



A Global Forest Coalition Newsletter on International Forest Policy



Forest Cover

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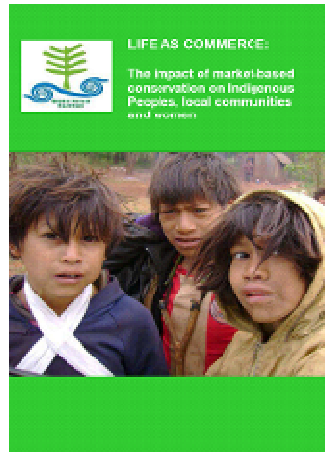
Welcome to the twenty-eight issue of Forest Cover, the newsletter of the Global Forest Coalition (GFC), a world-wide coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Indigenous Peoples Organizations (IPOs). GFC promotes rights-based, socially just and effective forest policies at the international and national level, including through building the capacity of NGOs and IPOs in all regions to influence global forest policy. Forest Cover is published four times a year. It features reports on important intergovernmental meetings by different NGOs and IPOs and a calendar of future meetings. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Global Forest Coalition, its donors or the editors. For free subscriptions, please contact Yolanda Sikking at: yolandasikking@yahoo.co.uk

Ex Silvis: Opportunistic and surreal: governments maintaining the status quo

By Miguel Lovera, chairperson, Global Forest Coalition

Headlines evoking deep consternation have dominated the news for the last two months, with story after story revealing a global economy in crisis. Experts across the world have predicted worse to come and recommend that severe measures be taken to save our economies.

So far, however, the only thing we have seen is a concerted international effort geared towards ensuring that the global economic order is rebuilt in all its former glory: In other words, the minority of rich nations and individuals will continue being rich, and the majority of poor nations and individuals will continue being poor. In the climate change negotiations this dynamic is being repeated. The most notable point of agreement between nations, developed and developing, is that things should remain just as they are, no giant leaps required! The irony is that as negotiations progressed in Poznan, exceptional floods were flushing a whole Brazilian state into the Atlantic Ocean, and Moscow recorded its warmest ever December day. Something has to change!



This is what the different case studies published in GFC's newest report, "Life as Commerce, the impact of market-based conservation on Indigenous Peoples, local communities and women" ask for: change, real and emphatically drastic change. There is no more time for free rides! The reality being lived by millions of people around the world ranges from difficult to desperate, not only because of the endemic

poverty 'efficient' markets trap them in, but also because of the adverse impacts of climate change combined with the indolence of rich entities and countries only prepared to protect their own finances. The case studies in the report show exactly why the use of markets as mechanisms for conserving nature is inappropriate, ineffective and fundamentally flawed. They reveal that there are many negative impacts, for local communities and their environment. But, market mechanisms are still the pivots of all actions being implemented and proposed by governments and other powerful actors. A slight bias is perceptible!

As part of the research involved in assessing the use of market mechanisms as a blanket solution, GFC dedicated time to consulting affected communities about their experiences of these 'solutions'. The results helped us build a clearer understanding of the problems that such 'solutions' generate themselves (even for communities that originally welcomed such projects). The information uncovered also fed in to the development of a tool box for action, designed to facilitate communal leadership and action in those communities seeking to stem the penetration of commercial actors into their natural areas and territories.



Tool box for action

Solutions are also proposed, although these are rather different to those proposed by states, corporate actors and mega-budget NGOs. They are solutions



primarily identified by the very people that would implement them, based on the mobilization of people who want their voices heard and their rights acknowledged, to stop others usurping their natural heritage and all the valuable resources it contains. As shown in the report, what nature needs most is that the people that evolved with it continue living within it. Most of the world's remaining pristine forest areas have Indigenous Peoples living within them and they have clearly taken excellent care of them, so why can't this situation be maintained? What is the impediment?

The impediment is that forest-dwelling communities need to be ousted to make way for agricultural and forest industries which are incompatible with nature, as incompatible as the market systems that were supposed to save nature and bring prosperity for all. Reality tells a different story! The only thing guaranteed by market mechanisms is the wholesale expropriation of most of humanity's resources by a select group of nations, corporations and individuals. Everything else that was promised - economic benefits for communities, an end to deforestation, the enforcement of environmental regulations - all this is likely to remain utterly unfulfilled.

To those observing the interactions between market mechanisms and nature, this is hardly surprising. It *would* have been surprising if the logic of the market, fully devoted to opportunistic profiteering, missed opportunities to profit for the sake of nature.



