ECO

Volume 48, Issue 3

Thursday, 26June 2014

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EBSAs & Traditional Knowledge

Ramya Rajagopalan

One of the SBSTTA 18 agenda items on the *Programme of Work on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity,* is the progress report on describing areas meeting the criteria for *Ecologically and Biologically Significant Marine Areas*, known as EBSAs. It is however important to note that despite extensive focus on this issue at COP 11, the document does not mention anywhere the need to have full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities for describing or identifying ecologically or biologically significant areas.

The importance of traditional knowledge and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities have been highlighted especially in two EBSAs workshops (Namibia and Arctic). Though the progress report calls for practical action for further work on describing EBSAs, it still does not include traditional knowledge. There is also no mention regarding the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the draft recommendations, in all the processes related to EBSAs.

While initially the discussions on EBSAs in 2008 started with description and identification in areas beyond national jurisdiction, workshops have discussed EBSAs within national jurisdiction, including in coastal waters, as reported from Eastern Tropical and Temperate Pacific (Gulf of Fonesca, an area important for traditional fishing communities). However, there has been no active participation of representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, including traditional fishing communities in these workshops.

The workshop for describing EBSAs in the Arctic, was one of the few that specifically included the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, and focused on the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities bordering the region, and tried to integrate the same, during the process of describing EBSAs. The experiences shared and documented on integrating traditional knowledge in the Canadian EBSA process needs to be further broadened to other regions so that the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the Arctic can be duplicated in other regions. In addition, there is a need for further training and capacity building initiatives to promote further such efforts.

It is essential that any *Culturally, Economically and Ecologically Significant Marine Areas* (CEESMAs) that are considered for conservation, sustainable use and management of marine and coastal resources, are considered through processes that include and build upon the ncreasing documentation of traditional knowledge as well as scientific knowledge. There must be active collaboration with men, women and youth from indigenous peoples and local communities who are dependent on these resources for their livelihoods, fully utilizing existing traditional knowledge and customary institution.

To this end the *Sustainable Ocean Initiative* (SOI) should focus its attention on enhancing capacities of national and other relevant authorities, in integrating traditional knowledge and frameworks such as CEESMAs, instead of just on the ecologically significant marine areas. The broadening of EBSAs to CEESMAs will not only make the process more effective, but will enhance the scope for better conservation of marine biodiversity as well.

Decision XI/17, calls for developing training manuals and modules including on traditional knowledge. The development of these materials is still in under process however. We urge the Secretariat and governments to hasten the process of developing such manuals with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities before COP 12.

Aichi Target 3 on perverse incentives and indicators

An elusive and tricky exercise

Maria del Rosario Ortiz Quijano

There can be no mainstreaming of biodiversity unless perverse incentives in all ministries are stopped. Stopping or at least phasing out perverse subsidies is the central indicator for mainstreaming of biodiversity.

To eliminate and phase out perverse incentives on biodiversity we need first to extract the information from the foggy national accounting systems of states in order to track them sector by sector. The OECD did an exercise on this kind that was presented during WGRI 5 in the context of possible biodiversity response indicators to monitor progress towards Aichi Target 3. Working with the OECD agriculture databases, it found that harmful effects on biodiversity have been decreasing over time in these countries even if the OECD countries contributed approximately USD 250 billion in support to this sector every year.

This is in principle is good news but a little bit confusing. According to the recently published Meat Atlas, for example, for 2013 it was predicted that average developed country meat consumption would be 79.9 kg per capita per year as compared to the world average of 43 kg per capita per year. In 2007, according to other sources, 16 OECD countries were on the list of the twenty top meat eaters. This high meat consumption leads to industrialized agriculture with well-known consequences for biodiversity. So how can these two facts be coherent?

One possible explanation is that harmful incentives to biodiversity are decreasing in OECD countries because part of the impact of meat production is being exported. Animal feed is grown in developing countries and imported by OECD countries. As happens with the hidden CO_2 emissions of imported goods to developed countries official national data does not include these outsourced emissions. To really track the perverse incentives we need an integrated indicator or an index that takes into account the whole trade chain by sector (livestock, fishing, wood, transport, production of crop-based biofuels, and agricultural) considering those applied domestically or outsourced. This kind of index on perverse incentives will reveal the true picture and so facilitate allow their elimination. Only at that point could biodiversity mainstreaming in all sectors become a reality.

GM Eucalyptus

Brazil considers authorizing GM Trees in contravention of COP9 Decision

Jay Burney, STOPGETrees

In Brazil, *Futuragene*, a UK-registered company wholly owned by Brazilian timber giant *Suzano*, has submitted a request to CTNBio to commercially release genetically modified eucalyptus trees in Brazil. CTNBio is the governmental institution charged with authorizing commercial release of GMOs in Brazil.

Hundreds of social and ecological justice organizations representing millions of people joined forest protection groups from around the world to reject the commercial release of GM trees due to their potentially serious negative effects on biodiversity and human rights, as well as the complete lack of independent assessments of their social, ecological and economic risks.

