

# Mainstreaming Biodiversity

Several important decisions relating to biodiversity were taken at the UN Biodiversity Convention, attended by over 7,000 participants from 170 countries and over 400 organizations

The 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), one of the most important global tools for the conservation of the biological and cultural resources of the planet, met in Cancún, Mexico, during two weeks from 2 to 17 December 2016 to discuss topics with its current 196 member countries. The UN Biodiversity Conference was attended by over 7,000 participants, including some 4,000 delegates from 170 countries and over 400 organizations.

COP13 discussed biodiversity conservation as usual, but for the first time the environment ministries, along with institutions of agriculture, fisheries and tourism, joined in the discussions of a political panel, in the search for balance towards the sustainable use of resources in a unique policy session on 2 and 3 December, prior to the start of the meeting.

While the ministers of environment, agriculture and tourism gathered for the first time to consider subjects of the agreement like a positive and propositional action, civil society organizations (CSOs) conducted side events and sessions to discuss important subjects on the better management of the biological (including marine and continental) and cultural resources, some within the framework of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11 and 12. COP13 also touched on some critical issues related to the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, one of the protocols that form part of the CBD process.

The President of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, announced the pledge to establish three new marine Biosphere Reserves that will conserve important habitats in both the Pacific and the

Caribbean, including large parts of the Meso-American Barrier Reef and deep-water zones in the Gulf of Mexico.

The pledge will increase marine protection in Mexico to 23 per cent, more than double the 10 per cent target. He acknowledged the good nature of consultation and agreement among all sectors on the need for conservation, even though later the indigenous communities and other Mexican civil society groups questioned the consultation, pointing to the absence of prior informed consent of local and indigenous people living in those areas for the creation of the reserve.

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“We must protect and conserve biodiversity because it contributes to the survival and development of communities,” said the Mexican President, Enrique Peña Nieto.

## Aichi Targets

The debate on the Aichi Targets began on the first day of the meeting in Group 2. The big non-governmental environment organizations (including WWF, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Nature Conservancy and Conservation International, among others) presented a report that said “unless countries significantly increase their ambition through more resources and improved policies for biodiversity protection, the Aichi Targets will

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not be met, and the Planet will be increasingly undermining the long-term wellbeing of humanity”.

On the other hand, indigenous peoples and local communities, supported by other small-scale organizations, stressed the strong need for community governance models based on traditional knowledge and recognition of territorial rights in Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs), which are also needed in efforts to reach the Aichi Targets by governments.

An interesting result of a study presented by the Big International NGOs (BINGOS), which surely would warrant further discussion, is that, in general, the higher-income countries proposed weaker goals compared to the low-income countries, but showed more progress in their conservation achievement.

A number of parallel events at COP13 tried to draw the attention of governments to subjects of interest for civil society. Among them were:

#### **The Night of the Oceans**

The governments and CSOs of France, Japan, Germany, Mexico and the Convention Secretariat organized this event. Its objective was

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to draw attention to promoting the achievement of the Aichi Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals prioritizing Objective 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) concerning the oceans. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) had a space to express recognition of the importance of the contribution of small-scale fisheries, developed by local communities and indigenous peoples, to the food security of the planet, and advocated a vision oriented not only to the preservation of the ocean but to its sustainable use based on respect for human rights.

ICSF also mentioned as important, the recognition of the value and integration of traditional knowledge in the management of marine and coastal resources as well as other hydro-ecological ecosystems and the need to strengthen community and indigenous peoples' governance models and capacities for their management. The ICSF presentation also invoked the spirit of Chandrika Sharma, long-time Executive Secretary of ICSF, who fought intensively at CBD meetings to highlight the importance of involving the social sectors interested in marine conservation.

#### **Ancestral marine and inland water territories: Customary use of marine and inland waters biodiversity in Central America**

ICSF, CoopeSoliDar RL, the TICCA Consortium and the National Indigenous Bureau of Costa Rica, organized this parallel event. Jesús Amadeo Martínez, representative of the Central American Indigenous Council (CICA) and Donald Rojas of the National Indigenous Bureau of Costa Rica opened the event.

Both mentioned the need for a discussion on marine and inland water territories that transcended the biological issue to address the importance of culture in the discussions towards the achievement of the Aichi Targets. Indigenous peoples, despite having been displaced in many cases from their territories, continue to maintain ancestral and current contact with the marine biodiversity and continental waters, and these areas remain of fundamental importance for life and conservation. The event presented how important actions of indigenous peoples' struggles are being developed in relation to hydrobiological resources in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

Lastly, Alvaro Pop, Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples, thanked the participants and mentioned the importance of advancing the discussion, as well as advocating for the implementation of the FAO



Donald Rojas, President of the National Indigenous Bureau of Costa Rica, opens up the side event. Indigenous peoples, despite having been displaced in many cases from their territories, continue to maintain ancestral and current contact with the marine biodiversity

SSF Guidelines as ways to fulfill the objectives of sustainable development and the wellbeing of thousands of indigenous peoples throughout our planet.

Following up on the marine agenda of the meeting, a new set of EBSAs in the seas of East Asia, the Northwest Indian Ocean and the Northeast Indian Ocean were discussed in the framework of scientific methodologies, traditional knowledge and socioeconomic parameters dealing with human-rights issues and the concerns of local communities and indigenous peoples.

The application of marine spatial planning should be encouraged and training initiatives for it organized, it was suggested, and requests were made for further technical work by the CBD Secretariat as well as further capacity-building efforts under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative.


The issues of mitigating the impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity and habitats were considered and suggestions approved by the parties, who also called for actions to enhance understanding of the scale of the impacts, and the need to improve waste management and recycling,

and curb production and consumption of plastics. Parties also requested the CBD Secretariat to continue compiling and disseminating information on scientific research related to the adverse impacts of underwater noise on marine and coastal biodiversity.

Finally, it was suggested that the FAO SSF Guidelines be included in item 10, drawing the attention of the Parties to the Convention to this important tool and, hopefully, promoting its implementation in the future.

It was pointed out that the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing, which entered into force in 2014, has now seen Antigua and Barbuda and Argentina depositing their instruments of ratification to the Protocol during the meeting, thus bringing the total number of ratifying Parties to 93.

Decisions at COP13 were also taken on synthetic biology, invasive alien species, sustainable wildlife management and other topics under the Convention and its protocols. The decisions, in the form they were presented to the Parties for adoption, are available on the website of the Convention at [www.cbd.int/cop2016](http://www.cbd.int/cop2016).

**For more** 

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[cbd.int/conferences/2016/cop-13/documents](http://cbd.int/conferences/2016/cop-13/documents)  
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