



Bridges Trade BioRes

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

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Trade and Environment

TRADE FEATURES PROMINENTLY AT UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL

At a recent meeting, the new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Achim Steiner and WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy -- echoed by a number of environment ministers and other high-level participants -- called for improving the synergies between the trade and environment regimes.

In addition to Lamy, several heads of UN agencies attended the 24th Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-24/GMEF), held from 5 to 9 February in Nairobi, Kenya.

Through a series of panel discussions and interactive roundtables, participants discussed globalisation and the environment and UN reform. While participants continued to be divided on the need to establish a comprehensive new UN environment organisation, they generally agreed on the need for better coordination between trade and environment policy-making processes.

The UN General Assembly established the Governing Council in 1972 as a forum for the international community to address major and emerging environmental policy issues.

Lamy, Chirac champion environmental sustainability

Speaking at the GC plenary in Nairobi, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy referred to sustainable development as central to the WTO and urged continued support from the environmental community in bringing the WTO Doha Round of negotiations to a successful conclusion. This would "tear down the barriers that stand in the way of trade in clean technologies and services" as well as reduce "the environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies that are leading to overproduction and harmful fisheries subsidies which are encouraging over-fishing and depleting the world's fish stock," he said.

Lamy emphasised that ongoing trade negotiations have a potential to facilitate a more efficient global allocation of resources. He stressed, however, that "for this efficient allocation to truly materialise, we all know that resources must be properly priced to start with - that externalities would have to be internalised. In today's world, our policies are not fully synchronised."

On the relations between trade liberalisation and environmental protection, Lamy noted that the WTO and UNEP are driven by their respective member states and that members should seek

coherence, starting at the national level.

President Jacques Chirac of France, speaking at the Paris Conference for Global Ecological Governance just prior to the UNEP Governing Council, also called for full-cost pricing and clarity in trade rules.

He championed the idea of a new UN Environment Organisation (UNEO), sending a strong message to the UNEP Governing Council. According to Chirac, "our international policy-making structure is ill-suited to the crucial issue of the 21st century, namely the environment. A new industrial revolution lies ahead - the sustainable development revolution... It will mean cutting pollution; including environmental quality in calculating GDP; and pricing natural resources fairly." To achieve this, he stressed the need for clear and fair competition rules, "either the international community knuckles down, or there will be an environmental war."

Chirac has previously supported the idea of imposing so called border tax adjustments to imports from countries that do not sign up to a future international treaty on climate change (see Bridges Weekly, 22 November 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-11-22/story2.htm>).

Ministerial roundtables provide food for thought on trade

Six ministerial roundtables that took place in a new, interactive format introduced at the 24th GC/GMEF examined opportunities and challenges arising in the context of globalisation and the role of UNEP and governments in that respect. Ministers suggested that UNEP contribute substantially to the global trade dialogue, including through strengthened collaboration with the WTO. They called upon governments to promote policy coherence between national environment, trade and sectoral (e.g. agriculture) ministries and to reduce or eliminate subsidies that distort prices of natural resources.

Delegates called upon UNEP to contribute to the dialogue on trade to help shape trade-related rules and institutions that affect the environment. Actions by UNEP would also include working with the WTO on the mutual supportiveness of trade and environment to ensure the benefits of environment on trade and trade on environment, respectively. Delegates suggested that the international community strengthen international

environmental governance to respond to globalisation processes and to ensure greater parity among international organisations promoting sustainable development (e.g. multilateral environmental agreements and the WTO).

Trade-related institutions also featured in discussions on the reform of the UN. Delegates pointed out that a reformed UN institution for the environment -- a possible UNEO -- should have closer relations with the World Bank and the WTO. They noted that the increased recognition that environmental issues are interlinked not only with development and sustainable growth, but also with agriculture trade, health and security have increased the need for global environmental leadership.

Additional resources

Speech at the UNEP GC by Pascal Lamy
http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/sppl_e/sppl54_e.htm

Paris conference "Call for Action"
<http://www.citoyensdelaterre.fr/conference/?PARIS-CALL-FOR-ACTION>

For daily reporting and a summary of GC-24/GMEF, see IISD Reporting Services at
<http://www.iisd.ca/unepegc/24unepgc/>

ICTSD reporting; "Environment Ministers Rise to the Challenge of Globalization and UN Reform," UNEP RELEASE, 9 February 2007; ENB Vol. 16 No. 60, 12 February 2007.