Simone Lovera, managing coordinator GFC, makes a point during REDD training for youth, in Poznan. Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC

In Poznan, Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) extolled the virtues of the market as a source of solutions to climate change, turning the convention into a high-security trade fair. But this blind acceptance that money is an ever-powerful elixir benefiting human welfare will definitely result in an unpleasant, but not unannounced, climate surprise.

A forest by any other name but not as sweet: the role of forest definitions in global climate change negotiations

By Sean Cadman, The Wilderness Society, Australia

You probably have your own preconceived idea of what a forest actually is, and that idea may also depend on where you live. 'Yes' you say, 'so what!' Well, it really does matter, because when the UNFCCC came to define a forest in the context of the climate change negotiations, they settled on a definition so broad that it is meaningless, both ecologically and in terms of climate change.

The current definition, which is used for reporting and accounting purposes under the Kyoto Protocol, is based on a forest's structure. According to the UNFCCC, it must be at least 0.05ha in size, with tree crown cover (or an equivalent stocking level) of more than 10%. The trees must also have the potential to reach a minimum height of 2m at maturity *in situ*. Critically, the definition includes (i) young stands of natural regeneration; (ii) all plantations which have yet to reach a crown density of 10-30% or a tree height of 2-5 meters; and (iii) areas normally forming part of the forest area which are 'temporarily unstocked' as a result of human intervention, such as harvesting, or natural causes, but which are expected to revert to forest.

Importantly, the Kyoto Protocol's definition makes no distinction between planted monocultures of perennial woody plants and complex, biodiverse natural forests.

So, does your personal picture of a forest include 2m-high oil palms marching endlessly over the hills of a devastated tropical forest landscape? Or 10m-high fields of spindly eucalypt trees planted in straight lines alongside the remnants of a 500-year old forest of 80m-high giant old-growth eucalypt forest, at the edge of the Tasmanian Wilderness in Australia? No, I thought not!

Those of you immersed in the fight to protect the world's forests and the rights of forest dwelling peoples may already have seen images associated with the word picture I have painted, but what is not well known is that under the current definition and rules of the Kyoto Protocol, these plantations count as forests.



Furthermore, if they were established after 1990 (the base year for the current accounting commitment period) it does not count as deforestation either!

'Clever' countries like Australia, who have been involved in a massive plantation establishment effort since 1990, have managed to avoid taking any responsibility for the emissions generated by their forest conversion strategy, by electing not to account for these forest management practices. If they had been accounted for, then the emissions generated would also have had to be factored in. Thus under the Kyoto Protocol, the conversion of a forest to a 'forest' is not deforestation, even if it results in massive CO₂ emissions (which will, as a result, remain unaccounted and largely unreported).

Through this simple but calculated manoeuvre, countries such as Australia have ensured that continued deforestation and the spread of plantations are not only accepted under the Kyoto Protocol, but positively encouraged. In particular, there are terrible potential consequences if the proposal on Reducing Emissions from forest Degradation and Deforestation (REDD) goes ahead using this definition. It would open up the door to a massive increase in the conversion of



Oil palm plantation in Sarawak.

forest to plantations, funded by financial mechanisms ostensibly aimed at reducing rates of deforestation and mitigating climate change.

The Wilderness Society and many other environmental NGOs believe that plantations must be treated separately to forests in any new climate change deal. One way to deal with this would be to split natural forests and plantations, while leaving the current structural definition in place. Forests and plantations are not the same thing.

A natural forest is a terrestrial ecosystem generated and maintained primarily through natural ecological and evolutionary processes. Natural forests are an essential part of the global carbon cycle, and have played, and continue to play, a major role in modulating the strength of the greenhouse affect. A plantation, on the other hand, is nothing more than a crop of trees planted and regularly harvested by humans, often containing little or no biodiversity.

A short paper that considers the rationale and issues associated with differentiating between forest and plantations in the context of climate change negotiations can be downloaded from:
http://unfccc.int/files/methods_science/redd/application/pdf/seancadman1_12nov08.pdf

While many parties involved in the climate negotiations do recognize the risks associated with converting natural forests to plantations others, particularly the Europeans, are wedded to a deeply held view that plantations really are forests: in fact, they cannot see the forest for the trees! Admitting that many European 'forests' are simply plantations is important however. It would allow the debate to move on, and it would really make a difference when it comes to mitigating climate change.

