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This is a special edition of the CBD Alliance ECO, usually produced at negotiations of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol. The articles within focus on the critical importance of biological diversity for the negotiations in Copenhagen.

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Some Crucial Biodiversity Principles for the Climate Debate

Helena Paul, EcoNexus

If we are to tackle climate change, we urgently need to instil values established in the Convention on Biological Diversity into the climate debate. As well as the fundamental importance of biological diversity, these values include the ecosystem approach and the maintenance of the knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities.

Ecosystem Approach

The ecosystem approach is particularly important, yet not always well understood:

*"The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the **integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.** Application of the ecosystem approach will help to reach a balance of the three objectives of the Convention. It is based on the application of **appropriate scientific methodologies** focused on levels of biological organization which encompass the essential processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems."* (my emphasis added ref: <http://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/>)

The ecosystem approach recognizes the fundamental interactivity of all planetary processes and of the many levels of organisation among living creatures. It also reminds us that human beings are an integral component of ecosystems with the ever increasing power to undermine or enrich them.

It is also important to note how the application of science is described here: as appropriate scientific methodologies, with the word appropriate and also the words scientific methodologies rather than leaping straight to the word technologies. The language of any new climate agreement should reflect this, because we are only just beginning to understand how the processes that underpin our lives actually function: how soils are built, how water operates within the planetary ecosystem and the vital importance of primary forests, wetlands, coral reefs and other complex systems threatened by climate change.

Ecosystem Resilience

A vital characteristic of ecosystems is resilience. Resilience is basic to all organisms and underpins recovery from illness, as the human organism seeks to return to its original equilibrium. According to a recent CBD document: **Forest resilience, Biodiversity, and Climate Change: A Synthesis of the Biodiversity/Resilience/Stability Relationship in Forest Ecosystems:**

"Resilience is the capacity of a forest to withstand (absorb) external pressures and return, over time, to its pre-disturbance state. When viewed over an appropriate time span, a resilient forest ecosystem is able to maintain its 'identity' in terms of taxonomic composition, structure, ecological functions, and process rates. The available scientific evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the capacity of forests to resist change, or recover following disturbance, is dependent on biodiversity at multiple scales." (ref: <http://climate-1.org/2009/12/04/cbd-underlines-role-of-forests-in-climate-change-mitigation/>)

It is clear that resilience is greater in more biodiverse systems. Such resilience is going to be increasingly important in the face of climate change. Thus the protection of biodiversity is crucial to our own survival, not merely for medicine or recreation or what we arrogantly call "ecosystem services".

Article 8 (j)

Another crucial principle embedded in the Convention on Biological Diversity is expressed in article 8j:

"(j) Subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices;"

This dry language makes it clear that indigenous and local communities have knowledge and practices that can make a major contribution to ensuring the resilience of ecosystems and the protection of biodiversity. This includes agricultural biodiversity - the selection, breeding and conservation of biodiversity that underpins human wellbeing. However, the replacement of natural ecosystems with plantations and industrial monocultures has already had very serious impacts on Indigenous Peoples and local communities, displacing them, destroying the ecosystems they have often helped to enrich and maintain and above all, undermining their own resilience.

The fundamental role of agriculture

A fundamental aspect of the interaction between indigenous peoples, local communities and biodiverse ecosystems is of course agriculture, which at this level consists of many different cultures that in a sense codify the inter-relations between communities and the ecosystems they inhabit and interact with. Agriculture has so far been neglected in the climate discussions. It is now in serious danger of entering them in the wrong spirit, as the basis for trade and offsets, particularly in the case of soils.

This must not be allowed to happen. Instead we need to apply the principles outlined above and ensure that the small farmers of the world are properly respected for their crucial role, not just in feeding many of us, but in maintaining the resilience of the ecosystems on whose integrity we all depend if we are literally to weather the storms of climate change.

