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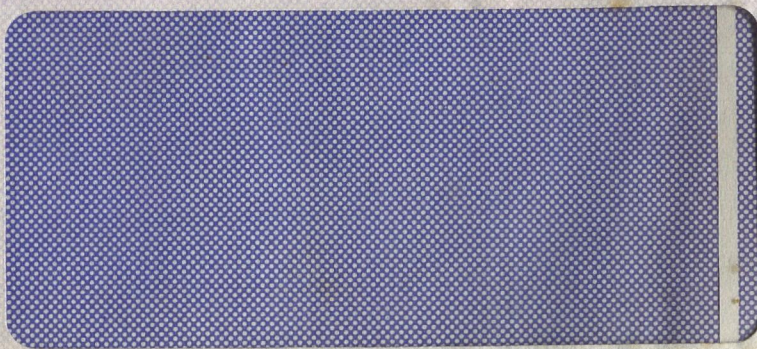
IUCN
The World Conservation Union



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IUCN
The World Conservation Union

Dr Sanjoy Deb Roy
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19 Kautilya Marg
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INDIA

6 April, 1993

Dear Professor Dr Deb Roy,

Request for financial assistance to attend the 67th SSC meeting and the 19th session of the IUCN General Assembly, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January, 1994

Thank you for your recent letter concerning the above.

All requests for financial assistance will, of course, be considered, but at present we are still registering requests for financial help and are currently exploring funding possibilities with potential donors. We are not, therefore, yet in a position to advise you whether funding will be available.

Funds are extremely limited this year, and we would strongly urge you to explore other possible avenues for the financial assistance you require. If we can help in this regard by writing an official supporting letter to any institution or other possible source of funding, please let us know.

Any funds SSC is able to acquire will be allocated to help as many SSC members as possible and priority may be given to those who are able to secure some of their own costs from other sources, and who need only a partial grant to attend the meeting.

A decision will be made by end September, 1993, as to how funds raised by that date will be allocated, and you will be advised during October 1993. In the meantime, please let us have precise details of funds you will require in order to attend the meeting - including air fares and/or accommodation, and the amount you would need from SSC. If you have already secured partial funding, please include this information.

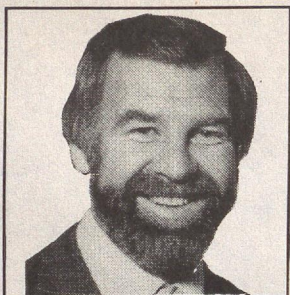
We hope that the above schedule will give you an opportunity to approach other sources of funding, clarify your needs from SSC, and allow sufficient time for you to make arrangements to attend the meeting if funding becomes available.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



Doreen Zivkovic
Secretary
Species Survival Programme



John Devereux

Labor Senator for Tasmania

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July, 1993

Dear Species Survival Commission Member,

With the USA having now signed the Biodiversity Convention and twenty signatory states having already ratified it, the Convention will achieve the necessary 30 ratifications in time to bring it into force early next year, if not by the end of this year.

Once again, it is my pleasure to enclose a copy of the latest issue of the Newsletter of the Biodiversity Coalition which covers some issues which deserve the attention of SSC members. In implementing the Convention, a balance needs to be struck between in-situ and to ex-situ conservation in general and between responsibilities to be taken up by the Convention (and institutions developed by it) and those to be left with existing international agencies.

The obvious division of labour is for the Biodiversity Convention to concentrate on in-situ conservation as provided for in Articles 8 & 9 and leave FAO's agencies to concentrate on ex-situ conservation which has been their historical strength. I think it would be fair to say that, although FAO agencies are coming to realise the importance of in-situ conservation, it is IUCN's SSC and CNPPA networks which have the expertise in this area.

The Biodiversity Convention is important for the way in which it defines in-situ conservation - to include not only wild populations but also modified populations used in traditional agricultural systems. The SSC/CNPPA networks can, and should, help both governments and communities conserve not only wild populations but also related and derived populations in traditional use.

These modified populations are actually one of the more important resources exploited by ex-situ conservers and commercial users of genetic material. Paradoxically, the commercial agricultural systems developed to use such genetic material pose a threat to traditional agricultural systems by displacing the communities which conserve them - hence the need for area-based and other conservation measures for such communities and systems and the need for such measures to be developed and implemented by institutional arrangements independent of those promoting industrial agriculture.

Additionally, the expertise of the SSC networks is needed to develop and manage ex-situ conservation programmes as an inevitable component of many in-situ conservation strategies where rehabilitation of degraded landscapes or displaced communities is deemed necessary to avoid extinctions. This is a circumstance which will occur all too often with respect to conserving traditional agricultural systems as well as wild populations.

I urge you all to take up the challenge in collaboration with your CNPPA colleagues.

Kind regards,

John Devereux
 John Devereux

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The Biodiversity Coalition

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Newsletter No. 5

June 1993

UNITED STATES COMES TO THE PARTY

In one of the best results for global conservation and future 'north'/'south' relations, the Clinton Administration has put the US's signature to the Biodiversity Convention without an accompanying interpretive statement endorsing the position of the US biotechnology industry.

