



Bridges Trade BioRes

Biweekly news, events and resources at the intersection of trade and environment

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ENVIRONMENT AT THE WTO

Easter Revised Text Likely as Fisheries Subsidies Talks Trudge Forward

A revised draft agreement text for prospective WTO disciplines on fisheries subsidies appears likely to be issued in time for a late-April deadline, following a week of discussions in the Doha Round Negotiating Group on Rules. However, with the persistence of differences on issues such as fuel subsidies, it is unclear whether the text will be free of brackets.

Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador Dennis Francis, who chairs the group, opened the 7-14 March session by reporting that four contact groups - on high seas fisheries, artisanal/small-scale fisheries, income support, and fuel subsidies - as well as the 'friends of the chair' serving as his focal points on key issues had met over the weekend prior to the discussions. He called on interested delegations to meet with the groups over the week as plurilateral discussions delved into new submissions by Malaysia and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and explored issues such as high seas fisheries, reciprocal and shared access to exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and fisheries management.

Fuel Subsidies

The question of whether and how countries will be able to subsidise fuel for fishing fleets remains the most contentious issue in the talks. Sources say it is the only issue to consistently receive high level attention over the past week. Because fuel subsidies can be delivered through a number of complex channels, establishing the true extent of funding can be extremely difficult.

Last month, in an attempt to unravel the complexity of the issue, Francis took the unusual measure of issuing a questionnaire to delegates asking them to identify their fuel subsidies (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [21 February 2011](#)). Countries reportedly responded to the questionnaire but with varying levels of detail - some were more forthcoming than others. Sources close to the discussions said that enough information was gleaned through the process that there was dissension within the group discussing the issue last week. Participating delegations are reportedly keeping their cards close to their chests, and were struggling to make a decision on how much information should be made available outside the group - even to other negotiators.

A particularly difficult aspect holding back the talks on fuel subsidies to the fisheries sector is the issue of “specificity.” In most cases a subsidy must be “specific” to a particular industry in order to fall under the WTO’s legal definition of a subsidy. Thus - with the exception of export subsidies - a subsidy that is available to other sectors in society is not generally considered actionable under the subsidies code. Because many countries, such as the United States, provide fuel subsidies in the form of tax rebates that are available to industries other than fisheries, they are not considered actionable.

A number of delegations, led by Mexico, are pushing for an elimination of the specificity requirements on any prohibition that would apply to fuel, to ensure any text does not create a bias in favour of developed countries. Such an exception, however, would have implications at the WTO going well beyond fisheries subsidies.

Malaysia looks for leniency to improve food safety standards

Malaysia’s [16 February submission](#) proposes that the list of exempted fisheries subsidies be extended to include support for upgrading vessels to meet food safety standards (e.g., special toilets and shower facilities, wash basins, partitioning for fish holds, fibreglass coating for sorting deck, etc.). It said that fisheries exports from developing countries have been subject to strict health standards, and that the cost of meeting these

standards can be prohibitive, ranging from US\$23,000 to 36,000 per boat.

Pakistan, India, Kenya (on behalf of ACP countries), and Tonga (on behalf of Pacific Island countries) said their fisheries exports have also been affected by such measures. They expressed general support for the Malaysian proposal, although they expressed a preference for making the exemption part of special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing countries. Indonesia, South Africa and Turkey also expressed support, and suggested that the whole value chain up to the handling and processing of fish in port should also be exempted. Also expressing general support were Brazil, Korea, El Salvador (on behalf of the small vulnerable economies), China, Colombia, Norway and the EU. Australia, the US, New Zealand, Peru and Chile said that they oppose measures that would increase overcapacity and overfishing.

ACP proposes exemptions for minimal fishing countries

Mauritius introduced the [1 March ACP proposal](#) by saying that these countries have a minimal share of world fisheries production and are not to blame for the current depleted state of fish stocks. It said any fisheries subsidies agreement must provide a balanced, fair and equitable outcome that takes into account the economic importance of the sector to the ACP and the need for adequate policy space for these countries to develop the sector.

Under the proposal, developing countries whose percentage share of global marine wild capture is not more than 0.60 percent would be exempt from the disciplines on fishing boat construction and operating costs (an annex lists 27 ACP non-LDC WTO members in this category). Tonga (on behalf of the Pacific island countries), Ecuador, Turkey, and Pakistan expressed support for the proposal.

