

New Sense of Urgency

A recent biodiversity meet witnessed a renewed sense of urgency for real solutions that draw on communities' customary and local knowledge

We have collectively failed to stem biodiversity loss, with potentially devastating consequences for all life on earth. We have failed to meet the targets set in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This was the message from Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, presented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3) launched at the 14th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Kenya in May 2010.

This 14th SBSTTA aimed to prepare for the Conference of Parties meeting to be held later this year in Nagoya, Japan (COP10). The agenda included the preparation of recommendations to the COP on a range of issues, including, among others, the outcomes of a series of indepth reviews that have been undertaken on the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA), on marine and coastal biodiversity, inland and mountain biodiversity, and forests and agricultural biodiversity. Under the spotlight was the CBD goal of achieving a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and hence the future strategic direction of the CBD, goals, indicators and revised targets received specific attention. New strategies to "mainstream biodiversity protection", based primarily on the "economics of ecosystems and biodiversity" are being promoted by the UNEP and

other multinational bodies as the key solution to the current crisis.

A report prepared for SBSTTA by the CBD secretariat on the progress made in implementing the PoWPA summarized progress at the global level, based upon the information contained in national reports and information gathered from Parties and organizations in a series of regional workshops that were held in preparation for SBSTTA. The progress report highlighted the fact

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that attention to marine biodiversity lags far behind that to terrestrial areas in nearly all aspects.

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Promoting equity

In particular, progress towards implementation of the goal of promoting "equity and benefit-sharing" and the goal seeking to "enhance and secure involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders" has been limited. This review was complemented by the release of GBO-3, which contained

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Launch of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, at Nairobi, Kenya

sobering statistics on the state of the earth's natural resources. The report suggests that marine and coastal biodiversity continues to decline. Habitats such as mangroves, seagrass beds, salt marshes, shellfish reefs and coral reefs face continuing pressures. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the world's marine fish stocks, for which data is available, are fully or overexploited. Attention is also shifting towards deep-water habitats, although data for these areas is still limited. The GBO-3 report indicates that less than one-fifth of marine ecoregions meet the target of having at least 10 per cent of their area protected by 2012.

Regrettably, the report on the progress on PoWPA fails to identify and analyze the obstacles to the implementation of the programme. A key focus of the report on the PoWPA and the recommendations arising from it, however, did centre on the issue of 'governance'. At the regional workshops held in 2009, representatives from the indigenous peoples and local community organizations, as well as organizations such as the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), through its working groups and the Indigenous and Community Conserved Area (ICCA) Consortium, had lobbied strongly for the recommendations to SBSTTA to suggest that Parties need to promote and implement a range of governance types in the management of marine protected areas (MPAs) and to incorporate the assessment of

governance in management effectiveness evaluations.

This focus on governance had arisen as there was a realization that MPAs around the world tend to be 'top-down' and State-driven, and ignore many community-based fisheries management and biodiversity protection initiatives. They also tend to include a narrow definition of MPAs. Rather than recognizing the principle of 'sustainable use', there is a tendency to view 'no-take zones' as the

only real form of protection, resulting in an inflexible approach to zonation that often deprives local fishing communities of access to the resources that they have traditionally depended on for their food and livelihoods. Relatively few countries have protected area legislation that recognizes plural legal systems and accommodates customary practices and local-level governance institutions.

A side event, facilitated by the Theme on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA), the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy in Africa (CEEPA) and the ICCA Consortium, at which ICSF made a presentation on MPAs, highlighted the contribution that indigenous and community conserved areas make towards protecting biodiversity, sustaining cultural and local knowledge systems, and building the resilience of local communities. Conservation policies and practices that fail to acknowledge the rights of indigenous and local communities to participate fully and effectively in the governance of natural resources violate their human rights and will undermine the integrity and sustainability of biodiversity protection strategies.

Climate change

Strategies to mitigate climate-change impacts, incentives to reduce carbon emissions and strategies to promote the use of marine and coastal systems as a means of enhancing

natural carbon stocks, especially in developing countries, emerged as key themes in the discussions on marine and coastal biodiversity as well as protected areas. Increasingly, the value of coastal habitats, such as salt marshes, in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is being recognized, drawing policymakers' attention to these areas and to the increasing development, population growth and other pressures that they are facing. Inevitably, this focus highlights the interactions of indigenous and local coastal communities with these ecosystems.

