

# ECO

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**Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.

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Agenda item 11.2

## The ABC of Ensuring Precaution on Geoengineering

*ETC Group*

Geoengineering refers to technologies designed to intervene in and alter earth systems on a large scale – particularly proposals to manipulate the climate system as a ‘technofix’ for climate change. It includes a wide range of schemes, including blasting sulphate particles into the stratosphere to reflect the sun’s rays, dumping iron particles in the oceans to nurture CO<sub>2</sub>-absorbing plankton, and genetically engineering crops so their leaves might reflect more sunlight.

Such schemes are highly speculative, inequitable and potentially devastating for people and ecosystems. However, the past few years have seen a marked increase in proposals from scientists and scientific institutions, commercial players and even some governments to pursue geoengineering approaches. Several proposals for open-air experimentation have now been tabled, some are in preparation while a few have already been carried out.

At COP10 in Nagoya, the CBD adopted a landmark decision on a moratorium on the testing and deployment of geoengineering technologies (Decision X/33 para 8w) – recognizing the particular threats to biodiversity and livelihoods. It marked the first time an intergovernmental body established oversight over geoengineering. The Decision included a call for three studies: on biodiversity impacts; on governance; and on views and experiences of indigenous and other communities – to inform appropriate precautionary oversight of geoengineering as it relates to biodiversity. These three studies have been completed and reviewed by SBSTTA-16 and Parties will decide the next steps under item 11.2 of the COP11 agenda.

COP11 should be an opportunity to re-state and re-emphasize the importance of precaution, adopting the following ‘ABC’ of precautionary oversight of geoengineering:

### **A – AFFIRM THE MORATORIUM**

Some geoengineering advocates attempted to down-

play the de facto moratorium adopted at COP10, claiming that it is not well grounded or that it has been superseded by other agreements. The advice from SBSTTA-16 points otherwise, and the three studies commissioned by the Secretariat clearly demonstrate that the basis on which the moratorium was agreed in Nagoya was correct and that it should remain in place.

The study on biodiversity impacts demonstrates that there is no adequate scientific basis on which to justify geoengineering activities. Specifically the study points out that no geoengineering approach meets basic criteria for effectiveness, safety and affordability (section 2); that attempts to alter levels of incoming solar radiation (“Solar Radiation Management”, Sunlight Reflection Methods or SRM) would precipitate significant and almost impossible-to-predict ramifications (section 4), and that CO<sub>2</sub> removal techniques are highly speculative, of doubtful effectiveness and in many cases will have unintended impacts on terrestrial or marine ecosystems (section 5).

Meanwhile, the legal and regulatory study undertaken by the Secretariat concludes that “the current regulatory mechanisms that could apply to climate-related geoengineering relevant to the CBD do not constitute a framework for geoengineering as a whole that meets the criteria of being science-based, global, transparent and effective,” raising particular concerns about the transboundary effects of regulatory mechanism for sunlight-reflection methods...especially given the potential for significant deleterious transboundary effects.”

## **B – BAN OPEN-AIR TESTS**

Decision X/33 specified that no geoengineering activities that may affect biodiversity should take place and that even small-scale scientific research studies should be conducted only in controlled setting and only when justified by the need to gather specific scientific data and when subject to a thorough prior environmental impact assessment.

The studies commissioned by the CBD Secretariat raise especially strong concerns about geoengineering techniques that are transboundary in nature and those that occur in global commons such as the ocean and atmosphere. Parties could therefore strengthen the moratorium to protect commons such as Polar regions. Additionally the studies find that there are particularly serious scientific and governance concerns associated with solar radiation management (SRM) such as stratospheric aerosols and maritime cloud albedo techniques. The studies warn that the SRM approach introduces a novel dynamic between warming due to high CO<sub>2</sub> and cooling due to sunlight reduction, which has no historical precedent and whose ecological impacts cannot be foreseen. SRM, in particular, is incompatible with the precautionary approach.

In order to reaffirm the intent of the CBD moratorium, stronger measures that explicitly forbid attempts to carry out some experiments outside of laboratory setting must be adopted. Real-world experiments are in no way “in a controlled setting.” Hardware tests are not “justified by the need to gather specific scientific data” for knowledge purposes but are rather engineering attempts to develop working hardware for future deployment.

## **C – CREATE MONITORING CAPACITY**

As money and attention increasingly flows into geoengineering, maintaining the moratorium and a subsequent test ban needs a capacity for sustained monitoring of geoengineering activities to ensure they remain in a controlled setting.

In early 2012, ETC Group published a comprehensive map showing past, current and proposed geoengineering activities and weather modification activities, supported by a database of almost 300 recorded projects. Such databases could form the core of an ongoing monitoring project ideally housed within the CBD Secretariat. The recommendations from SBSTTA-16 to COP11 include language that invite Parties to report on measures undertaken to maintain the moratorium and requests that the Executive Secretary compile this information and make it available

via the clearing-house mechanism. This would constitute a minimal, but useful step towards international monitoring and oversight of geo-engineering.

