

Forest Cover

A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy

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About Forest Cover

Welcome to the sixth issue of Forest Cover, the newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC). This coalition was established by a group of NGOs and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs) to facilitate the informed participation of NGOs and IPOs in intergovernmental meetings related to forests. Forest Cover is published four times a year. It features reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its founding members or the editors. For free subscriptions, please contact Simone Lovera at: [lovera1@conexion.com.py](mailto:llovera1@conexion.com.py)

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Ex Silvis: The Program of Work, not Prisoners of War

By Miguel Lovera, Coordinator, Global Forest Coalition

The sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/CoP-6) has approved the expanded Program of Work on Forest Biological Diversity (hereafter PoW) recommended by the seventh session of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice. Negotiators agreed not to re-open discussions on the PoW's contents, but engaged in thorough exchanges about what to include in the chapeau (introduction) to the PoW.

Some governments and observers wanted the chapeau to include clear targets, timetables and setting of priorities for strict protection of primary forests, combating illegal logging, and so on. Others preferred that priorities be set at the national level, since realities vary largely from country to country. In the end, many concrete issues were lost sight of or hidden within the conceptual space of the broad language accepted by governments in the final resolution.

The PoW is action-oriented and calls for implementation to be mainly at the national level, while recognizing the need to take action at the international and regional level as well. It also calls for the application of the "Ecosystem Approach" to the management of all types of forests. It emphasizes the need to take action on "forests that are threatened, important for biodiversity, and have potential for conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing." The PoW also recognizes that new and additional financial resources are necessary to facilitate implementation.

The PoW has the potential of making a positive difference in conservation and sustainable use of forests. However, how it is implemented will depend on governmental commitments. This has the potential of making forests PoWs in another sense -- Prisoners of War. The main challenge for the near future is to ensure that the World Summit on Sustainable Development recognizes the contribution the effective implementation the Program of Work can make to addressing one of the most profound crises the world's civilizations face: that of global forests.

So NGOs and IPOs have to keep up the pressure to get the right kind of policies at the national and international levels, liberating forests from the threats of conversion, logging and corporate greed.

The Bali PrepCom 4: Moving Backwards

By Ricardo Carrere, World Rainforest Movement

Among the many demonstrations organized in Bali during the last Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), perhaps the most illuminating was carried out inside the conference building: civil society representatives walked backwards along the corridors, highlighting the prevailing feeling about the whole process.

Nowhere are things moving backwards faster than in negotiations over forests. The forest-related clauses in the "Draft Plan of Implementation" for the WSSD agreed upon in Bali are -- to say the least -- pathetic.

A loud silence

What strikes one most when going through the draft plan is the absence of any reference to the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. Everyone involved in forests knows that "poor management practices" are not the root cause of forest destruction and degradation. Where they exist, such practices are instead a consequence of a chain of other causes -- the external debt burden, imposition of export-oriented economies, transnational investment, international trade, overconsumption in the North, inequitable land tenureship patterns, etc. In spite of the fact that these causes have all been identified by governments and international agencies, who have committed themselves to addressing them, the draft plan ignores them entirely. That makes the Bali plan incapable of dealing with forest conservation.

Insisting on "planted forests"

The draft plan insists on calling plantations "forests" and in assigning them the same social and environmental benefits as forests. The reality, however, is that large-scale tree plantations generate poverty, increase inequity, affect food security, deplete water and soil resources, and drastically reduce biodiversity, to mention only their most obvious effects. Ignoring this reality, the draft plan says that

"Sustainable forest management **of both natural and planted forests** . . . is essential to achieving sustainable development and is a critical means to eradicate poverty, significantly reduce deforestation and halt the loss of forest biodiversity and land and resource degradation, and improve food security and access to safe drinking water and affordable energy highlights the multiple

benefits **of both natural and planted forests** and trees and contributes to the well-being of the planet and humanity." (*emphasis added.*)

If native forests and plantations can be lumped together in this way, why protect native forests at all? Why not convert "untidy" forests into neat rows of eucalyptus, pines or other fast-growing species? The simple answer should be: because plantations are not forests. Some plantations may be useful; most are damaging. But in all cases they are plantations and not forests. The fact that the draft plan insists on calling them "forests" is bad news for forest conservation.

The North-South game

For many years, Northern and Southern governments have been playing a game while forests have continued to decline. The rules of the game are simple. Northern governments blame their Southern counterparts for destroying the "world's" forests. Southern governments respond that they are poor and that to conserve forests they need "additional financial resources" and free "technology transfer." The North refuses to provide either and Southern governments continue carrying out business as usual, to the benefit of Southern elites and northern corporations and economies.

