

The look of hope in nature's eyes Convention on Biological Diversity!

Stories from CBD COP8

Out of 34 decisions taken in Brazil, most just postponed concrete actions for the future.

See pages 3 and 11-17

Publicity ideas

How to protect floodplains?
By involving landowners along with the Minister of Environment.

See pages 4-7

Working Groups Meet

New name and chair selected in one meeting, another one was combined with a training.

See pages 20-21

by Klára Hajdu

Twelve Days in Brazil at a Slow Pace

It was the ever largest meeting of the ever largest biodiversity convention. Four thousand attendees, twelve days of negotiations and 34 decisions taken – in the effort to stop biodiversity decline.

Species are being lost at the fastest rate since the disappearance of dinosaurs. It is as much as 1,000 times faster than the natural rate of extinction. This was the main messages of a video on the 2010 target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss. This film launched the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-8) on the 20th of March, in Curitiba, Brazil.

Among the major achievements was the adoption of the new island biodiversity work programme. In addition, the decision to confirm the COP-5 ban on field testing of the so called suicide seeds (GURTs – the Genetic Use Restriction Technolo-

gies) and reject case-by-case risk assessments was celebrated by many countries, NGOs and indigenous peoples' representatives.

Nevertheless, the meeting failed the expectations of many. From a substantive point of view, the negotiations were not as ambitious as in previous meetings.

Two topics largely dominated the negotiations: the establishment of marine protected areas (PAs) on international waters beyond national jurisdiction, and development of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). Sadly, the outcomes rather

"Biodiversity for us is a matter of life and death"

**Tommy E. Remengesau,
President of Palau**

Continued on page 11



For more stories on CBD COP8 check pages 12 to 17



Contents

3 Twelve Days in Brazil at a Slow Pace

The meeting failed the expectations of many. Nevertheless, there are some points to celebrate.

4 Counting Corncrakes with the Minister of Environment

The Latvian minister of Environment was counting corncrakes. Hopefully the corncrakes can count upon him to secure their future.

6 Why shall we care for nature?

The CEEWEB Policy Office developed a CD-ROM for various stakeholders.

8 The Restoration of Slovakian Wetlands

A recent project attempts at stopping the decline of Slovakian wetlands.

11 Advocating Biodiversity with the Convention on Biological Diversity

International obligations and commitments can be an effective tool in protecting biodiversity.

12 Other stories from CBD

Read about Biopiracy: can CBD compete with WTO? on page 12, Games with Genes on page 14, Protected Areas on no man's sea and The Challenge to Communicate on page 17.

20 News from CEEWEB Working Groups

22 Get Green!

Tips on going green. Try them, and share yours with us!

24 Magazine Basket

A few magazines to learn about environment, the EU, and more.

27 CEEWEB Board Meeting

28 Back cover Take Part

Read how to tell others about your Biodiversity Day and plan CEEWEB work with the CEEWEB Policy Office

Counting Corncrakes with the Minister of Environment

The Latvian Fund for Nature, a member of CEEWEB, presents a successful campaign on raising the awareness of the public. It focuses on the need to preserve the natural diversity of floodplain meadows.

The corncrake (*Crex crex*) is among the endangered species in the world. Yet, in comparison to other European countries, Latvia still boasts a relatively large number of these birds – about 38 000 breeding pairs. Overgrowing of abandoned grasslands, drainage and the potential intensification of agriculture threatens the survival of the corncrake in Latvia.

Successful conservation of natural diversity in Natura 2000 sites often depends on the willingness and support of the local landowners. Public attitudes towards nature conservation are often inert or even negative. Landowners may perceive nature conservation solely as a nuisance to the traditional way of land management. This puts an additional strain on the implemen-



Minister of the Environment Raimonds Vejonis together with stakeholder Vija Janzema from Burtnieki lake floodplains and bird expert Andris Klepers from Latvian Fund for Nature are registering corncrakes in Burtnieki floodplains after midnight. Photo by Dainis Busmanis.

tation of the targets that a Natura 2000 site is set up for. A similar situation could be observed in sites covered by the Latvian Fund for Nature project "Restoration of Latvian floodplains for EU priority species and habitats" financed through the LIFE-Nature program and the World Bank/UNDP. The project has activities in 15 specially protected nature areas in Latvia. Biologically valuable floodplain meadows there are owned and managed by 850 various landowners and are in varying states of natural succession and quality.

To foster public involvement and to promote the appreciation of the importance of nature conservation, the Latvian Fund for Nature together with UNDP Latvia organized a campaign "Seeking out the Corncrake" in June 2005. The corncrake is one of the priority species of the LIFE-Nature program and a target species of the project. Floodplain meadows are a highly favored breeding habitat for this species.

More publicity on the Earth Day

A motivating team competition was held on the World Environment Day. There were three teams participating, each of them comprised of a publicly known person, a private landowner, and a professional ornithologist. The participation of the minister for the environment, head of the UNDP Latvia, and the chairman of the District Council assured wide publicity for the event. However, particularly important was the participation of local inhabitants. They were good role models for the relevant target audience.

The campaign encouraged people to identify the bird, and to count the number of the birds heard. This was an unusual activity for most of the participants who could experience themselves and demonstrate to others that the observation of natural processes is exciting, simple and available to everyone. Watching birds also helped to change the somewhat negative image of the floodplain meadows and convince the population that these often "overgrown" and "muddy" areas are valuable nature sites.

For the competition, comparable routes were drawn in two Natura 2000 sites around Lake Burtnieks in the north-eastern part of Latvia. They had to be covered during the night within a certain number of hours, and along the routes all corncrakes and other nocturnal birds heard by the contestants had to be registered. Covering the route on foot additionally demonstrated principles of nature-friendly ecotourism suitable for protected nature areas. The participants had an introductory course with abundance of visuals on recognizing the meadow birds. All the teams exhibited amazing determination to roam at night through dew-covered grass of the long route in attempt to differentiate between the many strange nocturnal sounds, and to count the corncrakes.

