

Monoculture Tree Plantations and Transgenic Trees: Will the CBD act on these threats?

World Rainforest Movement

Biodiversity loss is rapid and ongoing. Over the last 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems faster and more extensively than in any comparable period in human history. Tropical forests, many wetlands and other natural habitats are shrinking in size. Species extinction occurring 1,000 times faster than background rates typical of Earth's past. The direct causes of biodiversity loss -- habitat change, overexploitation, the introduction of invasive alien species, nutrient loading and climate change-- show no sign of abating. It is time to translate our hopes and energies into action, for the sake of all life on Earth.

The above quote is not ours. It is from the Executive Secretary of the CBD --Ahmed Djoghla-- in his foreword to the Convention's "Global Biodiversity Outlook", launched on March 20 to coincide with the opening session of COP8.

We totally agree with Djoghla. Nonetheless, we feel the need to emphasize two issues that --from our perspective-- have not received sufficient attention in the abovementioned report: monoculture tree plantations and transgenic trees.

Regarding the former, the Global Biodiversity Outlook does mention that tree plantations have a "low biodiversity value", but still considers them to be forests when stating that "tree planting, landscape restoration and natural expansion of forests have significantly off set the loss of primary forest area." This position is even more obvious when looking at Figure 2.1 ("Annual net change in forest area by region") which explains that "Forest area includes primary forests, modified natural forests, semi-natural forests, productive forest plantations and protective forest plantations" and that "Net change in forest area takes into account

afforestation efforts and natural expansion of forests." Translated into common language, this means the CBD still believes --against all evidence-- that plantations are forests.

This position contradicts Mr Djoghla's diagnosis of the situation, when he rightly includes habitat change among the "direct causes of biodiversity loss." Large scale tree plantations imply major changes in and destruction of natural habitats. As a starting point, the CBD should therefore clearly differentiate between forests from plantations. Within plantations, it should make clear that large scale industrial tree monocultures should not be promoted or supported by the parties of this Convention, precisely because they are a direct cause of biodiversity loss.

Regarding transgenic trees, there is no mention of this critical issue in the Global Biodiversity Outlook. This, in spite of the fact, that transgenic trees are one of the most dangerous threats to forests which host most of the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity. The release of genetically engineered trees will inevitably and irreversibly contaminate forest ecosystems and destroy biodiversity.

As a result, non-governmental organizations, social movements, scientists, indigenous groups, farmers, foresters and others are calling for a global ban on the commercial release of transgenic trees into the environment. We believe the CBD is the UN body responsible for putting this ban in place.

Large scale monoculture tree plantations are destroying biodiversity and local peoples' livelihoods; the release of transgenic trees would exacerbate those impacts while adding further ones. Following Mr Djoghla's words, we truly believe that "it is time to translate our hopes and energies into action, for the sake of all life on Earth", and that neither tree monocultures nor transgenic trees have any role to play in this. We hope the COP takes the appropriate action this week. (see inside for discussion about the recent (and weak) forest biological diversity CRP).

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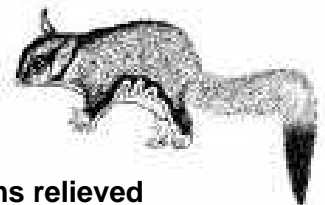
***Captain Hook Awards -- pg. 4!

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SUBMISSIONS: Welcome from all civil society groups. Please give to Jessica Dempsey or James Rowe at morning NGO meetings or submit to jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca and jkrowe@ucsc.edu

ECO thanks SwedBio for their on-going support!

That was close!



**New Zealand Possums relieved
by Friday's GURTs decision.**

COP-8's Parallel Universe & the new Forest CRP

Global Justice Ecology Project

On Wednesday March 22nd close to a dozen heavily forested countries around the world called for either a moratorium on the release of genetically modified trees into the environment, a global risk assessment on the impacts of such release, or both. They were joined by a chorus of several NGOs, the Women's Caucus, and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity.

Only Canada and Australia recommended compiling existing information on the risks and benefits of GM trees (while industry has libraries full of information on the benefits of GM trees [to their bottom line], they have somehow failed to produce any real data on the risks...hmmm...how peculiar).