The draft plan continues playing the game: "Take immediate action at national and international levels ... to facilitate the provision of financial resources and transfer and development of environmentally sound technologies, and thereby address unsustainable timber harvesting practices."

As if the problem could be solved by pouring in more money and technology! In most cases, it is precisely **because** financial resources and northern technology are available that forests are being destroyed.

"Stakeholders" and "partnerships"

The word "stakeholders" may sound nice, and the word "partnerships" even nicer. However,

in the mouths of corporations such terms are extremely dangerous.

As indigenous peoples organizations (IPOs) point out, the word "stakeholders" tends to be used in a way that implies wrongly that all interested parties -- from local communities to corporations based in distant cities -- somehow have an equal "stake" in any given forest. IPOs have rightly responded by designating themselves as "rights-owners" who should have priority in decision-making over their forests.

The term "partnerships", meanwhile, is often used in a way which implies that the "private sector", working together with governments and civil society organizations, will be able to solve the world's problems. This ignores the fact that corporations are themselves one of the major causes of environmental and social destruction. While many civil society organizations are calling for the need to control corporations' activities and to hold them accountable for the impacts of their activities, the process leading to the WSSD appears to be increasingly controlled by those same corporations.

The draft plan coming out of Bali claims that there is a need to

"Create and strengthen partnerships and international cooperation to facilitate: the provision of increased financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, trade, capacity-building, forest law enforcement and governance at all levels, and integrated land and resource management to implement sustainable forest management."

Without even a magic wand, corporations have been transformed from being part of the problem to being part of the solution!

Broken promises

Everyone agrees that forest conservation is one of the main challenges to be met in ensuring social and environmental

sustainability. Forests play a crucial role in sustaining the livelihoods of millions of forest-dependent peoples around the world. Their conservation does more than alleviate poverty; in many cases it prevents it. At the same time, forest conservation plays a major role in addressing many of the problems that are putting humanity's future at risk, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and depletion of drinking water supplies.

Governments' and international organizations' past commitments to ensuring forest conservation have in most cases not been complied with. For the last ten years, promise after promise made at the Earth Summit has been broken. The draft plan for WSSD goes further: it does not even promise anything. This move backwards generates serious doubts regarding the upcoming WSSD in Johannesburg.

For more information:

<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>

Indigenous Forum Issues at the WSSD

By Sandy Gauntlett, International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Issues, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Ten years after the Rio summit accepted the need for action on Indigenous issues, resistance to Indigenous rights remains high. As the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg approaches, we find ourselves going over many of the same issues again and again.

"Rights-holders" versus "stakeholders"

Most importantly, Indigenous Peoples should *not* be regarded as merely being among the "stakeholders" so frequently referred to in the draft Plan of Action of the WSSD. Indigenous Peoples are *rights-holders* by virtue of being original inhabitants of the land. "Stakeholders" is a term used to recognise other peoples (farmers, other ethnic communities, local communities) that also have an interest in and legitimate claim to

consultation over land use. Indigenous Peoples recognise the interest of such groups but argue that the word "stakeholders" is often used to weaken the power of Indigenous Peoples over their lands and territories.

Treaties with nation-states

The Fourth Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD held in Bali last month (Prepcom IV) called on the United Nations to enforce existing treaties between Indigenous Peoples and nation-states that have not been honoured. All NGOs and IPOs should be supporting this call. It will allow us to test which nation-states can be trusted to keep their word.

Alternative models of sustainability

The Bali Prepcom also called for recognition and promotion of alternative models of sustainability (like that of the Arctic Council), especially those that recognise and include Indigenous methodologies. Along with this went a demand (again) for the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples at all levels of decision making. The Prepcom also called for recognition of the sanctity of Indigenous Lands and Territories and for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to serve as a focal point for the promotion of this recognition.

A Secretariat as an Indigenous Peoples focal point

Finally, in order to ensure that there is enough logistical support for the promotion of Indigenous issues at the United Nations, a well-resourced Secretariat should be established for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which met for the first time last month in Geneva. The Permanent Forum itself has called for the establishment of such a Secretariat, similar to those enjoyed by the Commission on Sustainable Development or the Convention on Biodiversity. The establishment of this Secretariat would mean that there would be a funded focal point equipped to do the

paperwork necessary to make dreams become reality. We are asking that all of our friends and allies ask their own member nations to promote or support such a resolution.

For more information:

<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>

Taking the Lead

By Simone Lovera, Friends of the Earth International

"The Forest Bible". That is how some exhausted delegates referred to the expanded work program on forest biological diversity the day it was adopted by the sixth Conference of the Parties of the Biodiversity Convention (CBD) that took place 8-19 April in The Hague.

