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¿Harassment: when argument fails?

Global Youth Biodiversity Network

The Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) was established during COP10 in Nagoya in 2010, and is representing the voice of global youth at CBD negotiations. We have a regionally balanced representation, we empower youth to take action, and we build a global coalition to halt the loss of biodiversity around the world. So far we have managed to build good connections and a good image, and we have always felt appreciated in the CBD process.

After years of positive experiences, we were surprised to find that this time not only are our opinions attacked, but also that members of our delegation are being harassed.

There also appears to be a misunderstanding that some other groups of young participants who act rather aggressively are part of our network.

Several members of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network were cornered by individuals and groups of people that challenged our points of view by making inappropriate remarks about our religions, education, and culture.

One of us was confronted by a member of the Honduran delegation after giving our intervention on Synthetic Biology.

In an attempt to intimidate that person her knowledge was questioned, and the statement was condemned as biased against scientific progress. She was told to go and speak to the students in the IGEM and PRRI delegations because she “didn’t understand”. Comments with ideological and cultural references were made about the Parties whose positions our intervention had supported. These references were not only an insult to them, but also an insult to our team member’s own identity. We know that issues at the UN can get polarized and very political - but this is not an excuse for bad behavior.

We are now wondering: Does this reflect the official position of the Honduran government?

And do Parties understand the difference between the young people of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and the PRRI and IGEM students, or will they pool all young people in the conference halls and blame us for the behavior of others?



Tourism and Biodiversity

Caution as industry pushes past planetary boundaries

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Although tourism has simmered as a topic within the CBD since 1997, the process addressing it is at a boiling point. After nearly 20 years of CBD dialogues on tourism, this industry is emerging as an accelerator of ecological collapse.

Blunt concern framed the initial CBD talks on tourism. The *Berlin Declaration* of 1997 delivered the message that **“Tourism should be restricted, and where necessary prevented, in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.”** That proclamation is poignant today. Human activities such as tourism have endangered the biosphere, putting the Earth itself in a sensitive state.

Today, the CBD process on tourism poses a serious risk, because it disregards aviation. The CBD *Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development* - plus accompanying *User’s Manual* (2007) and *Application Manual* (2015) - promote ‘sustainable tourism’ as attainable. Yet nearly all destinations adopting these guidelines, or professing some kind of ‘eco’ tourism, rely on airplanes - which gorge more than 314 billion litres of jet fuel annually. The aviation sector is poised to double planes in the air by 2035, a major blow to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the Asia-Pacific alone, this means 100 million more passengers annually over this period. There is no way to reconcile this magnitude of growth with the US Environment Protection Agency’s recent ruling that aviation greenhouse gases endanger public health. Proposed biofuels and offset schemes are grossly disproportionate to such expansion. They also infringe on the land rights and customary practices of many affected Indigenous Peoples globally.

New CBD policy highlighting tourism as a driver of ‘sustainable economic growth’ is worrisome, and fundamentally, a dangerous ideological turn. Tourism’s scale of ecological harm is planetary - even without its aggregate carbon use at destinations, or its other acute impacts such as urbanization, marine and coastal pollution, groundwater contamination, habitat loss, invasive species proliferation, or endangered species

stressed to the point of losing fertility. These ecological costs assure eventual poverty intensification, rather than poverty relief as suggested by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its Sustainable Tourism Development Programme. They contribute to a deepening humanitarian crisis, as climate refugees, Indigenous Peoples displaced from protected areas, other vulnerable and exploited local communities - and especially affected children - experience deepening inequality, including reduced mental health and well-being. Given this, it is unacceptable to correlate tourism with sustainable use.

The CBD Secretariat needs to reassert an impartial role in guiding the tourism discourse of the United Nations (U.N.). Tourism has a development pattern that exceeds planetary boundaries. It erodes the ecological functions integral to well-being, endangering future generations. There is an urgent need to bring coherence to the CBD process on tourism, by foregrounding the specific inter-generational harms of tourism within decision-making. The process itself must decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.

It is vital that the Secretariat distance itself from the ideology of ‘sustainable tourism’. Immediate remedial steps of CBD Secretariat should include:

1. Aligning the CBD process on tourism with the precautionary approach revisited in the Cancun Declaration, which warns that “Life on planet Earth and our common future are at stake
2. Advising the UNWTO and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to adopt the precautionary approach of the CBD and monitoring their program congruence
3. Alerting UNWTO, ICAO, and other U.N. agencies governing tourism of the substantial limitations of this industry in realizing the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

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4. Maintaining a cautious position in relation to the 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, to promote unbiased evaluation of tourism benefits and costs
5. Reviewing CBD tourism initiatives in the context of the *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*, especially Targets 3, 4, 10 and 14 concerning anthropogenic pressures, safe ecological limits, vulnerable populations, and the removal of harmful incentives or subsidies
6. Revisiting the community-based research shared by NGOs within the CBD process on tourism 1997-present, which provides insights on harm prevention and risk reduction
7. Prioritizing the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and other instruments safeguarding the human rights of children and future generations, to strengthen the CBD process on tourism

Nuclear radiation and Biodiversity

Takafumi Tomita , JCN-UNDB / ikimono cafe

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, which began on 11 March 2011, released large amounts of radioactivity into the Pacific Ocean. As calculated by the French Institute for Radiological Protection and Nuclear Safety (IRSN), “this is the largest one off injection of artificial radionuclides into the marine environment ever observed.”