The results were truly unexpected as two of the teams also heard the great snipe (*Gallinago media*), a bird rarely found in Latvia. A member of the team, the UNDP Latvia office manager, Inita Paulovica, recounted that

"We have to make sure that the song of the corncrake does not become only the subject of folksongs"

Oskars KeiĶs

Continued
on page 6

Continued
from page 5

"the team spirit was surprising, especially when several deep ditches had to be crossed."

A member to the second team – minister for the environment, Raimods Vejonis, was exhilarated by the nighttime walk – the abundance of nocturnal creatures seen in such a short time could be compared to his African safari adventure in Kenya. His team member – a local farmer – had been seriously preparing herself for the event by listening to the bird songs' records.

Wise prize for the active ones

A more extensive public involvement initiative was organised in parallel. People from the rural areas of Latvia could call a free

number to report on corncrakes heard during the World Environment Day. The main incentive to call was the possibility to win a free-of-charge excursion to the nearest Natura 2000 site. An excursion was to be given in the district that had the most active callers. Over the weekend, 442 calls from all over Latvia were received, and the voices of 726 corncrakes were reported. The most active participants of this campaign were in the Madona district, and they could later enjoy a trip to the Teici Nature Reserve and the Aiviekste River floodplain. Accompanied by a talented nature interpreter, they listened to corncrakes and learned about the importance of nature conservation.

by Klára Hajdu

Why shall we care for nature?

CEEWEB Policy Office developed a CD-ROM for increasing awareness of various stakeholders about the need and ways to preserve biodiversity. It is perfectly timed for the International Biodiversity Day in May 22.

The awareness raising CD-ROM by CEEWEB not only addresses devoted environmentalists, but just as much other stakeholders. Through everyday examples and scientific explanations it describes the importance of biodiversity, the significance of ecosystem services, the methods and limitations of ecosystem valuations, the impacts and root causes behind biodiversity loss. It reviews the main responses given to these adverse changes by the society on various levels from global, through Pan-

European and EU to national levels in biodiversity conservation. It also outlines the principles of the only possible alternative for the future, namely sustainable development. The compilation provides firm arguments for the conservation of ecological systems in an attractive format. Recommended for versatile use for everybody!

The CD-ROM can be requested free of charge at the CEEWEB Policy Office.

The head referee of the competition, Latvian corncrake expert Oskars Keiņš, stressed that "the corncrake is one of our national values, which is also depicted on the 10 Lats silver coin; the other species that also adorns the 10 silver Lats is the European mink, yet that species is already extinct. We have to make sure that the song of the corncrake does not become only the subject of folksongs."

Participants of both the corncrake counting competition and the Natura 2000 excursion were inspired by these activities. They all agreed that "we have to appreciate the nature around us, and have to make sure it is preserved for the generations to come!" Publicity surrounding the campaign was an important tool for informing the public not only on this particular event but on the significance of nature conservation efforts in general. Articles published in the printed media across the country and TV segments shown on national television certainly contributed to the improved understanding of nature protection objectives.

A similar campaign to "Seeking out the Corncrake" will also be organized by the LIFE-Nature project Restoration of Latvian Floodplains of the Latvian Fund for Nature this year. This time it will take place in the western part of Latvia, and the teams will gather popular musicians, landowners, and ornithologists.

The corncrake (*Crex crex*).
Photo by Aivars Petrins.



The Restoration of Slovakian Wetlands

Slovakian wetlands are among the most threatened natural ecosystems. Even though the total area of wetlands in Slovakia has been dramatically reduced during the last few decades, there are still a few localities of high value. Nowadays a project named Restoration of the Wetlands of Záhorie Lowland aims to protect and restore eight proposed Sites of Community Importance. One of the partners of the project is a member of CEEWEB, the Slovakian NGO BROZ.

Human intervention has dramatically reduced the total area of wetlands in Slovakia during the last few decades and seriously threatened the majority of the remaining natural and semi-natural wetlands. The most significant changes in their natural

water regime were caused by the extensive drainage, peat extraction and land reclamation schemes. These changes have led to the dramatic decline of biodiversity and decrease in the water retention capacity of the areas concerned.



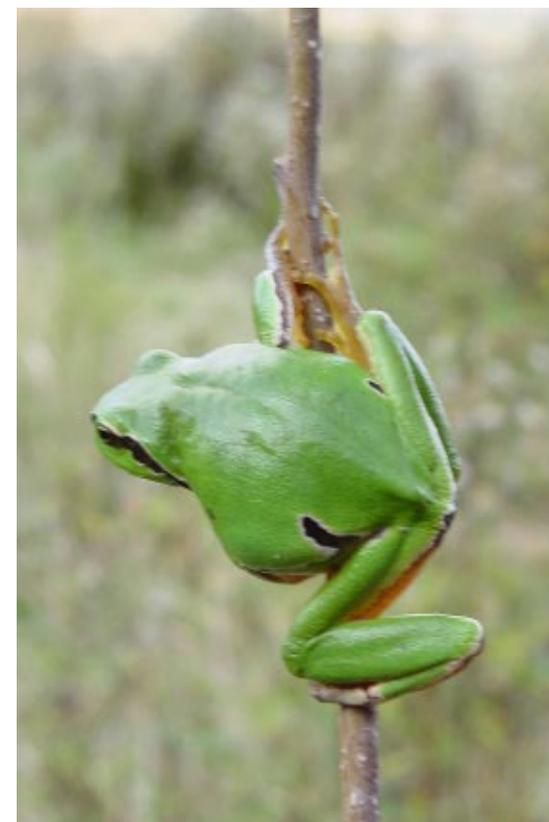
The sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) lives in peat bogs. It catches insect as nitrogen source. Photo by Jaromír Šíbl.

