

The CBD – Is it for Real?

Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMS)

Being one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, it is only fitting that Brazil play host to the Eighth Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is also an unprecedented opportunity for engagement between the Government of Brazil and civil society about the future of Brazilian biodiversity conservation and management.

One thing is for certain - if governments are to successfully achieve the objectives of the Convention (the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources) COP 8 decisions must focus on benefits for local communities, as well as drastic changes in the current unsustainable production and consumption model.

In Brazil (and indeed, in many other countries), the main cause of biodiversity destruction has been, and still is, the expansion of agro-business and monocultures such as large-scale soy plantations, tree monocrops for cellulose production, and shrimp aquaculture. These economic exploits (and exploits they are!) are promoted by, and benefit, a small number of transnational corporations alone. The destruction of biodiversity goes hand-in-hand with appropriation of territory and privatization, threatening local communities and local knowledge, along with food security and public health.

The protection of biodiversity is incumbent upon vastly different production and consumption patterns – patterns based on ecological principles, social justice, re-distribution of land, and the recognition of territories for local communities, not enormous profits for large businesses and cheap goods for consumers in the North.

Agricultural biodiversity, which is the heritage of humankind for the benefit of future generations, as well as the rights of indigenous peoples, will be decisively threatened if this COP allows for the release of terminator seeds. The existing moratorium agreed upon in 2000 must be upheld and strengthened.

The establishment of protected areas has been growing worldwide, but at the same time, conflict still exists between conservation areas and traditional populations. The creation of protected areas should guarantee the right of local communities to autonomously govern and manage them based on their traditional knowledge.

Now, onto Access and Benefit Sharing. Sadly benefit sharing of biodiversity, as it is discussed within the CBD, seems to represent the privatization of goods and knowledge that are a *collective* cultural resource. Any ABS policy framework should respect the human rights of indigenous peoples; it should reduce social inequities and valorize sociobiodiversity. *Continued on p. 2*

A CDB – É para valer?

Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento (FBOMS)

Sendo um dos países mais megadiversos do mundo, é perfeitamente adequado que o Brasil seja o anfitrião da Oitava Conferência das Partes da Convenção sobre Diversidade Biológica (CDB). Esta é também uma oportunidade sem precedentes para que o governo do Brasil e a sociedade civil assumam juntos um compromisso sobre o futuro da conservação e do manejo da biodiversidade brasileira.

Uma coisa é certa – para que os governos consigam atingir com sucesso os objetivos da Convenção (a conservação da diversidade biológica, o uso sustentável de seus componentes e a repartição justa e equitativa dos benefícios decorrentes do uso de recursos genéticos) as decisões da COP 8 devem focalizar-se em benefícios para comunidades locais, bem como em mudanças drásticas no atual modelo insustentável de produção e de consumo.

No Brasil e, certamente, em muitos outros países, a causa principal da destruição da biodiversidade foi e ainda é a expansão do agro-negócio e das monoculturas, tais como plantações de soja em larga escala, monoculturas da árvore para a produção da celulose, e a carcinicultura. Estas explorações econômicas (e como exploram!) são promovidas por um pequeno número de corporações transnacionais sozinhas, que delas também se beneficiam. A destruição da biodiversidade segue lado a lado com a apropriação de territórios e a privatização da biodiversidade, ameaçando as comunidades locais e o conhecimento tradicional, juntamente com a segurança alimentar e a saúde pública.

A biodiversidade agrícola que é o patrimônio dos povos para o benefício das futuras gerações, bem como os direitos indígenas, serão ameaçados de forma decisiva se a COP permitir a liberação das sementes terminator. Logo, a moratória já acordada em 2000 deve ser reafirmada e consolidada.

A proteção da biodiversidade precisa de modelos diferentes de produção e de consumo – modelos baseados em princípios ecológicos, de justiça social, redistribuição de terra, e reconhecimento de territórios para as comunidades locais, e não em enormes lucros para os grandes negócios e na existência de bens baratos para os consumidores no Norte.

O estabelecimento de áreas protegidas tem crescido pelo mundo, mas, ao mesmo tempo, ainda existe conflito entre áreas de conservação e populações tradicionais. A criação de áreas protegidas deve garantir o direito das comunidades locais governarem e controlarem com autonomia as áreas de conservação baseadas em seu conhecimento tradicional.