That its signature had to wait to the very last day for which the Convention was open for signature (Friday 4 June) gives some hint of the arguments which continue to rage within the new Administration.

This is a superb result for moderates within the State Department and progressives elsewhere within the Clinton Administration. Although many deserve our thanks and recognition for the result, the appointment of Tim Wirth as Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs (in consolation for missing out on Secretary for Energy) should not go unnoticed. One of the more unsavoury aspects of the Reagan/Bush years - the uncritical and unabashed global pursuit of US corporate interests by the US Government - has now been laid to rest.

The corporations remain one of the most powerful lobbying pressures on the new Administration - of course - but the June 4th statement by UN Ambassador, Madeleine Albright, and Under-Secretary of State, Tim Wirth, on signing the Convention makes it clear not only that US Government interests are not necessarily those of US corporations but also that the Government will pursue international consensus building as a key strategy for implementing the Convention.

This is a development of such profound international importance that the full text of the Albright/Wirth statement and associated USIA article is reproduced here. It is hoped that NGOs and officials both within the USA and around the world will take the trouble to analyse it and thence work in an informed and constructive way to persuade the US to live up to the promise shown within - so that the interpretive statement foreshadowed on ratification reflects NGO wishes and 'south' concerns and not just the interests of US corporations!

The gauntlet has been thrown down by the Clinton Administration - now is the time for US NGOs to show some campaign commitment and leadership on the biodiversity conservation issue. In particular, it is hoped that unfounded fears of release of a belligerent and partisan interpretive statement by the Clinton Administration will now be laid to rest.

Those G77 governments which had become justifiably nervous as a result of these misplaced concerns and associated comments should now feel free to renew their commitment to the early ratification of the Convention - if for no other reason than to participate fully in the development of a new international consensus on the full range of key 'north'/'south' issues identified in the US statement.

.....

UK GOVERNMENT NEEDS HELP

Persistent reports indicate that, of all the European Commission members, the UK Government is the one most likely to equivocate on ratifying the Convention. It was generally assumed that such equivocation was based on Tory loyalty to the Americans so it may be that, with the recent US signature of the Convention and commitment to ratify, UK Government reluctance may dissipate. Just in case the problem might have been Tory loyalty to Bush, any NGOs with UK connections or Government access should do whatever they can - at least write to John Major, P.M. - to urge UK support for an early EC decision to ratify.

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U.S. SIGNS BIODIVERSITY TREATY (Major Shift in U.S. environment policy) By Judy Alta, USIA United Nations Correspondent (EPF518, 4 June 1993)

United Nations — The United States has signed the Convention on Biological Diversity completed at the Rio Earth Summit last year.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright and Counselor of the State Department Timothy Wirth signed the treaty at a short ceremony at the U.N. headquarters June 4 and emphasized the reversal of U.S. policy from that of the Bush Administration.

Albright said that the signing "reflects the Clinton Administration's determination to treat environmental threats as seriously as other threats to our security. We have signed this treaty because we are committed to protect the diversity of the species of plant and animal life that exist on earth."

"It is no secret that the United States still has concerns regarding specific aspects of this convention, but we have decided that the course of wisdom is to join the convention and play a leadership role in determining how international policies are carried out," Albright said. "Sitting on the sidelines might satisfy some purists, but it would only undermine our goal of using international institutions to promote America's environmental agenda throughout the world."

Wirth said that the signing was another demonstration of the "rapidly evolving U.S. foreign policy" in which a set of new issues is dominant, including population, the establishment of democratic institutions, human rights, and climate change as well as biological diversity.

Wirth said that the United States should be "out front" on environmental issues internationally as it has been in its domestic environmental programs. He said that U.S. domestic efforts such as the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and fish and wildlife statutes were at the forefront of environmental action and "now is the time to translate that worldwide."

More than 150 countries signed the convention when it was opened for signature at the Earth Summit, but then-President George Bush refused to do so.

In a recent speech, President Clinton announced support for the biological diversity treaty, and committed the United States to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, a commitment that the Bush administration also refused to make in Rio.

In a joint statement passed out at the signing ceremony, Albright and Wirth said that "the United States believes ... that the Convention presents a unique opportunity for nations not only to conserve the world's biological diversity but also to realize economic benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of its genetic resources."

Wirth said that the Clinton Administration will be providing interpretations on the respect of intellectual property rights, technology transfer, funding of the "global environmental facility," and participation of the private sector when it presents the convention to the U.S. Senate for ratification.

U.S. SAYS TREATY CAN PRESERVE "BIOLOGICAL WEALTH" (Text: Albright, Wirth statement) (EPF519, 4 June 1993)

Washington — The United States is signing the treaty to preserve the diversity of plant and animal life on Earth because it can help focus international support on developing a plan to conserve "the biological wealth of the planet," according to U.S. officials.

