



Joint NGO statement to SBSTTA delegates

The NGOs have high hopes that SBSTTA 11 will lead to significant progress in all the themes for this week and look forward to having an input to the proceedings.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment points out that in the 13 years since the Rio summit, we have not managed to turn around negative trends in biodiversity. Extinction rates of plants and animals are today 1,000 times higher than background rates and there is a risk that the rate of loss is accelerating. The situation is alarming. The main victims of this biodiversity loss are the people who depend on it for their daily livelihood: Indigenous Peoples, rural local communities, women, and the monetary poor in general. It should be ensured that all decisions of this week respect the rights of these Peoples and communities.

These rights, and biodiversity itself, are invaluable and irreplaceable. While some of these values can be accounted for in monetary terms, this should never lead to a situation in which people's rights and biodiversity are put up for sale.

CBD programmes must include concrete and measurable timelines and targets in order significantly reduce loss of biodiversity by 2010. We welcome the second Global Biodiversity Outlook draft as an attempt to actually track our progress with indicators. As the Millennium Assessment points out, biodiversity policies should address the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss, which include unsustainable consumption patterns and the expansion of monocultures, overfishing and other trends that feed this consumption and their linkages to current global trade agreements. It is very important to address this issues at this SBSTTA.

CONTENTS

NGO statement	1
Ban Terminator.....	2
Fishy Sandwich.....	3
Bits n' Bits	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 (9am) or submit to jdempsey@interchange.ubc.ca

International trade currently forms the highway between unsustainable consumption and unsustainable production. The trade agreements that will be discussed at the upcoming Ministerial of the World Trade Organization have a major impact on biodiversity and the people that depend on it. Negotiations on issues like Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights, Agriculture, Non-Agricultural Market Access and Services could lead to agreements that make it virtually impossible to implement the CBD. CBD negotiators must analyze these real and potential impacts and defend their legally binding instrument against being undermined by the WTO.

The need for coherence between different international agreements has been emphasized again and again by this body. There is an obvious need for clear links with the climate negotiations that are taking place in this town at the moment, also because especially the recent push for large-scale production of biomass might have devastating impacts on biodiversity, as already demonstrated by the recent problems around palm oil imports threatening the last habitats of the Orang Utang in Borneo, and the Indigenous Peoples who depend on the very same rainforest for their survival.

There is also a need for better integration between the different work programs of the CBD and its Biosafety Protocol itself. A particular issue the SBSTTA should address in this respect is the serious threat posed by genetically modified trees to the world's forest biodiversity. The SBSTTA should call for a profound global risk assessment and for an immediate moratorium on the introduction of these GM trees.

The CBD must not neglect the biodiversity within the oceans. After all, they cover 70 % of the planet's surface. In particular areas beyond national jurisdiction and the deep seas are a part of our global common heritage. The CBD has a crucial role to play in closing the current gaps in oceans governance to ensure the wealth of biodiversity residing in the oceans is secured.

...continued on page 2

Ban Terminator Technology

estebancio castro – International Indian Treaty Council

The concerns of Indigenous Peoples over the use and patenting of genetic use restriction technologies “GURTs” (also known as terminator technology) for commercial purposes by multinationals is now a reality. Last month, Greenpeace and the Ban Terminator Campaign revealed that new patents have been granted to United States seed corporation Delta & Pine Land and, to the United States Department of Agriculture. Both were granted in Europe and Canada. This development will be an important issue for the upcoming Eighth Conference of Parties (“COP8”) to consider in Curitiba, Brazil.

For indigenous peoples who rely on agriculture to sustain their lifestyle and cultural practices, the seeds they harvest are seen as valuable environmental assets and an important component in the protection of land ecosystems which are considered to be non-renewable resources.

Agricultural traditional knowledge and sustainable agricultural practices by indigenous peoples and local communities are environmental resources of national significance, for which States members have a major responsibility to maintain and protect by effective policies and national law. Using GURTs in agricultural production will jeopardize Indigenous Peoples traditional knowledge systems, their seeds and crops. It is clear that GURTs are threatening the ability of Indigenous Peoples to use exchange and cultivate their own traditional seeds and crops. There are direct and indirect impacts to consider.

The International Indian Treaty Council (“IITC”) a non governmental organization with United Nations ECOSOC status at its 31st Anniversary Conference hosted by the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations at Ermineskin Cree Nation, Canada along with other organizations and indigenous communities passed the following resolutions:

- Calls on the Working Group on Article 8 j to advise the 8th Conference of the Parties that GURTs is a dangerous technology that threatens biodiversity, Indigenous knowledge systems, small holder farmers and global food security;
- Recommend to the Parties at the 8th meeting of Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP8) to fully consider the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) Report on GURTS, and approve the Report’s recommendation that governments develop national regulations to prohibit commercialization of GURTS;

It is the view of IITC that any field testing or any commercial use or other release of GURTs is a fundamental violation of the human rights of Indigenous peoples, a breach of our right of self-determination, and a threat to our rights of food sovereignty and food security.