Intellectual Property

DISCLOSURE OF ORIGIN AGAIN ON THE TRIPS COUNCIL AGENDA

At a recent meeting of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Council, countries largely reiterated known positions on the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Meanwhile, informal consultations on how to move the issue forward are ongoing, following the formal relaunch of the Doha Round at the WTO (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 2 February 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-02-02/story1.htm>).

The need for implementing effective international measures to prevent the 'theft' of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge (TK) -- often referred to as 'biopiracy' -- has been a matter of concern for many developing countries. To address

this issue, the countries have proposed an amendment to the TRIPS Agreement. This would entail incorporating a requirement to disclose the origin of genetic resources and associated TK in patent applications along with evidence of prior informed consent and benefit sharing (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 16 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-16/story3.htm>). They argue that such a requirement would be necessary to ensure that the TRIPS Agreement did not undermine the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

At the 13 February meeting of the TRIPS Council in Geneva, the group of developing countries -- Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, India, Pakistan, Peru, Thailand, Tanzania, Ecuador and South Africa -- that has proposed a provisional article on disclosure (Article 29bis - Disclosure of Origin of Biological Resources and/or Associated Traditional Knowledge) repeated their call for the TRIPS Agreement to be amended. They said they now were ready to proceed with text-based negotiations.

A number of African countries took the floor to support the disclosure of origin proposal, and said they were considering becoming co-sponsors. Brazil welcomed this move, noting that it would significantly enhance the support for a potential amendment of the TRIPS Agreement.

At the TRIPS Council, other countries -- including Australia, New Zealand and Canada -- said it was too early to discuss issues such as bio piracy and disclosure of origin requirements. Some, such as the EU, were of the opinion that the TRIPS Council was not the appropriate forum for the discussion, preferring the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and its Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge (IGC). The EU has previously issued a proposal within the WIPO IGC based on the EC Directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions. The proposal provided for a mandatory requirement to disclose the country of origin of the genetic resources and associated knowledge in all patent applications, for instance by amending the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), Patent Law Treaty (PLT) or European Patent Convention (EPC). It also included provisions for prior informed consent and equitable benefit sharing.

Norway has also issued its own communication last year advocating the need for a disclosure requirement (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 16 June

2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-16/story3.htm>). The US takes the opposite view and argues that although the TRIPS Agreement does not include provisions to protect genetic resources from misappropriation and theft, this absence does not indicate a conflict between the CBD and the TRIPS Agreement. Korea and Japan also oppose an amendment to the TRIPS Agreement.

Following the TRIPS Council some negotiators speculated that -- given the deep divisions between the developing countries and the US -- the EU might possibly become the bridge builder with regard to a decision on whether or not a disclosure requirement should be introduced into the TRIPS Agreement.

Discussions on a disclosure of origin requirement and access and benefit-sharing are also taking place within the CBD framework (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 2 February 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-02-02/story4.htm>). The focus on disclosure of origin differs between the two forums, with the CBD process set to establish an international ABS regime. Following the TRIPS Council, one delegate speculated that if countries could agree on an ABS regime under the CBD, this would add credibility to the argument for a disclosure of origin requirement within the TRIPS Agreement.

Over the following weeks, WTO Deputy Director-General Rufus Yerxa will meet informally with ambassadors and intellectual property negotiators from individual delegations to determine how best to proceed.

ICTSD Reporting; "TRIPS Meeting: Boost to IP Issues As Part of Resumed Trade Talks, US Submits Enforcement Proposal", IP WATCH 14 February 2007.

Biotechnology

GMO UPDATE: USDA CRITICISED, EU CITIZENS WEARY OF GM FEED, BIOTECH IN AFRICA

US Courts Critical of USDA GM Approvals

US federal courts have handed down two decisions in the last weeks chiding the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for not properly evaluating the environmental impact of genetically engineered (or modified, GM) crops before permitting field trials. The courts ordered the USDA to halt approval of all new field trials of genetically engineered crops

until more thorough environmental reviews are conducted, and ruled that past approvals were illegal.