Several side events at the SBSTTA suggested a growing awareness of, and respect for, the value of indigenous peoples' and local communities' traditional knowledge in finding real solutions to biodiversity loss. Many side events focused on local, decentralized solutions that build on communities' own knowledge and experiences. Some of this was very positive, driven by the extremely strong and vocal presence of indigenous peoples' representatives. However, some of the emerging attention being paid to community-based management and local customary conservation practices hints at a utilitarian approach aimed at "harnessing local knowledge, building resilience towards and mitigating climate change", thereby saving the global community from rapid biodiversity loss rather than recognizing the inherent rights of indigenous and local communities to manage the resources that they use and depend upon.

The final draft text that will be taken to COP10 includes recommendations from the SBSTTA for work at national, regional and global levels. At the national level, the extension of representative areas under protection is encouraged, as is the integration of the PoWPA into national biodiversity plans of action. At the regional level, Parties are encouraged to promote transboundary networks of representative protected areas, while at the global level, the need for further capacity building and technical support is noted. The SBSTTA

Working Group on Protected Areas responded favourably to several of the recommendations from the Regional Workshops, aimed at building the capacity of Parties to implement PoWPA and, in particular, on strengthening the governance of protected areas. At this level, Parties to the SBSTTA noted the importance of governance issues and encouraged Parties to establish and/or strengthen a range of governance types for long-term appropriate management of MPAs and to incorporate good governance principles.

In addition to this focus on governance under Management and MPAs, a specific section in the recommendations focused on Programme Element 2 of the PoWPA, which deals with governance, participation, equity and benefit sharing.

Paragraph 27 invites parties to:

- (a) establish clear mechanisms and processes for equitable cost and benefit-sharing and for full and effective participation

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- of indigenous and local communities, related to protected areas, in accordance with national laws and applicable international obligations; and
- (b) recognize the role of indigenous and local community conserved areas and conserved areas of other stakeholders in biodiversity conservation, collaborative management and diversification of governance types.

Primary responsibility

Although the Working Group on Protected Areas has primary responsibility for MPAs, the issue of MPAs was also discussed in the Working Group on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity. This Working Group committed to providing Parties with


support in improving the coverage, representative and network properties of the global system of marine and coastal protected areas, and has proposed new language on the expansion of MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction as part of the measures to promote sustainable use and protect marine biodiversity.

Trends emerging from the SBSTTA meeting have raised concerns amongst indigenous and local community representatives and NGOs about the future direction of the CBD and strategies to protect biodiversity. Most notable was the push by government and large conservation organizations for higher targets, despite the fact that key qualitative indicators of the existing targets, such as those on participation of indigenous and local communities, and equity and benefit sharing, have not been met, nor have the reasons for this failure been adequately analyzed. The promotion of the findings of the study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), which will be formally launched at COP10 in Nagoya, Japan, permeated the GBO-3 report, and the language of this study entered the official text as government delegations pushed for the valuation of ecosystem services.

The way in which the CBD's mandate to address the promotion and protection of rights to biodiversity, and the way in which policy and mechanisms for addressing biodiversity loss are being closely aligned with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), have prompted fears that some of the influence of the CBD may become diluted by the relative power of the climate-change corporate sector. The large conservation organizations have considerable influence in using climate change and linked biodiversity loss statistics to push for higher targets for protected area coverage, but with little attention to more qualitative indicators that impact indigenous and local communities.

Much of the agenda appears to be driven by the climate-change technology corporate sector, which appears to be having some success in

promoting 'technofixes' such as various permutations of the Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD), ocean fertilization, cloud making and other forms of geo-engineering, with little regard for the long-term impacts of these interventions on people, particularly on indigenous and local communities in developing countries. Not only is there no acknowledgement of the political economy of climate change in discussions surrounding mitigation strategies, but the discourse is totally lacking in any analysis of the gendered nature of the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Indigenous people, local community representatives and representatives from other civil society groups left the SBSTTA to prepare for COP10 with the concern that market solutions to biodiversity loss appear to be eclipsing debates about the sustainability of the current development trajectory and its impact on the freedoms of their communities. There is an increased sense of urgency ahead of COP10 for real solutions that draw on communities' customary and local knowledge and practices to protect global biodiversity. 

For more

gbo3.cbd.int

Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3)

www.iccaforum.org

Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas

www.cbd.int/sbstta14/meeting/documents.shtml

SBSTTA 14, CBD, Nairobi, Kenya