The US said a country’s percentage share of global marine capture may not indicate the impact of its fishing practices on a specific fish stock in a particular region, and asked if there would be a mechanism for graduating a country from the list.

New Zealand said the world share of ACP in fisheries may be low now but could go up in the future. Japan said that a 0.6 percent share is still a high proportion of the fish catch. Peru said it could not agree with the creation of a new category of developing countries.

Exemptions for developing countries are one of the more difficult issues in the talks, with S&DT provisions for artisanal and small-scale fisheries generating much debate. Countries, such as Peru and Ecuador, have been looking to have artisanal or small-scale fisheries included under exceptions made for subsistence fishing. Discussions last week reportedly focussed on the question of whether such an exception would also be extended to developed countries. Some countries, notably Canada, are reportedly pushing for a different approach altogether, which would instead allow for the provision of any subsidies up to a certain percentage of the total value of the landed catch.

ICTSD Reporting.

TRIPS Council: Members Debate Biodiversity, Access to Medicine

WTO members earlier this month debated how current global intellectual property rules affect biodiversity protection and access to medicine, but made little progress on either issue, both of which are priorities for developing countries.

The Council for Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) met on 1 March to discuss the use of a system intended to smooth poor countries' access to patented drugs, as well as whether WTO rules need to be amended to require patent applicants to disclose the use of any genetic materials in an invention. Such disclosure requirements have long been a demand of many developing countries, backed by a number of developed countries. The recently completed Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provided new fuel for the longstanding debate (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [8 November 2010](#)); the absence of disclosure requirements in the protocol rekindled

demands for amending TRIPS to prevent biopiracy.

Ultimately both discussions, which continued from the TRIPS Council's last session October, resulted in few new country positions (see Bridges Weekly, [3 November 2010](#)).

Biodiversity and TRIPS

The TRIPS Council spent the bulk of its time addressing the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Members addressed three points: the status of the CBD secretariat in the TRIPS Council, a proposal by Bolivia to exclude life forms from patentability, and a proposal to add a "disclosure requirement" to TRIPS Article 27.3(b) to make up for its absence in the Nagoya Protocol. Of these three points, the last consumed the majority of the speakers' time.

On the status of the CBD, many WTO members, and especially developing countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and India, called for allowing a CBD secretariat representative to participate in TRIPS Council discussions. They argued that doing so would help clarify issues such as the implications for TRIPS of the Nagoya Protocol, instead of requiring WTO members to figure it out for themselves. (In the absence of a CBD representative, Japan briefed the session on the Nagoya Protocol and its relation to TRIPS.) The United States argued against including a CBD representative, on the basis that doing so would unnecessarily waste the limited time of the Council. Members, the US delegate contended, already had to acquaint themselves with Nagoya anyway. The issue was left unresolved.

Beyond the process issue of whether to let the CBD attend Council meetings, members also had substantive questions about the Nagoya Protocol and its relation to TRIPS Article 27.3(b), which covers the patentability (or exclusion from patentability) of plant and animal inventions. Although many governments had hoped to include a disclosure requirement for patent-seekers in the Nagoya Protocol, they did not

succeed in doing so. As a result, many developing countries reiterated support last week for amending the TRIPS agreement to include a disclosure requirement — one that would punish failure to disclose with patent revocation. As in the past, this support ran into opposition from some developed countries.

While developing country backers of a disclosure requirement argue that it would add transparency to the patent process and discourage biopiracy, some developed countries, most prominently the United States, argued that it would be unduly burdensome and stifle innovation. The US instead supported an alternative transparency mechanism proposed by Canada, namely a patent information database. However, developing countries such as Colombia and Brazil argued that a database would be insufficient to cover the universe of traditional knowledge. The issue was left unresolved.

Proposals for more far-reaching amendments to Article 27 also arose during the meeting. Bolivia, with the support of Venezuela, proposed changing the TRIPS agreement to exclude life forms from patentability altogether. Bolivia argued that the “privatization of life itself” reduced human moral development, and that these concerns should not be assessed on the basis of economic value alone. Other developing countries expressed interest in evaluating the Bolivian proposal, but few endorsed it altogether. Switzerland and the US argued that patents only apply to new, commercial inventions anyway, and that life as such cannot be patented under the current rules. Overall, the Bolivian proposal received little attention compared to the other topics.