Because of the serious transboundary nature of many geoengineering schemes, Parties should, at the least, insist that there is monitoring and reporting of past, current and proposed geoengineering activities, including activities that take place in a controlled laboratory setting.

## **D – DEFEND THE ROLE OF CBD and SBSTTA**

The expert paper on legal and governance issues commissioned by the Secretariat shows that CBD is the appropriate forum to exercise oversight of geoengineering as it impacts biodiversity. The CBD has the necessary legal standing, scientific expertise and has an almost-universal membership.

Other expert bodies such as the scientific groups to the London Convention and Protocol on Ocean Dumping and also the International Panel on Climate Change have both different and narrower mandates and bases of expertise than the CBD. Their findings, while a welcome contribution, should not be given undue weight in future decisions nor should their work be allowed to undermine CBD Decision X/33.

In particular, the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) will not cover wider biodiversity, equity and livelihood concerns, nor is the IPCC properly constituted to contribute expertise in those areas. Further, in June 2011, 125 civil society organizations sent an open letter to the IPCC raising concerns about the biased and non-transparent process by which it was handling the issue of geoengineering.

## **E – ENSURE GENUINE CONSULTATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

The report of the Secretariat on views and experiences of ILCs and other stakeholders was carried out with little consultation and resulted in a cursory treatment of the issue. The summary document concludes that “so far the contribution of indigenous peoples to this debate has been very limited and culturally relevant capacity building programmes and information on these issues is scant. Understanding geoengineering impacts from indigenous perspectives is an issue that requires further exploration.”

Parties should propose that the Secretariat produce a further report in consultation with ILCs, including peasants organizations, on the potential impacts of geoengineering on biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural impacts, taking into account gender considerations.

## Women's Caucus Opening Statement

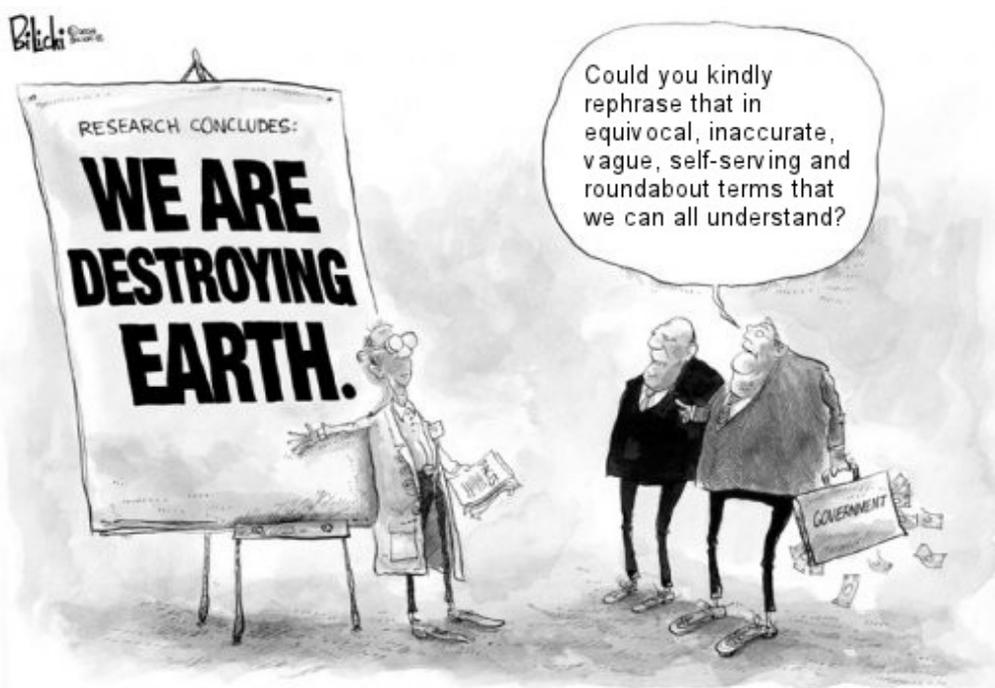
We welcome the new CBD Executive secretary and we look forward to working together to ensure that the CBD continues to champion gender equality and women's rights in its policies and implementation efforts.

In the last twenty years gender equality and women's rights have been and continue to be recognized as critical crosscutting issues at the CBD which has resulted in an extraordinary array of text. With this text Parties are in a unique position to pursue transformative implementation where women are recognized as crucial stakeholders and agents of change.