The first case, decided on 5 February, involved trials of herbicide-resistant grasses manufactured by Monsanto and the Scotts Company. A second ruling was handed down on 14 February over genetically engineered Roundup Ready alfalfa, also manufactured by Monsanto. Plaintiffs in the second case said they would ask for an injunction on future sales or plantings of the modified alfalfa. Monsanto said it would explore its legal options.

Both cases were filed by a coalition of farmers, consumers, and environmentalists led by the Center for Food Safety. They allege that the major threat of genetically engineered crops is genetic drift, whereby pollen from the modified plant can transfer traits to organic crops and native plants from wind, workers clothes, or shared equipment.

EU May Reconsider GM Labelling

On 8 February Greenpeace submitted a petition to EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou signed by one million EU citizens demanding compulsory labelling of milk, eggs, meat, and other products produced by animals fed with genetically modified crops. The EU currently requires processed foods to be labelled if they contain over 0.9 percent GM ingredients, however it leaves products derived from animals raised on GM feed from any labelling requirements.

More than 90 percent of the EU's imports of GM crops are used in animal feed. Feed manufacturers argue that the need to import feed materials makes it impossible to supply non- GM feed on a broad scale. Trading partners, notably the US, argue that any further restrictions would unfairly limit access to the European market.

Upon receiving the petition, Commissioner Kyprianou said "A petition supported by one million citizens shows strong interest in this issue. We will look into the matter again. We will look into the science ... to see if what is asked of us would be justified." Until now, The European Commission has not considered such labelling necessary.

African Leaders Sign Biotech Development Plan

African heads of state designated 2007 as Africa's year for scientific innovations at the Tenth Executive Council Session of the African Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 26 January to 2 February. The African leaders agreed to work together to develop a 20-year African Biotechnology Strategy with specific regional technology goals to be realized collectively through regional groupings. The strategy also aims to develop and coordinate national and regional biotechnology safety and application regulations. The goal is to reconcile the interests of scientists, industry, environmentalists, and civil society in often controversial biotechnology issues, such as the use of genetically modified crops.

Calestous Juma, chairperson of the African Union's high-level panel on biotechnology, said during his keynote speech that "the real challenge is how to use international trade and technology cooperation as critical tools for enhancing regional stability."

The African heads of state issued a declaration on 2 February that committed African leaders to promote science and technology throughout Africa through increased funding for research and development and encouraging young people to take up studies in science, technology, and engineering. The declaration also strongly urged all AU countries to allocate at least one percent of their GDP to research and development by 2020. A related decision will give scientists diplomatic passports to travel around Africa without hindrance.

The AU summit also saw the creation of a Pan-African intellectual property organisation, consolidating the two organisations currently in charge of intellectual property in Africa, to protect indigenous innovations.

African Civil Society Criticises Biotech Initiative

In related news, seventy non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from 12 African countries issued a joint statement at the conclusion of the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya accusing the Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa (AGRA), a major initiative of the Gates/Rockefeller Foundation, of trying to make African agriculture dependant on expensive, harmful chemicals, hybrid seeds, and genetically modified crops. The Alliance, launched in October 2006 (see Bridges Trade

BioRes, 6 October 2006, <http://www.icts.org/biores/06-10-06/inbrief.htm#6>), will initially invest US\$150 million, seeking to develop seeds and methods to help African farmers obtain the highest yields possible to combat hunger on the continent.

The NGOs said Africa's wealth of biodiversity and traditional agricultural knowledge is threatened by the programme at a time when it is needed most, due to challenges posed by climate change.

Additional resources:

The US District Court decision on International Center for Technology Assessment, et al. v. Mike Johanns, Secretary, USDA, et al. http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/pubs/GTBC_Doc_94_Opinion%202-5-07.pdf

Greenpeace GM food petition press release and text <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/releases/1-million-europeans-call-for-g>

Decisions of the African Union Executive Council meeting <http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/Conferences/Past/2007/January/sunmit/doc/Decisions%20-%2010th%20Ordinary%20Session%20of%20the%20Executive%20Council.pdf>

Text and signatories of the statement made at the World Social Forum by African NGOs <http://www.foodfirst.org/node/1610>

