

## A Breath of Fresh Air...

stas burgiel • defenders of wildlife

For the opening of COP-7, David Suzuki delivered a literal breath of fresh air amidst the backdrop of standard and stale opening remarks. With the analogy of how a breath of air is inhaled, exhaled and then circulated throughout COP7 delegates, throughout the atmosphere and throughout generations past and present, Suzuki's basic message was simple. We are the air we breathe. That we are inextricably linked to the biodiversity that we are currently and knowingly destroying day by day, and most ironically through the combined imbalance of overconsumption by the rich and the desperate plight of the poor to use whatever resources they might find.

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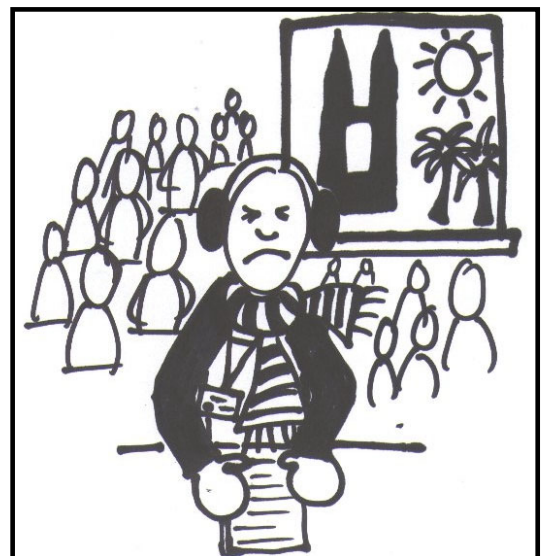
SUBMISSIONS: Welcome from all. Please give to Jessica Dempsey at NGO meetings, or email to: [jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca).

Is it possible to convert the message of saving biodiversity and its interlinked systems (the sacred principles of earth, water, fire and air) into a work programme compartmentalized into separate ecosystems, cross-cutting themes, global targets and numerous other pieces of the intergovernmental pie? Arguably none of the discussions to date, whether it be on forest biodiversity or agricultural biodiversity, has truly integrated the imperative of human survival. Even past discussions on Article 8(j), which are most closely associated with statements by indigenous peoples about how their existence as communities is at stake, has not translated into action by governments to protect this human biodiversity and cultural identity. What ultimately can a register of traditional knowledge do but document what has been lost?

We heard many good intentions expressed during the opening plenary about commitments to the 2010 target to reduce biodiversity loss, to the Millennium Development Goals, to networks of protected areas and to access and benefit-sharing. But such good will has yet to stop biodiversity loss. Good will and the biodiversity imperative has yet to persevere over the potential rule of trade (meanwhile the WTO is negotiating how multilateral environmental agreements should address specific trade obligations). Good will and the biodiversity imperative has yet to take significant action on ecosystem vulnerability and resilience to climate change (meanwhile the UNFCCC and the CBD continue to pass the buck of responsibility for the potential loss of 33% of all species by 2050). Good will and the biodiversity imperative has yet to truly recognize and reward centuries of agricultural innovation by local communities (meanwhile floods of imported, subsidized crops force once sustainable communities to seek jobs in overcrowded and polluted urban environments).

We can rightfully say that good things are happening out there. The handful examples put forward by the Equator Initiative, NGO coalitions and others at the side events are proof of it. However, these examples are the brilliant exceptions to the otherwise alarmingly depressing rule. In some sense, these cases allow us to feel good knowing that others have learned to save and prosper with their biological resources, while we stay the present course oblivious of how it is leading to our own demise. COP7 delegates need to look at the imperatives driving them -- whether it be a mandate handed down by their national governments or a program popular with various funders. As Suzuki's proverbial canaries in the coalmine drop around us in the form of island ecosystems, tropical rainforests or children with asthma, fear for our own survival should be motivating us to move a little, or a lot, faster than we are now.

Let's just hope this breath of fresh air isn't our last.



**ARE WE IN A TROPICAL COUNTRY? WHY WASTE ENERGY AND FREEZE THE DELEGATES? PLEASE GET US WARM ENOUGH TO THINK!**

# Protected Areas: What is Missing?

Ashish Kothari • Kalpavriksh, India

When over 3000 protected area professionals, indigenous peoples and local communities, researchers, and activists arrive at a vision of protected areas that is different from the one promoted for the last few decades, we need to sit up and listen. This is what happened at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Parks Congress, and this is what delegates to the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties would do well to heed.