To translate this into negotiation text would mean at minimum:

- keeping agriculture and soils out of market mechanisms, and
- adding in compliance with the CBD to the shared vision.

Further Information

Agriculture and climate change: real problems, false solutions.

EcoNexus, Biofuelwatch, Grupo de Reflexion Rural, NOAH - Friends of the Earth Denmark, and The Development Fund Norway, Copenhagen, December 2009. www.econexus.info

Small farmers can cool the planet: A way out of the mayhem caused by the industrial food system, November 2009 by GRAIN www.grain.org/o/?id=93

Small Scale Sustainable Farmers Are Cooling Down The Earth, December 2009 Via Campesina <http://viacampesina.net/downloads/PAPER5/EN/paper5-EN.pdf>

Earth matters - Tackling the climate crisis from the ground up, October 2009 by GRAIN www.grain.org/seedling/?id=643

The international food system and the climate crisis, October 2009 by GRAIN www.grain.org/seedling/?id=642

The difficult birth of REDD (*or is it a funeral?*)

Freidrich Wulf, Pro Natura, Switzerland

Emotions have been going up and down on UNFCCC COP 15's most dynamic topic: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD).

On Friday Facilitator Tony La Viña (Philippines) put together a chair's text based on what he heard from Parties in the first part of the week. The text had the charm of being short – but that was all. NGOs were delighted when Monday's text showed up with a lot of improvements and only one main disadvantage: the most important points were in brackets. But instead of these being removed in the final session before passing the document on to ministers, it seemed that the agreement almost reached was falling apart again on Tuesday morning.

So what is the discussion all about?

REDD is about keeping forest carbon out of the atmosphere. But forests aren't only just carbon. They are also the world's major treasuries for biodiversity. And it is easy to serve both issues best without any additional effort by conserving primary and natural forests.

As the heavily negotiated text is now going up to ministers, several key issues of major importance for biodiversity will be left for them to resolve.

As – due to the extension of REDD to REDD+ - there is no priority for directing the limited financial resources to the conservation of primary forests rather than plantations or the “sustainable” management of forests¹, other safeguards for biodiversity are all the more important. This includes:

- An overall goal with a reference to carbon and to ending gross deforestation as well as a timeline (conditional to adequate financing),
- Safeguards against the conversion of natural forests including text related to implementation and monitoring,
- A monitoring system based on national- level accounting, and
- A clear picture of how financing will look.

The overall goal should be ambitious and focus on ending gross deforestation as soon as possible – 2020 is ambitious but realistic. Time is running short for saving the world's last natural forests and we need to resolve this issue as possible. Gross deforestation means that you cannot compensate cutting down a forest – so this would aim at preserving the forests that already exist. This is the major input from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Old-growth forests (together with peatlands) are the most carbon-rich habitats existing so a reference to the reduction of carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation will help to target these biodiversity-rich forests. Of course, as developing countries rightly pointed out, this needs to be backed up by adequate funding.

One of the main fates of primary forests is their conversion into plantations and other land uses. REDD must not become an incentive for this conversion, especially as the forest definition used in the UNFCCC includes plantations. To work in practice, there must be monitoring. Also, if REDD is to be results-based, there must be an independent body that can ensure compliance over this and other safeguards - including critical safeguards for indigenous people's rights - when allocating REDD funding.

While it is obvious that national level accounting is crucial for avoiding leakage and parties having difficulties with this are now holding the whole process hostage, the issue on finance is more complex. It is a 'good thing' that finance will be based on funding rather than on markets alone, but there is a need for long-term financial commitments by industrialized nations.

The outcome of REDD and its value will depend on these requirements. Any deletion of watering down of these demands will severely affect the environmental integrity of the upcoming REDD deal. So please, ministers and heads of state, resolve these issues and remove the brackets so NGOs won't have to say “*No REDD deal is better than this REDD deal*”.