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MOP-3 gives a green light to LMO Labelling

Rodger Mpande, Zimbabwe

After a long and protracted struggle to agree on the key instrument that would give the Biosafety Protocol teeth (i.e. how to identify, label and handle LMOs intended for food, feed and processing -- especially bulk shipments) a decision was reached in the final hours of the third meeting of parties to the Cartagena Protocol. There are three main reasons for this breakthrough:

- The new affirmative position taken by Brazil. After intensive negotiations at the last MOP in Montreal, New Zealand and Brazil blocked an imminent agreement on the outstanding issue of LMO labelling.
- The capacity and patience of the working chair from Norway along with support from her delegation and the European community.
- The tactful and timely intervention by a coalition of NGOs silenced the uncompromising delegation from New Zealand. Realizing the negotiations were heading for a total collapse due to New Zealand's refusal to agree on the need for identification and documentation regarding the transport and movement of ILOs, NGOs creatively applied pressure outside of the negotiating room. They named and shamed the culprit by putting a straight question to the delegates and appealing to New Zealand's prime minister: Will New Zealand block the Curitiba accord? The statement read: "*New Zealand's import laws are some of the strictest in the world. Regarding GMOs, NZ has zero threshold for contamination, does not allow*

adventitious presence and provides comprehensive consumer labelling. Why is NZ preventing other countries from having similarly strict standards?" The hard line taken by NZ evaporated after the statement was made.

The final agreed text of article 8a states the need to fully identify and document the transboundary movement of LMOs, making these legal requirements. Several interpretations of this decision are being explored. Two key implications seem to emerge:

1. There is now a strong case for developing countries, especially in Africa, to request for GMO exporting countries to present information on shipments. In the past 5 years a number of African countries have been pressured to accept food shipments, especially food aid without questioning their content.
2. Fully documenting the transboundary movements of LMOs (including the type of modification) provides a foundation for formulating a legally binding liability and redress mechanism. Without internationally recognised standards for documentation the issue of liability and redress is a pipe dream.

In sum, we have moved ahead one small step towards an operational protocol.

Transnational corporations + Biosafety

Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development

MOP3 revealed the frightening influence transnational corporations have over national and international policy-making. In the specific case of the Biosafety Protocol, the direct influence of transnational companies such as ADM, Bunge and Cargill – which control 60% of the international soy trade -- became very clear.

However, in spite of the limitations of the text approved, the survival of the negotiations affirmed the necessity of an international biosafety system, and partially stalled the ambitions of Brazilian agro business and transnational corporations.

Now, it is up to Brazilian, Latin American and global civil society to get mobilized so popular desires for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use can prevail over the primary interest of transnational corporations -- profit. www.fboms.org.br

Is it for real from page 1...

COP decisions are made largely by Government representatives. However the main agents of *social transformation* are social movements, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples Organizations, and the hundreds of thousands of activists struggling daily for a just and sustainable society. Inspired by this idea, and to reveal the disconnect between official negotiations and the situation 'on the ground', the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMS) calls civil society organizations and social and popular movements all across the world to participate in the Global Civil Society Forum "Welcome to the Real World", during the whole period of COP8.

While Parties tinker over text inside, civil society will be focused on the 'real world', sharing experiences and views on how we are, and how we should achieve biodiversity conservation. The Global Forum is meant to strengthen the voice of social movements and to highlight the existing conflict between the CBD and World Trade Organization (WTO) regimes.. We welcome all delegates (Parties too) to take a break from the stuffy conference hall and attend a few sessions in the real world.

Participation (Not), Consent (Not)

Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition

“Participation” is a word that is all the rage these days at the United Nations. Recommendations coming out of the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) are generously sprinkled with promises of “full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities”. It sounds nice. But what does it really entail?

Governments of countries like Brazil, India and New Zealand, seem to think it means “full and effective *listening* to the deals we make on your behalf” – as became crystal clear during last January’s CBD meetings on the protection of traditional knowledge and access and benefit sharing of genetic resources in Granada.

Sure, Indigenous Peoples’ representatives were allowed to attend the plenary and various committee meetings. They were even occasionally allowed to make a statement. But their advice was ignored. Nor were they allowed to participate in the contact groups where the real deals were made. That’s not “full and effective participation”.

And yet, the two CBD working groups that met in January are negotiating matters at the heart of Indigenous rights. These include the protection of traditional knowledge related to genetic resources and biodiversity, and the sharing of the benefits that knowledge brings.

Governments of what is called the “like-minded” group of megadiverse countries may pretend that the two above issues are distinct. But they’re not. Medicinal plants, seeds and other genetic resources with the greatest commercial value are almost always already known by Indigenous Peoples’ and other local communities. Tapping that knowledge is corporations’ best short cut to raw material for their pharmaceutical and seed industries.

