



Bridges Trade BioRes

News, events and resources at the intersection of trade and biodiversity

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Vulnerability

TSUNAMI DISASTER MEETS TRADE, ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSES

Pledges of aid and debt relief for countries affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004 have been followed by calls for special trade measures to help them rebuild their economies. At the same time, experts have noted the role that environmental factors such as mangrove forests and coral reefs played in minimising the tsunami's damage, evoking calls for increased environmental investments to prevent future disasters.

WTO, UN suggest way forward

In a 13 January letter to all WTO Members, WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi said that

the WTO "shares part of the responsibility to assist recovery from this disaster," and asked Members to "reflect deeply and expeditiously on whether there is anything they can do at this moment in time in terms of their trade policy to help the worst affected economies to recover." While emphasising that the nature of any such measures would be up to individual governments, he observed that "obvious possible areas" would be "market access and some restraint in use of trade remedies". He urged Members to conclude the Doha Round as soon as possible, suggesting that market access in some sectors would be particularly valuable to tsunami-affected countries.

Lakshmi Puri, head of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) trade division said that rich countries should immediately introduce temporary trade measures to help tsunami-hit countries generate resources to rebuild their economies. Such measures would include temporary duty-free access to their exports, scrapping of anti-dumping duties and other restrictions, temporary work permits for their citizens, and help to rebuild trade and tourism infrastructure.

Trade measures proposed to help affected countries

Tariffs pose a significant barrier to the countries hit hardest by the tsunami. Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, the Maldives, Burma, the Seychelles and Somalia together paid close to US\$1.8 billion in duties to the US in 2003, close to three times the amount that the US has pledged in aid to the region. The Sri Lankan government is exploring the possibility of asking the US and the EU to lift duties on Sri Lankan textile and garment exports, which account for close to half of the country's export

earnings. Sri Lankan officials have said that an increase in real market access would allow the government to finance recovery from the tsunami and also help assuage fears about job losses in the country's textile sector resulting from the expiry of quotas.

In the wake of the tsunami, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) agreed to review its decision to impose anti-dumping duties on shrimp imports from Thailand and India (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 23 July 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-07-23/inbrief.htm#3>). However, this move met with opposition from the US shrimp industry.

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson similarly pledged to actively consider ways to use European trade policy to provide relief for regions and businesses affected by the tsunami. The EU is also considering reorienting trade-related technical assistance in areas such as sanitary and food safety standards so as to help businesses boost exports. The EU is also contemplating speeding up the modification, adoption and implementation of its new Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme that provides preferential access to imports from certain developing countries (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 5 November 2004; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-11-05/story1.htm>).

Mangrove forests, coral reefs saved lives

Experts, governments and non-governmental groups alike said that the tsunami's devastation was significantly reduced in those coastal areas with mangrove forests and coral reefs. Mangrove forests are a family of evergreen trees and shrubs which grow on stilt-like roots in dense thickets in coastal areas, providing both a barrier to extreme weather and a rich ecosystem for marine life. "We have observed that mangroves often served as a barrier to the fury of water," says M. S. Swaminathan, head of the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Chennai, India.

Similarly, while coral reefs "will not stop a tsunami but if they are protected and healthy, they can certainly lessen the impact of a tsunami as they absorb the force of energy of the wave," said Kristian Teleki, Managing Director of the International Coral Reef Action Network. An assessment of the actual damage to the coral reefs in the region will not be available for at least two months, according to Kristian Teleki, managing

director of the International Coral Reef Action Network.

According to John Pernetta, project director for the United Nations Environment Programme's Global Environment Facility in the South China Sea, about 80 percent of mangrove forests on Thailand's eastern seaboard and 20 percent on the western seaboard have been destroyed in the last few decades, most of it as a result of small-scale shrimp-farming. Coral reefs have similarly been destroyed, with the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network saying that 20 percent of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed and show no prospect of recovery. Countries across Southeast Asia were taking a second look at their mangroves as security from major storms and tsunamis, while Indonesia and Malaysia were actively planning replanting programs. However, experts at the FAO and US-based Mangrove Action Project warned such programs had to involve sufficient planning for a wide spectrum of mangrove species planting and consideration of sand dunes and indigenous fringe forests.

