

NGO and IPO statement at CBD's SBSTTA 7

Montreal, Canada

November 2001

The following is a joint NGO and Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPOs) statement made at the 7th meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) which took place in Montreal, Canada (November 12-16, 2001).

My name is Ricardo Carrere, from the World Rainforest Movement, and I am speaking on behalf of the Global Forest Coalition and other NGOs and IPOs present at this meeting.

I would like to begin by expressing that we have many expectations regarding the outcome of this meeting. We believe this scientific body should take the lead in providing advice on effective actions to implement the objectives of the Convention on the forest biome that harbours more than 60% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity. We sincerely hope that government delegates share this enthusiasm and that this meeting will result in concrete actions to address forest biodiversity loss.

Our expectations are in line with a sense of urgency resulting from what is happening to the world's forests and to their biodiversity, with few or no exceptions. In some cases, the problem is large scale commercial logging. In others, forest biodiversity is being affected by oil, gas and mineral exploitation, or by shrimp farming, or by conversion to agriculture, cattle raising, pulpwood or oil palm plantations. Yet in others, forest stands are being simplified to produce a narrow range of commercially valuable products.

Many of those processes are resulting in increased poverty, evictions and human rights abuses. And in all of them there is biodiversity loss.

The solutions to all those problems are difficult, but solutions need to be found. The misuse of the concept of state sovereignty must not be a justification to override local sovereignty and local peoples' rights by destroying their forests, their livelihoods and the biodiversity contained in their forests.

We hope that the CBD and particularly this Scientific Body meeting will be able to take the lead in a number of issues, among which we would like to highlight two which we believe are of crucial importance:

The first one has to do with the definition of forests. It is definitely not useful that large scale alien tree monocultures, which are themselves both a direct and an indirect cause of biodiversity loss, be considered by the CBD as being equivalent to forests. Plantations cannot be included at any point of the continuum of forest evolution. They are clearly not forests. Plantations of all types should be considered as a form of cultivation and at the same time the CBD should ensure that plantations never cause forest or other ecosystem biodiversity loss.

The second issue we would like to highlight is the need to address the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, because unless those underlying causes are addressed, forest biodiversity will continue to decrease. Many of those causes are of a global nature and need to be addressed at that level, while others are country specific. Measures to address both sets of underlying causes should be high on the agenda and concrete action