"Foreign organizations interfering with farming technologies," THE STANDARD, 30 January 2007; "African leaders set guidelines for scientific growth," SCIDEV.NET, 5 February 2007; "AU backs 'diplomatic passports for scientists,'" SCIDEV.NET, 30 January 2007; "Poland pledges to defend ban on genetically modified crops," BLOOMBERG NEWS, 15 February 2007; "Greenpeace demands expanded biotech food labels across the EU," ASSOCIATED PRESS, 7 February 2007; "EU may reconsider labels for 'biotech' meat, eggs," REUTERS, 6 February 2007; "Federal Court orders for the first time a halt to new field trials of genetically modified crops," CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY PRESS RELEASE, 6 February 2007; "USDA criticized by second judge over genetic crops," REUTERS, 14 February 2007; "USDA faulted on oversight of test crops," ASSOCIATED PRESS, 7 February 2007; "A growing debate," KENNEBEC JOURNAL (MAINE), 27 January 2007.

Commentary

SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT AND TRADE: ARE THEY COMPATIBLE?

Land degradation - especially in dryland regions - is one of the most significant environmental challenges facing the world today. Whether trade helps or hinders the struggle against this process is a controversial question.

Arguably, it is also one which has no easy answer. The impact of trade on the sustainable management of land depends on a whole host of factors: the nature of the product being traded; the volume of production and trade; the structure of the producing country's economy and the degree to which this is integrated with the global economy as a whole; and the nature of the regulatory environment at national, regional and international levels.

Despite its prevalence worldwide, and its intimate relationship with poverty and deprivation in both rich and poor countries, land degradation to date has lacked the attention required to propel it up the international political agenda. It is similarly conspicuous by its absence in the Doha Round of talks at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) - not to mention in other regional or bilateral trade deals.

This is despite the fact that WTO negotiations on a broad sweep of issues - from trade in goods, to services, to rules on intellectual property or agriculture - could have wide-spread implications for the future sustainable management of land around the globe.

In agriculture alone, the reduction of developing country tariff barriers risks exposing small-scale farmers to a flood of subsidised cut-price imports, potentially pushing them to discard traditional land management practices simply in order to survive.

At the same time, because the hefty subsidies disbursed by developed country treasuries are so often linked to production levels, these payments continue to provide incentives for intensive industrialised farming. Both small-scale and export-oriented farmers in developing countries are therefore often forced to compete with highly-mechanised farming in rich countries, sometimes with disastrous long-term consequences for the soil on which they depend.

The example of cotton illustrates the point well. In 2003, the US provided cotton subsidies worth USD2.4 billion to its 28,000 producers: this amount is more than the entire GDP of Burkina Faso, a country where more than two million people depend on cotton production to make a living, in a fragile dryland ecosystem.

Recent initiatives to explore alternative export products from dryland regions may represent a possible way out for developing countries. Unexpectedly, these zones are often characterised by remarkable levels of biological diversity, which, some experts argue, represent a vast untapped resource that could benefit local inhabitants. Plants with medicinal properties, fruit collected from the wild, or wool, meat and fibre could be collected or harvested, and then sold abroad.

Labelling and certification schemes could constitute an important tool for expanding market access for such products – along the lines of similar models for ‘fair trade’ or organic goods. Challenges, however, include the lack of any credible intergovernmental agency establishing and monitoring verifiable standards for sustainable land management, and consumer confusion and scepticism in the face of a bewildering proliferation of voluntary private initiatives.

Other concerns include the fact that large-scale trade in such products may simply replicate some of the environmental challenges inherent in other export sectors, and the inevitable reality that tackling land degradation in many dryland countries will, of necessity, require some kind of attention to products such as cotton which are at present heavily-traded.

In any case, local communities often face an uphill battle in gaining recognition for their knowledge and resources in a global commercial environment which is dominated by multinational pharmaceutical and agrochemical giants. While international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity stipulate that benefits from the use of genetic resources must be shared in a fair and equitable way, the relationship between this treaty and WTO rules on ‘intellectual property’ remains controversial. Finally, other important agreements – such as the FAO’s International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture – underscore the need for countries to share genetic resources freely, in order to safeguard the long-term sustainability of global agriculture.

If trade is to promote, rather than undermine, sustainable solutions to the problem of land degradation, decision-makers and politicians will need to accord the subject a far higher level of importance at the national, regional and global level. While voluntary initiatives are important, a lasting solution can only be established as part of a coherent public policy framework that is agreed on and implemented at all these three levels. Only under these circumstances will trade finally become part of the solution.