1 - Sustainable management of forests is not defined, and the proposal to do this has again been deleted from the text

Indigenous Peoples and the Copenhagen Negotiations

Malia Nobrega, Hawai'i, Pacific

Over the past week, governments seem to have largely forgotten that their human rights obligations towards Indigenous Peoples also apply in the context of climate change.



Indigenous Peoples urge governments to respect international human rights standards in any negotiations, decisions, framework, or political statement coming out of Copenhagen, Mexico, or any future meetings. It is their moral and legal obligation.

In last Fridays evening negotiations there was a breakthrough, and thus a step forward, regarding Indigenous Peoples' rights through a reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in the latest draft text of AWG-LCA 8 item 3 on REDD and REDD plus. It took a lot of effort and sustained lobby and actions by indigenous peoples to put the language in the text and was bracketed due to resistance by some states. As a result, the bracket was removed in the final days of negotiations in Copenhagen.

Indigenous peoples will continue to lobby for the inclusion of indigenous peoples' rights in any outcome document of COP 15 and to strengthen the safeguard and operational section of REDD in further negotiations after Copenhagen.

Excerpts from the International Indigenous People's Forum on Climate Change Policy Proposals:

Policy Proposals on Climate Change

Mother Earth is no longer in a period of climate change, but in climate crisis.Indigenous Peoples have a vital role in defending and healing Mother Earth. We uphold that the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples ... must be fully respected in all decision-making processes and activities related to climate change. Anchorage Declaration 20091

Climate Change calls for historic transformations

Climate change, in the light of the current global financial, economic, environmental and food crises, represents an unprecedented challenge and opportunity for humanity to transform global economic, political, social, cultural relations to live in balance with Mother Earth. Reaching climate equilibrium and justice is inseparable from acknowledging the historical responsibilities of developed countries while promoting social equity between and within nations, maintaining ecological integrity, addressing the climate and ecological debt, and pursuing an effective transition away from fossil fuel dependency towards a green economy.

Indigenous Peoples are Rights-holders

We hold inalienable collective rights over our lands, territories and resources. Policies and actions that are being negotiated now directly affect our traditional lands, territories, oceans, waters, ice, flora, fauna and forests thereby also affecting the survival and livelihoods of over 370 million Indigenous Peoples from all regions of the globe. However, our concerns and views have not been seriously addressed in the climate negotiation processes, least of all those from indigenous women and youth. We reiterate the States' and whole UN system's obligations to uphold regional and international human rights commitments and standards, especially the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The provisions of the UNDRIP articulate rights which must be respected and safeguarded in all climate decision-making and actions. We are therefore holders of collective rights, including sovereign and inherent rights to land and treaty rights, covenants and agreements. Protecting these rights also strengthen the capacity and resilience of indigenous peoples and local communities to respond to climate change.

Our rights to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) are the minimum standards to safeguard our rights and interests through the different stages of the project lifecycle, including policy framing, planning and design, implementation, restoration, rehabilitation, benefit-sharing and conflict resolution.

Indigenous Peoples' Contributions to Ecosystem-based Mitigation and Adaptation

We have intrinsic contributions towards addressing the climate crisis, and renewing the relationships between humans and nature. For generations, we have managed ecosystems nurturing its integrity and complexity in sustainable and culturally diverse ways. Our customary resource management systems have proven to be ecologically sustainable, low carbon economies. These include mobile pastoralism in drylands and rangelands, rotational swidden agriculture and ecological agriculture in tropical forest regions, the conservation, management and restoration of other natural ecosystems such as mangroves, savannahs, wetlands, the Arctic environment and small island ecosystems. Traditional knowledge, innovations and adaptation practices embody local adaptive management to the changing environment, and complement scientific research, observations and monitoring....

Securing Indigenous Peoples' Territories

The global economic transition to sustainable, low carbon development will require revitalization of diverse local economies, including support for Indigenous peoples' self-determined development. Economic planning combined with adaptive management to climate change will need to apply an ecosystem-based approach, and must fully respect the rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities. Securing our rights to our ancestral lands, forests, waters and resources, provides the basis for sustainable local social, cultural, spiritual and economic development, and some insurance against our vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. This is also beneficial towards improving ecosystem governance, ecosystem resilience and the delivery of ecosystem services.