For example, the reported release of Cs-137 between May 2011 to December 2014 resulting from the disaster is an enormous radioactive discharge when compared to the routine releases from the European Union’s largest nuclear plant, Graveline in northern France. The release from Fukushima plants of Cs-137 in the 3.5 years are equivalent to 500,000 years of discharges from Graveline.

Due to the radionuclides released by the Fukushima nuclear accident, and their incorporation into the materials cycle of ecosystems, the impacts of the disaster will last for ever-lasting. The contamination of the marine environment has been extensively investigated over the past 5 years, but in particular, there is a significant lack of research pertaining to species and ecosystem impacts.

The emergency conditions and radiological inventory at the Fukushima Daiichi site still remains a clear and enormous potential source of even greater contamination to the coastal and wider marine environment .

We have to clearly recognize that all nuclear power plants in operation have the same kind of risk for accidents and could cause irreversible environmental pollutions across borders. Presently, there are 434 nuclear power plants in operation in 31 countries, not counting the many that are being planned or under construction.

The *London Convention* is known as the international rules for the ocean pollutions, but there is no account on the radioactive pollutions in the world.

At CBD COP, it is necessary to pursue where the responsibility lies when international radioactive pollutions, like Fukushima nuclear disaster, are caused, and to recognize that such kind of economic activities are a great threat for biodiversity.

Radioactive contamination by nuclear accidents deprives us of all we rely on to live, such as local community, air, water, soil and food come from the ecosystem and diverse living things.

While we in Japan feel great responsibilities for having been scattering radioactive substances all over the world, we strongly hope that people around the world will learn from our experiences of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

It is essential that the dedicated international research and investigations continues so that all people may better understand the impacts of this ongoing nuclear disaster.

The opinions, commentaries, and articles printed in ECO are the sole opinion of the individual authors or organisations, unless otherwise expressed.

Submissions are welcome from all civil society groups.
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Indigenous Women and Conservation of Traditional Knowledge

Irla Élide Vargas Del Ángel /Mujer Indígena Nahua, originaria del Estado de Hidalgo, México. Revisado por Yolanda Terán

At COP13 in Cancun, women are participating in order to ensure that our vital role preserving Mother Earth and its ecosystems, is acknowledged.

As member of the *Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network of Latin America and the Caribbean* (RMIB-LAC) and *Global Forest Coalition*, we believe it is important and necessary, to include Indigenous women in the CDB documents as active subjects, as our role is key for the conservation of biodiversity through our traditional knowledge; from taking care of the food we give to our families to the medicines and water, the way we thank for the life and how we bless future generations.

Indigenous women pass on to future generations the knowledge that we have learned since we were children, and we have put into practice throughout our lives.

Indigenous women cohabitate with different forms of life found in our environment, and we respect them all because they provide and guarantee our livelihoods. For us, women, all biodiversity elements are important; water, land, air, light and sun's heat. Indigenous women have a close relationship with Mother Earth, and fertility is a feature that we share, allowing us to create life, food, safety and protection.

In the Nahua culture, the birth of a boy or a girl constitutes a very relevant event because it represents an opportunity to continuing life and transcend. The new-born will grow up along with a plant, and the umbilical cord is buried at the roots of a banana tree.

The father or the grandfather of the new- born take care of this ritual. The plant has been previously selected and hence, the ritual takes place right after the baby is born. The aim of this ritual is to make sure that the new born is "rooted", and even if he/she goes to work far away from his land, he/she will always return because the umbilical cord is placed at the roots of his/her brother tree.

Afterwards, the ritual of the first bath takes place. Both women of the family and the community help the mother

to prepare the first bath for the new-born, which it does not only means to bath him/her, but is also a welcome party to the world with songs and herbs (a mix of Mexican Honeysuckle, avocado, linea cordial, silver wormwood, chicken's gut, ripe casimiroa, guayabo leaves) dissolved in the water to protect the new-born's body. The first-time mother will receive advice on to take care of the new born, and in this way knowledge is orally replicated.

The work that women carry out is also an educational one, with a didactic purpose and entrenches the feeling of belonging to a social group. The tales and stories that our children enjoy are told by their mothers or grandmothers; they are not written but they are orally perpetuated.

Indigenous Peoples literature is based on oral tradition and it serves as a link between generations. Children learn how to behave through the examples of the families where orality is always present. This is not because we cannot write about our culture. That is indeed possible, however it is not necessary as orality has the function of writing, meaning that it perpetuates our cultural forms of perceiving life within our worldview.

For instance, in relation to health, is not about properly healing a person but about making the person and the heart feel fine, and it is possible to do this with a song, a prayer and words that will lift the spirit, motivate and incentivize the person to deal with personal, family and community matters. The importance is that these words which are intertwined with different herbs, love, respect and solidarity, have an effect of harmony and hence, a holistic encompassing attitude where body, mind and spirit are healthy.

With these examples we can affirm that Indigenous women firmly assume the role to preserve biodiversity and traditional knowledge when we teach our children to live together with the plants, animals, stones and rivers of our communities. We value them in a holistic way because with them we have built life and culture lessons throughout history.