Teresa Perez, of World Rainforest Movement and the Campaign to STOP GE Trees states: *"At the same time that the world is watching the World Cup in Brazil, the country's government is considering allowing the unprecedented commercialization of GE trees there. If approved, GE trees will result in the rapid expansion of tree plantations, which will accelerate deforestation and worsen the crisis of land grabs, including the potential displacement of entire communities. Land grabs are already leading to conflicts between local communities and timber corporations like Suzano."*

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CBD Alliance would like to thank Swedbio for their continued and ongoing support

***Submissions** are welcome from all civil society groups.*
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GM Trees continued...

In 2008, due to mounting global concerns about GM trees, the CBD called for the application of the Precautionary Approach regarding GM trees, as well as a comprehensive and transparent assessment of their long-term social and ecological risks prior to any open release into the environment. This risk assessment has not been done.

Any approval by CTNBio of the commercialization of the GM eucalyptus in question would therefore violate the CBD decision IX/5.

Dr. Rachel Smolker, Co-director of Biofuelwatch adds:

"The case of GE trees in Brazil is also highly significant because there is a request currently pending in the United States by GE tree company ArborGen to commercially release the very first GE tree there – a freeze tolerant GE eucalyptus tree. This would be an ecological catastrophe for the Southern US, where they would be planted. It would also worsen climate change.
GE trees must be stopped in both Brazil and the US."

Decision IX/5 Forest biodiversity

1. Urges Parties to:

(r) Reaffirm the need to take a precautionary approach when addressing the issue of genetically modified trees;

(s)Authorize the release of genetically modified trees only after completion of studies in containment, including in greenhouse and confined field trials, in accordance with national legislation where existent, addressing long-term effects as well as thorough, comprehensive, science-based and transparent risk assessments to avoid possible negative environmental impacts on forest biological diversity; 2/

2/ Where applicable, risks such as cross-pollination and spreading of seeds should be specifically addressed.

Five short reflections on civil society engagement

Christine von Weizsäcker, Ecoropa

1. Any civil society observer who has practical experience with the different types of participatory arrangements for civil society at UNFCCC, CBD and Rio-Process negotiations will come to deeply appreciate the culture of productive participation that has grown in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Appreciate it, develop it further, but, please, do not risk its destruction.

2. When negotiations do not have a productive outcome, very often "the lack of political will" is blamed. Who can create political will? Civil society can engender political will and transport it into the political arena. The environmental movement is a good example. Visibility of pressing new challenges is often promoted and sped up by civil society engagement.

3. There are types of stakeholder engagement strategies that invariably end up in arriving at the least common denominator. There are other types that allow the rich ecosystem of experiences and voices to be heard. In a biological ecosystem the ant may be as indispensable as the elephant. And in the ecosystem of people's voices the smaller organizations may have indispensable contributions to make.

4. Can all this not be dealt with at the national level? Not in a globalized world. It would give existing strong global actors a monopoly. But how can smaller organizations learn to transport their experiences into the international arena? Capacity-building is helpful. Advice from experienced participants is helpful. And a good deal of "learning by doing" will be needed as well. According to talents and priorities some will organize side-events, others will follow text, and still others will translate the results into meaning on the ground.

5. What can be seen at meetings of the Convention is only the tip of the iceberg. Negotiations are sometimes dramatic. But the real drama is much bigger. It involves the local, national and international levels. It involves official and unofficial structures and channels. And it is in the best of cases a delicate and cooperative game between those inside and those outside. Success needs to be carried on many shoulders, some visible and many invisible as far as meeting reports go. But at the end of the day this is not about being mentioned in a report. It is about the joint well-being of biodiversity and people.

Risks and benefits from synthetic biology

A plea for the precautionary principle

I heard a little frog ask:

Whatever happened to precaution?

Why isn't it in the synthetic biology text?

Funny thing, when so many delegates mentioned it in the plenary.

Last night there was a long discussion on synthetic biology.

We didn't get very far. We saw serious attempts to use the discussion on synthetic biology to circumvent the *Cartagena Protocol.* There was deep disagreement on many of the paragraphs because there are fundamental differences regarding the desired outcome of the negotiations and so there are many brackets in the text.

Given all the interventions on the *precautionary principle* in the plenary it is a remarkable fact that it is not even in the current negotiation text - which is deeply disturbing.

It is clear that the commercial uses of synthetic biology have the potential to disrupt the economies of developing countries, and undermine the sustainable use of biological resources.

It reminded one observer of the negotiation of the Cartagena Protocol when Parties spoke constantly of unquestionable benefits and hypothetical risks. Where is the scientific rigour in that?

As the discussions on the text are still ongoing, we should remember the words spoken by Ecoropa in the plenary, stating that:

"(...) there are existing obligations under the Conventions wherever there is a threat to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Para 9 of the Preamble points to the task of avoiding or minimizing such threats using the precautionary approach. The task is spelt out in more detail in Articles 7(c), 8(g), (h) and (l), 10(b), 14(a), (c), (d) and (e). Article 19.3 led to the Cartagena Protocol; beyond that 19.4 also applies to our discussion here.

National sovereignty of Parties to the Convention needs to go hand in hand with their obligations under the Convention to address likely threats and adverse impacts to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use at the national and transboundary levels. Bearing that in mind, Parties will have to address Synthetic Biology, anyway, at national and international levels.
They might as well not delay the package of decisions that will allow them to do so, as soon as possible."