The IIPFCC affirms our global unity and solidarity to realize the enjoyment of our collective rights and the recognition of our vision, indigenous knowledge and our contributions in solving the climate change crisis.

The entire text of the International Indigenous People's Forum on Climate Change Policy Proposals is available at http://tiny.cc/iipfcc_policy

For more info on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change visit the Indigenous Portal at: <http://www.indigenousportal.com/Climate-Change/>

Technology Transfer

by *Fiu Mataese Elisara*,
Ole Siosiomaga Society (OLSSI), Samoa

One of the four pillars of the Bali Action Plan (BAP) is technology transfer, an issue which has not been adequately addressed in the long term cooperative actions discussed here in Copenhagen.

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) present in Copenhagen have our own working group on this issue and we are pushing for text that will address Indigenous rights issues, including the appropriateness and relevance of technologies, the accessibility and affordability of technologies for Indigenous Peoples, and the use of Indigenous Peoples' technologies that are sustainable and do not cause additional harm to the climate or ecosystems.

For Indigenous Peoples and some civil society groups there is another critically important aspect of this technology transfer pillar of the BAP: the proliferation of untested and unproven technologies being promoted (and experimented with) for their capacity to store carbon or to manipulate natural systems without due consideration of their ecological and social consequences.

Some technologies being promoted as 'environmentally sound' here in Copenhagen have serious negative social and environmental impacts such as - nuclear power which carry many environmental and health dangers as well as possibilities of their being used for nuclear weapons; crop and tree plantations for bio-energy and bio-fuels can lead to large-scale displacement of farmers and IPs as well as destruction of existing carbon-dense ecosystems; agricultural practices involving genetically modified crops and trees, use of agrochemicals and synthetic fertilizers, and large-scale monocultures that destroy biodiversity resources that are the baseline of our livelihoods and food security. These are huge concerns, but yet they are being ignored in the texts of the negotiations here in Copenhagen.

The ETC group's well-researched "Let's look before we leap" publication (circulated here in Copenhagen) alerts governments to the absence of any precautionary environmental and social assessment mechanism in the draft Copenhagen agreement on technology. The report states that this absence poses grave threats to human health, human rights, rural livelihoods, diverse ecosystems and climate stability.

Those of us living the Pacific Islands are especially concerned about the intentionally large-scale technological interventions - often called geoengineering - in the oceans, the atmosphere and land. Ocean fertilization (Australia is allegedly already implementing four large scale projects in the Pacific) could disturb the food chain and disrupt marine ecosystems. Injecting sulphates into the stratosphere could cause widespread drought in equatorial zones causing crop failures and worsening hunger.



Let's look before we leap

Civil Society calls for Technology Assessment as part of any Copenhagen deal

Bio-char is unproven for sequestration carbon or improving soils, yet strongly promoted by certain commercial interests. Even those of us in the Pacific, despite being the most immediate victims of the climate crisis, do not want to become guinea pigs for new unproven technologies or old hazardous technologies such as nuclear power with the excuse that more technology is needed to fix the climate.

As one colleague said here in Copenhagen, "It is totally irresponsible that negotiators are discussing the development and the transfer of technologies without any mechanisms to filter which ones can be useful and which ones will create more problems for peoples and the environment. We need immediately the inclusion and application of the precautionary principle on the issue of technology".

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We need immediately the inclusion and application of the precautionary principle on the issue of technology

More information

Retooling the Planet: Climate Chaos in a Geoengineering Age, a Report Commissioned and Published by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, researched & produced by ETC group.
www.etcgroup.org/en/node/4966

Let's Look Before We Leap statement and press release -
www.etcgroup.org/en/node/4963

