

Green Schools Network

GobarTimes

ACTIVITY SHEET

May 2012

Why talk about the Convention on Biological Diversity?



57 species of plants and animals in India are critically endangered – which means their population is less than 250 in the wild. Yes, they're almost gone! The tiger's numbers are dwindling and the Indian rhino could be facing extinction. Does this make a difference to us? Would it matter if we never saw a vulture or flying squirrel ever again?

What about plants and trees? Will having forests around make any difference to us living in the city?

With many species of animals and plants teetering on the brink of extinction, biodiversity loss and the consequences of that are real threats. Each species performs a specific function in nature. If you lose one, you could lose all of them.

The biodiversity convention is a neat little way to continually remind us that we, human beings, are not the only living things on this earth. It is one of the few conventions with near unanimous approval, with as many as 193 countries as its signatories. Conservation of biodiversity needs action through policy. And that's what this convention promises.

It goes to show that saving particular species from extinction is for the good of all species in general. We need diversity and right now, diversity needs us.

Name.....

School Name

Class..... Date

Gobar Gyan

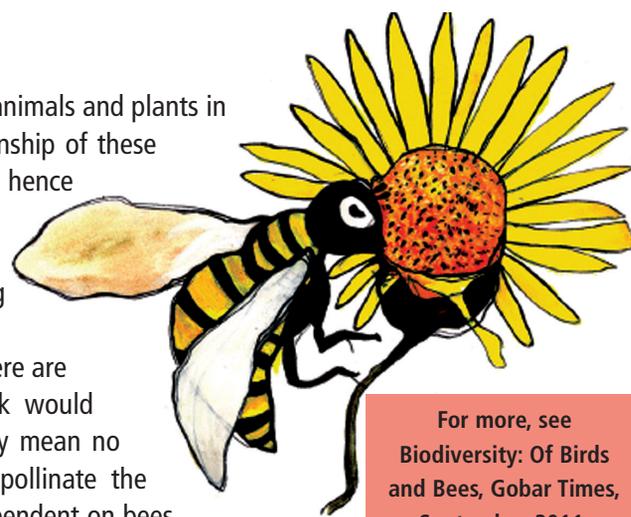
Biodiversity is more than numbers of birds, animals and plants in the wild. It is also the complex interrelationship of these animals and plants that keeps nature, and hence us, in good working condition. Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity defines biodiversity as "the variability among living organisms from all sources..."

Take for example, the case of bees. If there are no bees in this world what do you think would happen? No bees wouldn't necessarily only mean no honey. No bees would mean no one to pollinate the plants, which would mean plant species dependent on bees would die out. This would mean all living organisms dependant on those plants – animals, microorganisms and even human beings – would die out. It's the genetic make up, the genes of the bee, which enable it to perform many functions in nature - produce honey, pollinate flowers. The variability of genes means the structural differences in genes of different species, for example, the structural differences of the genes of bees make them different from birds or trees or any other living organism. This variability is biodiversity.

Since more and more animals and plant species were being threatened, the UN Environment Programme convened the Ad Hoc Working Group on Biological Diversity in November 1988. This Working Group designed the Convention on Biological Diversity which was adopted at the Rio Summit in June 1992. After the Convention came in to force in December of 1993, the first Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention was held in the Bahamas in 1994.

Since that time, urgent threats to biodiversity have been addressed, discussed and decided upon at each successive COP.

In 2012, India plays host to COP 11. Over 2000 delegates from more than 150 countries will gather at HICC-HITEX Complex in Hyderabad to discuss the threats to and future of biodiversity conservation.



For more, see Biodiversity: Of Birds and Bees, Gobar Times, September 2011.



Hi! I am Pandit Gobar Ganesh. You will find me in Gobar Times—a magazine that tells you how your everyday life is linked to the world around you. Hooked, huh? If you want to know more about me and GobarTimes visit us at:

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According to the Convention, Parties are supposed to meet every year. Well... let's just say, they try to stick to this rule. Sometimes, COP misses a year like in 1998, 2001 and 2005. Or they have to call a special second meeting in a year to discuss something extraordinary (and hence, the ExCOP in 2000).

The parties are constantly reviewing plans of action while trying to integrate conservation and sustainable development of biodiversity into state policy. Newer challenges and changing threats means they have to keep abreast with these and be on a lookout for solutions. Of late, the focus has been on the use of genetic material – safety concerns, benefit sharing and liability.

Activity 1: Tie it to a timeline

Ask your computer teacher for help and explore the website of UN Convention on Biological Diversity – www.cbd.int

Using the website of the Convention as a point of reference, fill up the blanks of this timeline –

Here's an example:

28 November - 9 December, 1994

COP 1: First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Nassau, Bahamas

Decisions: Lay down the rules and procedures for COP, financial resources and budget, location of Secretariat and organisational structure.

