

The Convention on Biological Diversity and its Contribution to Sustainable Development

In 1992, governments, indigenous groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to talk about the environment. The Rio Earth Summit was the largest international environmental meeting ever. At the meeting, world leaders agreed that it was important to protect the environment for all people, including present and future generations

The Three conventions emerged from the Rio Earth Summit are

- 1) The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- 2) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- 3) The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which happens to be my topic of concern is the international legal tool for "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources" that has been ratified by 196 nations. The CBD's governing body is the Conference of the Parties (COP). This ultimate authority of all governments (or Parties) that have ratified the treaty meets every two years to review progress, set priorities and commit to work plans.

Let us try and understand how Biological Diversity and Sustainable Development are related...

Biodiversity AKA the diversity of life on Earth can be defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems. Biodiversity thus includes not only the millions of different species on Earth, it also consists of the specific genetic variations and traits within species (such as different crop varieties), as well as the various types of different ecosystems, marine and terrestrial, in which human societies live and on which they depend, such as coastal areas, forests, wetlands, grasslands, mountains and deserts. Biodiversity is also measured by two major components 1) species richness and 2) species evenness.

Biodiversity is essential for sustainable development and human well-being. It underpins the provision of food, fiber and water; it mitigates and provides resilience to climate change; it supports human health, and provides jobs in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and many other sectors.

So it is absolutely important for us to take care of biodiversity so as to get better results in sustainable development.

THE USA AND THE CBD - A BRIEF HISTORY ·

1992: After extensive involvement by the USA in the six-year drafting and negotiation phases, the CBD opened for signature at the Rio de Janeiro "Earth Summit". Its objectives: "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources". Modeled after conservation laws in the United States, it set out a series of steps the parties will take in their own ways to conserve living resources and to ensure benefits they provide will be sustained. More than 150 nations and the European Union signed the Convention in Rio. However, USA President George H. W. Bush declined to sign. ·

June 1993: President Clinton signed the CBD on behalf of the USA. ·

November 1993: President Clinton transmitted the CBD to the Senate for advice and consent along with "seven understandings" to accompany the ratification instrument. He noted that existing Federal, State and local laws and programs were "sufficient to enable any activities necessary to

effectively implement our responsibilities under the Convention” and the “Administration does not intend to disrupt the existing balance of Federal and State authorities through the Convention”.

1994: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee supported CBD ratification by a 16-3 bipartisan vote, subject to the seven understandings. (Five of the 16 senators who voted for ratification are still in the Senate: Senators Dodd, Feingold, Gregg, Kerry, and Lugar. None of the three senators who voted against ratification remain in office.) However, the CBD never received a ratification vote on the Senate floor.

1995 - 2008: The Senate has not revisited CBD ratification for 14 years. But, during this time, the USA still has sent large delegations of governmental officials and representatives from environmental and industry groups to all CBD meetings. Nevertheless, as a CBD “observer,” our nation’s delegations have no official voice – we cannot directly engage in key negotiations or final decision-making.

· The CBD’s 24 work programs – ranging from agricultural biodiversity to forests, climate change to island issues, and plant conservation to ecotourism – set the agenda for key conservation and sustainable use activities around the world. · USA environmental and industry groups have long seen the value of the CBD for their work and they actively contribute to its processes and implementation. For example, several major organizations participate in the CBD’s protected areas work program, which sets goals for networks of protected areas, strengthens capacity and skills, and provides recognized guidance on management of protected areas. · Industry groups and other stakeholders are very active in the CBD’s genetic resource and access and benefit-sharing (ABS) negotiations. USA membership could significantly aid the molding of fair, workable ABS policies. · Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and habitats such as the tropical forests – Earth’s “lungs” - are integral to tackling the impacts of global warming. The CBD helps ensure that Earth’s native plants and wildlife are considered in negotiations over global warming mitigation and adaptation. · A few other notable CBD benefits: it fosters needed international coordination in addressing harmful invasive species; it is implementing a broadly-applauded Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; and it provides strong support for the vital, but neglected, scientific discipline of taxonomy.

My suggestions for Preserving Biodiversity include -- Increasing awareness and scientific temper among general public concerning to conservation of biodiversity, Increasing the number of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and biosphere reserves, Identifying and conserving economically important organisms, The levels of pollutants should be reduced in the environment, Deforestation should be strictly prohibited, Environmental laws should be followed strictly.

It is high time for us to unite and save biodiversity so as to get maximum sustainable development for us and future generations.