

Biodiversity Convention put on climate clean-up duty

Over the past few days, Parties to SBSTTA, civil society organizations and Indigenous Peoples have been fretting over how to re-direct the climate train. By ignoring biodiversity issues, climate negotiators and policy-makers are simply not dealing with the problem. For example, most *here* are aware that 25% of GHGs stem from deforestation and that diverse ecosystems are better equipped to deal with adaptation (Darwin, anyone?)

Some climate NGOs are just as bad: celebrities and activists around the upcoming Live Earth concerts are calling for individuals to pledge "To fight for laws and policies that expand the use of renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on oil and coal" (see full text of pledge at http://liveearthpledge.org/answer_the_call.php). But of course, here at SBSTTA, we know 'renewable' energy certainly does not equate 'sustainable', and definitely not just.

Indeed, as many side events and publications on agrofuels have demonstrated, it is as if we have all been put on climate clean-up duty, scrambling to mop up the mess to biodiversity that others have made (see article in ECO on Eucalyptus plantations on pg 2).

But 'the others' are not all to blame. We, the biodiversity community, have not been bold enough in communicating the science, which clearly shows the dire outcomes of 'climate solutions' on species, ecosystems, the most vulnerable humans, and in some cases, for the Earth's climate itself. The UNFCCC is not listening, but too, SBSTTA and the COP have not been talking loudly enough. We've heard delegates complaining that other ministries or colleagues responsible for climate change issues will not listen to them. We've heard that there is no use asking the SBSTA of the UNFCCC to meet with the SBSTTA of the CBD because they simply will not listen, or else it will be logistically impossible. Those reasons, while real and problematic, are no reason to cower.

In order to move from 'clean-up duty', we need to agree upon bold messages this week. As such, we believe the recommendations to COP should include the paragraph (working off the text provided by the European Expert Meeting, Vilm, April 2007):

10 (e) **Request the SBSTA of the UNFCCC , recalling UNFCCC decision 13/CP8 on enhanced cooperation between the Rio Conventions and taking into account the extreme importance of this issue for biodiversity, to organize a joint meeting with SBSTTA, within the UNFCCC process on reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries, in order to define the roles of the two conventions on this issue, assign a lead role to the CBD and ensure that issues of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are adequately taken into account.** (continued on p. 3)

Today's ECO

1. **Cleaning up messes**
2. **Reclaim the forests + eucalyptus plantations**
3. **To tree or not to tree**
4. **Agrofuels in Africa**

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 12th 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.

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CBD - Reclaim the Forests!

Greenpeace

Forest protection plays a powerful role in mitigating climate change. The awareness of this fact has also been reflected in the level of attention given to this issue so far at SBSTTA 12- especially at side events.

Illegal and destructive logging, along with the rapid conversion of tropical rainforests for agro-business, is having a devastating impact on forests, people and the climate. Forests, in particular intact forest landscapes, are significant stores of the world's terrestrial carbon. Their destruction is responsible for about one quarter of the world's carbon emissions- that's more emissions than from road, air, rail and sea transportation combined.

This call for forest protection is not just something that appeals to tree-huggers for ecological, social and cultural reasons, but also makes good economic sense. Economist Sir Nicholas Stern warned in a report for the UK government that climate change could shrink the global economy by as much as 20%. And that "*curbing deforestation is a highly cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions*" and estimated that between US\$10 billion and 15 billion extra investment per year could cut emissions from deforestation by around a half, which would in turn pay us back economically many times in the future.

The key political discussions on the issue of reducing emissions from deforestation have so far been mainly confined to the UNFCCC. Following the proposal by a number of countries for the development of mechanisms which will reward them for protecting their forests, the UNFCCC started a 2-year process to assess how to reduce emissions from deforestation. These 2 years are almost up and parties will decide in Bali at the UNFCCC COP in December how to take this issue forward, in particular whether deforestation will be included in the post-2012 commitments on climate.

It is clear in the discussions on possible mechanisms and policy approaches that biodiversity has been glaringly absent from discussions at the UNFCCC so far. Currently discussions have purely focused on the reduction of carbon emissions, with minimal lip service to the "co-benefits" for biodiversity and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, there has been no input in these discussions by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. How these discussions will develop and the options that are put on the table to ensure the effective and comprehensive protection of forests will be largely determined on the role that the biodiversity experts will play in these discussions.

Considering the rapid development of this discussion within the UNFCCC, Greenpeace urges the CBD to assert itself more forcefully in the discussions by defining a clear mandate and leading role in the development of any policy options and positive incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD).

