

Rio Conventions' ECOSYSTEMS PAVILION

Linking biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management

Pavilion News Digest, 23 October, 2010

The Rio Conventions' Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion is a collaborative outreach activity involving the Rio Convention secretariats, with the Global Environment Facility and other important partners

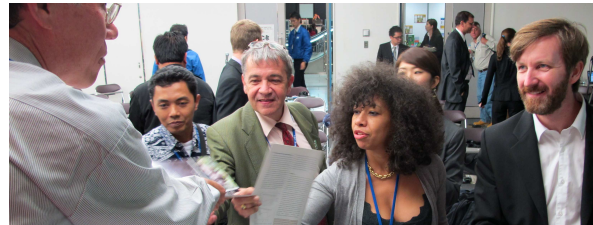
Water, Ecosystems and Climate Change - Day 5 Friday, 22 October, Nagoya

Water: the essential issue—"It will be a water crisis that hits first—before climate or biodiversity," says Peter Bridgewater, from the UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee, and that is one reason why the importance of wetlands cannot be understated. "Despite the dark cloud of climate change, availability and purity of water is the world's most serious environmental challenge," he says, adding that better biodiversity management can help solve the water issue. The wetlands, in comparison with forests, have a much more important role in absorbing excess carbon dioxide, and managing known effects of climate change such as floods, tidal surge or droughts.

Water Bankruptcy—The 2009 World Economic Forum concluded that we are now on the verge of water bankruptcy, and Rob McInnes from RAMSAR said this was particularly true for the poorest nations. "We need," he says, "to consider the huge gap between the loss of GDP caused by the disruption of water services of poorest countries and the less considerable gap of rich nations."

Wetlands harbour life—Probably no ecosystem has been as poorly understood as wetlands, and consequently, more than half of all freshwater wetland systems have been lost since 1900. In North America and Europe, 56 to 65 per cent of wetlands have been drained for agriculture. But according to Professor Jim Harris, Society for Ecological Restoration Chair of Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, the complex interactions between water, soils, topography, micro-organisms, plants and animals make inland waters among the earth's most productive ecosystems. "Wetlands", he says, "provide a number of ecosystem goods and services, including a wide-range of direct and indirect streams of benefits to humans and other

species. The seasonal flooding of the floodplains in the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands in Northern Nigeria, for instance, is crucial to the use of the area by people, fauna and birds. And yet, wetlands are in worse condition overall than any other broad ecosystem type due to overexploitation".



Discussing issues on Water Day in the Ecosystems Pavilion Dialogue Space

Humans and wetlands: a sacred balance—"If we want to understand the future, we have to look in our past and cultural heritage," says Bas Verschuuren, co-chair of IUCN's Specialist Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas. And if the future means adapting to the impacts of climate change, he says a bio-cultural approach is called for in order to broaden our understanding of how humans connect with the wetlands. Communities all over the world, he says, have developed a resilient cultural fabric made of cultural and spiritual values of their wetlands them to adapt to climate change.

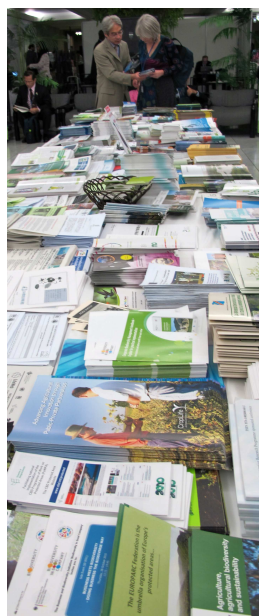
Wetlands degradation in the inner Niger Delta—Along the Niger River in Mali is the last remaining wetlands of any significant size in the Sahel. "The water from Niger River system," says Kemi Seesink, Senior Policy Officer from Wetlands International, "forms a lifeline threatened by environmental degradation and climate change". In this context, Wetlands International has launched an initiative to

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manage the delta and adapt in times of less water, while conducting studies on the impacts of dams on ecosystems. Rob McInnes, from the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, added that local people obviously understand very well the impacts of climate change on the delta, and should be involved in the decision-making process.

Natural solutions—“Using natural infrastructure solutions, rather than hard engineering that are, most of the time much more expensive, can save money” says Rob McInnes from RAMSAR. Plenty of good examples have proven that these solutions can be worth the investment. New York City found that it could avoid spending US\$3–8 billion on new wastewater treatment plants by investing US\$1.5 billion in land purchase and conservation management measures to protect wetlands in the surrounding watershed. “Wetlands and biodiversity are doing the work for us and for free,” said McInnes.