Fishing livelihoods threatened

Since many of the areas worst affected by the tsunami were fishing communities dependent on the livelihood provided by their equipment and boats, part of the recovery effort has focused on enabling communities to begin fishing again. European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has stated that the EU might send old or redundant fishing boats, which are being decommissioned as part of the EU's efforts to reduce its fishing capacities, to affected states to replace vessels destroyed by the tsunami. As well, the FAO is planning to provide essential inputs, such as boats, engines and fishing gear, to around 25,000 fisherfolk to ensure a quick re-start of small-scale fishing activities. The organisation said in a statement that an emergency coordinator and a fishery expert had been sent to Indonesia and that they were asking for around US\$10 million to finance emergency interventions in Sri Lanka over the next six months.

"Sri Lanka to Request Trade Relief," DM NEWS, 12 January 2005; "Nations Request Trade Relief," THE WASHINGTON TIMES, 11 January 2005; "EU Trade Commissioner Seeks Trade Measures to Relieve Tsunami Victims," EU Press Release, 11 January 2005; "EU May Send Old Fishing Boats to Tsunami States," REUTERS, 12 January 2005; "Sri Lanka Seeks US Tariff Cuts To Assist in Recovery from the Tsunami," INTERNATIONAL TRADE REPORTER, 13 January 2005;

"UNCTAD urges easing trade to help tsunami nations," FINANCIAL TIMES, 19 January 2005; "Indonesia to Replant Mangroves in Tsunami Defense," REUTERS, 17 January 2005; "Tsunami-Hit Nations Look To Save Mangroves," REUTERS, 17 January 2005; "FAO Calls For \$26 Million To Aid Fishing Victims Of Tsunami," SUBLEGALS, 7 January 2005; "Review of Tsunami Reef Damage to Take Months," REUTERS 13 January 2005; "Loss Of Mangrove Forests Contributed To Greater Impact Of Tsunamis!," ENN, 6 January 2005.

SIDS: MAURITIUS MEETING ADDRESSES CLIMATE CHANGE, TRADE ISSUES

Climate change and trade topped the agenda at a recent meeting on small island developing states (SIDS), held from 10-14 January at Port Louis, Mauritius. The International Meeting (IM) to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, which saw the participation of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as well as 18 presidents among the 2000 participants, concluded by adopting a "Mauritius Declaration" and the "Mauritius Strategy" for further implementing the Programme of Action. Given that the meeting took place soon after the devastating tsunami in Southeast Asia, participants emphasised the event and made linkages to the needs of SIDS in the area of climate change, which is expected to lead to an increase in extreme weather events.

The Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of SIDS covers a number of areas, including: climate change; natural and environmental disasters; management of wastes; resources, including coastal and marine; graduation from least developed country (LDC) status; and trade - globalisation and trade liberalisation.

Climate change threats to small islands

SIDS are particularly vulnerable to climate change, with large portions of the population living in low-lying areas expected to be submerged due to sea-level rise. SIDS populations and their livelihoods are also threatened by accelerating frequency of extreme weather events. In the "Mauritius Strategy" that was agreed at the meeting, participants urged the international community to cut emissions of greenhouse gases in accordance with commitments made under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Strategy also specifically calls on "Parties that have ratified the

Kyoto Protocol strongly urge all States that have not done so to ratify it in a timely manner".

While not all thought the strategy was strong enough, Gordon Bispham, director of the Barbados-based Caribbean Policy Development Centre noted that "finally, all parties have agreed that climate change is having an effect on (small islands) right now and that we need to put in place policies to reverse this".

Speaking at the meeting, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the devastation caused by the tsunami in December was a lesson for those looking at the results of climate change. "It is no longer so hard to imagine what might happen from the rising sea levels that the world's top scientists are telling us will accompany global warming." He said that "decisive measures" were necessary to prevent damage from climate change, which threaten SIDS in particular. He called for a global early warning system that would help in emergency preparations for climate change-induced extreme weather events.

Tough negotiations on trade text

During negotiations, issues related to the erosion of trade preferences and effects on SIDS were under debate. Participants also addressed the question of whether a special category for small and vulnerable economies, such as the SIDS, should be established within the WTO system. A number of SIDS pushed for it, while developed countries opposed such a designation, preferring to make commitments to help improve SIDS' trade capacities. Among statements by intergovernmental agencies, UNEP stressed that environmental issues should not be used as a reason to raise trade barriers.