While we understand that there are coordination efforts by the Secretariats of the Conventions to look at ways on working together on this issue, Greenpeace urges that this process is a speedy one to ensure that the CBD does not miss the boat on these current discussions, to ensure that biodiversity considerations are integrated from the beginning of the process.

Also Greenpeace strongly urges you, the biodiversity experts, to work much more closely with your colleagues back home working within the UNFCCC on the REDD issues to ensure that what is agreed at Bali (and beyond) will have benefits for both biodiversity and climate change.

Let's make sure we don't abandon the forests' future to only the carbon accountants - and make sure that the multiple functions of forests are preserved for future generations.

Eucalyptus agrofuels: substituting evil for wrong

Ana Filipini, World Rainforest Movement

The rush to use biomass as an alternative source of energy to reduce CO2 emissions is concealing the unsustainable consumption pattern that underlies global warming and climate change.

These reductionist approaches do more harm than good. A case in point is the European Ultra Low CO2 Steelmaking (ULCOS) project involving the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). Its chief aim is to replace fossil fuels with biomass, notably from monoculture tree plantations in the tropics. It has identified "good candidates" for biomass production – candidates to host industrial-scale eucalyptus plantations.

The 'candidates' chosen to host such plantations are: Brazil (which CIRAD considers could have 46 million hectares available in 2050), and several central African countries -- Congo (South), the Democratic Republic of Congo (West), Angola (North and East), Zambia (West), Tanzania (West and South), Mozambique (North) and the Central African Republic (West and Centre) -- with 46 million hectares.

Large-scale plantations destroy existing ecosystems –as is already happening in several grasslands, forests, peat lands, wetlands, which provide livelihoods to local populations. Such destruction implies the release of enormous amounts of greenhouse gases, which challenge the basis of those kinds of projects.

Replacing burning huge amounts of fossil fuels with large eucalyptus plantations to cater to rising demands for agro fuels only result in encroachment of highly diverse ecosystems and the depletion of soil and water. Meanwhile, the climate keeps changing. WRM <http://www.wrm.org,uy>

To tree or not to tree, and how: avoided deforestation + Indigenous Rights

Indigenous Caucus

While countries with pristine forests are requesting resources to avoid deforestation, it is critical to note that these forests are located on traditional Indigenous territories that are often the site of resistance and conflict. While it is government investment policies that have led to deforestation, remaining pristine forests persist because of the traditional way Indigenous Peoples manage them through the years.

We oppose any restriction on the rights of IPs to access and use traditional forest lands and territories. As such, any project being considered under the label of avoided deforestation must have the principle of free, prior and informed consent and full and effective participation of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities whose lands and territories it may impact. We recognize that the issue of avoided deforestation may be yet another ploy to access the genetic and environmental resources of indigenous peoples without having to share the benefits. Just as we have done with the neo-colonial policy behind displacement of Indigenous Peoples from protected areas, we will resist this new grab for our territories under the auspices of climate 'mitigation'.

In the issue of avoided deforestation, emphasis should be placed on securing land tenure systems that recognize the

rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to access traditional forests, practice community conservation and use traditional medicines. In recognizing the rights of people to sustain cultural practice we ensure cultural buy-in to conservation and climate policy.

To date, there have been two workshops held within the UNFCCC on this topic that have yet to recognize the formal participation of major Indigenous rights organizations. Thus we recommend the following:

Any project under avoided deforestation should ensure that Indigenous land rights and traditional practices are given full and complete consideration.

We insist on an Indigenous Peoples expert meeting that would analyze the effects of climate mitigation and adaptation policies and projects, particularly avoided deforestation.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that payment to an environmental organization business is not the same as conservation and we ask that a holistic and ecosystem viewpoint that Indigenous Peoples have always practiced in respect to forests be honoured, respected and maintained.

Climate clean up duty *(continued from p. 1)...*

Given the threat of genetically modified trees, we also suggest an additional paragraph under 10(b):

(x) Also expresses concern that promotion of genetically modified trees for agrofuels and other uses causes increased loss of biodiversity, can contribute to climate change and is in contravention to decision VIII/19,

Furthermore, and in agreement with Indigenous and Local Communities caucus (ICLs) here at SBSTTA, we suggest the following paragraph in the recommendations, which would finally formally recognize the impact of climate mitigation solutions on ILCs, and communicate this to other fora, especially the UNFCCC:

(x) Underlines the importance of full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities in processes regarding reduced emissions from deforestation, mitigation and adaptation and requests the Executive Secretary to convey this message to the UNFCCC.