The importance of wetlands is well known – both for the biodiversity conservation and stabilization of the water regime of the landscape. Rain water is kept in the wetlands and during dry periods they serve as natural reservoirs of water. The presence of untouched wetland ecosystems softens climatic extremes such as droughts and heat storms, and lowers the probability of floods. Wetlands represent unique habitats for many plant and animal species, and these ecosystems are a breeding area for many species of animals such as fish, amphibians and dragonflies.

Thirteen Slovakian wetland localities belong to the Ramsar convention, the international agreement aimed at the protection of wetland ecosystems, which has been signed in Ramsar (Iran) back in 1971. Two of them, ecosystems around the Morava and Rudava river basins, are located in Záhorie lowland. Rudava will be revitalized through a LIFE Nature project.

A project to reverse the damage done earlier

The restoration of the Wetlands of Záhorie Lowland project was approved by the European Commission in the framework of LIFE Nature programme. The European Union covers half of the total project budget that is totaling to EUR 624,000. The rest is paid by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic together with its partners, Slovak Water Management Enterprise, Department Bratislava and BROZ – Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development.



The tree-frog (*Hyla arborea*) is a characteristic amphibian of wetlands. Photo by Jaromír Šíbl.

The project shall contribute to the development of NATURA 2000 network through the conservation, restoration and enhancement of important wetland habitats and species at the territory of Záhorie Lowland, which is one of the most important regions in Slovakia not only concerning wetlands, but also biodiversity in general.

The project aims at improving the overall habitat conditions at the eight proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCI) – wetlands degraded in the past by the drainage schemes and other

Continued
from page 9

human interventions. It will help to reach and maintain favourable conservation status of the habitats and species targeted at the national level and will raise public awareness about the wetland restoration and conservation issues.

Actions that will be taken to achieve these objectives include the development of specific management plans for the most threatened species and habitats, restoration of meadows and improving water regime of the sites by filling up the drainage ditches.

Positive impact finally

The most valuable, 45 kilometer long section of the Rudava River is one out of the eight proposed Sites of Community Importance. The river flows from east to west through the sand dunes of Záhorie Lowland. Unlike the upper and lower sections, the middle section has never been regulated and therefore the river and its flood-plain have been preserved almost in their natural state. They form a complex of meandering streams and adjacent wetlands with well developed side branches, sand banks, oxbow lakes, fens, reed beds, swamps, temporary pools and wet meadows. It is considered to be the best preserved small lowland river ecosystem in Slovakia. The site partly overlaps with the Military District Záhorie. For its extraordinary natural values, the site has been designated as Ramsar site in 1998.

The extremely dry sand dunes, mostly covered with pine and

deciduous forests, are in close contact with wet habitats of different kinds – inter-dune depressions with alder swamp woods, transition mires, wet pastures, wet meadows. This is an absolutely unique type of landscape pattern in Slovakia (and in Central Europe), therefore the area is of extraordinary importance for the conservation of biodiversity. Due to this exceptionally high diversity of habitats, large numbers of species and communities with different ecological requirements can be found there in a relatively small area. The recent surveys recorded more than 500 species of vascular plants there, from which 101 are on the National Red List. More than 30 fish species (five on the Red List), 11 species of amphibians and reptiles (four on the Red List), 48 bird species (13 on the Red List) and 24 mammals were counted.

The natural water regime of the site was partly disturbed about four decades ago, when drainage ditches were dug in some parts, and the upper and lower sections of the Rudava River were regulated. Species diversity of some wet meadows and pastures has been partly influenced during the last decade due to lack of the management.

Some of the areas included in the project are located in the Military Training Area Zahorie. We hope that cooperation with the Ministry of Defense established in the course of the project will lead to a long-term protection of nature also in other Slovakian military training areas.

Continued from page 3

focused on the future process of the international negotiations.

"That is the multilateral pace," responded a Brazilian diplomat to complaints that the decisions reached basically postponed concrete actions for the future.

After delivering 34 decisions on numerous issues, such as PAS, ABS, traditional knowledge, private-sector engagement, incentive measures, alien species or impact assessments, now it is up to the intersessional working groups to move the substantive agenda forward. The next meeting will take place in 2008, Germany.

Besides official discussions, maybe even more important developments were made by individual governments. Brazil announced that it would declare 210,000

square kilometres of its rain forests a protected area in the next three years. Palau's President Tommy E. Remengesau launched the "Micronesia challenge," which aims to protect 6.7 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean (roughly 5 % of its surface) by 2020.

"Biodiversity may be a sideline issue for other people, but for us it's a matter of life and death," said Palau's President Tommy E. Remengesau. "The key point is to translate words into action. We need to follow commitments with real, practical action."

More detailed report on the meeting is published on CEEWEB's website at www.ceeweb.org

The final texts of the decisions are available on the Convention's website at www.biodiv.org

Advocating Biodiversity with the Convention on Biological Diversity

International obligations and commitments, including the Convention on Biological Diversity are useful tools in advocating the conservation of biodiversity. This was proven in several cases during the project carried out in South East European countries between the beginning of 2005 and 2006 February under the coordination of CEEWEB.

The involved NGOs (BIOTICA from Moldova, Green Action from Croatia, Makmontana from Macedonia and

Young Researchers of Serbia) used these policy tools in their everyday work, let it be campaigning for wetland conservation or lobbying for public participation regarding GMOs. Communicating these commitments also help building up pressure on governments for doing what they are supposed to do, and gives tools for NGOs for their role as watch-dogs of governments.

More information about the project including final national reports is available at www.ceeweb.org

BIOPIRACY

or can CBD compete with WTO?

The most complex decision reached at the Conference was on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). An international regime will be developed by 2010.