Natural value still overlooked—Even as markets are slowly considering the value of water services provided by nature, it is still a new concept to many and definitely not yet mainstream, says Patrick ten Brink, the co-coordinator for TEEB Policy Makers. He says, “The service true value is known when it is lost and then you have to pay to replace it.” In other words, “We never know the worth of water till the well is dry,” he says, citing an English proverb. Ten Brink highlighted good practice examples from all around the

globe, including Mexican good practices on aquifers for which the poverty geographical map has served to designate critical hydro and poverty stress, to the Vosges Mountains where farmers received compensation for low impacts practices in dairy farming.

Acting locally—Water security needs to be approached with a perspective that allows for small, local projects to consider the bigger picture, according to Keith Bowers, from the Society for Ecological

Restoration. He said that even with a small investment in restoring a habitat, such as in addressing mine tailings, very significant results could be achieved.

They just don’t get it—“There is a lack of political will of decision-makers to address water issues,” says Carlos Rodriguez from Conservation International, and he feared that targets for biodiversity are too ambitious. He says we might need two things: Even after seeing the facts and figures on biodiversity loss, he hears decision-makers complain that the biodiversity for the next decade are “too ambitious.” It was imperative to counter that perception by providing them with tools and political plans. “And it is possible,” he says explaining the structural reforms done in 1985 in Costa Rica to join together the ministry of three related sectors: Environment, Mining and Energy. But the question remains: “How quick can we do this change?”

Calculate Your Carbon Footprint for the Rio Conventions’ Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion

Understanding the impact of our meetings on the global climate is an important element of convening responsible events.

As such, the Pavilion will collect from participants information about their travel to Nagoya and their accommodation and local transportation around Nagoya, to quantify the total greenhouse gases produced by the Pavilion’s participants.

The live footprint tool, empowered by Ecometrica, will present each respondent with his or her individual footprint instantly.

You can enter your information at the Ecosystems Pavilion Information Booth (211 A, level 1 Building 2)

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Ron McInnes, RAMSAR Secretariat, Jacqueline Alder, UNEP, Patrick Ten Brink, Institute for European Environmental Policy, Keith Bowers, Society for Ecological Restoration, José Yunis, The Nature Conservancy, Carlos Manuel Rodriguez (Conservation International) .

Ecosystems Pavilion Programme Overview

18 October, Monday	<i>The linkages between biodiversity, sustainable land management and climate change</i> With the European Commission and other partners	Evening Sessions – Reducing emissions from degradation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) <i>With UNEP and other UN REDD members</i>
19 October, Tuesday	<i>Key role of protected areas in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies</i> With IUCN WCPA and other partners	Session 1: Inter-linkages of biodiversity, carbon and economics
20 October, Wednesday	<i>Indigenous peoples and communities – benefits and livelihoods</i> With UNDP, Conservation International and other partners	Session 2: Traditional knowledge in conserving biodiversity and carbon
21 October, Thursday	<i>Forest biodiversity: mitigation and adaptation – the linked benefits provided by forests</i> With members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other partners	Session 3: Environmental safeguards and REDD
22 October, Friday	<i>Water, Ecosystems and Climate Change</i> With SCBD and other partners	Session 4: Measuring and monitoring of biodiversity and ecosystem services within REDD
23 October, Saturday	<i>UNCCD Land Day 3</i>	Session 5 (11am -1:30 pm): Empowerment of the biodiversity constituency in REDD processes
		Evening Sessions – Commitments and international cooperation for financing synergies, in partnership with CBD's LifeWeb
25 October, Monday	<i>Economics of ecosystem services and biodiversity, climate change and land management</i> With TEEB and other partners	Session 1: Mesoamerican financing synergies through protected area solutions, featuring Costa Rica Forever and other national initiatives
26 October, Tuesday	<i>Ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation</i> With IUCN, ICLEI and other partners	Session 2: Caribbean and Micronesian financing synergies through protected-area solutions
27 October, Wednesday	<i>Promoting synergies for sustainable development and poverty reduction</i> With UNDP and other partners	Session 3: South American financing synergies through protected area solutions, featuring the Pan-Amazonian Vision
28 October, Thursday	<i>Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion Summit: Moving Towards Rio+20</i>	Session 4: West African Coastal and Marine financing synergies through protected area solutions

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