Ultimately forest conversion is deforestation and we need to dramatically reduce the practice. We certainly cannot end up subsidizing it in the name of climate change, which is clearly the fervent hope of some in the global forest and biofuel sectors.



UN Climate Conference: The World Carbon Trade Organization

By Anne Petermann, Global Justice Ecology Project Co-Director and North American Global Forest Coalition Focal Point

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met during the first two weeks of December in Poznan, Poland, with the intention of advancing a global agreement on climate change. By the end of the talks, however, it was clear that governments were determined to continue business as usual: there were no concrete steps toward the hard reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that climate scientists agree is necessary to avoid climate catastrophe. Market-based mechanisms were the only solutions on offer and the entire proceedings resembled nothing more than a carbon trading fair.

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries) - which was finalized during the climate COP (Conference of the Parties) - is emblematic of this trend. Contrary to its purported mission to protect forests, REDD's emphasis is on using the world's forests as carbon offsets, to allow industrialized countries to continue polluting.

The REDD negotiations were under frequent fire during the two weeks, from Indigenous Peoples Organizations, NGOs, forest protection groups and human

rights organizations. A key concern is that language in its text clearly points toward the expansion of tree plantations, the privatization of forests and the displacement of forest-dwelling communities.

During the REDD discussions, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US banded together to force the removal of all references to indigenous rights or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) from the REDD text. The Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change responded by staging a spontaneous protest outside of the media center. They were joined by allies chanting, 'No Rights! No REDD!', after which they held an impromptu press conference to amplify their statements throughout the halls of the climate COP. These are the same countries that tried to block the passage of UNDRIP and later refused to sign it.

An intensive lobbying effort by Indigenous Peoples Organizations resulted in language referring to the "full and informed participation" of "indigenous people" (note: not "indigenous peoples") being included in the REDD text. However, as Tom Goldtooth, of the Indigenous Environmental Network, pointed out in his intervention on behalf of the Indigenous Forum on the last night of the COP, "Full and informed participation without rights is meaningless."



Dr. Miguel Lovera (left) describes panel on REDD co-sponsored by GFC and FoEI.



Marcial Arias (2nd from left), from Kuna territory (Panama) and GFC's Focal Point for Spanish speaking Indigenous Peoples Organizations speaks at REDD Protest and Press Conference.



Fortune-teller predicts profits from deforestation and REDD support for UN delegate.



Activist and Bear state their feelings on the UNFCCC process.

All photos: Langelles/GJEP-GFC



In addition to posing a threat to Indigenous Peoples, REDD could also damage forest ecosystems. Because the text makes no reference to biodiversity, and because the UN still defines tree plantations as forests, REDD opens the door to the destruction of biodiverse native forests, facilitating their replacement by monoculture industrial timber plantations that provide no habitat for wildlife or other biodiversity. Such conversion of forest to plantation is additionally destructive to the climate, because plantations contain less than one fifth of the carbon contained in the forests they replace.

The most positive developments during the climate COP were the strengthening of the Climate Justice Now! alliance and the advancement of the mobilization against the Copenhagen climate change COP in 2009. Climate Justice Now!, which GFC is a founding member of, issued a final statement at the end of the COP calling for a "radical change" in the UN climate process, due to the overwhelming infiltration of business interests and the almost exclusive focus on using market-based mechanisms to address climate change (even though these mechanisms have proved a complete failure).



Miguel Lovera (left) and Anne Petermann (right) in front of the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA).
Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC



International Youth make their point known in the halls of the UNFCCC.
Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC

UNFF considers financing forests

Hubertus Samangun, ICTI, Indonesia and Andrei Laletin, FSF, Russia

The United Nations Forum on Forest's Open-Ended Ad-Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) met 10-14 November 2008, in Vienna, Austria, "to develop and consider, with a view to its adoption at the eight session of the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF), the Proposal for the Development of a Voluntary Global Finance Mechanism/Portfolio Approach/Forest Financing Mechanism" (as set out in the UNFF Economic and Social Council's resolution 2007/40 paragraph 6). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Boen Purnama, the Secretary General of Indonesia's Department of Forestry, who will also serve as Chair of the Bureau at UNFF-8 in April 2009, in New York.