More and more revealed cases of biopiracy around the world have led to a growing attention to the granting of patents on genetic resources and the lack of sharing benefits with indigenous communities and countries of origin. Large developing countries like India, Brazil, Pakistan and many others demand that corporations interested in having access to genetic material must disclose their country of origin and seek the prior informed consent of local people before obtaining patent rights.

Indigenous communities and small farmers argue that the plants they have cultivated and diversified for centuries are being used by corporations without their permission. This huge biological and associated cultural diversity (like the traditional knowledge about the healing characteristics of herbs and healing practices) are abused for the interest of large companies. They say that negotiations aimed at the commercial exploitation of organisms must involve them from the very start.

Even NGOs are for and against

On the other hand according to some communities, like farmers involved in the movement Vía

Campesina and many NGOs, the international system for ABS would amount to the "commodification" of biological resources and traditional knowledge, a common heritage of humankind.

Developed countries and their pharmaceutical, agriculture and biotechnology industries are very strongly against the inclusion of derivatives in the scope of a future international regime. The US (which is not Party to the Convention), with huge corporate interests in the biotech and pharmaceutical companies is not even willing to provide for the disclosure of origin of genetic resources. In the opinion of Douglas Neumann, a US State Department official, the disclosure condition would cause uncertainty for the product developer and "would discourage innovation."

Developing countries are also advocating their interests in other key fora. Because the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement under the WTO allows for the patenting without ensuring compliance with the provisions of the CBD, developing countries call for its amendment. They say that if prior informed consent and

benefit sharing is not possible under WTO terms, at least patents for products based on traditional or indigenous knowledge must be excluded. However, a WTO official told delegates at a meeting: "right now, we are not discussing the traditional knowledge".

Besides, developing countries ask that the issue be included in the negotiations on a substantive patent law treaty within the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

Who does actually own the knowledge?

In addition to the trade implications of ABS, another complicated and even controversial issue surrounding ABS is that of national sovereignty. It is not clear whether knowledge of plants, animals, and other organisms belong to indigenous communities or to the country as a whole, and thus who has the right to be involved in the negotiations and benefit sharing.

While the complexity of the issue and the immense opposite interests slow down the negotiations, the COP decision focused on the future negotiating framework. The COP established an expert group on a certificate of origin. Perhaps most importantly, the Parties also set a firm time frame to develop an international regime by 2010. To assist more effective future work, the conference elected two permanent Co-Chairs (Fernando Casas from Colombia and Timothy Hodges from Canada) of the ABS Working Group, which is greatly unusual to the functioning of the CBD.

Biopiracy case studies revealed

During the Conference a report entitled "Out of Africa: Mysteries of Access and Benefit Sharing" published by the Edmonds Institute in collaboration with the African Centre for Biosafety was presented, which provides 36 brief case studies of biopiracy. "Bio-piracy", according to the authors, is "the acquisition of biodiversity, i.e., biological material (plants, animals, microorganisms, and their parts), or of traditional knowledge related to that biodiversity, without the prior informed consent of those whose biodiversity or traditional knowledge has been taken."

The three dozens of case studies present medicines, cosmetics and agricultural products originating from biodiversity (and associated traditional knowledge) in African countries, which have been patented by multinational companies without proven sharing of benefits with local populations and countries of origin.

One of the best known and most recent cases of bio-piracy involves Hoodia, an appetite suppressant and the related traditional knowledge of the indigenous San people in South Africa. Developed and patented by the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, exclusive rights were bought by a British company. Only worldwide outcry could achieve that a miniscule percentage of the royalties were made available to the San in the form of a trust.

Reports such as this emphasised the urgency for a legally binding global treaty to prevent biopiracy.

Games with Genes

Recommendations on Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs) and genetically modified (GM) trees were the positive outcomes of the COP8. Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety finally reached the agreement on the issue of the detailed documentation requirements for living modified organisms for food, feed, or processing (LMO-FFPs).

Rejecting GURTs, accepting farmers' rights

In addition to ABS, the Genetic Use Restriction Technologies (GURTs) have been in the focus point of debates between developed and developing countries, small holder farmers / indigenous peoples and agro-corporations in recent years. GURTs produce genetically engineered organisms with the potential to turn genes on and off depending on the conditions. Though the technology clearly bears some risks that have not been duly assessed until now, other aspects in addition to environmental and health risks are brought up in the case of "suicide" seeds. This would largely increase the dependence of farmers on multinational corporations, because they would need to buy the seeds for farming year after year, without the possibility and right to preserve them for next year cultivation.

In 2000 the CBD COP-5 adopted a de facto moratorium, when it

recommended that "in the current absence of reliable data on genetic use restriction technologies, without which there is an inadequate basis on which to assess their potential risks, and in accordance with the precautionary approach, products incorporating such technologies should not be approved by Parties for field testing".

However, research is still being carried out in Canada, the United States and Europe in laboratories and in one case, even in a greenhouse, said Karen Pederson, women's president of the National Farmers Union in Canada at COP-8.

Now COP-8 in Brazil reaffirmed this recommendation on the moratorium and encouraged Parties and others to respect traditional knowledge and farmers' rights to seed preservation and continue to undertake further research.

No GM trees for now!

Genetic modification came up on another agenda item of the Conference, namely within the discussions of forest biodiversity. Here the COP recommends parties to take a precautionary approach on the use of genetically modified trees, which actually means a moratorium on their release into the environment. Besides, the COP requests the Executive Secretary to collect and collate existing information, including peer-reviewed published literature on the impacts and risks associated with GM trees, which will provide input into the next discussions at COP-9.

"Because there is insufficient scientific data regarding the biological impacts of transgenic trees, as well as an absence of socio-economic and cultural impact assessments, it is good scientific practice to invoke the Precautionary Principle, which is enshrined in the CBD," stated Dr. Ricarda Steinbrecher of the Federation of German Scientists. "This means no release of transgenic trees into the environment whilst this research is ongoing," she added.