On trade, the "Mauritius Strategy" acknowledges the special difficulties SIDS face in integrating into the global economy due to their small size and structural disadvantages. As such, trade liberalisation and globalisation present both opportunities and challenges, including in terms of preference erosion (i.e. loss of benefits from preferential trading arrangements due to further reductions of trade barriers at the multilateral level). The Strategy goes on to reaffirm countries' commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system. It welcomes the WTO July Package and the new resolve by Members to fulfil the development dimension of the Doha Round, and stresses the importance of facilitating effective participation by small economies such as SIDS, which often lack representation in Geneva or are involved in the challenging accession process. The trade section of

the "Mauritius Strategy" concludes by listing areas of key concern to SIDS: WTO accession; graduation from LDC status; capacity constraints; technical assistance; structural vulnerabilities; erosion of preferences; structural adjustment; the relationship between trade, environment and development; trade and food security; and lack of Geneva representation.

Additional Resources

To view the "Mauritius Declaration,"
<http://www.un.org/smallislands2005/pdf/mauritiusdeclaration.pdf>

To view the "Mauritius Strategy," visit
http://www.un.org/smallislands2005/pdf/sids_strategy.pdf

Daily coverage: <http://www.iisd.ca/sids/IM/>

ICTSD reporting: "Islands' Fears on Climate, Trade Acknowledged," REUTERS, 17 January 2005; "Support to small islands on disaster preparedness pledged in UN meeting," XINHUANET, 14 January 2005; "Summary Of The International Meeting To Review The Implementation Of The Programme Of Action For The Sustainable Development Of Small Island Developing States," ENB, 17 January 2005; "Mauritius International Meeting (BPoA+10) Press Releases," SIDS NETWORK, 10-14 January 2005.

Fisheries

WTO DEBATES SUBSIDIES; EU SETTLES ON 2005 QUOTAS

In its first submission to the WTO Negotiations Rules negotiations on fisheries subsidies, the US lent its support to the comprehensive approach to eliminating fishing subsidies promoted by the Friends of Fish, positioning itself against countries such as Japan and Korea who want to move more carefully on subsidy elimination. In related news, round-the-clock negotiations at the end of 2004 led the European Council of Fisheries Ministers to abandon stringent fishing quotas that scientists and non-governmental organisations said were necessary for the survival of the continent's fisheries.

WTO Members disagree on subsidy approach

At the 16 December meeting of the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules, Members discussed a submission from the US (TN/RL/W/169, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>) expressing its support for a November 2004 proposal by Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, New Zealand, the Philippines and Peru which would have Members first broadly prohibit fisheries subsidies and subsequently negotiate

appropriate exceptions to the ban (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 19 November 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-11-19/story2.htm>). According to the US submission, the "primary focus of the negotiations should be to strengthen disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute directly to overcapacity and overfishing", and the November proposal's 'top-down' approach "offers a simple, administrable, enforceable and realistic structure" for doing so. In addition to the six sponsors of that proposal, Australia, Brazil, Pakistan, and Venezuela expressed support for the US submission.

Japan opposed the proposal for a general prohibition on fisheries subsidies, and once again argued for a 'bottom up' approach that would require Members to evaluate each type of subsidy and slate it for preservation or elimination depending on its effect (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 8 October 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-10-08/story2.htm>). The American submission countered that the Japanese approach would "contemplate a very small number of prohibited subsidies and a large number of permitted subsidies", and that it "could potentially lead to a set of disciplines weaker than the current rules".

Korea, which supports the Japanese approach, said that the fisheries subsidies talks were proceeding far too quickly given that the issue was only put on the WTO agenda at the November 2001 Doha Ministerial Conference. On the other hand, the EC said that the simple fact that Members generally agree that harmful subsidies must stop already represented significant progress. It also urged participants not to take hard-line positions in favour of the top-down approach on the grounds that the alternative approach might also yield results. India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and China emphasised developing countries' need for special and differential treatment.

EU Fisheries quotas agreed

Under the new quotas agreed upon after all-night negotiating sessions, the European Council of Fisheries Ministers decided to decrease total allowable catch (TAC) quotas by, on average, 10 percent. The Council abandoned the European Commission's controversial December proposal to ban cod fishing in selected areas of the North Sea, Kattegat, Skagerrak, the eastern English Channel, the west of Scotland and the Irish Sea, owing to resistance from Britain, whose Scottish fisheries would have been adversely affected (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 20 December 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-12-20/story2.htm>).

However, ministers agreed to close three cod fishing zones in the Baltic Sea. The Council also agreed to set up a long-term management plan for the 'sustainable exploitation' of cod in the Baltic, while the Commission said it would present proposals as soon as possible to improve control measures in relation to the recovery plan for cod.