The work program, which the Conference of the Parties expanded even further with the addition of a eight-page introduction, is an amazingly comprehensive document. At first sight it seems to cover almost every single direct and underlying cause of deforestation and forest degradation one could possibly think of, including forest fires, the bushmeat trade, perverse subsidies, "unauthorized" logging, education, technology transfer and -- of course -- money.

More than protected areas

But the real breakthrough of the work program is its clear recognition that addressing direct causes only will not halt forest biodiversity loss. One-third of the entire work program is about establishing an "enabling environment" for halting deforestation and forest degradation.

Of course, non-government organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples organizations (IPOs) would have liked to see some recommendations spelled out far more clearly. For instance, why should the program blandly recommend studying the "impact of the demand for forest products on sustainable forest management"? Everybody knows that the steeply-rising Northern demand for products like paper and pulp cannot in fact be

met through sustainable forest management, but only through the replacement of natural forests, grasslands and agricultural lands by large-scale tree monoculture tree plantations.

Temporarily-"unstocked" forests

Similarly, the work program recommends that the CBD help develop and harmonize forest definitions. But the CBD needs to do more: it needs to play a lead role. The CBD's institutional interest in promoting an "ecosystem" forest definition based on Article 2 of the Biodiversity Convention would help greatly in ensuring that monoculture tree plantations are not counted as forests.

As things stand, however, FAO and CIFOR seem to have taken the lead in the debate on "harmonizing" forest definitions. Worryingly, a closed expert group meeting organized by the two organizations in January 2002 concluded that the plantation-friendly definition of forests used by the FAO was adequate and should be used as the basis for "harmonizing" other forest definitions. The FAO definition -- also adopted by the Conference of the Parties of the Climate Convention to be used in the forest-related clauses of the Kyoto Protocol -- classifies any collection of trees as a "forest". Not only tree plantations, but also orchards, many gardens, and even the city of Asuncion qualify as "forest" under this definition. Arguably, even an area of land with no trees can qualify, as the definition includes areas that are "temporarily unstocked" due to clearcutting as long as they are expected to turn into forest again at some undefined moment in the future. On the FAO view, South America's Atlantic Forest could be considered to be merely "temporarily unstocked", rather than 93 per cent destroyed.

The connection with climate

Climate negotiators, who meet again in October 2002, should meanwhile not apply the FAO definition of forests previously approved for use by Northern countries to projects to be implemented in the South under

the Clean Development Mechanism. Under the FAO definition, plantation companies would be allowed to reap profits merely from classifying their large-scale industrial tree plantations as carbon sinks.

A legally-binding instrument

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has named biodiversity as one of the five areas in which the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should be able to achieve concrete results. But getting action on biodiversity means getting action on halting deforestation and forest degradation: sixty per cent of the world's biodiversity is found in forests.

The draft action plan for the WSSD recommends that the UN Forum on Forests, the Convention on Biodiversity and the Climate Convention work closely together to conserve the world's forests. While this recommendation may help head off the interagency competition that has dominated so many global forest debates in the past, the WSSD also needs also to state clearly that the Convention on Biodiversity is the only legally binding instrument that covers all types of forests.

For more information:

<http://www.biodiv.org>

Discussions on How to Define Carbon Sinks Cut Short in Bonn

By Yuri Onodera, Friends of the Earth-Japan

Governmental participants in the Bonn meeting of the subsidiary bodies of the Climate Convention on 5-14 June had to cut short their discussions of how to define biological carbon sinks when the Brazilian coordinator of the G77 (the main grouping of Southern countries) left for home at the end of the first week.

A short draft decision was prepared by the co-chairs for the plenary, and the matter was forwarded to the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Climate Convention in October in New Delhi (COP8).

Proposing Definitions

The G77 and Canada tabled controversial proposals -- to be discussed in October -- to use definitions of forest, reforestation and afforestation which had been previously adopted to clarify what can count as a carbon sink in Northern countries. According to the definitions, large-scale monoculture tree plantations are forests. That creates incentives to establish plantations at the expense of natural growth.

Shifting Dates

The Canadians also tabled an even more controversial proposal to allow plantation projects on lands that were still forested in 1998, but clearcut before 1999, to be eligible to receive carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism. Under previous proposals, no credit would be possible on lands where forests had been cut after 1990. Japan supported the Canadian proposal, hoping to gain credit from plantations recently established by its pulp and paper companies in a number of countries. But a decision on the matter will have to wait until after the next round of submissions by countries on this issue, which will close 20 August 2002.