Releasing GURTs may lead to irreversible degradation to the world’s ecosystems, food sovereignty and food security for Indigenous Peoples. Today’s knowledge of the impact of GURTs is uncertain. There is a need for extensive research on environmental impacts. State-parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity should guarantee food security and uphold the existing moratorium.

The full IITC resolution is posted at www.treatycouncil.org as well as at www.banterminator.org, with submissions to 8(j) on the potential impacts of GURTs from Indigenous peoples’ organizations and communities, and farmers associations.

*You are invited to join us for a side-event:
“V-GURTs (Terminator) as a biological containment tool” Friday December 2 13:15 – 14:45 Foyer Gallery 1 (Level 5)*

...NGO statement continued from page 1

We need Global solidarity to conserve global biodiversity. This includes cooperation, financial support, positive incentives, production based on a sustainable management of resources and a fair trade which support the rights of local communities. We must compensate for the ecological debt that has been accumulated through the above-mentioned consumption patterns.

COP 8 will be critical. Now that we are rapidly approaching the deadline for achieving the 2010 target, which was reiterated by 170 heads of State at the recent UN World Summit, we expect a different kind of COP that delivers meaningful decisions on concrete steps to reach this target.

“Fishy Sandwich: hold the mustard ... gas!” – More Ammunition Against High Seas Bottom Trawling

deep sea conservation coalition (www.savethehighseas.org)

Campaigners for an immediate UN moratorium on high seas bottom trawl fishing read with growing alarm the article “DECADES OF DUMPING CHEMICAL ARMS LEAVE A RISKY LEGACY” by John Bull (<http://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-02761sy0oct30,0,2199000.story?coll=dp-aol-yahoo-nws-hed>)

The article details how decades ago, the US army dumped huge quantities of obsolete chemical weapons in the oceans off the US, and, get ready for the best part, THEY DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHERE THEY DUMPED THEM. According to the article, “The Army now admits that it secretly dumped 64 million pounds of nerve and mustard agents into the sea, along with 400,000 chemical-filled bombs, land mines and rockets and more than 500 tons of radioactive waste - either tossed overboard or packed into the holds of scuttled vessels.” The article notes that “A drop of nerve agent can kill within a minute. When released in the ocean, it lasts up to six weeks, killing every organism it touches before breaking down into its non-lethal chemical components. Mustard gas can be fatal. When exposed to seawater, it forms a concentrated, encrusted gel that lasts for at least five years, rolling around on the ocean floor, killing or contaminating sea life.”

“Market for Contaminated Deep Sea Fish Collapses; Obsolete Bottom Trawlers Enlisted to Search and Recover Dumped Weapons”

Unfortunately, these deadly chemicals are now finding their way out of the deep like creatures from a 1950s B movie, including through the fishing nets of bottom trawlers. Deep-sea fish may no longer be ‘the healthy alternative’. And who knows when a scientist, searching for the cure to some heinous disease may instead encounter toxic tube worms or deep-sea corals and sponges that glow in the dark – though not because of any special adaptation to living in the cold, pressurised world that is the deep-ocean.

Bottom Trawling – Always Bad, Now Even Worse

The reality is that our oceans have been used as a dumping ground for generations. As new technology has evolved enabling us to fish and explore deeper and further out to sea than ever before. Nobody really knows just how much and which countries (and companies) have dumped their toxic waste over the side hoping that in sinking to the bottom of the sea, it would disappear forever. And nobody has thought of ways to clean it up. But perhaps bottom trawlers are going to do this for them. Last year, after all, a bottom trawler caught a submarine, so hauling up some old barrels of muck from the ocean floor should be no problem.

“Greenpeace: Protecting Bottom Trawlers from ... Themselves”

If all of the water was sucked out of the high seas and we were left looking at the remaining landscape, there is every indication that among the lush pockets of biodiversity, we would find the detritus of the last 70 years showing the impacts of the industrialisation of our oceans. For vast swaths of the ocean floor, the image we would see would be of ploughed land, left infertile and barren. Now, it appears, we would find much of the area contaminated too, heaped with barrels of oozing gunk and gelatinous mud.

It is high time that the old adage ‘out of sight, out of mind’ stopped being applied to this global commons. Establishing high seas marine reserves would ensure that the pockets of biodiversity could be preserved and even grow. Regulating deep-sea bioprospecting would ensure that the benefits from the genetic diversity of this global commons could be shared equitably by all. But stopping bottom trawling has to be the first step towards ensuring the long-term health and vitality of life in the deep-ocean. And, it seems, could very well end up being the “healthy alternative” for humans and the oceans we depend on.