What does the new paradigm on protected areas contain, and does the proposed Programme of Work before COP7 take us into this paradigm? Essentially, the following elements were major breakthroughs at the WPC:

1. *Destructive ‘development’ around a protected area will ultimately consume the PA itself:* Protected areas need to be seen not as isolated islands of biodiversity, but as organic parts of larger landscapes and seascapes containing diverse land/water uses...and therefore the need to focus conservation and sustainable use attention on these larger areas which also contain bio-cultural connectivity provided by indigenous and local communities...and the need to avoid destructive commercial and ‘developmental’ projects such as mining and plantations in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas;
2. *Protected areas protected ‘against’ communities will not last long:* Government designated PAs have often harmed indigenous and local communities, and ignored their essential contributions to conservation...and therefore the need to move all PAs where local dependence exists, towards forms of co-management or community-based management, including through the restitution of rights and lands where appropriate, and addressing the needs of poverty eradication and livelihood security;
3. *Protected areas are not only the ones designated by communities:* Indigenous and local communities have been conserving and sustainably managing ecosystems and species for millenia, and in many parts of the world continue to do so...such “community conserved areas” need to be given equal recognition and support, within an overall framework in which diverse forms of governance of PAs are recognised and supported.

If countries are serious about reaching the WSSD target of reducing biodiversity loss, they need to encompass the above lessons into PA policies and systems. The proposed Programme of Work does contain significant elements, goals, and activities that could take countries in this direction...in particular we hope that the dreaded square brackets around the activities under the Element “Governance, participation, equity, and benefit sharing” are removed!

But there are also critical issues from the Parks Congress outputs that need to be integrated into the PA programme of work, including a planning vision broad enough to encompass landscapes and seascapes that are not only biological but also cultural, the idea of restitution of lands and rights where earlier taken away without prior informed consent, and the need to avoid all forms of forced displacement.

**We need to remember that Article 8 also contains Article 8j...and therefore that the entire thrust on PAs, including in marine and coastal areas, must be based on principles of conservation, social equity, and full participation.**

## **AOTD (Acronym of the day)**

*Dear Reader – in an effort to build capacity and technical expertise of delegates to the COP, we are offering this quiz. Please select the correct answer. First person to email the address below will be featured in the next Eco as the Biodiversity God or Goddess.*

**AHTEG**

**Stands for**

**A:** Another Hollow Total Expense-paid Gathering

**B:** Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group

**C:** An Honest Trustworthy Enthusiastic Government!!

*We are accepting submissions of new and annoying acronyms for this space. Please submit to [jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca](mailto:jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca).*

# A New Style of Technology Transfer Needed

patrick mulvany • itdg

The naïve expectation that the CBD would facilitate the transfer of technologies, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, to economically-poorer countries, has not materialised. However, since the inception of the Convention there has been continued pressure by some economically-rich countries to persuade the CBD to remove so-called barriers to transferring certain biological technologies which have not been asked for nor wanted by the majority.

In the distant days of negotiating the Convention, the promises of Genetic Engineering and modern biotechnology were sold to Parties as limitless, secure and, once released, endlessly replicating wealth – the best way to make use of the green gold secreted in biologically-rich countries. So successful was this sales job that the Convention included Article 16 on technology transfer which explicitly included ‘biotechnology’ “...*technology includes biotechnology, and that both access to and transfer of technology among Contracting Parties are essential elements for the attainment of the objectives of this Convention...*”. Also in this Article, there were a few concerns about implementing intellectual property rights but essentially it promised wealth.

Twelve years on, this is the first Conference of the Parties to address the issue as originally described. There will be detailed discussions of the Programme of Work proposed by SBSTTA 9 and then in the High-Level Ministerial Segment the topic will be addressed again. Whatever the final commitments in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, it will still take a long time for tangible benefits, if any, to appear; but, worse, the political commitments might actually exacerbate the onslaught of unwanted biotechnologies.

And what auspicious timing – the topic is raised at the first COP after the coming into force of the Biosafety Protocol - the most significant achievement of the CBD to date. While the Precautionary Principle is being championed on one side of the Convention, the other appears to be discussing the issue of Technology Transfer in old pre-Biosafety Protocol ways.

The old model of Technology Transfer is an out-dated concept which tends to reinforce techno-dumping – the transfer of out-dated technologies – or the transfer of technologies from industrialised countries that favour the donor economically. At the same time the model does nothing to inhibit the only part of technology transfer that has happened historically, and still continues, the transfer of the biological riches of developing countries to the wealthy – biopiracy.

Worse still, worries about the possibility that recipient countries might not honour industrialised countries’ patents has led to the push by one non-party for the development and transfer of GURTs – the most biologically damaging LMOs yet to be devised by humankind.

What the CBD should be championing is a Technology Transfer framework that, first, incorporates and recognises the values, needs and capacities of local communities. Secondly, provides for the development of assessment tools that will strengthen local decision making capabilities about technologies. And, only third, provides the actual biological technologies, science, tools and their associated skills and knowledge that are required by communities.