Debate over ‘Paragraph 6 system’ continues

Delegations also discussed the provision of generic medicines to countries that lack domestic capacity to produce them.

In the wake of concerns that drug patent rules in the TRIPS agreement were making lifesaving drugs inaccessibly expensive in poor countries, WTO members agreed on a system for allowing cheap generic copies of patented drugs to be produced under compulsory licences for the

purpose of export to countries that needed them. However, that ‘Paragraph 6 system’ - so named for the relevant section of a 2001 declaration in Doha reaffirming that TRIPS should not prevent governments from taking measures to protect public health - has been criticised by some for being almost unusable because of complex procedural requirements. Since the Paragraph 6 system was set up in August 2003, it has been successfully used only once, by a Canadian generic manufacturer exporting HIV/AIDS medicine to Rwanda.

As a result, much of the Paragraph 6 discussion in the TRIPS Council centered on why it has been used so little. Some countries offered their own experiences with the use of compulsory licensing. Brazil, for example, described its domestic HIV/AIDS compulsory license program. In 2007, in an attempt to restrain the growing cost of its HIV/AIDS treatment programme, Brazil issued compulsory licenses authorising the generic production of the widely used HIV/AIDS drug Efavirenz, which cut the per dose price by two-thirds, from \$1.59 to \$0.53. As HIV/AIDS patients grow resistant to older drugs, they require new, generally more expensive drugs.

Recognising that pharmaceutical innovation in more effective HIV/AIDS drugs came with serious research and development costs, Brazil suggested that WTO members look at the balance of incentives underpinning the Paragraph 6 system. Brazil called for a “a balance between the rights granted to IPR owners and the interests of society as a whole”, and in this regard, “to include other stakeholders in this discussions so that we can better understand why the system is not being used and agree on ways to improve it.”

Indeed, both developing and developed countries called upon each other to provide more information so that the Paragraph 6 system could work properly. In the previous TRIPS Council in October, developing countries asked developed countries to provide more information on their technology transfer and safety regulations for exporters, since these regulations could prevent developed country generic companies from exporting to developing countries. In turn, developed countries asked developing countries to

provide answers about how developing country importers experienced the Paragraph 6 system. To the frustration of developed countries, developing countries did not have answers ready at the time of the latest TRIPS Council meeting. However, the developed countries were able to provide some answers to the developing countries' questions on technology transfer and safety regulations.

Finally, some developing countries requested information workshops that would gather NGOs, pharmaceutical companies, and relevant practitioners in the field to explore more deeply the reasons behind the failure to implement Paragraph 6. Developed countries left the option open, but emphasised that governments' experience should be shared in the TRIPS Council regardless. Whether the workshops will be undertaken remains to be seen.

ICTSD reporting; "Nagoya gives new context to old views in intellectual property council," WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION, 1 March 2011; "Patentable subject matter, IP waiver for health discussed at WTO," EUROPEAN AIDS TREATMENT GROUP, 3 March 2011.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

UN Reports Urge More Sustainable Approach to Agriculture

Extreme weather events and increased biofuels production are driving up food prices and will continue to be a significant force in surging global food prices, according to a new report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Meanwhile, a second UN report suggests a more sustainable approach to farming will not only help combat environmental problems, such as climate change, but also improve development.

While the FAO has not overtly made a connection between climate change and food prices, the annual State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) report cites extreme weather, like the drought which devastated wheat crops in Russia last

summer, to illustrate the increasingly clear relationship between the state of the world's environment and recent spikes in global food prices (see [Bridges Weekly Vol 15, No 8](#)).

"Over the past couple of years, we've seen a clear link between climate disruptions – floods, droughts, less predictable rainfalls – and price volatility," Olivier De Schutter, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to food told Bridges Trade BioRes. "Agriculture, when practiced on large-scale monocultures, is quite vulnerable to such shocks."