In July, 2005 the FAO published a report entitled "Preliminary Review of Biotechnology in Forestry Including Genetic Modification." In it, over half of researchers surveyed reported the environmental threat of escape of transgenic pollen or plants into native ecosystems and forests and their impacts on non-target species as a major concern.

Continued on page 16



Continued
from page
15

Agreement reached on documentation requirements for LMOs

The third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP-3) took place between 13-17 March, right before CBD COP-8 in Curitiba, Brazil. Approximately 1000 representatives from parties to the Protocol and other governments (most importantly from the US), UN agencies, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, academia and industry were present at the meeting. Last years' developments in more and more LMO use and international trade were also proved by the increased participation of representatives of trade and finance ministries in many national delegations.

The core focus of the five-day meeting was without doubt the issue of the detailed documentation requirements for living modified organisms for food, feed, or processing (LMO-FFPs). After

unsuccessful negotiations on this same issue last summer at COP/MOP-2, failing to reach an agreement on this question could have sounded the death knell of the Protocol. Finally, Parties agreed on a compromise agreement that, as many delegates noted, balanced the interests of importing and exporting, as well as developed and developing parties. The decision requires that in cases where the identity of the LMO is known through identity preservation systems, the documentation states that the shipment "contains" LMO-FFPs, while in cases where the identity of the LMOs is not known, it should state that the shipment "may contain" one or more LMO-FFPs. However, "may contain" documentations should be phased out by 2012, by considering further decision of COP-MOP-6 after reviewing relevant experiences.

Other and less debated issues on the agenda were risk assessment, the rights and responsibilities of transit parties, the financial mechanism and capacity building. Parties often agreed to revisit the topics at future COP/MOPs.

What are LMOs?

"Living modified organism" in Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is defined as any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology. "Living organism" means any biological entity capable of transferring or replicating genetic material, including sterile organisms, viruses and viroids. Under "Modern biotechnology" two things hide. First, it is

the application of in vitro nucleic acid techniques, including recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and direct injection of nucleic acid into cells or organelles. Second, it is the fusion of cells beyond the taxonomic family, that overcome natural physiological reproductive or recombination barriers and that are not techniques used in traditional breeding and selection.

www.biodiv.org/biosafety

by Klara Hajdu

Protected Areas on no man's sea

Discussions on Protected Areas (PAs) at the conference started with the review of implementation of the PAs work programme for the period 2004-2006. Options for cooperation for the establishment of marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction were revisited as well as options for mobilizing financial resources. The parties also talked about the further development of tool kits for the identification, designation, management, monitoring and evaluation of national and regional PA systems.

However, the discussions were largely dominated by one topic, namely the establishment of high seas PAs, where a Friends of the Chair group and a contact group had to be convened to reach a compromise decision. This question specifically focuses on the Convention's mandate vis-à-vis the UN General Assembly (UNGA), particularly in view of the UNGA Ad Hoc Working Group on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The final decision recognizes that the CBD has a key role in supporting UNGA work in this issue, by focusing on the provision of scientific and, as appropriate, technical information and advice relating to marine biodiversity, application of the ecosystem and precautionary approaches and in delivering the 2010 target.

The Challenge to Communicate

Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) were highlighted by many participants as key means for the implementation of the Convention. In their decision the Parties adopted the short-list of priority activities and the CEPA plan of implementation addressing national and international levels.

The short list of priority activities includes:

- establishing an implementation structure or process for CEPA activities (like establishing focal points and national implementation bodies)
- assessing the state of knowledge and awareness on biodiversity and determining capacity for communication (which should also address awareness of biodiversity and its relationship to human well-being)
- developing key messages (including the role of biodiversity in supporting human well-being)
- implementing a media relations strategy (including hosting familiarization workshops and presenting key messages)
- elaborating toolkits for the development and implementation of CEPA strategies
- organizing workshops for the articulation of CEPA strategies
- strengthening formal and informal education on biodiversity

The implementation plan identifies goals, activities, targets, tools, main actors and partners at the national, regional and international levels.

The COP invited the UN General Assembly to consider the proclamation of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity at its 61st session.

Natura 2000 Continental Biogeographic Seminar

The biogeographic seminars are often places for lively debates and controversial opinions, since governmental representatives often submit lists that are far from complete. It is the NGO responsibility to point this out and provide additional information.



A larger map is available from eea.eu.int

Following the EU enlargement in 2004, the ten new member states had to undertake the obligation to designate their Natura 2000 sites. In 2005, a series of Biogeographic Seminars started. Biogeographic seminars are stakeholder meetings in which the list of Natura 2000 sites proposed by the national governments are discussed and agreed on by the European Commission. Now the designation process is coming to an end, with the last remaining Biogeographic Seminar taking place on 26-28 April, 2006. The Natura 2000 sites of the Continental region will be discussed.

The seminar will take place in Darova, the Czech Republic, and the participants will be the delegates of the European Commission, the European Topic Centre which provides scientific background to the EC, official delegates of the concerned member states (the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia), independent scientists, land user organisations, neutral observers and – which is the most relevant for us - NGO representatives. The good news are that this is the first Biogeographic Seminar where two NGO representatives per member state can participate.

In the seminar, Sites of Community Interest will be officially adopted by the Commission through the evaluation of proposed Sites of Community Interest (National Lists). Decisions will be made about the sufficiency of national proposals, based on three requirements: quantity of sites, quality of sites and the coherence of the network. If a proposal of a species or a habitat type turns out to be insufficient, further bilateral negotiations or research studies will be proposed concerning the species or habitat type in question.