Several background documents were presented. The first concerned the Country-Led Initiative on Financing for Sustainable Forest Management (CLI) which took place in Suriname, 8-12 September. Suriname pointed out that concern focused on current and emerging initiatives relating to financing sustainable forest management (from producer, consumer and community perspectives); the use of financial payments based on forest ecosystem services; and related institutional and governance matters, both at the national and international levels. The CLI's conclusions and recommendations included some references to Indigenous Peoples' rights and concerns, which had been outlined by Max Ooft in his intervention during the CLI (see his article in FC 27).

Dr Markku Simula then presented the background paper on "Financing flows and the need to implement the 'non-legally binding instrument' (NLBI) on all types of forests." He gave an overall picture of forest finance in the context of the NLBI, focusing on external sources. He reviewed existing, potential and evolving sources and funding mechanisms, paying special attention to new forest-related developments in the climate change negotiations. Dr Simula stressed that it is necessary to review needs of and the potential for forest financing, and to identify gaps, both in terms of themes and geographic areas, in relation to existing and emerging financial flows for forests. He also mentioned the critical importance of upfront investment for sustainable forest management, which is not adequately covered by existing financial flows.



Other presentations were made by representatives of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Bank, the secretariat of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

FAO spoke about the CPF Sourcebook on Funding for Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), which has been updated and now includes 800 entries in its funding database.

The World Bank's representative provided information about the World Bank's new Forest Investment Fund/Program (FIP), which is part of the Strategic Climate Fund developed by the Bank in response to the UNFCCC's Bali Action Plan. The WB has a mandate to develop the FIP in order to mobilize funds for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in developing countries (REDD), and to promote SFM as a means of protecting carbon stocks.

The FIP is different from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). It seems that the FIP would be intended to complement the FCPF by plugging a perceived gap between the FCPF's Readiness and Carbon Funds, providing the additional financial resources necessary to fund policy reforms and investments necessary to reduce emissions in a sustainable manner.

Other key elements of FIP include the need to recognize the importance of co-benefits, such as biodiversity, and "to consult local and indigenous communities" and other stakeholders, in both its design and implementation. The FIP will be completed in April 2009 and then piloted in a number of countries.

The UNFCCC secretariat detailed work that has been done since COP-13 in Bali in relation to REDD and preparations for COP-15, scheduled to be held in Copenhagen in 2009.

Notably, all the presentations and subsequent discussions focused on REDD, as if this was in fact a conference on REDD alone (which it was not).



Die in protest Forest Carbon Ship Facility. Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC

Regretfully, there were only four representatives from the Major Groups. The IPOs were represented by Hubertus Samangun, the NGOs by Andrei Laletin, the Women's Group by Jeannette Gurung and the Forest Owners by Bjorn Jorgen Nilsson. Two separate meetings were held with the UNFF secretariat, to discuss how to involve Major Groups in UNFF more effectively and concerning preparations for UNFF-8. Major Groups representatives also had separate meetings with the Chair of the meeting, and the new Director of the UNFF Secretariat. They also presented a

proposal of the so-called "Major Groups Initiative" (MGI) to the UNFF Secretariat. There should be a UNFF Inter-sessional meeting devoted to the role of Major Groups in the UNFF process.

The mandate of the AHEG was quite clear but the Vienna meeting failed to reach consensus on a Global Forest Fund. The meeting did not discuss the three financing options in detail, in relation to implementing the NLBI and SFM. AHEG experts plan to have two more meetings before the 8th session of the UNFF: in February 2009 in Washington DC, and in March 2009 in Rome.

In general, our impression on the meeting was positive. Although AHEG could not get consensus on a future financial regime for the NLBI, it made a reasonable start and the process could still be completed by April 2009. We hope that UNFF will support the MGI, making it possible for the Major Groups to input into future UNFF decisions on the world's forests.



Will the FSC protect our forests?

Wally Menne, Timberwatch, South Africa

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) appears to be following the same path as many large commercial entities that have recently hit the proverbial wall. Like the Enrons of this world, FSC is seemingly following a meteoric trajectory to a splashdown somewhere in the lost world of financial machinations (although it does not seem to have realized this yet). In this case, the FSC seems most likely to land in a mire of carbon trading and forest carbon offsets.

What went wrong has been the subject of much debate amongst civil society. On the one hand, some critics of the FSC, which was meant to do good for forests, are adamant that the basic concept of FSC certification is fine. They argue that it has simply not been applied in the spirit and to the letter of the original vision. On the other hand, there are those that look to the main beneficiaries of the system: The well paid 'suits' that help to pad the furniture in FSC's headquarters in Bonn, and the bosses of certification bodies that seem to be able to spew out endless reams of certificates, vaguely worded reports, and audit summaries that do little more than identify marginal improvements (that may or may not materialize).

