
[Open letter related to Forests Definition to all members of the CBD](#)

The Thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will be held in FAO, Rome, Italy (18 - 22 february 2008). Forest biodiversity will be one of the main items on the agenda. Also in the light of the discussions on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries that will take place within the framework of the Bali Plan of Action of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the need for synergy between the outcomes of these discussions and the Convention on Biological Diversity, we draw your attention to the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Review of Implementation of the Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity (Rome, 28 May-1 June 2007) to: "Adopt an agreed global definition of forest (and other forest-related terms) that reflects forest biodiversity elements, taking into account ongoing dialogue and work." (Programme element 3, Goal 1, objective 1. Definition).

The AHTEG also recommended to "Educate the public and policy makers about the importance of forest biodiversity and natural forests, the impact of forest degradation on natural forests and different values of different types of forests, and plantations". The working definition of forests adopted by the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, based on FAO's definition, includes both ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity conservation and tree monocultures that constitute a major threat to biodiversity. As long as there is no coherent definition of forests that is used in both legally binding instruments, there is a severe risk of dissynergies and even conflicts between national activities that implement these Conventions.

In line with the above-mentioned recommendations, SBSTTA could revisit the following CBD definition: "A plantation forest may be afforested land or a secondary forest established by planting or direct seeding. A gradient exists among plantation forests from even-aged, single species monocultures of exotic species with a fibre production objective to mixed species, native to the site with both fibre and biodiversity objectives. This gradient will probably also reflect the capability of the plantation forest to maintain 'normal' local biological diversity."

(<http://www.cbd.int/programmes/areas/forest/definitions.asp> Forest Biodiversity Definitions. Indicative definitions taken from the Report of the ad hoc technical expert group on forest biological diversity)

In the light of the importance of the above distinction we believe that -from a biodiversity perspective- "even-aged, single species monocultures of exotic species with a fibre production objective" should be excluded from the category of plantation forests -because they are unable "to maintain 'normal' local biological diversity" and should be instead included in agriculture as "tree crops".

Such distinction is particularly important in southern countries, where the ongoing expansion of millions of hectares of plantations of often alien tree monocultures are heavily impacting on forest -and grassland- biodiversity under the positive guise of "plantation forests".

We sincerely hope that this issue is addressed at your upcoming meeting and that the CBD will play a leading role in the adoption of "an agreed global definition of forest , that reflects [forest] biodiversity

elements."

Yours sincerely,

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