The SOFA report, released on 7 March, also points to rising agricultural production costs due to volatility in the fossil fuel and fertiliser industries. Soaring input costs contributed significantly to the slowed growth in the global food production index, according to the FAO data, falling from 3.8 percent in 2008 to 0.6 percent in 2009.

As a whole, the report found, annual world trade in agricultural goods contracted in 2009 and 2010 despite growth in per capita consumption.

Biofuels crops edging out those for food

The reallocation of crops from those meant for food consumption to those destined to produce energy represents a growing connection between agricultural commodities and international energy markets, the report says. According to the study, 120 million tonnes of maize and other cereal crops – once supplied for human consumption – are now designated for conversion to fuel in order to meet US and EU biofuels targets.

Tighter ties between agricultural commodity prices and international energy markets could mean that future fluctuations in energy prices would have a greater influence on agricultural markets and food prices. Thus, says the FAO report, this increasingly intimate relationship could end up "exacerbating international market volatility and jeopardising global food security."

The report predicts that higher food prices will undoubtedly result from the increased production costs, bouts of extreme and unpredictable

weather, and increased biofuels production, and concludes that this will have detrimental effects on human development.

UN special rapporteur pushes agro-ecology approach

Boosting the output of smallholder farmers and coordinating international policies on food security and climate change will be key to stabilising food prices and increasing the role of agriculture as a means of economic growth and poverty reduction, the FAO suggests. Now more than ever, says the report, there is the need to revamp investment in agriculture in order to generate environmentally sustainable increases in productivity.

Agro-ecology and eco-farming, which take a more ecological approach to agriculture, could take the lead for stabilising market volatility and global food security if harnessed properly by coordinated international policy responses, contends [a separate UN report](#) released on 8 March by the right to food programme headed by De Schutter.

The UN report says eco-farming has the potential to double food production in the next 10 years in transitioning nations. Already, it raised average crop yields by 80 percent in 57 developing nations that were studied as part of the report.

Diversifying crops is a primary focus of agro-ecology as well as enhancing soil productivity and protecting crops against pests by relying on the natural environment. When applied to agricultural systems, says the UN report, agro-ecological methods can “help put an end to food crises and address climate-change and poverty challenges”.

Benefits of agro-ecological farming would be greatest in nations that are just beginning to develop their agriculture, such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and sub-Saharan Africa. Agriculture production in LDCs has increased rapidly over the past decade, the SOFA report shows, with LDCs now leading the world in agriculture production growth at 2 percent per year.

With LDCs experiencing the greatest growth in agricultural production, a push towards agro-ecological farming in these regions could spread environmentally and economically sustainable techniques to those who need the support the most, De Schutter says.

Inter-governmental coordination essential for future

Women in agricultural sectors should especially be supported by global efforts, the SOFA report says. If women farmers were given the same opportunities as men for land use and financial resources, the FAO predicts that farm output in developing countries could increase by 2.5 to 4.0 percent. This approach would thus make women an important factor in ensuring security of food supplies and adopting the practices of sustainable agriculture.

To ensure global food security, the FAO report overall encourages urgent, coordinated global policy that maintains open trading and encourages agricultural reforms focused on environmentally sustainable practices and female participation.

“If more land was cultivated following agro-ecology principles, climate disruptions would probably be less damaging and would not result in as much volatility as we’ve seen recently,” De Schutter said. “We simply cannot pretend that things can go on as they are.”

More information

The FAO’s State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11 can be accessed [here](#).

The UN’s Special Rapporteur on the right to food report “Agro-ecology and the Right to Food” can be accessed [here](#).

“Climate change, biofuels threaten food security: FAO”, REUTERS, 7 March 2011; “Farmers must be weaned off using oil, says UN expert”, WALL STREET JOURNAL, 8 March 2011; “Global food crisis: Turmoil in Middle East will keep prices high”, THE WASHINGTON POST, 9 March 2011; “Eco-farming could double food output of poor countries, says UN”, THE GUARDIAN, 8 March 2011.

IN BRIEF

**Liability and Redress Protocol
Opens for Signing**

Netherlands, Columbia, Sweden, and Denmark earlier this month became the first countries to sign a new international protocol that establishes rules for liability and redress for possible environmental damage caused by the cross-border movement of living modified organisms (LMOs).

The Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress was adopted by the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biodiversity in October, 2010 after a six year negotiation process (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [25 October 2010](#)). The supplementary protocol addresses what should occur if a LMO causes damage to biodiversity after a trans-boundary movement.

The agreement specifies that governmental intervention must occur to ensure that the importer or user of the organism restores damaged area to its original state and takes adequate measures to prevent any future damage.

According to Hidenori Murakami, Advisor to Japan's Minister of Agriculture, Forests, and Fisheries, the Supplementary Protocol is the "missing link" in the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Cartagena, which was adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2000, aims to ensure the safe handling, transport and use of LMOs.

"I think we now have this system which works as the safety net for the possible damage [of biodiversity] through trans-boundary movement of LMOs," said Murakami in a UN press release.

The Supplementary Protocol will enter into force 90 days after it is ratified by 40 countries. Delegates from the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol were optimistic about a rapid ratification process. Murakami said he expected all 40 signatures to be obtained within the next few

months. Japan is expected to sign the protocol in the near future.

Rene Lefeber of the Netherlands, who was also co-chair of the negotiation process, called the supplementary protocol a "major breakthrough." Lefeber said the protocol now places the responsibility of environmental reparations not only on the victims, but also on governments.

"Countries that decide to permit the release of living modified organisms into their environment, but are concerned about the risk this poses to biological diversity have a mechanism at their disposal that will contribute to the prevention and restoration of damage to biological diversity," said Lefeber.

Lefeber further stated in a press release that he hopes the adoption of the protocol will set an example and "rekindle the flame of environmental negotiations" in the future.

ICTSD Reporting; "New Biosafety Protocol to UN Treaty on Biological Diversity Opens Up for Signature," UN NEWS CENTRE, 7 March, 2011; "Press Conference on Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety," MEDIA NEWSWIRE, 7 March, 2011.

**Norway Joins Canada in WTO
Dispute over EU Seal Import Ban**

Norway has announced that it will join Canada in its request for the establishment of a WTO dispute settlement panel over the EU's ban on seal product imports. The 15 March statement by the Nordic sealing nation was not unexpected, as it has historically allied itself with Ottawa over the controversial issue.

Canada's request was launched last February following a May 2009 vote by the European Parliament to impose an import ban on seal products (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [21 February 2011](#)). Norway, which does not belong to the EU, says the move is necessary to rectify what it calls a breach of WTO rules.

“We consider the EU ban on trade in seal products to be in conflict with WTO rules, and would like a WTO dispute settlement panel to make an independent assessment,” said Jonas Gahr Støre, Norway’s Foreign Minister.

Canada signalled its support for Norway’s decision to partner with it in the WTO dispute.

“We are encouraged by Norway’s decision to join Canada in requesting the establishment of a dispute settlement panel by the WTO,” Canadian Fisheries Minister Gail Shea said. “Canada welcomes Norway’s support for our position that the European Union’s ban on seal products is groundless.”

The EU ban on seal products is based on the grounds that seal harvesting practices from commercial operations – like those in Canada – are “inherently cruel” and “inhumane.” However, Canada strongly rejects the rationale, arguing that seal harvesting in Canada is done humanely and that its sealing practices are “safe, sustainable, and economically legitimate.” Furthermore, Canada points to the thousands families in coastal communities whose livelihoods depend upon the sealing industry.

“The [Canadian] government will continue to defend Canadian sealers and their right to pursue an honest livelihood,” Shea said in a recent press briefing, adding that Canada has every intention of seeing the WTO process through to a conclusion – a process that normally takes a year.

Oslo echoed Ottawa’s position, arguing that case involves more than the commercial value of the industry. “For the Norwegian authorities, this issue involves important principles, such as our right to sustainably harvest our living marine resources and to sell products derived from hunting and fishing,” Norwegian Fisheries Minister Lisbeth Berg-Hansen said in a statement.

ICTSD reporting; “Minister Shea Welcomes Norway’s Challenge of the European Union’s Seal Ban at the World Trade Organization,” MARKET WIRE, 15 March, 2011; “Norway Fights on Against Sealing Ban,” THE FOREIGNER, 16 March, 2011; “Norway Joins Canada to Fight EU

Seal Ban,” THE MONTREAL GAZETTE, 16 March, 2011.