CEEWEB carries the mandate of the European Habitats Forum (EHF) to organize the NGO input from the new member states to the Biogeographic seminars. To fulfil this duty, CEEWEB organized a preparatory workshop for the Continental Biogeographic Seminar in 26-27th January in Prague. In this meeting the participants of the Biogeographic Seminar could clarify and understand the biogeographic process, how it works, and what is needed by NGOs to be effective at the biogeographic seminar. They reviewed the existing information and data, identified gaps, and determined steps for addressing these gaps.

Time to Register

The next CEEWEB Academy will take place in Bulgaria on May 16-21, 2006. The event will focus on strengthening civil participation in the implementation of EU nature conservation directives through the experiences gained by the ten new Member States.

Two topics will be covered during the Academy session: management of protected areas and Natura 2000. In relation to protected area management, sustainable land use, preparation of the management plans and responsibilities, as well as tourism as a tool of management will be discussed. About Natura 2000, the background, creation of a Natura 2000 network, management of Natura 2000 areas, financing and impact assessment aspects will be covered. Based on the lectures and the participants' experiences, there will be a discussion on the best possible implementation of Natura 2000.

The exact location of the training is the town of Kiten, at the Black sea coast in the area of the mouth of the Ropotamo River. The event will take place in an incredibly picturesque place. In the surrounding areas, just 10-15 kilometers away, there are at least 10 protected areas, including Ramsar sites, nature reserves, as well as all interesting sub-Mediterranean communities.



We aim at having an interactive meeting. Therefore, we call for the active participation of the CEEWEB members. If you have experiences to share, please let us know at your earliest convenience about which issues you can and would like to talk, with special focus on the following topics:

- Preparing management plans
- Tourism as a tool of management
- Creation of the Natura 2000 network
- Financing Natura 2000

We also need your input for the discussion session, in a form of presentation of a good example from your country on Natura 2000 preparation, site designation or implementation.

More information about the event and about the expected input from the participants as well as the provisional agenda and registration form are available on the CEEWEB website. We encourage every CEEWEB member to attend this meeting. Please register as soon as possible.

With questions and suggestions please contact Ildikó Arany via e-mail: arany@ceeweb.org, tel.: (+36-1) 398-0135.

The Meeting of the Rural Development Working Group

The members of the former Agri-environmental CEEWEB Working Group have met to share their experiences and plan future activities.

Eight people participated in the Working Group meeting in Tirgu Mures, Romania, on March 6-7, representing four organisations, namely Naturalist Club Poland, Environmental Society "ECO-MISSION" from Macedonia, Agora and Milvus Group from Romania.

At the meeting the work plan was reviewed and complemented with the task list. In addition, the members of the Working Group took two important decisions: about the name and scope of the Working Group activities, and about the leadership.



Working lunch during the meeting. Photo by László Ambrus

All participants agreed that rural development is broader and allows for a more holistic approach in comparison to the focus on agri-environment. Thus the Working Group was renamed Rural Development Working Group.

Péter Pál from Agora (Romania) was nominated and elected as the chair of the Working Group.

The most exciting was the discussion on the national rural development strategies and plans. The WG members gave a short overview on the situation in their countries and the role of NGOs in the rural development process. It was interesting to see how big differences between countries and ministries exist, but also between NGO movements and the ways of cooperation. The discussion was awakening and informative, all of us learned something on lobbying and influencing the process.

More information is available online at www.ceeweb.org/workinggroups/agrienvironment/meetings



Known Weaknesses can Become Strengths

Sustainable Tourism Working Group recently had a training on SWOT analysis for tourism development. The training was coupled with a working meeting.

"SWOT" is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis is a simple but indeed powerful tool for participatory planning of sustainable tourism activities in a specific area.

The training was the first of trainings organised for the members of the CEEWEB Sustainable Tourism Working Group. The second training will focus on sustainable tourism product development. The third will be devoted to the development of the group members' skills in tourism impact assessment and management.

A CEEWEB member NGO, Osijek Greens, hosted the training and the meeting of the Working Group in Osijek, Croatia, on 2-4 April, 2006. A study trip to the nearby town of Djakovo served for practicing the SWOT analysis.

The members of the Working Group confirmed their readiness to implement the action plan developed during the CEEWEB Annual

Meeting. The template for the country reports about the sustainable tourism situation was finalised, so the draft country reports can be prepared in two months. The working group will publish a brochure on sustainable tourism and prepare training material on SWOT analysis. The contents and style of the publications were discussed.

The group looked into the possible projects and funding sources for sustainable tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Chair of the Working Group, Michael Meyer, informed the participants that in the framework of the CADSES project, CEEWEB and ETE will be drafting a strategy for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathians and will elaborate the corresponding sustainable tourism protocol to the Carpathian Convention. Both should be ready for the COP2 in 2008. NGO consultation meetings will be organised for collecting the NGO input to the first draft.

Above: Study visit to Djakovo. Photo by Katrin Gebhard



Get Green!

We are all working on nature and environment related issues. But how is our green philosophy realized in our offices?

My friends were asking me where I am working and what the difference is between – let's say – a bank office and our green, nature and environment friendly office. I could not list too many differences. You can really save on going green, so some banks with good management can be greener than some of the environmentalist offices.

After this conversation with friends, I proposed in the CEEWEB Office to think over our way of life here. The result of our staff meeting was an action plan and task list related to the topic of green office.

The skeleton of our vision on a green office can be summarized in five simple steps.

Step 1. Measure how much you use and waste

It is always the starting point to look at the reality. After you know what the situation is, you can start thinking what to improve and how.

Concerning waste, the best option for improvement is to think of reducing waste. We decided to buy only rechargeable batteries, re-writeable CDs, and USB drives for data storage. All these things may seem to be obvious, but it is important to remember them when making everyday decisions.

Composting can also effectively reduce the amount of waste. It takes a little time and energy from the staff, but can prevent 1/3 of the waste generated. That is why our office started to collect organic waste separately and composting it in the garden. The compost can be used as natural fertilizer.