In a joint statement June 4, Madeleine Albright, U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations, and Timothy Wirth, counselor of the State Department, said the treaty could also help nations benefit economically from conserving their biological diversity.

Following is the text of the joint statement:

Our signature of the Convention on Biological Diversity reflects President Clinton's, Vice President Gore's and our nation's commitment to conserve the biological wealth of the planet. We believe that this convention can play a key role in stemming the loss of the earth's species, their habitats, and ecosystems by providing a forum for focussing the energy of common international concern toward a coherent, dynamic, and urgent action plan for the future.

The Clinton administration intends for the United States to play a leadership role in forging consensus not only on this convention, but also broadly in the global challenge posed by the loss of species. We believe that our leadership must start at home. The president and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's creation of a national biological survey will provide a national focus for surveying and monitoring our own biological resources and for ensuring that high quality scientific advice is the basis for the management of our natural resources. This major step demonstrates U.S. priority for domestic implementation of the convention. So, too, does the emphasis we place on the concept of ecosystem management as one of the best means for preventing environmental degradation that might otherwise endanger species and habitats. Leading by example, we hope to help jump-start the implementation of the convention internationally.

The United States believes as well that the convention presents a unique opportunity for nations not only to conserve the world's biological diversity but also to realize economic benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of its genetic resources. Toward this end, the United States supports the use of creative economic incentives - such as fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources - and appropriate forms of technology transfer that will help strengthen measures adopted by countries to implement the convention's conservation obligations. (Cont. page 3)



(Cont. from page 2.) The United states believes that the voluntary participation of the private sector in the development of new technologies based on genetic resources will maximise the value of economic benefits proposed in the convention and the incentives countries have to conserve biological diversity. Properly implemented, this convention can be a win-win situation - promoting simultaneously entrepreneurial genius and creative conservation of our precious biological inheritance. To promote private sector participation, the United states is urging all parties to implement policies that:

- provide adequate and effective intellectual property protection for inventions based on genetic resources;
- ensure that terms regarding sharing of benefits and technology transfer are voluntarily accepted by all parties involved, and
- do not impose restrictive conditions on the development, commercialization or marketing of new technology or products (based) on genetic resources.

Rather than issuing an interpretive statement at this time to emphasize these points, as other nations have, the United States will address interpretive issues at the time of ratification. The State Department will continue to consult with other countries on common approaches in this regard. We expect that these consultations will provide the basis for our timely ratification of the convention.

The United states believes that adoption of these policies will stimulate the development and commercialization of new technologies based on genetic resources and will provide a suitable climate for cooperation between U.S. firms and academic institutions, governments, industry and indigenous peoples in countries harbouring genetic resources. Such cooperation offers the most effective means of transferring new technology and encouraging the application of new technology toward conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The United states will work to ensure that there will be full and fair consideration of the need for and modalities of a protocol on biosafety. Although the convention does not require the development of a biosafety protocol, the United states looks forward to participation fully in international discussions relating to biosafety. One of our foremost objectives will be to ensure that any biosafety regulation arising from the convention is scientifically based and analytically sound.

Finally, the United states will play a key role in ensuring that a mutually beneficial and workable relationship is established between the Conference of the Parties and a restructured Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The United states is promoting reforms that will help make this facility better able to provide for funding of cost-effective and sustainable biodiversity projects.

FINANCIAL MECHANISM NEEDS PERMANENT FIXING - WITHOUT THE GEF

One of the key issues to be faced by the IGC in September will - or should - be how a permanent financial mechanism is to be decided upon for the Biodiversity Convention and what that mechanism should be. Comments by Tim Worth on signing the Convention on behalf of the US make it clear that funding of the Global Environmental Facility will be one of the subjects covered by a US Government interpretive statement when it submits the Convention to the Senate for ratification.

It is essential that NGOs and governments alike make it clear to the US and other major donor countries that the GEF, even if - and when - reformed, is not an appropriate financial mechanism to facilitate the myriads of micro-scale projects necessary to effectively achieve both biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of its components around the world - bearing in mind that this Convention is confined to facilitating efforts by governments and people of developing countries to achieve these ends.

Given the slow rate at which rhetoric on reforming the GEF is translated into action, the argument may turn out to be academic. For, if the GEF has not been reformed by the time the signatories/parties to the Biodiversity Convention meet to discuss establishing a permanent financial mechanism, it will not be a politically viable option. After all, the GEF's suitability was only canvassed by donors on the basis that it would be reformed - and soon! This is yet one more important reason why states should waste no time in completing their ratification procedures and so help bring the Convention into force as soon as possible. It will also be an important test of the Clinton administration's commitment to sorting out these matters by consensus. This is an important issue where US, EC and Japanese NGOs can make a big difference.



