GREENPEACE

PRECAUTION ON BIOFUELS

CBD COP9 – Briefing
May 2008

UNEP/CBD/COP/9/26:
The Potential Impacts of Biofuels on Biodiversity
UNEP/CBD/COP/9/3: Report of SBSTTA13
XIII/1. Review the implementation of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity
XIII/2. Review the implementation of the programme of work on forest biodiversity

PRECAUTION ON BIOFUELS

International Action Required Now

Greenpeace welcomes the inclusion of the pressing issue of 'biofuels' into the negotiations of COP9 CBD and calls for strong, rapid and adequate decisions on that issue. The CBD and its three objectives provide a clear framework and *de facto* mandate to regulate the negative impacts of biofuel production and consumption. The international community has to act with a precautionary approach to biofuels and stop delaying strong decisions. New scientific evidence since SBSTTA12 counters the argument by some countries that SBSTTA13 should not have made additional recommendations on biofuels. However, the rapid unfolding of negative impacts of biofuels on biodiversity and also on food security fully justifies holding a debate and taking precautionary decisions by COP9.

Urgent Crisis

The scale of current and anticipated global biofuel (diesel and ethanol) consumption threatens not only the availability of crops for food and feed, but also the integrity of remaining biodiversity in the world. For example, substituting even 10% of worldwide demand for diesel fuel for road transport would require more than three-quarters of total current global soya, palm and rapeseed oil production.

Meeting the growing demand for biodiesel is likely to take place through the expansion of palm oil plantations in countries like Indonesia and the region of Papua on the island of New Guinea. Major commodity traders are already planning significant expansion into the biodiesel infrastructure. Once established, this will increase the destruction of presently intact forest – that will also worsen climate change. Meeting only the EU projected growth in demand for vegetable oil through palm oil would require more than 15 million hectares of mature oil palm plantation. This is nearly three times the acreage that was under oil palm in Indonesia in 2005 and probably at the expense of the remaining intact forests.

Alongside subsidies, it is the amount of mandatory targets for biofuels in transport fuels in many countries that is the main driver to the rush for agrofuels. For example, in early 2007, the EU endorsed a 10% target for biofuels in transport fuels by 2020. This almost doubles the target established in the 2003 Biofuel Directive (5.75% by 2010). The increased EU target was conditional on production being 'cost effective', 'second generation available' and – currently most important – 'sustainable'. But these requirements remain largely theoretical. Many countries have also adopted biofuels binding targets (US, Canada, etc.). The Chinese

government expects that biofuels will meet 15% of its transport fuel demand by 2020. India has set a target of securing 20% of its diesel fuel from biofuels by 2012. The US, currently using 6.8 billions gallons of biofuels, has a federal target for the use of 7.5 billion gallons by 2012, with a proposal to raise this further to 36 billion gallons by 2022.

Solutions

With the urgent need to address climate change now widely recognised, bioenergy is presented as a possible solution for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Greenpeace supports the development of alternative, climate-friendly energy sources, but insists that those alternatives must be ecologically sustainable, and do not undermine other central priorities such as food provision, nor do they threaten biodiversity and ecosystems that are the best guarantee for the future of life on earth.

There are two main types of bioenergy – biomass is used to produce electricity and/or heat; biofuels are used to fuel transport. Governments of developed countries increasingly support the use of biofuels for transport, whilst emerging research indicates that emissions savings from many biofuels are uncertain – most of the mainstream biofuels are significantly less efficient than the use of biomass in stationary applications such as cogeneration.

The use of biomass in stationary applications is acceptable when the feedstock is produced under strict sustainability criteria. Potential examples are genuine agricultural and forestry residues, preferably used regionally and in cogeneration power plants. The production of biogas is an example of an efficient and potentially small-scale application that can help energy supply in remote areas, especially in some developing countries.

However, agriculture for biofuels can result in a number of unsustainable practices, including endangering natural ecosystems and local food security and even, in some cases, worsening the climate crisis. A number of governments, including Europe and the US heavily subsidise biofuels in the transport sector and implement mandatory targets, but have no policies in place to address the negative environmental and social impacts.

COP9 can show leadership in assisting Parties and other international organisations to adopt the right policies and avoid the pitfalls.

Greenpeace urges parties attending CBD COP9 to:

Immediately adopt a precautionary approach by suspending the introductions of any new supportive measures for biofuels until the following safeguards have been implemented:

- End or avoid governmental support measures (e.g., subsidies, tax redemptions or mandatory targets) for any bioenergy without strict sustainability guarantees
- Oppose all unsustainable bioenergy production
- Adopt sustainability criteria for producing bioenergy that demonstrates, minimally:
    - Considerable positive net overall GHG balance of at least 60%
    - No direct or indirect degradation of natural forests and other natural ecosystems
    - Sustainable agricultural production (e.g. no GE crops, low chemical input)
    - No threat to local food security, in particular in developing countries
- Request Parties and all stakeholders to adopt policies that ensure all sources of bioenergy meet strict sustainability criteria

- Address the direct and indirect negative impacts (through full life cycle analysis) of the production and consumption of bioenergy (in particular biofuels, mass for energy and other causes of land conversion and forest degradation) on forest ecosystems, and ensure that guidelines or standards for the production of bioenergy, in particular biofuels, take any such negative impacts into account
- Prevent the leakage or displacement effect (expansion of one activity outside forests that pushes another activity into forests)

Greenpeace requests the Executive Secretary to:

- Assess the possible impacts on biodiversity of the use of cellulose agriculture and forest residues in second-generation biofuels (although residues are per definition limited) and the use of algae in closed systems as biofuel and to provide a report to the next SBSTTA
- Assess the options (e.g. capacity limitations) for producing bioenergy without conversion of forests, either direct or indirect

Contact: Wolfgang Richert, Greenpeace International,
Tel: +31-20-718-2129 (office) / +31-6-1509-3586 (mobile)