US Environment Agency Proposes National Standards for Power Plants

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) flexed its national regulatory muscles last week when it proposed new regulations that would limit toxic emissions of air pollutants from coal- and oil-fired power. Mercury, arsenic, and other air toxics – all known or suspected of causing cancer and other serious health conditions, according to the EPA – would be reduced through the installation of pollution control equipment.

The rules would be the first-ever national standards established for US power plants as was mandated to be done 20 years ago under the 1990 Clean Air Act.

Under the proposed regulations, all existing and new coal-fired power plants would have to meet established emission limits for mercury while oil-fired plants would be required to meet limits on emissions of metals within four years.

Even though economical technology for controlling toxic air pollution has already been developed and is being employed in newer facilities, power plants remain the largest air polluters in the US.

“They are responsible for 50 percent of mercury emissions, over 50 percent of acid gas emissions, and about 25 percent of toxic metal emissions in the US” says the agency.

EPA figures estimate that through the obligatory installation of technologies like scrubbers, 91 percent of mercury released into the air from coal burning could be prevented.

The EPA says the initiative will result in significant improvements in US public health because illnesses linked to air pollution – such as nervous system damage and cognitive impairment in children, premature deaths and heart attacks – will be significantly decreased.

The well-being of natural habitats such as lakes and streams are also expected by the EPA to improve under the regulations.

For the next 60 days the EPA proposal will be open to public comment from citizens, policy makers, industry, environmental advocates and public health groups.

One obstacle the EPA proposal is expected to encounter is the recent bill passed through a subcommittee of the US House Committee on Energy and Commerce by Republican Party members (See Bridges Trade BioRes, [21 February 2011](#)).

The bill is designed to stymie efforts by the Obama administration to use the Clean Air Act to regulate emissions linked to climate change. Its budgetary restraints on the EPA are partly responsible for the extended deadline for reporting CO₂ emissions announced on 17 March.

Like several other emissions regulations, opponents say the proposal will result in energy cost increases which, in turn, would push American industry abroad in efforts to maintain competitiveness.

“I think the EPA is overstepping what it should be doing in terms of impacting Americans’ ability to compete globally” argued Republican Senator John Barrasso.

But EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson points out that while the switch could raise electric rates by US\$3 to US\$4 a month and cost the industry US\$11 billion to install the technologies, the regulations would create thousands of jobs and produce savings of up to US\$140 billion in health benefits by 2016.

ICTSD Reporting; “EPA Proposes Tougher Air Pollution Rules for Power Plants”, BUSINESSWEEK, 16 March 2011; “EPA proposes rules to limit emissions from coal-fired plants,” USATODAY, 18 March 2011; “EPA Proposes First US Standard for Coal-Plant Mercury”, 16 March 2011; “EPA Extends Deadline for Reporting CO₂ Emissions”,

REUTERS, 18 March 2011; “News Release from Headquarters”, US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, 16 March 2011; “House Panel Backs Bill Blocking EPA Action on Emissions”, WALL STREET JOURNAL, 10 March 2011.

Poor Countries Continue to Raise Concerns over Sustainability Financing

Developing countries once again expressed concerns over financing sustainable initiatives related to the green economy at the recent Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 19).

The meeting, which took place from 28 February – 4 March, further discussed the role of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (10 YFP) and aimed to determine how this May’s CSD 19 will contribute to the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Rio +20).

The majority of the meetings discussions were focused on the major themes of CSD 19: small island developing states (SIDS), transport, chemicals, waste management, and mining.

During the discussions on SIDS, transport, and chemicals, developing countries continued to express their concerns over how to finance sustainable development initiatives. Trinidad and Tobago said the “priority of affordability over sustainability” will continue to persist among developing countries until adequate financing can be secured. In response, representatives from developed countries called for a greater degree of collaboration between developing countries and the international community in order to generate financial resources.

According to a summary of the meeting by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), delegates seemed to reach a consensus during the thematic discussions that a “one-size-fits-all” approach is not appropriate for

sustainable policy due to the differing needs of each country. Delegates preferred to support the idea that allowed governments to choose from a variety of policy options to meet sustainable development requirements.