'EXPERT' PANELS WRAP UP IN TRONDHEIM

One of UNEP's most important interim initiatives to facilitate the early implementation of the Biodiversity Convention was the establishment of several 'Expert' Panels to work on how to implement some of the Convention's provisions, especially information needs. These Panels met three times between October and March and then prepared reports for last month's final meeting in Trondheim, Norway - which is a heavy meeting schedule in anybody's book.

In an interesting and welcome innovation at the Trondheim meeting, a number of international experts were invited to give keynote papers on various aspects of biodiversity conservation with a view to improving the capacity of officials present to assist their governments in developing strategies and adopting measures to implement the Convention. An avalanche of documentation is thus anticipated in the Conference report!

Interested NGOs should write to: Mr Peter Schei, Director, Ministry of the Environment, P.O. Box 8013 DEP, M-00030 Oslo 1, Norway; and ask for: a full set of papers to, and reports from, the 'Expert Conference on Biodiversity' held in Trondheim from 24-28 May 1993.

Panel 1, working on conservation measures and information needs, has recommended to UNEP that interim working groups be established to work on how to develop protocols on agriculture, forestry and fisheries. This Panel's Report is the most detailed and useful in its canvassing of possible implementation measures for the consideration of signatory states.

Panel 2, looking at economic implications, has recommended a protocol on fair and equitable benefit sharing for allowing access to genetic resources. Rather oddly, the Panel suggests FAO's International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources as a basis for such a protocol for which - surprise, surprise - FAO's Commission for Plant Genetic Resources would make a good negotiating forum - the answer to which ought to be an emphatic "thankyou but NO" - these are the very interests which tried to expunge the concept of sharing benefits with countries of origin from the text of the Convention! Anyway, biodiversity access and benefit sharing issues go far beyond the brief and competence of FAO's CPGR.

It's now five years since the FAO's CPGR agreed to set up an international fund to compensate traditional farmers - not one measure has been agreed and not one cent collected let alone disbursed. This is not the kind of black hole which we want the Biodiversity Convention's benefit sharing provisions to disappear down.

Panel 3, on technology transfer and financial issues, recommended that the IGC develop guidelines for cooperation between Parties and noted the existence and work of UNEP's own Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre and of the International Technology Transfer Centre in Osaka. In general, there is not much enthusiasm for making the Biodiversity Convention a major, let alone principal, focus for setting the international rules of the high-technology transfer game. Where the Convention could excel, however, is in the facilitation of the exchange of appropriate technology and information between agencies, communities and individuals with in-situ conservation responsibilities.

On financial issues, Panel 3 recommended that the IGC ask for an invitation to GEF meetings and that UNEP's new Executive Director (Elizabeth Dowdeswell from Canada) look at other funding arrangements. Here is the opportunity to develop a new and independent financial mechanism for the Convention which is under the control of its Parties and which is responsive and tailored to the needs and capabilities of those agencies, communities and individuals responsible for biodiversity conservation and for ensuring the sustainable use of its components.

It is vital that NGOs take up this issue with their governments. For as long as we have to continue to suffer the World Bank's stranglehold over project development and approval - which would not be touched by long-promised 'democracy' and 'transparency' reforms - it's hard to imagine how international funds can be put to effective biodiversity conservation and local community support.

Panel 4 was preoccupied over whether or not a protocol was needed to deal with the dangers of trade in and use of LMOs (living modified organisms). Perversely, some have tried to argue that the Convention text requires the development of a protocol when it patently does not. In a dissenting view, the US did not support the majority recommendation that a protocol should be developed but it is clear from the Wirth/Albright statement accompanying US signature of the Convention that the US is prepared to countenance "biosafety regulation arising from the convention" - which is pretty close to the same thing. Importantly, all signatories agree that this Convention is an appropriate forum to discuss this issue.



STATES' FEEDBACK IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ON RATIFICATION INTENTIONS

(Summary of Information—June 1993)

STATE	JUNE	SEPT	DEC	STATE	JUNE	SEPT	DEC	STATE	JUNE	SEPT	DEC
Western Europe	(3)	(7)	(8)	Africa .	(6)	(7)	(7)	Caribbean .	(2)	(2)	(2)
Spain	U	R		Egypt	I		R	Trinidad/Tobago	U		?
France			?	Guinea	Ratified			St Kitts/Nevis	Ratified		
Italy	I	R		Gabon	I,U,R			Antigua/Barbuda	Ratified		
Austria	I		?	Zaire	I,U		?				
Switzerland	I		R	Tanzania	U,R			East Asia .	(4)	(4)	(4)
Germany	U	R		Zambia	Ratified			Japan	I,R		
Belgium	U		?	Botswana	U		?	India	I,U		?
Netherlands	I,U		R	Mozambique	I		?	China	Ratified		
UK	I		?	South Africa	S,I		?	Indonesia	I,U		?
Ire			?	Madagascar	S		?	Phillipines	I,U,R		
Denmark	I		?	Mauritius	Ratified			Maldives	Ratified		
Sweden	I,R			Seychelles	Ratified						
Norway	(Ratified)							Oceania .	(6)	(6)	(6)
Monaco	Ratified			Latin America .	(5)	(6)	(6)	Australia	(Ratified)		
				Mexico	Ratified			New Zealand	I		?
North America	(1)	(1)	(1)	Chile	I,U,R			PNG	Ratified		
Canada	Ratified			Colombia	U,R			Vanuatu	Ratified		
USA	I		?	Ecuador	Ratified			Tonga	I		?
				Peru	Ratified			Marshall Is.	Ratified		
E. Europe/CIS .	(2)	(2)	(4)	Uruguay	I		?	Fiji	Ratified		
Russian Fedn.	I		R	El Salvador	I		?	Cook Islands	Ratified		
Poland	I		R	Brasil	I,U,		R				
Hungary	U,R							Middle East.			
Armenia	Ratified							Saudi Arabia	(S)		
								Acc Totals .	(29)	(35)	(38)