In addition to recycling toners, ink cartridges and other imaging consumables, you can do a range of things to 'green-up' your workplace and improve your office's environmental performance.

Recycle as much as you can! Selective waste management is crucial for minimizing the impact on the environment and on citizens' health. Our office is quite lucky because we have opportunity for selective waste collection, but if there are no selective waste containers close to your office, you can still look for the closest opportunity or lobby for having one!

We in the office collect separately electric waste, paper, glass and plastic.

Step 2. Don't harm when cleaning

Nowadays you can find tons of cleaning stuff on the shelves of

the stores. What to choose? I go back to methods my grandmother was using, natural and effective ways of cleaning: lemon and vinegar. Let's discover the traditional and environment-friendly methods.

For washing the dishes, you can buy biodegradable dish soap.

Step 3. Shop green

We usually go to the little shop near the office for shopping for the office staff. The shop-girls know that we never ask for plastic bags, we usually use our own backpacks. While shopping we prefer the products less packed, produced locally or at least in the country.

As green consumers, we like organic products. Last week we received the first vegetable packages from Open Garden Foundation (www.nyitottkert.hu). Our office became a collection point where locals can receive their packages of organic products.

This way we help the Community Supported Agriculture initiative and we get our tasty, aromatic vegetables in the office.

As for environmentally sound office furnishings, we prefer the FSC furniture that comes from sustainable managed forests.

Step 4. Save energy

Depending on the conditions, specific energy saving methods should be worked out in every office. Saving energy is good both for the environment and the

pocket of the organisation, as energy-saving innovations are cost-saving as well.

Offices use about a third of their electricity for computers, copiers, printers and other equipment. Choosing energy efficient office equipment and using equipment wisely can lower operating costs considerably. ENERGY STAR™ products can cut energy usage by more than half!

Step 5. Think green whatever you do

We have a wonderful garden around the office. We contributed to the feeding of birds during wintertime. Now we can hear the beautiful concerts of "our" birds.

The CEEWEB staff travels a lot. As you know the quickest way of travelling is by airplane, but this is the most harmful for the environment. So we prefer trains or shuttle buses if the destination is not extremely far. If the specific destination requires, we go by car, but always try to collect mates (this is called carpooling).

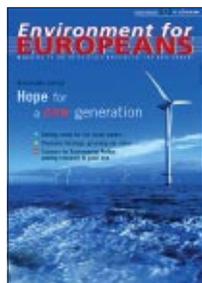
Share your ideas and keep improving

There are many other ways of improving the environmental performance of our offices, so please contact us with your innovative ideas!

While greening your office you might find better ways of reducing waste, water or energy – share your ideas with us! Look at other green office initiatives in your country and tell us your green office tips!

Magazine Basket

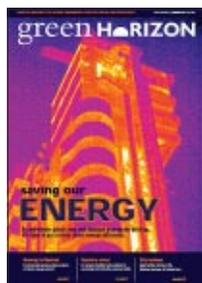
We would like to call your attention to some magazines that are providing news about environment, sustainable development and nature conservation in Europe and worldwide.



Environment for Europeans, by the European Commission Directorate-General for the Environment. This quarterly magazine aims to inform the broad European public about news and events in the environmental field at EU level, in a lively, attractive and readable format. It is distributed free of charge to readers around the world. Published in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Polish and Greek. Download from www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/news/efe

Available from Environment DG – Communication Unit
Rue de la Loi/Wetsstraat 200, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
fax: +32 2 29 69560

Subscribe online at www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/maillingregistration/main/mailling_reg.cfm



Green Horizon, by the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). This quarterly magazine reports on the cases and stories that shape the environment and sustainable development in Central and Eastern Europe. The magazine is useful for professionals from business, international organisations, national governments, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, academicians and the media. Published in English. Download from <http://gh.rec.org>

Available from the REC
Ady Endre út 9-11, 2000 Szentendre, Hungary
tel: +36 26 504000, fax: + 36 26 311 294, www.rec.org
Subscribe online at <http://greenhorizon.rec.org/subscribe-to-green-horizon-2.html>



YEE Newsletter, by Youth and Environment Europe (YEE). This bi-monthly newsletter serves as an "information point" for its member organisations and other environmentalists. Published in English. Download from <http://yee.ecn.cz/publications.htm>

Available from YEE
Kubátova 1/32, 102 00 Praha 10 – Hostivar Czech Republic
tel: +420 271 750643, fax: +420 271 750548
yee@ecn.cz, www.ecn.cz/yee

Northern Lights, by the Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED). This quarterly newsletter informs ANPED members as well as the wider public on progress of projects, upcoming international governmental and other meetings and presents reports from these meetings as well as provides general information to people interested in the issues ANPED is working on. The newsletter provides the ANPED members with a platform to highlight their activities to the network members as well as to a wider public. Published in English. Download from www.anped.org



Available from ANPED
PO BOX 59030, 1040 KA Amsterdam, The Netherlands
tel: +31 20 4751742, fax: +31 20 4751743
c.theile@anped.org, www.anped.org

Danube Watch, by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR). This monthly magazine reports on current issues affecting the Danube Basin, and on the actions taken to deal with challenges facing the river. Striving for scientific accuracy while remaining concise, clear and readable, it is produced for the wide range of people who are working for the improvement of the environment in the Danube River Basin. Published in English. Download from www.icpdr.org/icpdr-pages/danube_watch.htm



Available from ICPDR Permanent Secretariat
D0412, PO Box 500, 1400 Vienna, Austria
tel: +43 1 260 605738, fax: +43 1 260 605895
icpdr@unvienna.org, www.icpdr.org

Metamorphosis, by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), the largest federation of environmental citizens organisations in Europe. In this quarterly newsletter you will find recent updates on how we can protect and improve the environment in the EU and to enable citizens to play their part in achieving that goal. The reports on legislative and policy developments in the EU show which way the Union is heading in terms of environment and sustainable development. Published in English.