The final quotas were significantly more lenient than those originally proposed by the European Commission and scientists who were concerned that overfishing could threaten the survival of certain species. EU Commissioner Joe Borg, responsible for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, said that the Council "genuinely looked for alternatives to drastic cuts in either fishing possibilities or fishing days without putting stock recovery in danger. The result is less fishing, more protection for the stocks that most need it and greater respect for the rules."

However, environmental group WWF criticised the deal, saying that the ministers had failed to take decisive action to preserve threatened species. "We all want to secure a long term future for commercial stocks and a healthier marine environment, but avoiding taking action is not going to help anyone as it will jeopardise stock recovery," it said in a statement. Also, according to one EU diplomat, some national delegates seemed surprised at how quickly the Commission had ditched key elements of its proposal.

Simplicity called for in European fisheries policy

Also during the Council meeting, the European Commission presented a communication that aims to simplify the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Targets to achieve this goal were recognised as improving the clarity of existing texts, simplification and accessibility; reducing costs and constraints for public administrations; and alleviating administrative costs and constraints for fishermen. The Commission suggested that a consultation process be launched to involve stakeholders in developing a multi-annual action plan to make the CFP easier to understand and implement.

Additional Resources

2005 EU quotas: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2004/com2004_0785en01.pdf.

European Commission Communication: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2004/com2004_0820en01.pdf

ICTSD reporting: "Outcome of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council -- 21-22 December 2004," EU MEMO 04/306, 22 December 2004; "EU Cuts 2005 Fish Quotas to Save Depleted Species," REUTERS, 23 December 2004.

In Brief

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES REACH LANDMARK POTATO AGREEMENT

Six indigenous communities from Peru reached a groundbreaking agreement with the Lima-based International Potato Center (IPC) that recognises the communities' rights over the native potato strains and associated traditional knowledge. This "is a first legal sign of the restoration of rights that indigenous people once had," said Alejandro Argumedo from the Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (ANDES) which helped to broker the deal. He pointed to the importance of potatoes as a food source and a cultural symbol in Peru which has the highest diversity for potato genetic resources in the world. The agreement requires signatories to ensure that the genetic resources and knowledge should remain in the custody of the communities and "do not become subject to intellectual property rights in any form". "These indigenous people are against patents," Argumedo stressed, adding that patents "represent a model of property that does not fit into their worldview" which is based on exchanging and sharing information openly. The IPC is one of 16 Future Harvest Centres around the world that aim to work towards increasing food security, reducing poverty, and protecting the environment in the developing countries.

The Agreement is available at <http://www.grain.org/bio-ipr/?id=429>.

"Potato Capital of the world offers up new recipe," IPS, 18 January 2005.

EU CONSIDERS TIMBER CERTIFICATION SCHEME

At the 22 December Council of agriculture ministers, EU members debated a European Commission draft regulation that would create a voluntary certification scheme for timber imports into the EU. Proposed under the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) adopted by the European Commission in May 2003 (see BRIDGES Weekly, 23 May 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-05-28/inbrief.htm>) and augmented by a set of measures adopted in July 2004 (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 23 July 2004, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-07-23/inbrief.htm>), the plan would allow countries to sign up for voluntary partnerships with the EU through which its legal imports into the EU would be accompanied by paperwork showing the timber comes from approved forests. After the bilateral agreement has been signed, the EU would refuse

timber imports from that state unless they had been certified as legal. The plan -- which the EU notes would be WTO-compliant because the partnerships are voluntary -- would seek to stop illegal logging and associated trade in illegal timber which the EU says are associated with environmental damage, corruption, bad governance and losses in government revenue in developing countries.

ICTSD reporting; "EU Divided on Plans to Curb Illegal Timber Trade," REUTERS, 22 December 2004; "Outcome of Agriculture/Fisheries Council of December 2004," EU MEMO MEMO/04/304, 22 December 2004; "Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) - Commission acts to combat illegal logging," EU Press Release IP/04/980, 20 July 2004.