19 States have now ratified and, on the basis of the above information, we might expect more than 20 to have done so by the end of June 1993 - that's two thirds of the campaign target set by conservation NGOs. We're still on track to get the thirty ratifications needed to allow the Convention to enter into force by the end of 1993. It's already a record-breaking performance - with a record number of states (more than 160) having signed the Convention and the fastest rate of ratification (almost 20 in the first year) of a UN convention.

In all practicality, the date of entry into force will probably be set by the timing of the deposition of instruments of ratification by European States following the anticipated collective decision of state members of the European Commission to ratify the Convention. This decision is expected around September this year.

Key to symbols: "(S)": have not signed yet; "S": intend to sign; "I": intend to ratify; "U": ratification process underway; "R": intend to ratify by date at head of column; "(Ratified)": national ratification process complete; "Ratified": instrument of ratification formally lodged. "?": no timetable given.

UNEP AND IUCN WORKING TO FACILITATE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION

UNEP's Guidelines for signatory states in preparing plans for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components - a central measure for Convention implementation - are almost ready for publication. Indications are that the GEF will consider funding the development of national plans consistent with the UNEP Guidelines.

Meanwhile, IUCN's Environmental Law Centre is working on the preparation of a Handbook to assist officials of state agencies and other national organisations who are likely to be - or ought to be - involved in development of Convention implementation measures. It's planned for publication early next year - to coincide with the Convention coming into force perhaps - after extensive consultation on drafts over the next few months.

FAO'S CPGR STRUGGLES TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THE AGENDA

Unfortunately, it cannot be said that the FAO is happy with the Biodiversity Convention becoming the forum to discuss issues previously the preserve of one FAO agency or another. In particular, the FAO's Commission on Plant Genetic Resources [CPGR] is worried about its patch - conveniently forgetting that its attitude over the years (epitomised in the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources) created and sustained the political climate which allowed the rewriting of the rules on access to genetic resources in the negotiation of the Biodiversity Convention.

By way of example, at the recent CPGR meeting in Rome, delegates received a report from their intersessional Working Group [CPGR 93/3, January 1993] which reported that "there was general agreement that the CPGR should keep its role as the primary intergovernmental forum for discussions and negotiations of technical and policy matters related to conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA [plant genetic resources for food and agriculture], including the development of possible protocols for the Convention on Biodiversity related to PGRFA." [para.23].

Furthermore, "Support was expressed for the ideas that at the institutional level: (i) the Commission should provide policy advice to the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on matters related to PGRFA, ..." [para.25]. This is commendable cooperation and somewhat at variance with actions of participants in UNEP's 'Expert' Panel 2 in pushing for a recommendation that the renegotiation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in the CPGR forum was the appropriate way to deal with access and benefit sharing provisions in the Biodiversity Convention. That's not cooperation - that's hijacking!

In trying to redefine their mission, post UNCED, the CPGR is faced with solving the conundrum that while confining their mandate to their area of expertise - the ex-situ conservation of genetic material important for global food and agriculture - they cannot credibly argue to be the appropriate forum to negotiate wider matters. It is a pity that the CPGR cannot feel proud enough in its work on ex-situ conservation to work with the Biodiversity Convention to secure in-situ conservation objectives (where their interests are a minor - but very important - part of the overall task faced by the global community) rather than trying to extend its mandate beyond its area of expertise. Their technical and policy advice on PGRFA is needed and would be welcome.

In many instances, traditional agriculture, indigenous people and local communities - let alone other species - want and need to be protected from the 'development' strategies in which the FAO, and the CPGR in particular, has played a significant role. It is heartening to observe

that the CPGR is recognising some of these problems but to go so far as to claim to be the architect of their solution goes beyond optimism into cynicism.

To take one example, five years ago, the CPGR piously resolved to recognise 'farmers rights' by setting up an international fund under the control of the CPGR's intersessional Working Group. Setting aside for the moment the fact that no provision has been made for payments into that fund, the CPGR failed to consult with the 'farmers' (custodians of knowledge and material exploited by 'northern' agriculture) to whom rights were to be awarded. As a result, they failed to identify the sentiments clearly articulated at the Rio Earth Summit (the non-governmental bits) by representatives of such groups and interests - they want to be able to exercise such rights with the same freedom and effectiveness as 'northern' interests exercise intellectual and other forms of property rights.