By Jonathan Hepburn, Programme Officer - Agriculture, ICTSD.

Additional resources:

Trade and sustainable land management was discussed at a recent ICTSD dialogue. For further information on the meeting and ICTSD’s work on sustainable land management, including access to a comprehensive background document, visit http://www.ictsd.org/dlogue/2007-01-31/2007-01-31_desc.htm.

In Brief

MINISTERS AGREE STEPS TO REGULATE MERCURY

Ministers at a recent high-level environmental gathering have agreed to take steps to limit global exposure to the toxic chemical mercury. As countries remain divided on whether to opt for voluntary commitments or legally-binding rules, they decided to focus on a voluntary programme for the time being, leaving open the possibility to start negotiations on a treaty in two years’ time.

The mercury issue has been divisive at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council in the past (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 4 March 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/05-03-04/inbrief.htm#3>), and those involved in the process said that the decision to scale up activity in this area was significant.

"The mercury decision... underlines a new determination by environment ministers to rise to the challenges of our time," commented UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. The Zero Mercury Working Group, however, said that the current approach did not go far enough and stressed the need for a legally-binding instrument.

At the UNEP Governing Council, the EU, the African Group, Norway and Switzerland pushed for negotiations on a treaty (which would also cover trade aspects). The US, Australia, Canada, Japan, China and India preferred to extend voluntary partnerships. Under the two-track approach agreed, a new ad hoc open-ended working group of government and stakeholder representatives will be established "to review and assess options for enhanced voluntary measures and new or existing international legal instruments."

Currently, the EU is the main exporter of mercury, with India and China being the main importers. The EU has taken steps to ban mercury exports by 2011 (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 3 November 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-11-03/inbrief.htm#2>)

Exposure to high levels of mercury in any form -- metallic, inorganic or organic -- can permanently damage the brain, kidneys, and developing foetus. Mercury is released from coal-fired power stations, waste incinerators and as a by-product of artisanal mining of gold and silver.

For more on trade-related discussions the UNEP Governing Council, see the lead story of this issue of Bridges Trade BioRes.

"New UN-backed voluntary programme seeks to curb toxic mercury pollution," UN NEWS CENTRE, 14 February 2007; "Governments Agree Action on Mercury, but no Treaty," REUTERS, 12 February 2007; ENB Vol. 16 No. 60, 12 February 2007.

INTERNATIONAL WHALING BODY IN CRISIS

The majority of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) membership chose to boycott a recent Japanese-sponsored meeting seeking to re-commercialise whaling. According to observers, the meeting -- which took place against the backdrop of clashes on the sea between Japanese whalers and international anti-whaling activists -- demonstrates the escalating crisis rocking the global whaling body.

Japan had invited all members of the IWC for an informal meeting from 13-15 February in Tokyo to discuss IWC reform -- namely, suggestions for managing limited commercial whaling. However, only 34 out of 72 members attended, with anti-whaling nations such as the US, Australia, and New Zealand in boycott.

"One of our goals is to improve the atmosphere of the IWC, which has become one of confrontation," said Minoru Morimoto, Japanese commissioner for the IWC. He lamented the fact that a number of key members boycotted the meeting, and warned that the IWC was on the verge of collapse.

There has been a moratorium on commercial whaling since 1986. Whaling nations Japan, Norway and Iceland, have continued to hunt under scientific research programmes. The meat is sold for consumption, and conservationists claim that the scientific programmes are used as a guise to continue whaling.

For several years, Japan has sought to promote a change in IWC policy from a complete ban to allowing whaling at a level of "sustainable use." According to Japan, certain whale species have recovered enough to sustain a limited hunt. At the 2006 annual meeting of the IWC, pro-whaling nations managed to pass a declaration calling the international moratorium on whaling "no longer necessary" (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 30 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-06-30/story2.htm>).

The reform suggestions from the Tokyo meeting will be presented at the next IWC annual summit, to be held from 28-31 May in Anchorage, Alaska this year.

"Japan hosts whaling meet as anti-whalers boycott," REUTERS, 14 February 2007; "Whaling activists withdraw threat to ram Japanese fleet," REUTERS, 14 February 2007; "Australia relies on whaling data from Japanese," NEW ZEALAND HERALD, 15 February 2007; "Japanese whaling ship on fire," THE WORLD TODAY, 15 February 2007; "Fractured whaling body could collapse - delegates," REUTERS, 15 February 2007; "Japan Says IWC Must Improve or it May Quit Group," REUTERS, 16 February 2007.