Other discussions focused on the 10 YFP. Many delegates indicated they were in favour of adopting the 10 YFP at CSD 19. However, several outstanding issues related to the framework's functions, organisational structure, and funding will need to be clarified before the plan can move forward.

The meeting closed with projections on how CSD 19 will ultimately contribute to Rio+20. The exact role of CSD 19 in this context was debated among conference members, with some having more ambitious goals than others. But despite differences, CSD Vice Chair Silvano Vergara said that the themes of CSD 19 were directly relevant to the objectives of Rio+20, and that CSD 19 will be important in paving the way towards Rio+20.

The Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will take place from 2-13 May.

ICTSD Reporting; "Summary of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development: 28 February – 4 March 2011," EARTH NEGOTIATIONS BULLETIN, 7 March, 2011.

Britain Joins Chorus against Decentralised GM Policy

Britain last week joined with France, Germany and Spain in voicing their opposition to a European Commission (EC) draft legislation on genetically modified (GM) crop cultivation. The 17 March statement relates to last summer's draft proposal that, if approved, would decentralise the decision-making process on GM crop cultivation (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [23 July 2010](#)).

Britain's trepidation stems from the concern that the legislation would do ease Brussels' strict GM

approval system – only two GM crops have been approved in the past decade – and would actually make entrance into GM crop research more difficult for nations that may want to pursue it.

"The operation of the EU decision-making process does need to be improved, but we're not convinced that the proposal will enable this to happen," said Caroline Spelman, Britain's farm minister, at the EU environment ministers' meeting.

Furthermore, Spelman cautioned, GM bans under the proposal would be in direct violation of EU's WTO commitments.

For its part, the Commission says its proposed policy on GM crops aims to reduce tensions surrounding the lack of compliance on GM issues by establishing clear parameters for countries' national policies on biotech cultivation that would lessen uncertainty for farmers and agri-business across Europe.

Brussels has been struggling with how to deal with several member states that have defied the centralised policy on the issue and unilaterally implemented GM crop bans.

Opposition to the draft was raised earlier by France, Germany, and Spain on the grounds that allowing member states to decide on the matter independently would lead to policy fragmentation and bring about unexpected trade barriers.

Another key concern raised by Britain was the indicative list of reasons for which member states could respectively prohibit or restrict GM cultivation (see Bridges Trade BioRes, [7 February 2011](#)).

Spelman argued that the justifications on the list, such as maintaining public order, had not been well thought out and should be revisited.

"Suggesting public order as possible grounds for a ban could have the unintended consequence of actually encouraging public disorder," she said.

The list is still under review, contended EU health and consumer Commissioner John Dalli, and can

be edited and refined to incorporate well-grounded reasons in upcoming rounds of talks.

ICTSD Reporting; “Britain adds voice to criticism of EU GM crop plans”, REUTERS, 14 March 2011; “Ministers discuss banning GM crop cultivation”, EurActiv, 15 March 2011.

EVENTS AND RESOURCES

Events

For a more comprehensive list of events for the trade and environment community visit the [BioRes online calendar](#).

Coming up in the next two weeks (21 March – 4 April)

24-31 March, Dhaka, Bangladesh. FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY BASED ADAPTION (CBA) TO CLIMATE CHANGE. This event, organised by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), aims to share the latest developments in adaptation planning and practices, priority sectors, and measures at different levels and disseminate knowledge among stakeholders. The conference will include sessions on adaptive capacity, agriculture, water governance, and the economics of community-based adaptation. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

25 March, Geneva, Switzerland. TRADESIFT TRADE POLICY TRAINING COURSE. This one day course will show participants how to use TradeSift, a software tool designed to deliver highly cost effective trade policy analysis. The course will include a demonstration of the capacities of TradeSift to aid in the economic analysis of all aspects of trade policy analysis and a 3 hours hands-on instruction in the use of the software. The course will be led by the developers of TradeSift. For more information, visit the [TradeSift website](#).