They certainly did not want to be patronised by the architects of their problems. As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter (Ethiopian initiatives), the Biodiversity Convention's Article 8(a) on the use of protected areas to meet in-situ conservation objectives, what ought to happen is that the ex-situ conservers and subsequent users of genetic material collected from, derived from or based on material or information collected from traditional agricultural, indigenous or local communities should pay a royalty or rental payment to such communities which fully reflects the residual or rental value of that material or information. Additionally, where ex-situ interests wish to see relevant material maintained in-situ, they should pay the relevant communities to ensure that the material is adequately conserved for external benefit.

In all cases, it should be left up to the communities concerned to negotiate their own terms and to decide how any benefits are received and used. The states party to the Biodiversity Convention and its institutions, when established, can readily ensure that such negotiations take place on a fair and informed basis. This is a far preferable approach to the internationalised paternalism advocated by the CPGR on the assumption that local communities in the 'south' will never be fit to negotiate with big boys from the 'north'. A defeatist attitude can only end in defeat!

To its credit, the CPGR is attempting a coherent response to UNCED, albeit in an attempt to maintain the status quo. It is planning a major conference - the 4th International Technical Conference to be held in Germany in late 1995. It is anticipated that, at this more-than-technical conference, a comprehensive package of agreements, measures and programmes would be adopted which would (Cont. page 8)

COMPONENTS OF THE GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND USE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES (AS REPORTED TO THE CPGR, ROME, APRIL 1993. [CPGR/93/5, JANUARY 1993])

1. The Existing Components of the Global System are:

The Commission on Plant Genetic Resources itself - an intergovernmental forum for discussion of issues related to plant genetic resources operating under the auspices of FAO which provides the secretariat.

The International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources - a non-binding agreement to facilitate access to and use of plant genetic material. Since its original adoption in 1981 three annexes have been added including one recognising states' sovereignty over biological resources (unlike the Undertaking itself).

The International Fund on Plant Genetic Resources (only foreseen at this stage) to compensate 'farmers rights' and to finance conservation and utilization programmes developed by, or run in cooperation with, the CPGR or other FAO agencies (not projects devised and operated by the communities with the supposed 'rights').

At the moment there are some 114 states which are members of the CPGR and 107 which are adherents to the Undertaking. Some states are adherents without being members and vice versa. There are some very important absentees from the list of adherents - including the USA, Venezuela, Indonesia, Japan, Zaire and Malaysia - severely weakening its claim to international credibility.

2. International agreements being negotiated with a view for adoption or endorsement at, or before, the 1995 Conference to complement the Undertaking and thence become components of the Global System are:

A (voluntary) International Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer to facilitate access to relevant material (which was actually adopted at the April 1993 meeting). In one colonial gem in the adopted draft, collectors are admonished to "... demonstrate a sense of gratitude towards local communities." (Article 10.2). The code is silent as to whether such 'gratitude' should be shown in beads or in fair and enforceable benefit sharing contracts.

A Code of Conduct for Biotechnology is at the early preparation stage. This could either supercede or be subsumed by initiatives pursuant to implementing the Biodiversity Convention - or GATT, UNIDO or WIPO initiatives - or any combination of the above. It remains most unclear just where such initiatives will or should be pursued although the Convention is a major contender.

Basic Agreements on Genebanks. The April 1993 meeting of CPGR accepted an offer from the IBPGR that the base and active collections under the control and management of the Centres in the IBPGR network be placed under the auspices of FAO. The IBPGR is the International Bureau on Plant Genetic Resources and is the forum and front for the twenty or so international gene-bank Centres set up since WWII.

Individual agreements will have to be negotiated between FAO and each Centre to give effect to this gesture but the intention is clear - to signal to the countries of origin of that genetic material that the Centres will not attempt to privatise and/or patent it.

No assurances were offered with respect to patenting breeding lines developed by the Centres derived from the base collections. The fact that this arrangement further relieves users of material from the Centres from sharing benefits with countries of origin passed without comment or notice - except for a sterling rearguard effort by the Malaysian delegation.

The gesture also wrong-footed NGOs worried about patenting life forms - as placing this material under the auspices of FAO, rather than vesting ownership in the countries of origin (which donated the material in the first place) actually makes more useful material freely available for subsequent patenting by the 'north's' breeding and biotechnology corporations (a point also not lost on the Malaysians).

3. A Series of Global Mechanisms to facilitate conservation and utilisation are also envisaged:

The World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources designed to facilitate the exchange of information and technology and to sound the alarm if ex-situ collections fall into danger for any reason or genetic diversity is threatened anywhere in the world. It will be interesting to see how the CPGR handles reports that FAO field programmes are a major threat.