Words on paper are crucial, but healthy ecosystems and gender equality will only become a lived reality when full implementation is enforced. Women are watching and ready to support ambitious goals and implementation and as a caucus we would like to see the following five points integrated into the negotiations and outcomes:

- Recognize and incorporate women's traditional knowledge,
- Integrate the gender dimension in social, environmental, and cultural indicators,
- Ensure capacity building for women in all program areas as a means to secure the full and effective participation of women,
- Strengthen discussions and implementation of the gender dimension in the second objective of the Convention on sustainable use,
- Commit to long term actions on gender equality and women's rights by the CBD Secretariat and Parties.

Women around the world- including farmers, fisher women, forest dwellers and managers, scientists, indigenous women, and change makers-recognize that none of these objectives will become a reality unless adequate financial resources are provided. The mechanism for these financial resources must be transparent, predictable and gender responsive.



*CBD Alliance would like to thank Swedbio for their continued and ongoing support. We would also like to thank Christensen Funds for supporting the participation of CBD Alliance candidates at the COP11.*

# Tourism: Time flies, Ethics crash - Buckle up for Action!

*Alison M. Johnston, International Support Centre for Sustainable Tourism (Canada)*

A well synchronised set of workshops kicks off today for the CBD Secretariat, UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and government of Germany to pitch and promote tourism. Instead of being impartial facilitators of dialogue the Secretariat and UNWTO are the air beneath industry wings. Together with Germany, they are marketing tourism as a biodiversity ally.

Tourism has been bumping around the CBD corridors since 1997. At the first UN Workshop on Traditional Knowledge, civil society groups (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples' organizations gathered to express concern about tourism impacts on the biosphere and at the ecosystem level. They had the foresight to flag tourism as a whopper of an issue which was flying under the radar.

At COP4 in Bratislava, tourism took centre stage through a Ministerial Roundtable. Initially this suggested that tourism would receive scrutiny as a sector having severe cross-cutting impacts. However, the event was oriented to tourism growth instead - its theme being tourism as a 'financial incentive' for biodiversity conservation. Ever since, this industry has had a privileged passport within the CBD.

15 years later we are witnesses to the continuing freefall of executive endorsement of tourism by the responsible UN agencies. There is no neutral keeper of the process. This week's workshops are focussed on tourism development. They imply that industrial-scale tourism and its infrastructure can be sustainable - though there is clear evidence to the contrary. 'Ecotourism' growth is being touted as a ticket to poverty eradication and environment protection.

COP11 marks the 10th anniversary of the controversial UN International Year of Ecotourism (IYE). IYE was contested by international NGOs, who requested a review of 'eco' tourism instead. NGOs submitted portfolios of research showing industry's norms: most notably, climate change, ecosystem degradation, human rights violations and culture loss. Examples include language erosion, sacred sites desecration and biopiracy. Indigenous Peoples' groups provided illustrative case studies as direct testimony, summed up in the Oaxaca Declaration. This grassroots data showed that 'success stories' and meaningful 'best practices' are an exception.

The UN process on tourism and biodiversity surrounding the IYE became increasingly undemocratic. It was dismissive of NGOs that provided credible research and it in-

fringed on the rights of Indigenous Peoples whose cultures and ancestral lands frequently are targeted for ecotourism (bypassing actual peoples until the process was essentially over). There was an illusion only of appropriate outreach, dialogue, and representation - later denounced by the International Indigenous Forum at COP7 in Kuala Lumpur (2004). The legacy is a misleading impression within the CBD arena that tourism was properly evaluated. In reality, tourism was pre-approved and important - but inconvenient - research findings were sidelined.

The *CBD Guidelines on Tourism* being showcased this week never gained legitimacy. They look impressive and they sound progressive, but they lack technical competency on key sustainability issues, particularly the dynamics of tourism putting cultural diversity and thus biological diversity at risk. Community level experiences documented, evaluated and reported (including impacts of climate change and biofuels) were not accurately reflected.

International NGOs specializing in tourism - and closely involved as witnesses to the IYE and CBD processes - have regarded the *CBD Guidelines on Tourism* as dangerously short-sighted. Their rigorous research contributions should have been sufficient reason to implement the CBD precautionary approach and revisit both the methodology and content.

We should be concerned that the infamous guidelines now are resurfacing without context and still without credibility. We must object to them being used to boost an industry that already is growing without restraint and which is a major contributor to climate change. We also must morally call into question institutional support for an industry whose slim profit margins generally rely on poverty; whose propensity for exploitation far outweighs its Kodak moments.

Third World Network highlighted the many outstanding concerns about tourism at the 2012 Earth Summit (see [www.twinside.org.sg](http://www.twinside.org.sg)). Point 16 of the Berlin Declaration on Sustainable Tourism (1997) needs to be operationalized. It states: "Tourism should be restricted, and where necessary prevented, in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas." Neither the CBD Secretariat's pet tourism guidelines nor the Río+20 loose proclamations on tourism reinforce this standard. We all need to collectively take notice and stop the growth agenda, or industrial style 'eco' tourism will cause unfathomable harm globally for today's children and next generations.