The CBD’s recommendations on technology transfer will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent article in ECO. In brief, though, the Technology Transfer framework should:

- ① protect rights, knowledge and local innovations;
- ② cover the full range of technologies and all species;
- ③ prevent biopiracy;
- ④ ensure the measures do not make the CBD subservient to the WTO TRIPs agreement;
- ⑤ promote international research and safe science that will improve ecosystem resilience and agricultural biodiversity;
- ⑥ ensure Technology Democracy - democratic technology assessment and choice – that emphasises the Precautionary Principle and Biosafety;
- ⑦ examine restrictive practices and monopoly control by Transnational Corporations.

The transfer of useful technologies that respect local values, respond to democratic assessments and are in conformity with the Precautionary Principle, is yet to be fulfilled by the economically rich countries: will this COP make a difference?

*Technology Transfer and Agricultural Biodiversity will be discussed at a lunchtime event on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February in the Community Kampung space on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. See posters for details.*

## Getting Biodiversity into the Spotlight, and On Peoples' Minds

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It is notoriously hard to get the mainstream media to cover biodiversity issues: lacking bloodshed or intrigue, stories on biodiversity conservation are lucky to pop up in fine print in the back of newspapers. In December last year, two organisations convened a meeting to consider how biodiversity specialists can strengthen the ways in which they communicate through media and to the public. Their discussion merits wider consideration by the many people wishing that biodiversity was less a foreign concept, more a household word.

As the meeting noted, even a high-level international process such as the CBD garners little attention by the media and the public. In part, this may be because biodiversity is a complex concept that is not easy to communicate. Possibly, the connection between biodiversity and economics, or biodiversity and human livelihoods, needs better articulation. Some doubts about the utility of 'biodiversity' as a communication concept were raised. The relationships between economy and ecology were touched upon, with some participants arguing that the fundamental causes of biodiversity loss lie in the economic system and the dominance of the economic agenda.

The media often makes use of individual species to illustrate the complex problems of biodiversity - is this the most effective approach- and does it help the public to understand the wide implications of biodiversity conservation? Speakers to the meeting noted that in fact, at least to those central to the debate, biodiversity is becoming a concept on the political agenda over the last decade, rather than a focus on individual species or wildlife issues. Yet the complexity of biodiversity as a political issue- as can be seen around the debates here in Kuala Lumpur on issues such as access and benefit sharing, are not readily translated into language that raises public awareness. The possibility of exploring common key messages among non-governmental and other organisations was raised, as was the need to place biodiversity into a broader sustainability context, which includes issues such as lifestyles and over consumption. It was argued that with regard to the media, Indigenous Peoples are included in the debate as long as this does not include the issue of establishing rights. In the media, indigenous rights tend to appear as marginal.

Finding ways to communicate biodiversity concerns to the public in a way that fosters understanding and loyalty- in a sense, "branding biodiversity" – was discussed in a final presentation. As currently reported upon, biodiversity tends not to convey a sense of relevance to humans. In fact, notions of despair and irrelevance are associated with biodiversity. Successful "brands" have a relationship with their users: people believe in the brands, respect them, are committed to them and trust them. To what extent does biodiversity enjoy the same relationship with people? An open global dialogue could create a biodiversity brand, as collaboration has the potential to close the belief, respect, commitment and trust gaps. Distinguishing between positive and negative images, participants lent support to the use of positive images carrying notions of prosperity, health and beauty. Nevertheless, it was remarked that in the context of media reporting dramatic images can be very useful-experience shows that media tends to respond to catastrophic news

The relationship of the 'local' and the 'global' in conceptualising biodiversity was addressed, with criticisms that the local aspect of biodiversity tends to be neglected, creating an impression that biodiversity is 'there' and not 'here'. However, it was also pointed out that media reporting tends to have a local focus on gardening-type issues, rather than international issues, which may encourage a tendency to view biodiversity only in a narrow sense.

Helping people to experience nature is a very strong means of communicating biodiversity in a deep emotional sense. Organisations such as zoos, natural history museums and environmental non-governmental organisations, which provide opportunities for personal experiences, have an important role. Using individual species to tackle complex biodiversity issues can be an effective 'hook', although there were differing views on the usefulness of this approach. With regard to the specific target group of young people, cartoons and games are often effective.

*From Joy Hyvarinen's report on the meeting "Communicating Biodiversity", Chatham House, London, 16 December 2003 convened by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in co-operation with the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA)*

### **A N N O U N C E M E N T**

**NGO Meetings every morning from 9 – 10 in the NGO ROOM, Third Floor PWTC**

*Eco is produced by the CBD NGO community. Editorial board: Rosario Ortiz, Nathalie Rey, Barbara Gemmill, Ashish Kothari, Stas Burgeil, Jessica Dempsey, Patrick Mulvany.*