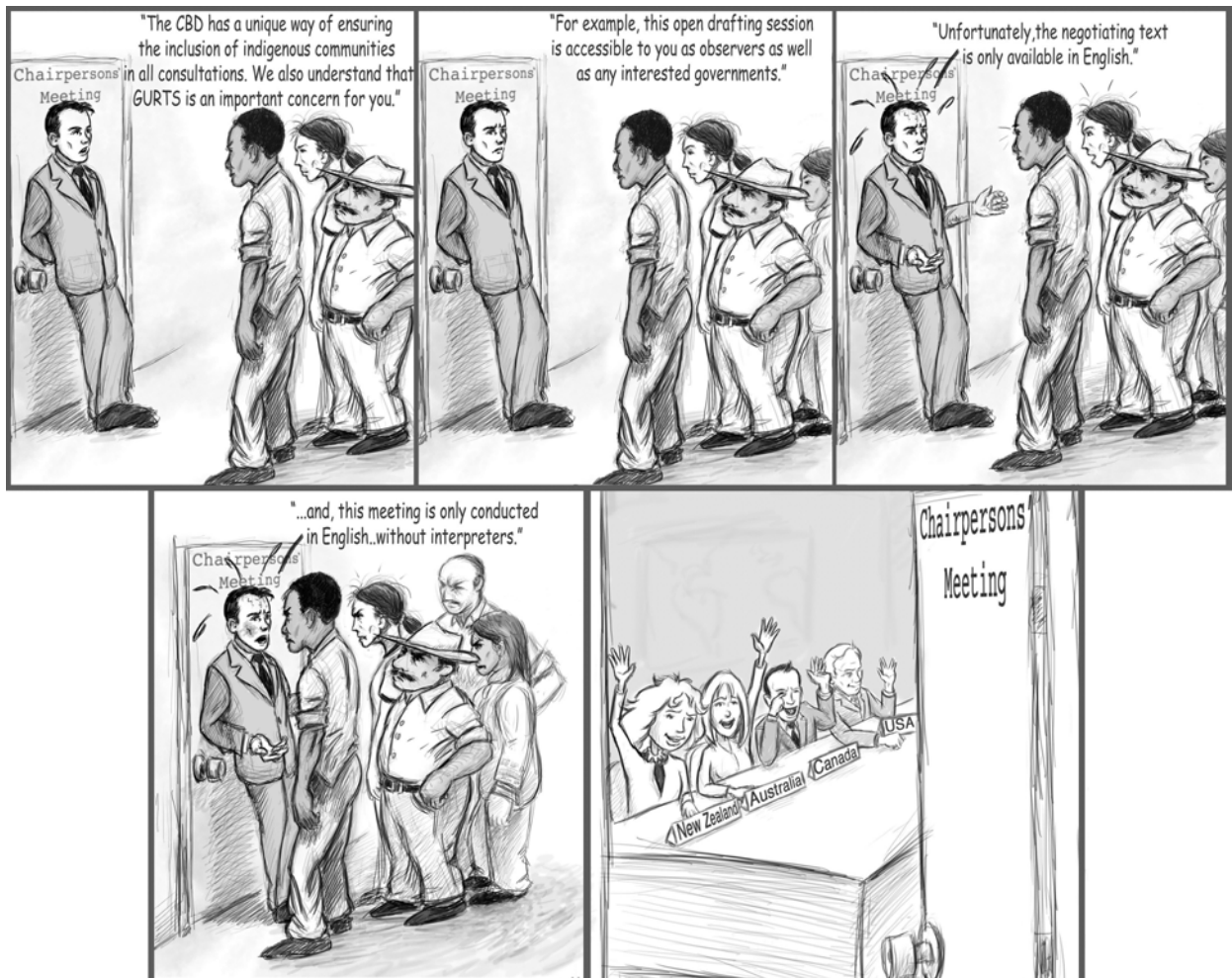
Thus it’s no accident that the National Biodiversity Institute of Costa Rica (INBio) prefers hiring Indigenous people as bioprospectors. Nor

is it implausible, as it is rumored, that bioprospectors in Africa feign illness when they arrive at a local community so they can spy on the medicine-men or -women who treat them.

But if traditional knowledge is big business these days, the question is: big business for whom? For corporations like Monsanto and Bayer? For private institutions like INBio? For national heritage committees like the one set up by the Brazilian federal government, to which Indigenous Peoples are invited as “guests” only?

And has anyone ever asked Indigenous Peoples whether they want this big business in the first place? If governments had just, for once, *listened* to the statements of the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity during the discussions on traditional knowledge and access and benefit sharing last January, they would have realized that Indigenous Peoples are not talking about “big business”. They’re not talking about selling genes. They’re talking about respecting rights – including the internationally recognized human rights of Indigenous Peoples – and about protecting knowledge and sacred values. They emphasize time and time again that traditional knowledge cannot be private property, and thus cannot be patented or otherwise commodified.