In customary fashion, the CRP ignored the call of the small forested nations for a moratorium, in deference to the pro-industry requests of the big rich

ones when it stated, "The Conference of the Parties *requests* the Executive Secretary to collect and collate existing information, including peer-reviewed literature, regarding the potential impacts

of genetically modified trees on the conservation and sustainable use of forest biological diversity, for consideration at the thirteenth meeting of SBSTTA and *invite* parties, other governments and relevant organizations, including local and indigenous communities, to provide relevant views and information to the Secretariat for inclusion in this report. Given the uncertainties related to the potential impacts of GM trees on forest biological diversity, the COP recommends that Parties take a precautionary approach to the use of this technology."

Round Two anyone?



Perverse incentives - main threat to biodiversity

Helmut Roescheisen, Deutscher Naturschutzring (DNR)

Point 27.2 of the draft decisions contains dynamite -- if the Conference of the Parties takes the issue seriously. This point is about the development of proposals on the removal or mitigation of perverse incentives, on positive incentives, and on valuation tools (VIII/23). For some delegates, the issue, if treated under the CBD, will lead to negotiation paralysis because of the EU's agriculture policy. Some would like to see these issues only dealt with in the context of the WTO. But it should be noted that within WTO negotiations, the removal of perverse incentives and the precautionary principle are not priorities either. If perverse incentives are not dealt with at the CBD, they will not be addressed.

Thanks to the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU), we are well aware of our challenge's enormity. Every year, environmentally harmful subsidies amounting to around 850 billion US-Dollars worldwide are paid to agriculture, fossil fuel and nuclear energy sectors, road transportation, water industry, fisheries and forestry. The OECD-countries' annual spending on agricultural subsidies alone is approximately 350 billion US-Dollars. These measures designed to promote export often have profoundly negative environmental consequences. Many developing countries export primary goods from forestry, agriculture, fishing, and mining. The unsustainable exploitation of natural resources often follows.

Significant funding could be released by slashing these subsidies and allocating a proportion of the resources to development and environmental policy.

WBGU estimates that the additional resources needed to implement internationally agreed-upon poverty and environmental targets run in the low Billions (\$US). A prerequisite to this implementation, however, is that it be embedded in a coherent sustainable development strategy. The dismantling of perverse subsidies would reduce the pressures on the budgets of many industrialized, developing, and newly industrializing nations and would create scope for expenditures that support sustainability. WBGU estimates the additional cost of establishing a worldwide network of protected areas covering 15 percent of the Earth's land area at 19 billion Euros.

WBGU also reports that an assessment should be made of financing requirements for preserving natural life-support systems and combating absolute poverty. Their call for research quantifying interconnections between the fields of poverty reduction and environmental protection is also very promising. Research should be done analyzing incentives financed by user contributions for the construction of environmentally sound energy and water supplies in rural areas.

It will be interesting to see if, and in what way, the German Minister Siegmur Gabriel -- who is interested in having COP 9 and MOP 4 in Germany -- will take the lead in further discussions of perverse incentives.

A Temporary Victory on Terminator

A broad coalition of peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and civil society celebrated the rejection of efforts to undermine the global moratorium on Terminator technologies at the CBD on Friday. Despite Friday's victory, there is no doubt the multinational biotech industry will continue to push sterile seed technology. Now all national governments must enact national bans on Terminator as Brazil and India have done.

IFC Greenwash

Lucy Baker, Bretton Woods Project

Staff members of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank smugly launched their “web-based private sector guide to biodiversity” at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Curitiba, Brazil. Asserting that “emerging markets hold the majority of the world’s most significant biodiversity” assets, the stated aim of the guide is to “help businesses understand how they can manage the business risks from biodiversity issues”. However, a closer look at the IFC’s lending policy on biodiversity reveals serious shortcomings, not least of which is its failure to adequately align itself to the CBD. It has been criticized by civil society, governments and the IFC’s own internal compliance advisor ombudsman.

The IFC is the World Bank’s private financing arm, which also claims the largest private sector portfolio supported by the GEF, the financing mechanism of the CBD. With a portfolio of approximately \$19.3 billion for financial year 05, its self-proclaimed mission is to “promote sustainable private sector investment in developing and transition countries, helping to reduce poverty and improve people’s lives”. It upholds itself as a standard setter for the market and other private investors, including export credit agencies, and the Equator Principles, a voluntary environmental and social lending framework for over 30 private banks.