A Network of Ex-situ Base Collections under FAO auspices with technical assistance from the IBPGR (see 'Basic Agreements on Genebanks' above).

A Network of Areas Established or Demarcated for the In-situ Conservation of Genetic Resources "of wild relatives of cultivated plants and wild or semi-domesticated species of actual or potential socio-economic value for food and agriculture, and the promotion of 'on-farm' conservation and utilization of land races". Note that "potential" is not used to mean resources of unknown utility but to refer to prospective resources being evaluated for utility. Conservation of genetic and biological material of no known human utility for food and agriculture draws a big blank at FAO.

4. A couple of Global Instruments to help the CPGR achieve all this are also envisaged:

Periodic Reports on The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources with a view to identifying gaps, constraints and emergencies to be dealt with by:

A Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources to coordinate available resources and direct them to meet identified priorities based on Area G of Chapter 14 of Agenda 21).

All this amounts to a grand undertaking which is commendable insofar as it is designed to protect the interests of food and agricultural production systems and consumers reliant on genetic material derived from ex-situ collections. Where it falls apart, is in the arrogance and cynicism with which the CPGR claims to be able to serve the interests of other agriculturalists, communities and consumers and claims to have the competence to solve their problems. If only the FAO would confine itself to what it does well.

UNEP SETS UP IGC

The 17th Session of the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council, when it met in Nairobi from 10-21 May 1993, agreed to establish "... an Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity to prepare for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties ...".

Ironically, the resolution proposing establishment of the IGC also calls on signatory states to ratify the Convention despite the fact that only four of the thirteen states sponsoring the resolution had actually ratified at the time! Hopefully, the missing nine (which shall remain nameless at this stage) will ratify soon before tardiness turns to hypocrisy.

BE THERE!

This first meeting of the IGC is set for the week of 20-24 September 1993 in Geneva. This is the Big One - the meeting not to be missed by conservation and development NGOs and agencies which want to be part of the implementation of the Biodiversity Convention.

Obviously, most interested groups and individuals won't be able to actually make it to the meeting because of financial constraints. What everyone can do, however - and which is ultimately more important in the longer run - is to make sure their own government knows their views on the key issues long before the September meeting. Now's the time to write a few letters and knock on a few doors. How about asking for full participation in whatever governmental or interdepartmental processes have already been set up to coordinate ratification and national implementation!

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FAO'S CPGR STRUGGLES

(Cont. from page 6)

set the rules of the game for the use and conservation of genetic resources for a generation to come. This package goes by the name of the Global System for the Conservation and Use of Plant Genetic Resources (or "Global System" for short) [see box].

Alarmingly, a key component of this Global System, the Global Plan of Action designed to fix all the problems identified by periodic reports on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources is to be "[a costed transformation of] the relevant parts of Agenda 21 (especially area G of Chapter 14)" [para.7, CPGR/93/3, January 1993]. No mention is made of the Biodiversity or Climate Change Conventions despite the fact that they will be legally binding international instruments whereas Agenda 21 is non-binding - although key bits of it were drafted by FAO people which could explain things!

ETHIOPIA TAKES A WELCOME LEAD

Ethiopia was active at both the BDC Trondheim and the CPGR meetings on giving priority to in-situ conservation of agricultural genetic resources and on developing measures to conserve agricultural systems which maximise biodiversity and harvestable yields with a minimum of external inputs. This is an important line of thought. 'In-situ' is defined by the Convention to cover conservation of both wild populations and landraces in traditional agriculture. The Convention, therefore, can be used to develop measures to secure 'protected areas' under Article 8(a) to protect traditional agriculture and its genetic resource management strategies from disruption by external pressures - including commodity-based agricultural production.

This is an extension of the idea, canvassed at IUCN's 4th World National Parks Congress in Caracas last year, that parks need to protect the interests of people as well as those of other species. It could see the creation of protected areas specifically designed to conserve, in-situ, traditional agricultural communities with certain commendable characteristics - especially maximising biodiversity and conserving genetic material useful to agriculture. It could also be used to protect indigenous people from similar external pressures. Article 8(a) 'Protected Areas' could thus become a focus for efforts to protect traditional agricultural communities and indigenous people as well as threatened species. Such an approach could fulfil the in-situ conservation needs of various FAO agencies and obviate the need to maintain the International Tropical Timber Agreement as anything more than a simple commodity agreement.

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JOIN THE BIODIVERSITY COALITION

The speed with which many signatory states are proceeding with ratifying the Convention is a fantastic result - congratulations to everyone for the contributions you made - and continue to make.

Now begins the far more arduous and complex task of encouraging and facilitating implementation of the Convention through national policies, programmes, plans, and strategies. If you would like to help keep this momentum going, do consider joining the Biodiversity Coalition. If you can afford it, send \$20US but, otherwise, just send us your name and address. In return you'll get occasional newsletters like this one with useful information and timely exhortations to action.