DUTCH COMPANY TO PAY FOR TOXICS CLEAN-UP IN ABIDJAN

Dutch trading company Trafigura recently offered the government of Cote d'Ivoire US\$198 million to help clean up toxic waste released in the capital Abidjan in August 2006. In return, the Ivorian government promised not to prosecute the company and released company officials it had arrested in relation to event.

During the night of 19 August, ca 500 cubic metres of wastes from 'Probo Koala' -- a Panamanian-registered vessel contracted by Trafigura Beheer BV -- were released at several sites, including near water sources. Large numbers of residents were soon seeking medical help for intestinal and respiratory troubles, vomiting and nose bleeds (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 8 September 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-09-08/story2.htm>)

The incident triggered outraged reactions in Cote d'Ivoire, with the government resigning, and highlighted gaps and loopholes within the international regulatory framework on waste. Investigations to clarify the sequence of events that led to the waste spills, as well as the applicable rules and related responsibilities, are still controversial and ongoing.

When the deal was announced on 13 February, a Trafigura spokesperson stressed that the company was not paying damages and that it was not taking responsibility for the events. According to the company, the wastes constituted routine oil slops -- the disposal of which is covered by International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (Marpol) -- and were handed over to a registered Ivorian operator.

Others have, however, argued that the wastes were toxic and as such covered by the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which requires the prior informed consent of developing country recipients.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, cautioned that there was "a whole unregulated and often illegal trade in toxic, hazardous waste" that reached developing countries with weak oversight systems in place. "We need to work on the broader environmental legislative framework globally so that these issues do not arise again," he said.

Jim Puckett of the Basel Action Network added that "It's time the Basel Convention Parties once and for all agree to an interpretation that puts this much needed ban into the force of international law," referring to the so called Ban Amendment. The amendment, which has been negotiated but not signed onto by a sufficient number of countries to enter into force, would prohibit the movement of any hazardous wastes from the EU and OECD countries to all other parties.

Environmental groups further questioned the timing of the Trafigura deal, which closely preceded the release of a criminal investigation into the case. Jasper Teulings of Greenpeace said "One cannot do justice without knowing the facts in their entirety. At this stage, it would have been more appropriate to secure a provisional settlement with an advance payment, rather than one that closes the books definitively, especially when the full extent of liabilities have not yet been determined."

"Ivory Coast toxic clean-up offer," BBC NEWS, 13 February 2007; "World Needs Tougher Toxic Trade Rules - UN," REUTERS, 15 February 2007; "Ivory Coast Toxic Dumping Case Settled for US\$198 Million," ENS, 15 February 2007.

BELUGA CAVIAR BACK ON THE MARKET

The UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has provided export quotas for Beluga caviar, the most precious caviar species, for the year 2007. This move followed the approval of export quotas for most other caviar species in early January (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 19 January 2007, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/07-01-19/inbrief.htm>).

The export quota for Beluga caviar, issued to the Caspian range states Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan, is 29 percent lower than it was in 2005. The CITES secretariat issued no quotas for 2006 given that the exporting states had failed to meet requirements concerning the sustainability of the catch of caviar-producing sturgeon (see Bridges Trade BioRes, 20 January 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/06-01-20/inbrief.htm#2>).

Commenting on the Beluga quota, CITES Secretary-General Willem Wijnstekers said "The Caspian States have stepped up their efforts to control the caviar trade and to release millions of young fish into the sea, but the decline in populations cannot be allowed to continue." He added that the CITES Animals Committee would study the sustainability of the trade at its next meeting.

Speaking on behalf of Caviar Emptor, an initiative to save sturgeon launched by a number of conservation groups, Ellen Pikitch strongly opposed the decision to re-instate Beluga quotas. She said "With beluga sturgeon, we have a species on the brink of extinction that has lost more than 90

percent of its population in recent years. It's a death sentence to allow trade of its precious eggs to resume." She said a long-term trade moratorium was needed to allow the species to recover, and called on industry, restaurants and consumers to boycott the caviar.

