A Table from the Sea’s Edge

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By Malaka Rodrigo

An awkward looking table with a set of chairs seen in COP10 puzzled me few weeks ago with its rugged and antique look since I’ve seen it for the first time.. I’ve seen it on one morning while a group of volunteers struggle to relocate the heavy table at the lobby of COP10 venue at Nagoya Congress Centre. It was the activities of volunteers that I captured on my lenses, but haven’t got time search for more information about the table until I receive the communiqué by the Secretariat of Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) with information about this “Table from the Sea’s Edge”.

In fact I’ve surprised when I received a press release from the CBD Secretariat mentioning the table’s uniqueness. The wooden structure is made out of driftwood that afloat in the sea and washed ashore. These woods were collected from different parts of the world and the masterpiece was created by British furniture-maker and artist Silas Birtwistle. It has been an important structure to symbolize the harmony between the ecosystems…

More about the table on http://atablefromtheseasedge.com/

The driftwood table at COP10 (c) Malaka Rodrigo
The driftwood table at COP10 (c) Malaka Rodrigo

Ahmed Djoghlaf, The Executive Secretary of the CBD at COP-10
Following is a press release by the Secretariat of Biological Diversity about this driftwood table and chairs…

PRESS RELEASE FROM UN SECRETARIAT OF CBD

A Table from the Sea’s Edge - Artwork in celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity

Montreal, 11 November 2010 – During the historic United Nations summit on biodiversity recently concluded in Nagoya, Japan, an object that gained great attention from conference delegates was a large table and chairs crafted from driftwood. Created by British furniture-maker and artist Silas Birtwistle, the striking artwork was exhibited in the courtyard of the conference centre throughout the United Nations meeting, where it was unveiled to the public for the first time. The project is supported by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), WWF, who supported its creation and facilitated its deployment at the conference, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the shipping line Maersk. Numerous other organizations also contributed in various ways.

Birtwistle conceived and created the work as a contribution to the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity. The idea was to help raise public awareness of interlinked environmental issues and promote conservation of the world’s coastal and marine biodiversity. The sea shore represents the boundary between marine and terrestrial environments. Ocean currents connect continents and cultures. The table symbolizes the interface between land and sea, connections between human land-based activities and the coastal and marine environment, the links between cultures, and the need for dialogue and agreement between countries to ensure the protection of biodiversity.
In 2009 and 2010, Birtwistle visited beaches in four continents and lining three oceans, in Belize, Canada, Malaysia, and the United Republic of Tanzania, to collect the driftwood. The WWF offices and the coastal communities working with WWF at the sites in East Africa and the Coral Triangle, Malaysia, helped in the collection.