Best wishes,

Alistair Graham, Coordinator, Biodiversity Coalition, C/- P.O., Cygnet 7112, Tasmania, Australia (ph:+61-02-951745; fax:+61-02-951964). Michael Kennedy, World Wide Fund for Nature (Australia), 8-12 Bridge St., Sydney 2000, Australia (ph:+61-2-2476300; fax:+61-2-2478778)



Senator John Devereux

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Dear Mr. ~~Devereux~~ DEVEREUX,

this is to acknowledge receipt of your communication regarding Biodiversity Convention and the related works to be taken up by the C.N.P.A members/activists. This is a very pleasant surprise to me that a public figure as important as a Senator of your country is concerned about ~~this~~ subject, which is undoubtedly extremely urgent and important, but acknowledged/understood by so few of your class! Actually the most major problem faced in the field of nature conservation is the abject lack of understanding and appreciation of the intricately woven pattern of the life line on this planet and also about the inescapable dependence of man on mother nature for his sustenance and future survival. Incredible scientific achievements during the few recent past has probably obscured his view and spurred his ego to attempt the impossible "task of taming nature"! While ^{some of} the scientists and the resource managers are day dreaming and committing mistakes after mistakes in their attempt, the politicians and their obsequious bureaucrats are taking advantage of such mistakes often behind a veil of so-called 'sustainable development', which is the other name of promoting consumerism and market economy, the surest way to foil ~~and~~ true sustainable living of a quality life. Hell, I feel politics is all about quick or immediate gain of interests, while ecological planning aims at true sustainability or viability. Thus to seek and obtain compatibility between these two conflicting ideas is often discredited, no doubt at the cost of human future. There are very few exceptions and naturally I have nothing but appreciation for your outlook and stand.

But let me introduce myself to first! I am a forester/wildlife manager and though retired from Govt. service last year, continue to behave the same way as before. Because I had taken my profession as a way of life and hence I will pursue my ideology as long as I live.

This letter is intended to bring out my understanding about ex-situ conservation measures, as an integral part of 'conservation' in general. To this I don't quite agree. In the pursuit of wildlife conservation during the past 35 years, one aspect has been increasingly clear before me and that is, conservation of any species or life form cannot be ~~best~~ achieved in isolation of the ^{biological} communities in which the species had been evolved. If any species has to be preserved/conserved, the habit-natural habitat, the conspecifics and the associate species, including the predators, ceto and endo parasites etc. cannot also be ignored, as the total web of the food chain, which supports/nurtures the target species has to be maintained in proper natural shape for the sake of true viability of target species. So much so that, I consider, it may a futile exercise (in the long run) to sustain a species in captive conditions, if the natural habitat where the species had been evolved, cannot be protected for what ever the reasons, that could be. I think saving a faunal species is not all that important specially on the as millions

species have gone extinct and new species evolved during the past. It may not really be worth making all these attempts, if the natural habitat is lost.

But of course, there are many more facts to this subject, which needs some discussions. During the past the process of evolution had continuously been moving on, but after man's arrival on the evolutionary scene, specially since the day he learnt to light a fire, the very evolutionary process has probably undergone a drastic transformation. Never in the history of evolution, a single species has ever influenced natural processes as commandingly as man has done, armed with his Frankenstein-Friend "5th Science." But spectacular though it may be, the process has virtually stopped evolution of new species, though species after species of flora and fauna all over the world is added being added to the lengthening list of extinct species. Besides, the list of endangered species had never been so long! In reality we don't have even any comprehensive ^{idea} list of the biodiversity loss, that we have already suffered, much less any understanding of the possible consequences on the future viability of our race!

I don't therefore subscribe to the view that attempt of maintaining/managing and breeding in captivity promotes wildlife conservation. At best this may serve the purpose of some research findings, that too under unnatural circumstances. But even then I will support such attempts, as long as these are confined strictly to animals, ~~reared~~ bred in captivity. We have a sizeable number of specimens of various species and it may be possible to attempt maintaining a captive population of such animals.

But I have no such feeling about modified or domesticated animal population, which is also a part of ^{the} available biodiversity.

1st Session of the World Conservation Congress
Montreal, Canada
13-23 October 1996

INTENTION TO ATTEND & REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION

(PLEASE COMPLETE USING CAPITAL LETTERS AND UNDERLINING YOUR FAMILY NAME)

Full Name: DEB ROY, SANJOY

Name of organization:

Mailing address: A-16 SHALIMAR APARTMENT

SOUTH EX. PLAZA-II, 209 MASJID MATH
NEW DELHI - 110049, INDIA



I intend to participate in the World Conservation Congress as an observer.
Please send further information and documents.

French

English

Spanish



I intend to participate in the meeting of the Species Survival Commission
to take place immediately prior to the World Conservation Congress on
11 and 12 October 1996.

RETURN BY 30 JANUARY 1996 TO:

World Conservation Congress Coordinator
IUCN
Rue Mauverney 28
1196 Gland
Switzerland
Fax No.: + 41 22 999 0020