The IFC recently revised its policy and performance standards on social and environmental sustainability governing its lending decisions. This sees the replacing of the current ten safeguard policies of the World Bank Group with eight IFC-specific ‘performance standards’ (PS), which were made public on 6 March 2006. The revised standards rely far too heavily on client-generated information, supervision and monitoring and employ vague and unenforceable language in relation to what is required from the IFC and its client.

Criticism from without and within

Implications for biodiversity are found throughout the performance standards (PS), although PS 6 on *biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management*, and PS 7 on *Indigenous Peoples* relate most specifically. At the presentation last week, the IFC reiterated its wholehearted commitment to the Convention. However, its performance standards have been criticized by a coalition of international NGOs for their failure to uphold international standards on biodiversity and indeed environmental sustainability in general.

For instance, the IFC refuses to recognize any area as a “no-go zone”. This sets the IFC behind some major commercial lenders, including JP Morgan Chase and ABN AMRO, as well as the mining industry association, ICMM, who for instance consider UNESCO World Heritage Sites out of bounds for investment. It has also failed to address illegal logging, or general marine impact issues aside from encouraging certification of sustainable fisheries. Other issues, such as impacts on wetlands, coastal areas or coral

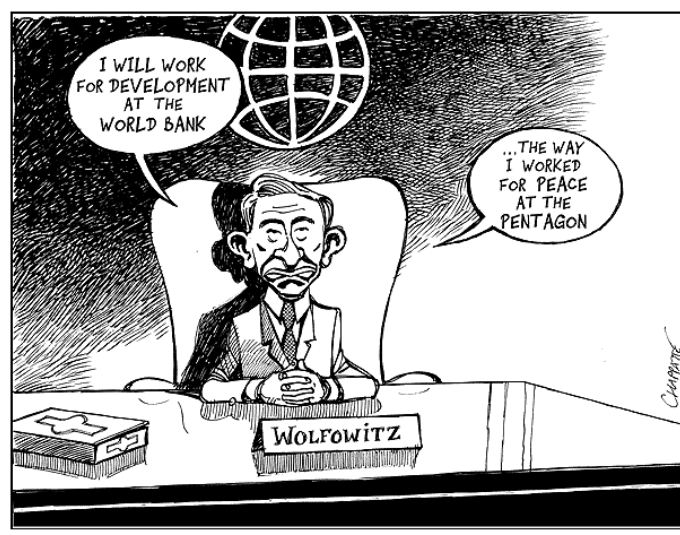
reefs have also been omitted. Moreover, PS 7 on indigenous peoples contains no provisions to ensure the IFC will not be complicit in the piracy of indigenous peoples’ resources and intellectual property.

In a public submission, the UK government’s Department for International Development (DfID) stated that the performance standards fail to refer to the precautionary principle, and warns that “the uncertainty of scientific knowledge should not be an invitation to ignore the importance of critical habitats and species. It also points out that the wording of PS 6 does not go far enough in aligning itself with the Convention, and calls for stronger language on ‘alien and invasive species’. Even the IFC’s own internal audit body, the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO), has expressed concern, specifically on the “weakening of biodiversity provisions”. More generally it emphasizes an overall weakening of current institutional commitments to environmental and social sustainability.

Meanwhile, business as usual

For all of its glossy veneer, the IFC continues to fund projects in a variety of sectors, with serious adverse global and local implications for biodiversity and environmental sustainability, most notably, in logging, mining, pulp and paper, agricultural monoculture and large hydro. For example, in June 2004, the IFC gave a loan of \$30 million to the Amaggi soy expansion project in the Brazilian Amazon. The Amaggi Group, owned by Blairo Maggi, governor of the Brazilian state of Matto Grosso, is one of the largest soy exporters in the world and a major contributor to the destruction of the Amazon.

Lastly, the IFC recently made known its intention to increase lending for extractive projects, in direct contrast to the Bank’s leadership role in creating an investment framework for clean energy and to tackle climate change, as agreed at the G8 summit in July 2005.



When the Document says this, it really means that...

(excerpted from “How to Lobby at Intergovernmental Meetings”, Felix Dodds and Michael Strauss, 2004)

Decides.....means.....This is action! Someone – usually not governments – should do something.
Recalls.....means.....We said we would do something and we just remembered we haven’t done it.
Implements.....means.....It’s time to try to do what we said we would do.
Regulates.....means....We are really serious this time.