From this perspective, requirements for certificates of origin or disclosure of legal provenance are not going to protect Indigenous rights any better than aspirin is going to treat cancer. How dare governments talk about an international regime to ensure “prior informed consent” when Indigenous Peoples have never consented to the International Regime itself ! If this is the “prior informed consent” governments are proposing, then we can surely expect the term to share the fate of “full and effective participation” – empty words.



Roadmap to Recovery for the Planet

Greenpeace International

This is the Summit for life on Earth. It is the year that the Convention on Biological Diversity, born at the Earth Summit in 1992 returns to where it was spawned. The year when governments gathering in Curitiba have no choice but to take action tackling the very real threats to the diversity of life on our planet.

The current extinction rate of plant and animal species across the world is approximately 1,000 times faster than in pre-human times. It is predicted to be 10,000 times faster by the year 2050. This loss of biodiversity prevents ecosystems from functioning properly and threatens the basic livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. It is particularly troubling since we are all dependent on the planet's ecosystems for air, food, water, shelter, and for our health. Therefore, biodiversity must be protected. The only way to do so effectively is to create a global network of effectively managed protected areas. Unless the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) acts on its commitment to halt the loss of biodiversity and implement a global network of protected areas both on land and at sea, we run the risk of losing even more species forever, and in so doing jeopardising our own survival.

The question for this COP is: will it be another talk-shop mired in interest-based politics and short-term expediencies, feathering the beds of the wealthy while further exploiting the Global South? Or, will we leave Brazil in 2 weeks time with a reinvigorated roadmap to recovery for biodiversity across all ecosystems and habitats.

The problems are not yet insurmountable. To address them requires political will and a commitment to action. To kick-start the process, Greenpeace is providing the COP with a unique Roadmap to Recovery for the Planet. Combining satellite imagery of the last remaining ancient forests and the latest techniques for mapping ocean life, Greenpeace has identified the areas of forest and ocean that need immediate protection. They are now clearly mapped-out for governments to take action. The maps and the scientific background information that goes with them will be released at a side-event on Tuesday 21st at 1.15pm and will be available at www.greenpeace.org on the same day.

The Challenges are clear. The solutions are now mapped out. No excuses. Action required.

...A CDB – É para valer?

Agora, sobre acesso e repartição de benefícios. Infelizmente, repartição de benefícios decorrentes da biodiversidade, tal como discutido dentro da CDB parece representar a privatização de bens e conhecimento que são um recurso cultural coletivo. Políticas de acesso e repartição de benefícios sempre deverá visar a redução de desigualdades sociais, a valorização da sociobiodiversidade, o reconhecimento do direito de todos a terem livre acesso à informação sobre a conservação da biodiversidade e aos mecanismos de controle social que previnam a monopolização da vida, do patrimônio natural, cultural e genético dos povos tradicionais.

As decisões da COP estão em grande parte sob as ordens e decisões de representantes do governo. Entretanto, os principais agentes da transformação social são os movimentos sociais, as ONGs, as Organizações Indígenas, e as centenas de milhares de ativistas que se esforçam diariamente para que se tenha uma sociedade mais justa e sustentável. Inspirado por esta idéia e para revelar a desconexão entre as negociações oficiais e a situação 'na terra', o Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs e Movimentos Sociais para o Meio Ambiente e o Desenvolvimento (FBOMS) conchama a sociedade civil, organizações e os movimentos sociais e populares de todo o mundo a participarem do Fórum Global da Sociedade Civil "Bem-Vindo ao Mundo Real", durante todo o período da COP8.

Enquanto as Partes discutem sobre o texto lá dentro, a sociedade civil centra seu foco no 'mundo real', compartilhando experiências e pontos-de-vista de como nós somos, e de como nós devemos alcançar a conservação da biodiversidade. O Fórum Global é um instrumento para fortalecer a voz dos movimentos sociais e realçar os conflitos existentes entre o regime da CDB e o regime da Organização Mundial de Comércio (OMC). Pretende fortalecer a importância do uso sustentável dos recursos naturais, do direito de acesso a recursos genéticos e da garantia do conhecimento tradicional sobre a agenda do livre comércio e do neoliberalismo. Nós damos as boas-vindas a todos os delegados e delegadas (Partes também) e convidamos para quebrarem a rotina das cansativas discussões da Conferência e atenderem também a algumas sessões no mundo real.

About ECO...

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

NGO MEETINGS

9 am
Everyday

NGO room

Be There.