In 1998, the 169 CITES member states decided to place all sturgeon species on Appendix II of the Convention, which includes species that Parties have agreed to subject to trade controls in order to ensure their survival. While wild sturgeon populations continue to decline, caviar from farmed varieties is on the increase.

"CITES announces small export quota for beluga caviar," CITES RELEASE, 5 February 2007; "Beluga Caviar Trade Resumed Despite International Objection," CAVIAR EMPOR RELEASE, 5 February 2007; "UN Lifts Ban on Exports of Beluga Caviar," REUTERS, 6 February 2007.

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

26 February to 2 March, Rome, Italy: COORDINATING WORKING PARTY ON FISHERY STATISTICS. Organised by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). For further information, contact Sachiko Tsuji at sachiko.tsuji@fao.org or visit ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/cwp/cwp_22/agenda.pdf.

26 February to 2 March, New York, USA: CSD-15 INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING. This will be a preparatory meeting for the fifteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15). The discussions will focus on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere, and climate change. For further information contact the Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1 212 963 8102; fax: +1 212 963 4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/csd15_ipm.htm.

19-24 February, Nicosia, Cyprus: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT: SURVIVAL AND SUSTAINABILITY. Organised by the Near East University, the aim of the conference is to create a multi-disciplinary discussion between policy makers, researchers, and academics in order to produce policy options and materials for decision makers seeking to combat environmental problems. For further information visit <http://www.neuconference.org>.

26 & 28 February, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW BODY - EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES. For further information, contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41 22) 739 5007; fax: (41 22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

28 February & 1 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES. For further information, contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41 22) 739 5007; fax: (41 22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

28 February to 2 March, Wels, Austria: WORLD SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DAYS 2007. Organised by the O.Ö. Energiesparverband, four concurrent conferences offer a range of events and seminars on sustainable energy production and use, the future of renewable energy technology, efficiency and renewable energy sources, and rural sustainable energy development. For further information see <http://www.wsed.at>.

1-2 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT - SPECIAL SESSION. For further information, contact the WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41 22) 739 5007; fax: (41 22) 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

1-2 March, Geneva, Switzerland: DISCIPLINING FISHERIES SUBSIDIES - INCORPORATION SUSTAINABILITY AT THE WTO AND BEYOND. Developing new disciplines on fisheries subsidies that present sustainability concerns is a priority for achieving sustainable management of the world's fisheries resources. After several years of work on subsidies reform at UNEP and WWF, the remaining question is how "sustainability" can be incorporated into appropriate and workable conditions on fisheries subsidies at the WTO and beyond, including national and regional level fisheries policy. Answering this question is the aim of this symposium. For more information about this meeting contact Anja von Moltke (anja.moltke@unep.ch) or Aimee Gonzales (agonzales@wwfint.org) or visit http://www.unep.ch/etb/events/2007fish_symposium.php.

Other upcoming events

5 March to 1 April, e-conference: WATER SCARCITY AND AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGIES. This moderated e-mail conference is being organised by the FAO Biotechnology Forum in collaboration with FAO's water programme, and will coincide with the World Water Day, which is celebrated each year on 22 March. A related background document is available online. The document gives an overview of the current status and future perspectives regarding water availability and use on Earth as well as a discussion of some major strategies that can be employed to deal with water scarcity. It then looks at the issue of water use in agriculture in more detail as well as some of the potential ways in which biotechnology could contribute to this area (e.g. increasing the efficiency of water use in agriculture; application of mycorrhizal fungi; or improving wastewater treatment). For further information visit <http://www.fao.org/biotech/C14doc.htm> or contact biotech-admin@fao.org.

8-9 March, Bangkok, Thailand: DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES IN ASIA. Organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UN Division for Sustainable Development, this workshop will review national sustainable development strategies (NSDS) in countries in Asia and the Pacific and their relationship to national development plans and poverty reduction strategies (PRS) with a view to better integration. The following themes will be covered: sustainability and development in Asia and the Pacific; Governance approaches to national sustainable development strategies in Asia and the Pacific; The role of stakeholders in sustainability strategies; and integrating sustainability in development planning. For further information see <http://www.scidev.net/events/index.cfm?fuseaction=readevents&itemid=1044&language=1>.