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition is an alliance of over 50 international organizations, representing millions of people in countries around the world, that is calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling.

Switzerland Bans GM Food – citizens actually asked to vote on issue!

55.7% of Swiss citizens voted for a ban on farming genetically modified (GM) plants and animals for five years, in a November 27 national referendum. The moratorium does not stop GM research nor the import of GM food but Switzerland will now institute a blanket ban on the cultivation of GM crops and the import of GM animals.

Switzerland is home to many pharmaceutical firms as well as major agro-chemical corporation Syngenta which holds many patents on Terminator technology (Genetic Use Restriction Technology or GURTS).

Visions, targets, indicators...

Rosario Ortiz, cbd alliance

Three work programmes, three different visions: dry lands and sub-humid lands biological diversity, mountain biological diversity and forests biological diversity. Even though forests ecosystems are encountered in dry and sub-humid lands and mountainous areas all around the world, the scope of the vision overseen for these frameworks reveals the adoption of different prioritization criteria that goes beyond their geographical or climatic distinction particularities. On one hand poverty alleviation is a priority for both dry and sub-humid lands and mountain biodiversity programmes of work, while on the other hand halting biodiversity loss is a number one priority of the work programmes on forest biodiversity. Another priority listed in the vision for the forest programme is the guarantee of the provision of goods and services and the sharing of benefits arising from sustainable use. Are these terms synonymous to poverty alleviation or do they mean different things?

If we compare the goals and targets related to the promotion of sustainable use and consumption (goal 4), the dry and sub-humid lands and mountain biodiversity work programs don't go beyond the formulation of the decision VII/30: "unsustainable consumption of biological resources and its impact upon biodiversity is reduced". Meanwhile, the forest AHTEG (3rd meeting) went beyond this goal and sub-target to explore specific indicators related to unsustainable consumption (see document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/INF/3). But for some miraculous reason, the sustainable use indicators and other proposed indicators have totally disappeared from the SBSTTA – 11 forest document to be discussed on Wednesday (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/15).

Unsustainable consumption leaves ecological footprints in all ecosystem types, including forest and other ecosystems. The three objectives of the CBD are not achievable if this target is not addressed and monitored. Sustainable livelihood of biodiversity dependent people (poverty alleviation) is neither possible nor achievable if unsustainable production and consumption patterns of urban (mostly Northern) populations are not taken into consideration. The expansion of global trade based on commodity exports to generate wealth directly translates into a loss in biological diversity on the ground. The ecological footprint of consumption of forest products, one of the indicators proposed by the ad-hoc expert group on forests in their last meeting, is a good start to tackle the linkages between global trade, production and consumption patterns and biodiversity loss. We recommend Parties to align this goal and targets with a similar indicator in all three programmes of work. The Parties must include unsustainable consumption indicators on the agenda if they hope to hit the 2010 target.

On-going Visa issues for CBD delegates

In plenary yesterday a delegate from Cameroon noted their on-going difficulties obtaining Canadian visitor visas for their delegation members. This has also been an on-going issue for civil society delegates, especially those from the south. The Secretariat diplomatically noted that the issue was 'being looked into' by the Canadian government. Recall the agreement between the Canadian Government and the CBD as per:

1. Competent Canadian authorities shall not impose any impediments to transit to or from the Premises of the Secretariat of representatives of Parties to the Convention, observers, experts on missions, or other persons invited by the Secretariat on official business
2. VISAS, where required, for persons referred to in paragraph 1, shall be issued by the Government free of charge and as PROMPTLY as possible.

(<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/cop/cop-03/information/cop-03-inf-48-en.pdf>)

Funding – priority for Brazil

Joy Hyvarinen & Alistair Gammell, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

New and additional funding is essential for implementation of the Convention. Funding alone will not solve the problems, but starving biodiversity of money certainly underwrites failure, as it does in any other serious endeavor. Funding must be a top priority issue for COP 8, a landmark event when the CBD 'comes home' to Brazil.

The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention (WGRI), which met in September in Montreal, adopted an important recommendation on financial resources (1/4). According to this, the COP should decide to conduct an in-depth review of financial resources and the financial mechanism at its ninth meeting, including developing a strategy for resource mobilization.

The emphasis needs to be brought back to 'new and additional' funding, as set out in Article 20 of the Convention. It is crucial that the funding issue is given a serious high-level political debate at COP 8. This debate needs to set a framework for the review at COP 9, which gives it substance and which gives donor countries a clear signal of what is expected now – if there is to be any prospect of credible progress towards the 2010 target.

The WGRI also recommended that the COP should examine the GEF's new Resource Allocation Framework for biodiversity and climate change (RAF). Is it what is needed or will it be more difficult for some countries – already poor and struggling - to access funding?

Without a strong steer on these issues at COP 8, the CBD is unlikely to maintain momentum towards 2010.