INDIAN PATENT ACT REVISIONS RAISE FARMERS' CONCERNS

A decree issued by the Indian government to bring the country into compliance with its obligations under the WTO Agreement on Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) has raised concerns that it could take control of seeds away from farmers and put access to life-saving drugs for diseases such as AIDS out of the reach of poor people and. The 26 December Ordinance was issued by the Indian government to meet the 1 January 2005 deadline for TRIPS compliance in the drugs, pharmaceuticals, agro-chemicals, food and biotechnology sectors that had been left out of two earlier amendments to India's 1970 Patent Law. Among others, concerns were raised that the new amendment has not categorically excluded seeds developed by novel means and has introduced ambiguity regarding what micro-organisms and microbiological processes, including biotechnological products and processes, could be patentable. This led to concerns and mobilisation from farmers across the country who said that the ordinance could restrict their ability to save seeds and oblige them to pay royalties to seed companies. Under Indian law, the ordinance will lapse if lawmakers do not approve it within six months. Legislators will consider the bill during the budget session of Parliament that begins in February. For more information, including the medicine-related aspects of the new bill, see BRIDGES Weekly 9 January 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/05-01-19/story2.htm>

ICTSD Reporting; "India: Major Amendments In The Indian Patents Law," LEX ORBIS, 12 January 2005; "Farmers oppose patent ordinance," FINANCIAL EXPRESS, 11 January 2005; "New amendments to Patents Act, 1970 to affect farm sector," FINANCIAL EXPRESS, 3 January 2005.

ISAAA REPORT: BIOTECH CROPS UP BY 20 PERCENT

The global area of biotech crops continued to grow for the ninth consecutive year in 2004 with a yearly growth rate of 20 percent compared with 15 percent in 2003, according to the annual report of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) released on 12 January. The estimated global area of approved biotech crops for 2004 was 81.0 million hectares, equivalent to 200 million acres, up from 67.7 million hectares or 167 million acres in 2003, with more than one third (34 percent) of that area grown in developing countries. Biotech crops were grown by approximately 8.25 million farmers in 17 countries, namely the US, Argentina, Canada, Brazil, China, Paraguay, India, South Africa, Uruguay, Australia, Romania, Mexico, Spain, the Philippines, Colombia, Germany and Honduras. Although Bulgaria and Indonesia did not grow biotech crops in 2004 owing to 'expiry of permits' used to grow such crops in 2003, Paraguay joined the group for the first time in 2004 and already grows two percent of the world's genetically modified crops.

According to the ISAAA report, absolute growth in biotech crop area between 2003 and 2004 was, for the first time, higher for developing countries (7.2 million hectares) than for industrial countries (6.1 million hectares), with the percentage growth almost three times as high (35 percent) in the developing countries, compared with the industrial countries (13 percent). The report notes that the two main biotechnology traits continue to be herbicide tolerance (72 percent) and insect resistance (19 percent) and that soybean, maize, cotton and canola continue to be the four main commercialised crops. The report concludes by predicting the expansion of biotechnology crops in 2005 up to 150 million hectares, with up to 15 million farmers growing crops in up to 30 countries.

"Preview: Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/GM Crops: 2004," ISAAA Brief 32, 12 January 2005, available at <http://www.isaaa.org>.

MILLENNIUM PROJECT CALLS FOR BALANCING TRADING SYSTEM

The UN Millennium Project -- an independent advisory project commissioned by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to propose the best strategies for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) -- has reproached the global trading system

for being "unbalanced against the interests of developing countries". The group's final report, entitled "A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals", calls for both expanding market access for low-income countries and providing them with "aid for trade" -- helping them build the infrastructure and supply-side capacity that they need in order to effectively participate in international trade. The report exhorts rich countries to lower barriers to imports, liberalise their agricultural sectors, and ratchet up development aid to 0.54 percent of national income by 2015. The report's authors emphasise the need to help developing countries adjust to the impacts of trade liberalisation, including the erosion of trade preferences. They also describe liberalisation in 'mode 4' of global services trade (temporary movement of people to supply services) as a "major source of gains for developing countries, capable of bringing more benefits to them than perhaps any other part of the Doha Agenda". The group also points the importance of making special & differential treatment more effective and operational. Observers welcomed the report, but stressed the need for countries to muster the necessary political will to put the recommendations into practice.

The report is available at <http://unmp.forumone.com/>. For more information on the Millennium Development Goals, please see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

"Millennium goals," THE INDEPENDENT, 18 January 2005; "Whatever it takes," ECONOMIST, 18 January 2005; "Way exists to slash poverty, but is there the will?," IPS, 17 January 2005; "Rich must keep aid promises, says UN," GUARDIAN, 18 January 2005.