2-6 April, Paris, France: CODEX COMMITTEE ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF FOOD STANDARDS. Jointly organised by WHO and the FAO. The main points that the meeting will address are the Code of Ethics for International Trade in Foods and Risk Analysis for Food Safety. For more information contact the joint office of WHO and FAO +39 06 57051, or by e-mail at codex@fao.org. To access the full agenda visit http://www.codexalimentarius.net/download/report/681/gp24_01e.pdf.

16-27 April, New York, US: UNFF-7. The seventh session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF-7) will, among other, focus on a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, hold a multi-stakeholder dialogue and discuss enhanced cooperation and policy and programme coordination, including further guidance to the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. For more information contact Hans Hoogeveen at +1 212 963 1234 or by fax at +1 212 963 4879, internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>.

20 April, Washington D.C., US: FOREST RESEARCH MANAGEMENT IN AN ERA OF GLOBALISATION. Organised by the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO), this conference will focus on: how to develop forest research strategies and prioritise research objectives; acquiring funding and financing; and ensuring quality and efficiency of research institutions. For further information see <http://www.safnet.org/meetings/iufro/>.

30 April to 4 May, Ottawa, Canada: CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING. Organised jointly by FAO and WHO, this meeting will focus on guidelines for the production, processing, labelling and marketing of organically produced food, labelling of genetically modified food and food ingredients, and advertising in relation to nutrition and health claims. For more information contact the WHO/FAO office at +39 06 57051, or by e-mail at codex@fao.org. The agenda can be found at http://www.codexalimentarius.net/download/report/682/fl35_01e.pdf.

30 April to 11 May, New York, US: UN CSD-15. The fifteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15) will focus on the areas of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere, and climate change. For further information contact the Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1 212 963 8102; fax: +1 212 963 4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/policy.htm>.

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 Malena Sell at msell@ictsd.ch.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN BIOFUELS: GOOD FOR DEVELOPMENT? AND GOOD FOR ENVIRONMENT? By Annie Dufey (IIED, January 2007). Biofuels have been promoted as a means of creating jobs and wealth in developing nations, while cutting greenhouse gas emissions in the industrialised world, where demand for biofuels is set to skyrocket to meet ambitious targets. This report calls for international trade barriers, especially subsidies, to be relaxed to enable developing countries to reap the benefits of the biofuels trade, and for certification schemes to take account of the real environmental and social conditions in such countries. The current trade regimes are not fit for encouraging synergies and sorting out trade-offs. Any benefits from biofuels trade could be undermined if the sector continues to expand without improved policies and international coordination. To access the report visit <http://www.iied.org/pubs/display.php?o=11068IIED>.

THE GENE REVOLUTION: GM CROPS AND UNEQUAL DEVELOPMENT. Edited by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (Earthscan, December 2006). The high-yield selective breeding of 'the Green Revolution' of the 1960s and '70s is now being overtaken by 'the Gene Revolution' - the development and spread of GM crops across the world. With over 90 million hectares already under cultivation and 60 countries conducting research, GM is reviled by some as a vast Pandora's Box and corporate sell-out, while hailed by others as the necessary technological solution to stagnating agricultural output, ballooning populations, climate change and drought. Sandwiched in between are developing and transitional countries where the need to feed vast populations and to compete against the US in international markets are compelling reasons to get on the GM bandwagon. This book seeks to bridge the gap between the 'naysayers' and 'cheerleaders' to provide an examination of the realities, complexities, benefits and pitfalls of GM adoption in developing countries that are desperately fighting poverty while trying to stay afloat in the hyper-competitive global

economy. It includes an assessment of the GM reality in China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Argentina, the US and the EU, and the consequences of GM crops for billions of people as the monetary and technological divide between rich and poor widens. For further information see

<http://shop.earthscan.co.uk/ProductDetails/mcs/productID/751/>.

RESULTS FROM THE FAO BIOTECHNOLOGY FORUM: BACKGROUND AND DIALOGUE ON SELECTED ISSUES. By J Ruane and A Sonnino (FAO Research and Technology Paper 11). This 152-page report presents the background and summary documents from a series of six moderated e-mail conferences hosted by the FAO Biotechnology Forum from 2002 to 2005, relating to agricultural biotechnology for the crop, forestry, animal, fisheries and agro-industry sectors in developing countries. To access the report visit <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/009/a0744e/a0744e00.pdf>.

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