cultural diversity and biological diversity, often referred to as 'biocultural' diversity.

Cultural diversity and oral knowledge systems characterizing many indigenous and local communities are finely tuned to ecosystems, but are being rapidly degraded - largely due to the same pressures associated with biodiversity loss, such as land use changes and processes of economic globalization in general. In addition, the denial of rights to land and secure land tenure is a denial of rights to cultural freedom and the associated traditions, languages, spirituality and identity associated with the land. The loss of culture, in turn, increases existing pressures on biodiversity.

As we advocate for biodiversity conservation, so too must we raise awareness about the many cultures that have maintained important values, knowledge and wisdom about

biodiversity. Including these voices and experiences in conservation, while fighting poverty and stopping climate change, create opportunities that sustain both human cultural diversity and good management and respect for biodiversity.

The policies of UNEP, UNESCO, IUCN and the CBD, for example, now include a focus on the interrelationships between biodiversity and cultural diversity. However, there is a need for a more concerted effort in practice. Effective biodiversity conservation relies on mainstreaming cultural diversity into policies and action for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This approach involves:

- ensuring indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and access to traditional lands, territories and resources;
- strengthening the retention of local and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) through inter-generational dialogue and cooperation;
- integrating local participation, knowledge and values in policy decisions while educating governments, NGOs and communities on intellectual property rights related to traditional ecological knowledge;
- developing and strengthening local and indigenous institutions at all scales;
- ensuring greater access to information communication technology and geo-

spatial information technology for indigenous and local communities interested in documenting and mapping their traditional knowledge and territories;

- formal recognition (e.g. national qualifications) of competence in non-literate, traditional ecological competencies, such as tracking and medicine; and
- establishing partnerships between indigenous peoples, local communities and governments, international and local organizations and the private sector

Recognizing the value of cultural diversity for its contribution to the conservation and restoration of the world's biodiversity depends on ensuring security of tenure on traditional territories, examining our biases about the value of formal vs. experiential knowledge, and ensuring local and indigenous communities' participation and guidance in conservation decision-making processes.

References: ICSU 2002. Science and Traditional Knowledge. Report from the ICSU Study Group on Science and Traditional Knowledge. March 2002. Available at www.icsu.org/Gestion/img/ICSU_DOC_DOWNLOAD/220_DD_FILE_Traitional_Knowledge_report.pdf; UNESCO 2000. World Conference on Science. Science for the Twenty-First Century: A New Commitment. UNESCO, Paris

ECO is published by the civil society community at many International Environmental Convention negotiations. It is currently being published at the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP-9) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Bonn, Germany 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. Email to jkrowe@ucsc.edu and jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca ECO thanks Project "COP 9 preparation" supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Swedbio, and Hivos-Oxfam Novib Biodiversity Fund.



The Federal Ministry
for the Environment,
Nature Conservation

Notes from the COP

Today's Nomination for the Golden Chainsaw Award

Today the seventh nomination for Greenpeace's Golden Chainsaw Award goes to China for trying everything to slow down the COP9 decision on Biodiversity and Climate Change, one of the crucial issues at this conference. China is not interested in informing and guiding biodiversity-relevant climate change mitigation activities, such as biofuels, GE trees or ocean fertilization. They even supported Brazil's opposition to establishing an expert group (AHTEG) on this topic.

FSC is misleading the public

World Rainforest Movement – Global Forest Coalition

"Forest certification according to the principles of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) balances social, environmental and economic interests. FSC requirements address all core elements of the UN Convention on Biodiversity. In fact, through FSC certification these have been successfully implemented in over 100 million ha of forests around the globe."

The above statement is posted in FSC's special section on its web site titled "FSC at the UN Conference of Biodiversity." What the statement does not say is that the 100 million hectare figure hides **millions of hectares of monoculture tree plantations** that have been falsely certified as "forests".

At the same time, it hides the fact that social and environmental movements from around the world have been denouncing tree plantations for years and demanding FSC to stop

certifying them, because among other ill-effects, they destroy biodiversity.

Be they plantations of eucalyptus, pine, acacia or oil palm, these large scale monocultures are mostly aimed at feeding northern consumers with growing volumes of raw materials extracted in southern countries at a huge social and environmental cost.

Local communities are displaced to give way to endless rows of identical trees that displace other life forms in the area. These plantations not only destroy biodiversity but they also deplete and pollute water resources while soils become degraded. Human rights violations are rife, ranging from the loss of livelihoods and displacement, to repression and even cases of torture and death.

Apart from having to confront governments and corporations, local communities struggling against large scale monoculture tree plantations must face the additional problem that these same plantations are being given credibility through FSC certification. In fact, most core elements of the Convention on Biodiversity have been effectively violated in those millions of hectares of certified plantations around the globe.

FSC's credibility is increasingly undermined by certification of these and other destructive projects. Nowadays FSC's decision-making is controlled by

corporate interests, which try to convince consumers that buying more timber products is good for biodiversity. This is undermining the efforts of environmental organizations working to educate consumers on the need to reduce consumption.

Plantations are not forests and FSC should not certify them!

Street protests during MOP4 and COP9

German Campaign Against Biopiracy

"Nature for people, not for business"! and "Resistance is fertile" were the slogans a broad international alliance of social movements and activists along with La Via Campesina used over the past month to call for an immediate halt to nature's commodification, and a just sharing of natural resources for the benefit of local communities.

The main points of critique were the current push for agrofuels and their threatening implications for biodiversity, small farmers, and the worldwide food supply. Further points were biopiracy, seed privatisation and the CBD's ignorance towards small-scale farmers and their important role in promoting agrobiodiversity.

There has been scarce space at COP 9 for substantial critique of industry's creeping control over negotiations. This business offensive makes NGO lobby activities seem more futile than fertile. More radical protests and a real change

away from a development paradigm driven by economic growth are required if we are to keep life from being commodified to death.

More information, pictures and videos on the street protests can be found under: biotech.indymedia.org