PUBLIC HEARING TACKLES REACH LEGISLATION

Ahead of the first reading of the EU's proposed system of Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) in the European Parliament, some 1000 participants from civil society groups, industry, journalists, Members of the European Parliament (MEP) and the public came together at a public hearing on 19 January to debate the workability of the chemicals legislation. Among others, participants raised issues related to the impacts of REACH on industry competitiveness, the need for equal competition with non-EU countries, compliance with WTO rules, the special concerns of small and medium sized enterprises and the need to minimise animal testing. The hearing also discussed the UK-Hungary

proposal to simplify the registration procedure by allowing companies to form consortia to share the cost of registration (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 3 December 2004; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/04-12-03/inbrief.htm#3>). It remained unclear, however, whether the proposals would be revised ahead of the first reading in light of recent impact assessments, as called for by some MEPs. As Enterprise and Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen noted, the assessments presented "variations so great that it is scarcely possible to come to conclusions."

"Parliament kicks off debate on chemicals," EURACTIV, 21 January 2005.

Events & Resources

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar, <http://www.trade-environment.org/page/calendar.htm>.

Coming up in the next two weeks

18-22 January, Kobe-Hyogo, Japan: **WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISASTER REDUCTION**. This conference is organised by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat and aims to increase support for the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies at all levels and in particular its integration into development planning processes. The conference is the culmination of a the ten-year review of disaster reduction activities since the first World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, which took place in Yokohama, Japan in 1994. For further information contact Helena Molin Valdes, tel: +41-22-917-2776; fax: 917-0563; email: molINVALDES@un.org; Internet: <http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/>

24-28 January, Paris, France: **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIODIVERSITY: SCIENCE AND GOVERNANCE**. This conference is sponsored by UNESCO and organised by the French Ministry of Research and New Technologies. The Conference aims to contribute to and strengthen the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, other relevant international conventions, international organisations and programmes, including through enhancing public opinion about scientific and social issues connected to biodiversity. The debate will highlight the link between biodiversity and sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and the Millennium Development Goals. For further information contact the conference secretariat, email: biodiv2005paris@recherche.gouv.fr; Internet: <http://www.recherche.gouv.fr/biodiv2005paris/en/index.htm>

26-27 January, Montreal, Canada: COORDINATION MEETING FOR GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENTING OR FUNDING BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES. Organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. For further information, contact the Secretariat, tel: +1 514 288 2220; fax: 288 6588; email: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=BSCMCB-01>

26-28 January, Gauteng, South Africa: INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON AFRICA WATER LAWS - PLURAL LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR RURAL WATER MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA. This workshop will compare ongoing national policy and legal reform in Africa, and their direct and indirect impacts on small-scale rural water development, use, and management, as well as discuss general and site-specific recommendations and guidelines for water management and legal pluralism that foster sustainable development for the poor in Africa. For further information contact Barbara van Koppen, tel: 27-12-845-9100; email: b.vankoppen@cgiar.org; Internet: <http://www.nri.org/waterlaw/workshop.htm>

26-30 January, Davos, Switzerland: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM 2005. The 2005 World Economic Forum will focus on the theme, "Taking Responsibility for Tough Choices." Issues on the agenda include: achieving global and regional stability; enabling economic growth; building the "great company"; navigating uncertainty; and balancing global and local considerations. Sessions will be chaired by such high-profile figures as Microsoft's Bill Gates and Citigroup's Charles Prince. For further information, contact the Forum Secretariat, tel: +41-22-869-1212; fax: +41-22-786-2744; email: annualmeeting@weforum.org; Internet: <http://www.weforum.org>.

26-31 January, Porto Alegre, Brazil: WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2005. The World Social Forum (WSF) is organised by a Brazilian Organizing Committee (BOC) which was set up by 23 organisations in order to debate ways to build globalisation in solidarity, while respecting universal human rights, and is grounded in democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples. For further information contact the World Social Forum, email: fsminfo@forumsocialmundial.org.br; Internet: <http://www2.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

29 January-2 February, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: ENVIRONMENT 2005. This conference, organised by Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency (ERWDA) and General Exhibitions Corporation (GEC) will address policy issues related to sustainable transportation. The three themes of the workshop are Sustainable Transportation in Developing Countries: Challenges and Prospects; Transportation, Environment and Health: Defining the

Linkages; and Promotion of Sustainable Transportation: Role of Donors. For further information contact the Environment 2005 team; tel: +971 2 4446900; fax: 4446135; Internet: <http://www.ee-uac.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.homepage>.