Notes from the C O P

And the Winners Are...

On Friday in Curitiba, at a regal and well-attended ceremony, the Coalition Against Biopiracy awarded the Captain Hook Awards for Biopiracy, and the Cog awards for inspiring resistance (Note: Cogs were ships designed to repel pirate attacks). Here is a selection of this year's winners:



Extreme Makeover Award:

Delta & Pine Land

For vowing, since 1998, to commercialize [Terminator technology](#). Initially, D&PL promoted genetic seed sterilization for use in the South to prevent farmers from re-using seed. After massive protest, the company changed its tune and said Terminator was primarily intended for Northern farmers. Now the company is greenwashing Terminator by promoting it as a biosafety tool to contain gene flow – for farmers everywhere!

Access of Evil Award:

Canada, Australia, New Zealand

For repeated attempts to undermine the de facto moratorium on Terminator technology at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). And for their betrayal of Indigenous Peoples at the CBD's Working Group on 8(j) in Spain.



Best Peoples Defense

(Joint winners)

In Defense of Maize Network and the Wixárika (Huichol) People, México

For widening the scope of their fight – from a protest against GM contamination of native maize to an integrated territorial struggle that holistically encompasses self-government, water, forests, fauna, paths, sacred land, language and teaching. Last year, the Wixárika People got back 10,200 hectares of land for their communities.

Deccan Development Society (India)

For two decades of organizing successful seed sovereignty systems among Dalit women's communities in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh. Also for their groundbreaking grassroots research into the effects of Bt cotton that persuaded the government of Andhra Pradesh to kick Monsanto out of the state.

Bola Murcha (Flat Ball) nomination goes to OECD countries



Today's *Bola Murcha (Flat Ball)* nomination for the most destructive government delegation at CBD COP8 goes jointly to all delegations of OECD countries(1) for not moving towards any substantial increase in funding for the implementation of the Convention.

Without substantial increases in funding there is no way the CBD will achieve its core goal to significantly reduce the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

We are already in the second half of the conference and there is still no movement on the issue of financing. And without the global north, largely represented by OECD countries, opening its pockets and sharing a bulk of the burden there will be no future for life on earth.

The Bola Murcha (Flat Ball) of the day will be available for pick-up at the Greenpeace booth in the exhibition hall of COP8.

(1)-OECD countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

Inadequacy of the GEF: Another Option in the CBD

Joy Hyvarinen, RSPB

Without new and additional financial resources in accordance with Article 20 developing countries face enormous difficulties implementing the Convention.

Financial resources and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) will be among the dominating themes of the second week of the COP. Debates will continue to highlight the inadequacy of the GEF and concerns around the Fourth Replenishment, and the inappropriate new Resource Allocation Framework (RAF), which makes it more difficult for many countries to access GEF funding.

This makes it all the more important that delegates consider an opportunity they have yet to capitalize on. This is Article 8(m), which directs Parties to:

‘(m) Cooperate in providing financial and other support for in-situ conservation outlined in subparagraphs (a) to (l) above, particularly to developing countries.’

Article 9 (e) contains a similar provision for ex situ conservation.

Article 8 covers protected areas and other in situ-related themes under the Convention, such as ecosystem restoration, invasive alien species, sustainable use and development in areas adjacent to protected areas, and Article 8(j). As a look at the CBD Handbook shows, the COP has never taken any action regarding 8(m).

An important aspect of Article 8(m) is that it is not limited by the incremental costs definition, which is linked to the 'global benefits' required to make funding from the GEF possible. Funding under Article 8(m) could cover projects that have only national or local benefits.

Article 8 (m) should be read with Article 20.5 - 7, which addresses the special needs of developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), small island developing states and semi-arid or arid countries.

Increased funding is not the solution to all the Convention's problems, but it is essential. A convention that continues to produce lengthy work programmes and lists of targets without implementation support - both financial and other - risks undermining its credibility.

COP 8 provides the opportunity to begin implementing Article 8(m), and seeing if it can provide a basis for better financial arrangements than existing ones under the Convention, at least as a complement to the GEF - possibly even a replacement, if confidence in the GEF continues eroding.