25-28 March, Calgary, Canada. INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB) ANNUAL MEETING. The IDB, in conjunction with the Inter-American Investment Corporation (IIC), will hold their annual meeting to discuss socially responsible development of natural resources, the future of oil in a carbon conscious world, and sustainable cities. Participants will include the institutions’ governors, high-level authorities of member countries, and representatives of multilateral financial institutions, development agencies, and private banks. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

29-31 March, Geneva, Switzerland. SIXTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE). The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) primarily promotes pan-European economic integration. The tentative agenda of its biennial meeting includes discussions on economic integration in the ECE region, the role of regional integration and cooperation in promoting sustainable development, and new ECE initiatives. Elections for a new chairperson and vice-chairpersons are also planned. For more information, visit the event [website](#).

Other upcoming events

11-12 April, Paris, France. 2011 BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY GLOBAL DIALOGUE: THE ROAD TO RIO+20. This meeting, convened by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), will focus on strengthening the role of the private sector in the transition to a resource-efficient and green economy. The objective of the two-day meeting is to review and operationalise the role and contribution of business and industry in the transition to a green economy. The meeting will aim to contribute to the global processes leading to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). For more information, visit the [event website](#).

11-13 April, Sao Paulo, Brazil. FSC CERTIFIED PLANTATIONS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES: CHALLENGES, ACTIVITIES, STANDARDS, AND SOLUTIONS WORKSHOP. This workshop, Sponsored by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), will explore company-community collaborations in the FSC system and discuss important issues for strengthening the benefits from certified operations for local communities while minimising negative impacts. Participants will also develop recommendations for generic indicators to correspond with the obligations of certified companies to local communities. The workshop will feature five independently-researched case studies and will also include a field trip to on one of two local FSC certified operations. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

9-13 May, Istanbul, Turkey. FOURTH UN CONFERENCE ON LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDC-IV). This conference aims to assess the results of the 10-year action plan adopted at the third UN Conference on LDCs and to adopt new measures and strategies for their sustainable development. The conference will connect governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

28-30 June, Panama City, Panama. WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH'S GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON AQUATIC ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAMMES: THEIR BENEFITS FOR GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY. This conference will provide a forum for OIE members and other participants to exchange information on a science-based approach to the management of aquatic animal health and food safety at the production level. Participants will share their experience in the prevention, detection, and control of aquatic animal diseases; safeguarding food safety; and other related contributions to sustainable management of the

aquatic environment. For more information, visit the [event website](#).

Resources

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy for review by the BioRes Team to biores@ictsd.ch.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE FOREST CARBON PARTNERSHIP FACILITY. Published by FERN and the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) (February 2011). This report presents the findings of a review of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and its ability to promote public and private investment in Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). The report asserts that the FCPF is still failing to fulfil its social and environmental commitments. The authors believe that a game of “smoke and mirrors” is emerging, with the World Bank and recipient governments seemingly colluding with each other to mask defects in FCPF operations and related REDD country planning. The report recommends refocusing the debate on action to reduce forest loss by monitoring improvements in forest governance and recognition of tenure rights. The full report is available [online](#).

SUSTAINABLE ADAPTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE: PRIORITISING SOCIAL EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY. Published by Earthscan (February 2011). This book sets out how to ensure that adaptation efforts are socially and environmentally sustainable, contributing to poverty reduction as well as confronting the processes driving vulnerability. It examines how adaptations to climate change, including types of measures, policy frameworks, and local household strategies, interact with social and environmental sustainability. The book includes a mixture of conceptual and case study-based papers, which draw on research from Europe, Asia and Africa. The book is available for purchase at [Earthscan's website](#).

CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE: GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS 2011. Published by the UN Human Settlements Programme (March 2011). Cities and Climate Change examines the links between urbanisation and climate change, the potentially devastating effects of climate change on urban populations, and the policy responses and practices that are emerging in urban areas. The report shows how cities can improve the way they operate in order to respond to climate change and provides practical strategies for strengthening their role as part of the solution. The full report is available for purchase at [Earthscan's website](#).

HOW DO SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES AND INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS DRIVE CHINA'S RAPID DEVELOPMENT? Published by the World Bank (March 2011). This study uses case studies, interviews, field visits, and extensive reviews of the existing literature to briefly summarise the development experiences of China's special economic zones and industrial clusters. The papers assert that the special economic zones and industrial clusters have made crucial contributions to China's economic success. It shows how the special economic zones have contributed significantly to China's gross domestic product, employment, exports, and attraction of foreign investment. The full working paper is available [online](#).