The recent FSC General Assembly (GA) in South Africa (3-7 November) could have been an opportunity to deal with some of the controversial issues that have plagued FSC. However, it seems that most participants, including senior FSC officials, are not yet ready or willing to acknowledge or get to grips with the changes that are essential if the FSC is to retain any credibility.

From the word go, the FSC GA was a classic illustration of corporate affluence and influence, with Mondi emerging as the 'Gold Sponsor', in return for an unspecified amount of money (presumably substantial). Despite Mondi's well advertized generosity (or calculated investment?), the organizers still seemed to think it necessary to set a registration fee of €1,200 per delegate, making it virtually impossible for representatives of less wealthy environmental and social sector NGOs to participate. No doubt this was intended to influence the mix of participants, so that moneyed Economic Chamber (ie industrial) members, and

big international NGOs that have cosy partnerships with industry (as WWF has with Mondi in South Africa, for example), would have a free run when it came to ensuring that the agenda of the FSC's Economic Chamber would prevail.

However, in what appeared to be a last-minute attempt at damage control, Hubert de Bonafos, of FSC's Accreditation Services International (ASI) came to the Timberwatch/ GFC 'Life as Commerce' certification report launch, which was held in Cape Town the day before the FSC GA was due to start. Here he offered all participants free entry to the FSC GA! No doubt this was also a calculated PR exercise. He was probably aware that most people were unlikely to have kept the days open just in case a fairy godmother popped up with this 'generous' offer!

Having no success with the free registration carrot, de Bonafos then extended an invitation to the Timberwatch and GeaSphere reps to join him and other FSC staff for dinner that evening. Being both cash-strapped and pragmatic, some of our group - Philip Owen, Vera Ribeiro, Mduduzi Tshibase, myself and Catherine Ross - accepted the offer, and ended up being treated to dinner by Hubert de Bonafos, in the company of FSC Executive Director, Andre de Freitas, along with



Eucalyptus plantations, South Africa. Photo: Wally Menne, the Timberwatch



the new FSC communications manager, Alison Kriscenski, and the South African FSC National Initiative contact person, John Scotcher.

It was worth the risk. What followed was a long debate on the reasons why the NGOs present have decided not to participate in FSC structures, either at the international or national levels. The Timberwatch and GeaSphere positions on FSC are very clear, and have been communicated to them on many occasions, but FSC folk still refuse to concede that there are any real problems with FSC. Their stubborn reluctance to accept that we did not wish to be a part of the flawed FSC structures and processes indicated that there was very little hope of changing their views (not that we had really expected to).

We left after agreeing to attend another meeting first thing the next morning at the conference venue, which would be attended by FSC board members as well. Clearly under some sort of pressure to respond, the new group included Roberto Waack, Grant Rosoman and Jaime Levy. Discussion moved on to the failed FSC plantation policy review process, now in its fourth year (two years after it should have been completed). At this point there appeared to be some consensus. Jaime Levy fully endorsed our view of the Plantation Policy Working Group report – a wishy-washy useless document that failed to address the real problems.

- We spoke about the unsuitability of the FSC generic standard for certifying plantations.
- We spoke about the NGO call for FSC to end its certification of tree monocultures.
- We spoke about green alternatives to the plantation timber production models in use.
- We spoke about the GFC/Timberwatch 'Life as Commerce' certification study.

At this point, a glint of interest came into Andrei de Freitas's eyes: he informed us of a new study of Eucalyptus plantations in Brazil. He said the study showed that FSC-certified plantations were definitely better than uncertified ones!

It now became clear that we were probably wasting our time talking to an organization called the 'Forest Stewardship Council': its leader seems to be an expert on Eucalyptus plantations, but with a poor knowledge of forests.

The most interesting outcome from the FSC GA was a statement from a small group of its member organizations, including FERN and Greenpeace, entitled, 'Regaining credibility and rebuilding support: changes the FSC needs to make'. (See: http://www.fern.org/media/documents/document_4297_4298.doc)

This states that, "Continued support for FSC from these organizations will depend on decisive action being taken to improve the performance of FSC" and "Continued active support of the FSC will depend on it advancing these recommendations swiftly and demonstrating improved performance."