Terms of Reference Approved

In another development, Bonn negotiators approved the Terms of Reference for a program to develop standards and criteria for carbon sinks-related activities under the Clean Development Mechanism. The Terms of Reference were based on a draft from an expert workshop held in April. They include a timetable for forthcoming events (UNFCCC/SBSTA/2002/L8, downloadable at <http://www.unfccc.org>).

For more information:

<http://www.unfccc.org>

Georgian National Workshop on the Underlying Causes of Forest Loss

By Alexander Urushadze, Zelkova, Georgia and Andrei Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia

The Georgian National Workshop on the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation took place 10-11 May 2002 at the Georgian State Agrarian University in Tbilisi. Among the 48 participants were representatives of Parliament, government departments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business organizations, research institutes and universities, participated. The objectives were to:

- Analyze the forest sector of Georgia and the role of the state and NGOs in solving its problems;
- Identify the underlying causes of forest degradation in Georgia; and
- Recommend concrete measures to solve the problems identified.

Case studies were prepared for the workshop on the influence of the energy crisis on Georgian forests, the underlying causes of forest loss during the transition period and public participation. Also discussed at the workshop were results from a questionnaire which had been given to stakeholders in Georgia and neighboring countries on how to address underlying causes of forest loss.

Six main underlying causes of forest loss were identified:

- Insufficient implementation of existing laws;
- Corruption;
- Ineffective management of the forest sector;
- Financial problems in the forest sector;
- An uncontrolled wood market; and
- The influence of the energy crisis.

The workshop urged, among other things, that the recommendations of NGOs and the

scientific community should form the basis for a Forest Code.

The duties and responsibilities of forest officers should be more clearly defined and economic incentives should be created for more organized and effective sustainable forest management. Legal control of forest exploitation and law enforcement should be improved. Minimum levels of timber-cutting should be set, and cutting legalized only up to this level. An endangered species law should be passed. Regional Timber Exchanges, certification and local manufacture enterprises should all be supported. Lastly, regular meetings on forest policy should take place in the future among governmental, non-governmental, scientific and private stakeholders.

Reports on Other Forest-Related Meetings

UN Indigenous Forum Meets

The first meeting of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues took place from 13 - 24 May in New York. The Forum, which consists of eight experts nominated by governments and eight experts nominated by Indigenous Peoples, recommended, among other things, that a technical workshop be organized to promote models for sustainable development that incorporate principles of genuine partnership between states and indigenous peoples.

It also requested the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Forum on Forests and other agencies to participate in a comprehensive review of mandates, policies and programs that relate to indigenous peoples. Indigenous Peoples Organizations attending the Forum have called for a separate Secretariat for the Forum. See also the article by Sandy Gauntlett.

For more information:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/indigenous/forum.htm>

Tropical Timber Council establishes Civil Society Advisory Group

The International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) met for the thirty-second time from 13-18 May in Bali, Indonesia. The meeting was marred by a controversial presentation that claimed that the pulp and paper industry was not responsible for forest loss and that clearcuts were more biodiverse than meadows. But it reached agreement on many other issues and approved several projects, including one in the field of mangrove conservation. ITTC also decided to establish a Civil Society Advisory Group and invited the Group to organize a panel discussion at the next ITTC session in November 2002.

For more information:
<http://www.itto.or.jp>

Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings

For more information:
<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages>

- ** World Summit on Sustainable Development, 26 August - 4 September 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa. Considering the lack of progress at the Fourth Preparatory Meeting for the WSSD, there are serious doubts whether the Summit will come up with the bold, forward-looking Plan of Action and Declaration needed to give a renewed impetus to the implementation of the results of UNCED-1992. See the reports by Ricardo Carrere and Sandy Gauntlett.

For more information:
<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>

- **Eighth Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, 23 October - 1 November 2002, New Delhi, India. This COP will continue to discuss how to define reforestation and afforestation projects under the Clean Development Mechanism. See the reports by Yuri Onodera and Simone Lovera.

For more information:
<http://www.unfccc.int>

- Thirty-Third session of the International Tropical Timber Council, 4 - 9 November 2002, Yokohama, Japan. See reports of other forest-related meetings. For more information, visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

- Third session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, 26 May - 6 June 2003, Geneva, Switzerland. This third session is expected to deal with unfinished business from the second session, including the Terms of Reference of possible intersessional working groups. It will also address forest health and productivity and the maintenance of forest cover.

For more information:
<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/forests>

- Twelfth World Forestry Congress, 21 - 28 September 2003, Quebec City, Canada. This congress is organized by FAO once every six years. It is open to all and addresses a broad range of forestry-related themes.

For more information:
<http://www.wfc2003.org>

(**** meetings at which GFC can facilitate Southern NGO/IPO participation*)

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