

Summary Report of the Informal Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on Biodiversity Aspects of Geo-engineering the Climate

Side event during the Seventh Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions, 2 November, 2011, Montreal, Canada

The side event was attended by about 30 participants, including Party representatives, Indigenous and Local Community groups (ILCs), NGOs and other organizations.

Spanish and English interpretation was provided.

Presentations

David Cooper, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Mr. David Cooper, from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, introduced participants to the requests made to the Executive Secretary at the tenth meeting of the Conference (COP) of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) related to geo-engineering and the work undertaken by the Secretariat in line with decision X/33.

Decision X/33, 9(l) requests the Executive Secretary to compile and synthesize available scientific information, and views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, on the possible impacts of geo-engineering techniques on biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural considerations, and options on definitions and understandings of climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the CBD and make it available for consideration at a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) prior to the eleventh meeting of the COP.

Mr. Cooper presented an overview of the content of the draft study on the impacts of climate related geo-engineering on biological diversity, including:

1. Mandate
2. Scope and features of geo-engineering
3. Climate change and impacts on biodiversity
4. Impacts on biodiversity of SRM techniques
5. Impacts on biodiversity of CDR techniques
6. Associated social, economic and cultural considerations
7. Synthesis

Mr. Cooper informed participants that the draft study will be made available for peer review by the public in November and invited participants to contribute to the review, highlighting that feedback is sought on first draft, including:

- Comments on compilation and synthesis of available scientific information,
- Comments and further inputs to associated social, economic and cultural considerations,
- Additional views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders.

A notification with information regarding the peer review process and deadline will be sent and posted shortly. A webpage will be created where the draft study will be made available for review. The webpage will also contain key information and resources. A second meeting will take place in January to complete the study. There is an opportunity to involve Indigenous and Local Community participants in this meeting in an effort to ensure that their views are adequately represented in the study.

A second peer review of the revised draft will take place in February, specifically targeted for review by Parties. Upon the completion of the peer review process and further revision, this report will be used in the preparation of a pre-session document to be submitted to SBSTTA 16, with possible recommendations to COP 11.

Yolanda Terán, Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity (IWNB – LAC)

Ms. Yolanda Terán, from the Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity (IWNB – LAC), delivered a presentation on Indigenous Peoples perspective of geo-engineering. Ms. Terán highlighted the difficulty of the issue, as it involves two very distinct realities and world views – one dominated by profit and technology, the other focused on survival and basic needs. The concept of geo-engineering is very complex and scientific, and the terminology virtually unknown to most ILCs. Therefore, providing comments and in a short time frame poses great challenges for ILCs.

Ms. Terán voiced her concern over the concept of geo-engineering, which involves manipulation of the Earth and nature and a reflection of humans trying to dominate and control the Earth. For ILCs, the concept of Mother Earth is one of respect, where all things are alive and act in harmony.

Ms. Terán pointed out that traditional knowledge teaches them that by modifying nature in one place can have undesired consequences and chain effects in others. It is also based on humans living in harmony with nature, with care and respect.

Ms. Terán considered this side event to be a first dialogue with ILCs on geo-engineering, and emphasized the need for more information, acknowledging that it is difficult to reach small communities that are often busy just surviving. Given that ILCs may be directly affected by geo-engineering experiments, it is crucial to involve ILCs and to obtain free, prior, and informed consent.

Comments and suggestions

The following comments and suggestions were made during the discussion following the presentations:

- Regarding the graphic representation of the different geo-engineering methods with two axes: one on risks and uncertainty and the other on feasibility and readiness, it was pointed out that this graph does not consider the social and cultural aspects.
- Indigenous and local community representatives emphasized the need for more basic information or capacity building before being able to provide views.
- In the text of the decision, equal weight is given to both the compilation of scientific information and the views of ILCs and between the impacts on biodiversity and the associated social, economic and cultural considerations. Therefore, equal weight should be given to each aspect in the study. However, this is challenging given the clash of paradigm between the two concepts. The process for the work on geo-engineering may need to be reworked. The CBD must be innovating in tackling this issue.
- To collect views from ILCs on geo-engineering, there is a need to ask the right questions in the right way. The Secretariat requested help in formulating these questions and welcomed suggestions on how to better collect views from ILCs.

- It was suggested that weather modifications be considered in the draft study, as they can have serious impacts on ILCs.