31 January - 5 February, The Hague, the Netherlands: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER FOR FOOD AND ECOSYSTEMS. Organised by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Government of the Netherlands, this conference will provide a high-level platform to help governments identify management practices, share practical lessons learned and determine the enabling environment for harmonizing food production and ecosystem management with a view to implementing internationally-agreed commitments. For further information contact Mathieu Pinkers, email: m.j.h.p.pinkers@minlnv.nl; Internet: <http://www.fao.org/ag/wfe2005/>

Other Upcoming Events

7-8 February, London, England: GLOBAL TOURISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY: MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND BUSINESS RISKS. This conference is organised by the Royal Institute of International Affairs in association with the World Travel & Tourism Council. The major challenges and opportunities of doing business in tourism will be discussed by leaders from the international tourism industry, various governments, and experts in international relations. Sessions will include topics such as the sustainability of tourism growth, tourism and the environment, and developing tourism economies. For further information contact Georgina Wright; tel: +44 (0)20 7957 5729; fax: 7321 2045; email: conferences@chathamhouse.org.uk; Internet: <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/index.php?id=5>.

23-25 February, Edinburgh, United Kingdom: EVOLUTION OF THE LIFE SCIENCE INDUSTRIES CONFERENCE. This conference, hosted by the Centre for Social and Economic Research on Innovation in Genomics (Innogen), will bring together speakers who will give their views on the evolution of life science industries in developing countries, policies for promotion of the life sciences, and the impact of ethical and stakeholder pressure on innovation. Several sessions will be held addressing topics such as the regulation of the life sciences in agriculture and food-related industry sectors, the international evolution of the agro-biotechnology industry, and globalisation and the international governance of life sciences. For further information contact Innogen; tel: +44 (0)131 651 1180; fax: 651 1746; email: innogen2005@ed.ac.uk; Internet: www.innogen.ac.uk/conference.

5-7 March 2005, Turin, Italy: THE ROLE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR THE

CHARACTERISATION AND CONSERVATION OF CROP, FORESTRY, ANIMAL AND FISHERY GENETIC RESOURCES. Co-organised by the FAO Working Group on Biotechnology. Presentations will cover topics such as the status of the world's agrobiodiversity, the status of cryopreservation technologies and the use of molecular markers for genebanks, investigating gene flow and for genetic characterisation of agricultural populations. For further information contact the organising secretariat, tel: +39 011 660 0187; fax: 660 0708; email: mail@fobiotech.org, Internet: www.fobiotech.org/FAO_2005.htm.

17-20 March, Geneva, Switzerland: 2ND ALTERNATIVE WORLD WATER FORUM. The forum is organised by an International Committee made up of members of the World Water Contract, of the World Coalition against the Privatisation of Water, and a Swiss committee composed of representatives of Swiss NGO's. The objective of this forum is to further develop and promote public policy and institutions that will provide all human beings access to potable water and have water management done in a sustainable manner. For further information contact the Secretariat of Fame 2005, tel: +41 (0)22 320 18 03; fax: 320 18 23; email: secretariat@fame2005.org; Internet: http://www.fame2005.org/article.php3?id_article=126.

29 May - 1 June, Montréal, Canada: GLOBAL DEMOCRACY 2005: CIVIL SOCIETY VISIONS AND STRATEGIES. The Montréal International Forum initiated this four day conference to bring together more than 700 participants to create discussions and collaboration between citizens, governments, representatives from the business community, and others. These participants will use different visions of global democracy to identify strategies to achieve global democracy and increase the awareness of the meaning and importance of global democracy. For further information contact the G05 Secretariat, tel: +1 514 499 9468; fax: 987 1567; email: registration@g05.org; Internet: <http://www.g05.org>.

Fellowships

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND PUBLIC POLICY FOR 2005-2006. The Science, Technology, and Public Policy Program (STPP) at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA) is currently accepting applications for pre-doctoral, post-doctoral, and mid-career fellowships for the 2005-2006 academic year. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2005. For further information visit: <http://bcsia.ksg.harvard.edu/stpp/fellowships>

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section,

please forward a copy or review by the BRIDGES staff to hbaumuller@ictsd.ch.