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Agrofuels: Observations from Africa

A new report “Agrofuels in Africa: the impacts on land, food and forests” looks at the trends taking place on the continent that’s next on biofuel investors’ shopping list. ECO talked to two of the authors, Timothy Byakola of Climate and Development Initiative, Uganda and Josea Doussou-Bodjrenou of Nature-Tropicale, Benin.

What’s happening with biofuel developments in your country?

Timothy Byakola: Agrofuels are increasingly becoming big business in Uganda. This is a big threat to our forests. An example is Mabira Forest, which was to be cut down for expansion of land to produce sugar cane for the production of ethanol. This initiative had the patronage of the president. Mabira Forest is one of the last areas of rainforest in Uganda, and is a water catchment area for lake Victoria and the Nile River. Fortunately this move was stopped as a result of public protest. However, on Bugala Island in Lake Victoria, about 6,000 hectares of forest have been cleared to grow oil palm.

Josea Doussou-Bodjrenou: Benin, like other countries in West Africa, has been approached by companies from many countries to start producing biofuel. For example, a Malaysian company wants 300,000 hectares for palm oil, and there are other companies who want to produce ethanol from sugar cane and cassava. Benin is already in contact with Brazil, and hopes to “copy and paste” the Brazilian experience. This is without any strategy or studies on the environmental and social impacts. We already have had some bad experiences in Benin. For example, the production of cassava in central Benin to produce ethanol by a Chinese company has led to a large increase in the price of *gari*, our local staple food. The huge amount of water used by the cassava ethanol processing plant leaves the river dry during some parts of the year, and the communities are left without water.

What are the drivers of these developments?

TB: There is a lot of interest from the government to attract investment on lands that it regards as “wastelands”. The government also looks at the biofuel industry as a new opportunity to provide jobs in rural areas. But the reality is they even use forests that are not regarded as wastelands.

JDB: The government is planning to convince the local community to participate in the new national Agricultural

Revival programme, which will increase biofuel production for export.

What do you think the CBD response should be?

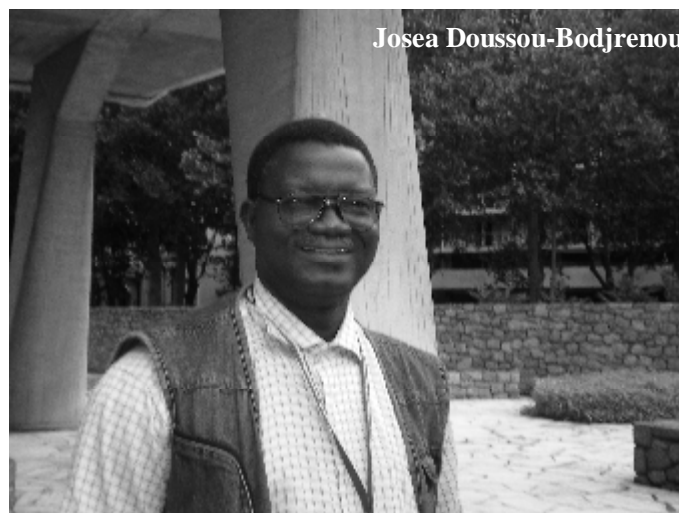
JDB: The CBD must take the potential threats of biofuels seriously, and countries should apply the Precautionary Principle. We need research into the socio-economic and environmental impacts before moving ahead with biofuel developments. Communities must be allowed to participate in both the research on impacts, and the development of national policies, following serious efforts by governments to raise awareness.

Do you have a message to African countries about the biofuels boom?

JDB: African countries need to think seriously about solving their own energy (electricity) problems, before destroying their environment to produce biofuel for developed countries.

TB: For many poor countries like Uganda, biofuels look like a promising energy source. But unfortunately, they risk being drawn into large-scale commodity production, where feedstocks will be exported without benefiting local communities. Countries therefore need to be careful that this industry does not end up making their citizens poor.

“Agrofuels in Africa: the impact on land, food and forests” can be found at www.biofuelwatch.org.uk



Josea Doussou-Bodjrenou

Quote of the Day

Agrofuels: the new economic boom? With benefits for all?

Story told by Indigenous representative Sandy Gauntlett at agrofuel side event Wednesday evening: “One of the elders responds to the claim that environmental plundering provides benefits, in particular employment by saying:

‘Thank you for the job. It provides me with enough money to buy food for my children, the food I used to get from the forest for free. And I only have to work 10 hours a day, travel 2 hours, sleep 8 hours, eat 2 hours, and I still have 2 hours of quality time to spend with my children. But thank you for the job.’”