Available from EEB 34, Bd. de Waterloo, B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 289 1090, Fax: +32 2 289
eeb@eeb.org, www.eeb.org

PDF file available at:
<http://www.eeb.org/publication/general.htm>



Continued on page 26

Continued from page 25



IUCN RoFE Newsletter, by the World Conservation Union Regional Office for Europe.

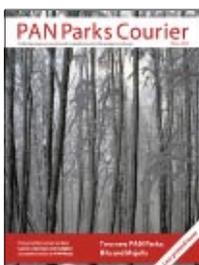
This quarterly newsletter is one feasible tool to learn about the almost 350 IUCN members in the Pan-European region. The newsletter targets not only nature conservation professionals, but attempts to provide up to date science-based information to a wider interested public. Published in English, French and Russian. Download from www.iucn.org/places/europe/rofe/rofe_publications/publications.htm

Available from IUCN
Rue Vergote 15, 1030 Bruxelles, Belgium
tel: + 32 27 328299, fax: + 32 27 329499
europe@iucn.org, www.iucn.org



Environmental Law Monthly, by Agra Informa Ltd. This monthly newsletter provides essential reading on current and forthcoming legislation, Statutes, EU directives, Court rulings etc. Published in English.

Available from Agra Informa Ltd
80 Calverley Road, Tunbridge, Wells, Kent TN1 2UN, England
tel: +44 20 7017 7500, fax: +44 20 7017 7599
marketing@agra-net.com
www.agra-net.com
Subscribe online at www.agra-net.com/portal/puboptions.jsp?Option=subscribe&pubId=ag081



PAN Parks Courier, by PAN Park Foundation. This quarterly magazine informs all interested parties about the developments of PAN Parks giving many good examples on how nature conservation and sustainable tourism can be combined in Europe's protected areas. Available in English. From January 2006 the Courier was replaced by a monthly electronic journal. If you want to receive this e-newsletter, please send your email address to news@panparks.org. For more information, visit www.panparks.org

All printed issues are available online in PDF at www.panparks.org/Newsroom/Courier

If you would like to share information about your magazines and other publications with other CEEWEB members, please send your list to Dalma Földes via e-mail: dalma@ceeweb.org.

by András Krolopp

CEEWEB Board Meeting

Budgets for the Working Groups and details about the next Annual Meeting were decided by the new CEEWEB Board at its first meeting this year.

The main item on the agenda was the finalization of the budgets and activity plans for the Working Groups.

The Annual Meeting in 2003, in Krakow, decided that up to 50% of the total Core Funding CEEWEB receives can be used by the Working Groups.

For this year the Board has decided to divide 56.800 Euros among the Working Groups. Sustainable Tourism Working Group will receive 14.800 Euros from the CEEWEB budget, the other three Working Groups (Natura 2000, Agro-environment and CITES) will receive 14.000 Euros each.

The Board discussed the date and place of the Annual Meeting. In 2006 it will last for three full days, and it will be followed by a CEEWEB Academy. Tentatively, it will start on 27 September and will end on the 1st of October.

Wednesday and Thursday will be dedicated to the meeting itself, on Friday there will be an excursion. Saturday and Sunday will be allocated for the Academy.

The Board has studied the proposal by Green Action for hosting the Annual Meeting in Croatia, and gave the mandate for the Policy Office to get more detailed information. Recently the Board had agreed that the Annual Meeting should take place in Hungary this time, in order to make better use of the available financial resources as well as human capacity.

Besides these two major issues the Board, as usual, received an update on the activities of the Policy Office and the Working Groups.

The Board Meeting took place on 19-20 January 2006, in Budapest, in the CEEWEB office.

CEEWEB

Kuruclesi út 11/a, H-1021 Budapest, Hungary
Tel.: (+36 1) 398-0135, fax: (+36 1) 398-0136
www.ceeweb.org

The Diversity is a quarterly newsletter of the Central and East European Working Group for the Enhancement of Biodiversity (CEEWEB).

Owner/Publisher: András Krolopp, CEEWEB Policy Office
Editing and layout: Kristina Vilimaite, CEEWEB
Cover photos by andrea (evocattivo, sxc), Stephen Rainer, Yarik Mission, Tom Denham

Photo inside front cover provided by the SeaWiFS Project, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, and ORBIMAGE, on page 2 photo by Gerla Brakkee
Photo on page 15 by Marc Garrido, on page 22 by Anka Draganski
Back cover photo by Dieter Joel Jagnow

Tell Others about Your Biodiversity Day



May 22 is the International Biodiversity Day. Get more publicity for your activities on that day – share your plans and later the achievements with other CEEWEB members.

The collection of the stories about the activities of CEEWEB members on the biodiversity day will be published online and advertised both inside and outside the network.

Please let us know the following: where and when your action takes place, what the target audience of the activity is and who organises it (do not forget to mention your partners). After the event, inform us how successful you were and send us some photos. Send the information to Dalma Földes via e-mail: dalma@ceeweb.org.

CEEWEB Workplan – You Plan!

CEEWEB revises the workplan of the network every year and presents it to the members at the Annual Meeting. For effective functioning of the network it is crucial that the workplan reflects the activities of the member organisations.

For Osijek Greens, Croatia, membership in CEEWEB, among other things, means participation in the Working Groups and in other projects of the network.

Share with us the plans your organisations have in relation to biodiversity. Let us know about the activities planned both for the near future and for 2007 so we get the next CEEWEB work plan well focused on the priorities of the members.

Let us know your expectations from CEEWEB, tell us more about the ways to improve the way our network functions. Comment the work plan of 2006 (downloadable from www.ceeweb.org/aboutCEEWEB/annualmeetings).

Send your input to Dalma Földes (dalma@ceeweb.org).