Unfortunately, the statement fails to set any specific deadlines. It uses vague terms like "without further delay," "as soon as possible," "advancing these recommendations swiftly" and "to immediately begin implementing," which, in the context of the stated seriousness of the situation, are totally inadequate and unlikely to bring about any changes at FSC. Perhaps that is what the members who produced this statement really want?

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and Indigenous Peoples

By Johnson Cerda, Asociacion Indigena de Limoncocha

In December 2007, the World Bank launched a program called the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) at the climate change negotiations held in Bali. The FCPF is supposed to support various developing countries in their efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing deforestation.

This process has had an initial stage, which has been completed in two rounds, in which interested countries have presented proposals containing their main ideas for developing national REDD plans. However, from an indigenous perspective there are some serious concerns. The proposals seek to include indigenous territories in the implementation of REDD programs. Yet Indigenous Peoples' involvement in the initial preparation of the Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) was not considered; this could jeopardize any plans in the future. Consultation mechanisms definitely need to be established or, where legislation already exists,



improved. A brief discussion with Indigenous leaders from key organizations showed that in some cases limited briefings have been conducted, but many organizations are unaware of the process.

One of the main demands of Indigenous Peoples is the recognition and implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This must not be neglected in the project implementation process in REDD countries.

Indigenous Peoples' concerns have been reinforced by the fact that the same governments that rejected the UNDRIP negotiations also fought against the inclusion of any mention of the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the REDD discussions at the climate change negotiations (COP-14), held in Poznan in Poland, even though these are now recognized by the same United Nations system. This feeds into the general concerns already held by Indigenous Peoples.

Report on other meetings:

IUCN: Nature is Our Business

Diversity can be a great thing, but one would assume that an organization calling itself the 'World Conservation Union' would at least have a degree of unity amongst its members. Not so. In fact, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) seems to lack any sort of cohesion these days. The recent World Conservation Congress (Barcelona, 5-14 October), which brought IUCN's 1,100-plus members together, was characterized by stark divisions: Divisions between the membership and the Secretariat, divisions between the Secretariat



Protest about the Forest Carbon Ship Facility in Bali, Indonesia, December 2007. Photo: Lanaelle/GJEP-GFC

and the almost 10,000 people participating in its six scientific Commissions, and divisions within the membership itself.

One of the most controversial issues concerned a partnership agreement with the multinational oil corporation, Shell Inc, signed by the IUCN Secretariat in 2007. The overwhelming majority of the 785-plus NGO members believe that IUCN's image will be damaged by a partnership with an oil company that has wrought environmental and social havoc amongst Indigenous communities in Nigeria, Canada and many other countries. The agreement itself hardly obliges Shell to clean up its act: Shell would only have to listen to environmental 'advice' from the Union.

However, the majority of the 84 state members rejected the motion to terminate the agreement with Shell. This means it remains in place: IUCN motions can only be passed if they are supported by a majority of both NGO and governmental members. Many governments appear to feel that the generous financial contribution Shell makes to the IUCN Secretariat outweighs any potential image-related problems. They also seemed unconcerned about the risk that IUCN may moderate any criticism of the environmental behavior of companies in light of their existing or potential financial contributions.

It seems that Life really *is* Commerce these days. The Barcelona conservation trade fair was a clear example of it. Yet there were some positive developments too. For example, the fact that IUCN passed a resolution formally committing itself to the full and effective implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a sign of the conservation community's increasing respect for Indigenous rights. The election of Aroha Mead as the first Indigenous chairperson of an IUCN Commission (the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP)) also demonstrated increased respect for Indigenous scientists. Nevertheless, there was still a clear divide between the Indigenous Peoples' representatives, who gathered together in the UNDP Poble and other events specifically organized by or for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and the many other events that seemed to be almost exclusively organized by and for white Anglo-Saxon males who seem to spend most of the rest of their time driving around the African planes dressed in safari suits.



*An impromptu meeting occurred with Indigenous Peoples and funders late one evening outside of the IUCN World Conservation Congress.
Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC*

The Shell resolution, and the increasingly close relationship between IUCN and the business community in general, also generated tension between some of the IUCN Commissions and the Secretariat. Commissions are formally independent from the Union and consist of scientists from all over the world, who use them as networks to exchange information and collaborate on an immense range of issues, from environmental education through to the food habits of a specific species of bat in Africa. As independent bodies, Commissions can also establish working groups. Thus CEESP has a working group on the Social and Environmental Accountability of the Private Sector (SEAPRISE), which has played an important role in monitoring the environmental and social behavior of corporations like Shell, and publicly denouncing the human rights violations of these companies.