2005 GENEVA DECLARATION ON TRADE & ENVIRONMENT. By EcoLomics International, January 2005. This declaration proposes a ten-point action plan for the WTO aimed at reinvigorating discussions and negotiations on trade and the environment that are currently stalled because of a lack of interest and urgency among member states. For further information and to access the declaration visit <http://www.ecolomics-international.org/>

ACCOMMODATING MEAS IN TRADE AGREEMENTS, by Kevin R. Gray, 204. The paper examines different methods to accommodate multilateral environmental agreements in international trade agreements. Several options are discussed with the overall conclusion being that they all have merits and are best used in the context of the actual agreement and are suitable to the characteristics of the parties. In addition, a combination of the various approaches may be needed in light of the negotiating circumstances. Available at http://www.iddri.org/iddri/telecharge/gie/communication/s/4e_gray.pdf.

PROGRESS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS FOR PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, published in the Journal of AgroBiotechnology Management and Economics, 2004. The issue includes articles on: plant biotechnology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America; Bt cotton technology in India and worldwide; development and cultivation of genetically modified (GM) rice, potato, papaya, and cassava in developing countries; and consumer acceptance and social constraints. The special issue is available online at the link below. Available at <http://www.agbioforum.org/>.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD LABELLING AND THE WTO AGREEMENTS, by David Morgan and Gavin Goh in Review of European Community & international environmental law (RECIEL) 13 (3, 2004) : 306-19. This article examines the WTO implications for the labelling and product tracing of GM food, with respect to the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT 1994). It focuses on: the application of the WTO agreements where labelling and product-tracing requirements are stated to pursue multiple policy objectives; whether GM foods are 'like products' for the purposes of Article 2(1) of the TBT Agreement and Article III(4) of GATT 1994; and the likely impact of labelling and product-tracing requirements for the competitive opportunities of GM food, and the implications for the 'no less favourable' treatment requirement in Article 2(1) of the TBT Agreement and Article III(4) of GATT 1994.

THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE AND THE CONCEPT OF PRECAUTION. By Sandin Per in *Environmental Values* 13 (2004): 461-475. The paper provides an improved conceptual foundation for the precautionary principle debate in the form of an explication of the concept of precaution. Distinctions between precaution and two related concepts, prevention and pessimism, are briefly discussed. The concept of precaution is analysed in terms of precautionary actions. It is argued that precautionary actions are implicitly assumed to be precautionary with respect to something, and that this assumption should be made explicit. A definition of a precautionary action involving three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions (intentionality, uncertainty and reasonableness) is proposed, and the implications of this analysis for the debate on the precautionary principle are discussed. For further information, see <http://www.erca.demon.co.uk/EV/EV1320.html>.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS AND FOOD SECURITY IN THE SOUTH, by Philippe Cullet in the *Journal of World Intellectual Property*, 7 (3, 2004): 261-286. While the international legal and policy framework proposed in the 1980s emphasised the free availability and transfer of germplasm, today, the emphasis is on appropriation through sovereign rights and intellectual property rights. Existing legal instruments do not give much consideration to the rights of farmers, even though their tremendous role in agricultural management is recognised. This article addresses this specific aspect and examines ways in which developing countries can re-balance the law and policy framework by introducing legal protection to recognize and promote farmers' contributions to food security and sustainable agricultural management. The starting point for this enquiry is the Trips Agreement, but this article also explores other avenues for sui generis protection, which takes into account other relevant treaties in the field. For further

information see

http://www.wernerpubl.com/Volume_pro/abstract_vol7no3.htm#intellectual or contact info@ielrc.org.

POLLUTION HAVENS AND FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT: DIRTY SECRET OR POPULAR MYTH?, by Beata Samaryska Javorcik and Shang-Jin Wei in *Contributions to Economic Analysis & Policy*, 3 (2, 2004). The article focuses on investment flows from multiple countries to 25 economies in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, taking into account information on both the polluting-intensity of the potential investor and the environmental stringency in the potential host country. The authors find no support for the "pollution haven" hypothesis, concluding that firms in less polluting industries are more likely to invest in the region. The article also does not find any systematic evidence that FDI from "dirtier" industries is more likely to go to countries with weak environmental regulations. Available at <http://www.bepress.com/bejeap/contributions/vol3/iss2/art8/>.

INFLUENCE OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS. By Svanhild-Isabelle Batta Bjornstand, 2004. The report focuses on the development of Farmers' Rights in developing countries as a response to strict intellectual property rights already established in developed countries. It addresses two main questions: To what extent did the developing countries have a breakthrough for their demands for Farmers' Rights in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture? How can the negotiation outcome regarding Farmers' Rights be explained? Available at <http://www.digbib.uio.no/publ/statsvitenskap/2004/18715/18715.pdf>.

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