Yet such work clearly clashes with the new 'corporate mentality' of IUCN (which literally offered courses on marketing and competitiveness to its membership

during the Barcelona congress). Shell representatives and other Congress members proudly walked around with buttons stating 'Nature is Our Business'. These new biodiversity businessmen welcome carbon offset markets and other dubious schemes as a great opportunity to sell 'environmental services', such as forests' carbon sequestration capacity. The fact that the Congress took place in a month marked by plunging international stocks and collapsing financial markets did not stop talk of international markets as a 'stable and reliable' source of conservation finance. Conservationists have often been blamed for being unworldly, and this Congress certainly seemed to justify the criticism. Many participants appeared to be on another planet!

It was also worrying that members felt the need to pass a resolution to remind the IUCN Secretariat that it should actually implement resolutions. This tends to make one rather skeptical about the future of the other 105 resolutions agreed in Barcelona! In the corridors, one regularly heard complaints that 'the Secretariat does whatever it wants to anyway' and that it often competes with the membership for funds. Many voiced their belief that the IUCN Secretariat should stop acting as an independent consultancy, and start supporting the work of its members instead.

In theory, IUCN is still a unique body with the ability to bring governments, NGOs, Indigenous Peoples, academics and other rights- and stakeholders together, to discuss and elaborate socially just and environmentally sound methodologies for conserving biodiversity. But if nature becomes business, it will be the power of money, rather than the power of science and mutual collaboration, that will increasingly set IUCN's agenda. Yet over the past few months we have all seen how unsustainable the power of money can be.



Participants at The Knowledge café, Effective Forest Policies : Implementing the CBD versus REDD. Photo: Langelle/GJEP-GFC

*For more information, please visit
<http://www.iucn.org>*



Calendar of Forest-Related Meetings

More information on these and other intergovernmental meetings can be found at: www.iisd.ca/linkages

The World Social Forum will take place in Belém, Brazil from 27 January to 1 February 2009. For more information, please visit: http://www.fsm2009amazonia.org.br/?set_language=en

The World Agricultural Forum will be held in Kampala, Uganda from 24 to 26 February 2009. For more information, please visit: <http://www.worldagforum.org/index.php?section=133>

Green Energy Summit 2009, dedicated to sustainable development, renewable energy and clean technologies will take place in Bangalore, India, 4 to 6 March 2009. For more information, please visit: <http://www.greenenergysummit.com/>

The second meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (CBD AHTEG) on Biodiversity and Climate Change will take place 30 March to 3 April 2009 in Helsinki, Finland. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

The fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA 5) and the seventh session of the AWG on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Protocol (AWG-KP 7) will take place from 30 March to 9 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany. For more information, please visit: <http://unfccc.int>

UNFF 8 will take place 20 April to 1 May 2009, at UN Headquarters in New York. For more information, please visit: www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html

The 30th Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place 1 to 12 June 2009 in Bonn, Germany. For more information, please visit: http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2009

The 2nd World Congress on Agroforestry will take place 23 to 29 August 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya. It is organized by ICRAF-The World Agroforestry Centre, in collaboration with UNEP and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) of the University of Florida. For more information, please visit: <http://www.worldagroforestry.org/wca2009/>

The forty-fifth meeting of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC-45) and associated sessions of the four committees will be held 9 to 14 November 2009, in Yokohama, Japan.. For more information, please visit: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

UNFCCC COP 15 and Kyoto Protocol COP/MOP 5 will take place 7 to 18 December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark. These meetings will coincide with the 31st meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies. For more information, please visit: http://unfccc.int/meetings/unfccc_calendar/items/2655.php?year=2009

The ninth Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 9) is expected to convene in the final quarter of 2009 at a location to be announced. For more information, please visit: <http://www.unccd.int>

2011 has been declared International Year of Forests. For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/2011/2011.html>

Editorial Team:

- Simone Lovera, Global Forest Coalition, Paraguay
- Ronnie Hall, Global Forest Coalition, UK
- Sandy Gauntlett, Pacific Indigenous Peoples Environment Coalition, Aotearoa/New Zealand
- Swati Shresth, Kalpavriksh, India
- Andrei Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia
- Yolanda Sikking, Global Forest Coalition, the Netherlands

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