Recommended December 29 as International Day for Biological Diversity to UN General Assembly.

Rounded up the meeting with a medium term schedule of work and initiated proceedings for COP2.

Notice how the information is arranged – date first, then name of the meeting + location and finally the decisions made at the meeting? Fill in the missing information keeping to this format -

6 - 17 November, 1995

_____ : _____ **Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD;** _____

Decisions: By this time, it was important to move on to effective ways and means to develop and transfer technology and break down the CBD with regards to threats to marine and coastal biodiversity and forests, access to genetic resources, Intellectual Property Rights and the like. The first discussions on the threats from movement of genetically modified organisms were initiated here. A global system, in collaboration with FAO, for conservation of plant genetic resources used in food was worked out.

COP 3: Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Buenos Aires, Argentina

Decisions: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between CBD and Global Environment Facility. Modalities were worked out for the implementation of Articles 6, 8, and 8 (j) of the Convention. Future programme of work regarding the conservation of terrestrial biodiversity is demarcated. A special General Assembly meeting to review the implementation of Agenda 21 was

conducted. The fine points of the relationship between CBD and UN Commission on Sustainable Development were worked out.

_____ : _____ **Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Bratislava, Slovakia**

Decisions: Deliberations on status, conservation and sustainable use of inland water ecosystems, marine and coastal biodiversity, agricultural biodiversity, and forest biological biodiversity.

22 - 23 February, 1999 & 24 - 28 January, 2000

ExCOP 1: First Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Cartagena, Colombia & Montreal, Canada

Decisions: _____

15 - 26 May, 2000

COP 5: Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Nairobi, Kenya

Decisions: _____

7 - 19 April, 2002

_____ : _____ **Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD;** _____

Decisions: Major outcomes include Intergovernmental Committee for the **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. Deliberations on modalities of these and further discussions on Strategic Plan for the CBD.

9 - 20 February, 2004

COP 7: Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Decisions: _____

20 - 31 March, 2006

COP 8: Eighth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Curitiba, Brazil

Decisions: _____

COP 9: Ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD; Bonn, Germany

Decisions: Major outcomes include Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) programme. In-depth review of programme of work on agricultural biodiversity leads to exploration of biofuels and biodiversity. Review of implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan for CBD leads to tentative process for the revision of the Strategic Plan. Roll out for the third edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook and follow up to **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment**. Call for engagement of cities and local authorities and greater South-South cooperation for biodiversity conservation.

18 - 29 October, 2010

_____ : _____ **meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD;** _____

Decisions: Major outcomes include Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization or simply put, the Nagoya Protocol. There was also the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** and the **Aichi Biodiversity Targets**. Plus, a more energised look at resource mobilisation towards achieving the three goals of CBD. The decade beginning 2011 to 2020 is declared as **the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity**. At Nagoya, traditional knowledge of local communities is recognised as important for sustainable development. Adopted the **Tkarihwaié:ri Code of Ethical Conduct** to Ensure Respect for the Cultural and Intellectual Heritage of Indigenous and Local Communities and works out certain elements of *sui generis* systems for the protection of traditional knowledge.

Activity 2: Convention Czars

Now that you have a fair idea of how COPs work and what their outcomes are like, why don't you try your hand at one.

Imagine that there's going to be an India specific conference of parties on biodiversity. Representatives from different parts of the country – north, south, east, west – shall meet to discuss biodiversity threats in their areas and what they are doing to conserve biodiversity.

Let's do some role playing. Choose four teams, one each for north, south, east and west. Each team should choose one representative who will do all the talking.

Think like a national representative, there are many facts before you; but there are also many expectations from you.

Large parts of the Western Ghats have been cleared for logging, reservoirs, roads and for use in agriculture for coffee, rubber, palm oil.

The endangered Asiatic Lion found in the Gir forests of Gujarat is facing threats to its habitat.

Pygmy hog is found only in Manas National Park in Assam.

Coral reef around Andaman Islands and Lakshadweep are threatened by rise in sea temperatures.

Using these facts as an example, find out more biodiversity related news that affects your team's area. Discuss these threats with your team and think of conservation strategy to save the species.

If want to save the sparrow in your neighbourhood, how would you do it?

Elect a Secretariat to act as the judge and monitor. He/she will make sure everyone gets their turn to speak and all questions are answered properly.

Now, come up and talk about biodiversity threats in your area and what you are doing to stop this.

Finally, decide on outcomes and decisions like the ones in Activity 1.

Activity 3: Highlights from Hyderabad

Our environment minister, Jayanthi Natarajan, speaking ahead of the COP 11 in Hyderabad over October 8 to 19, 2012 said that biodiversity conservation will become a deciding factor while awarding environmental clearances.

Do you think Ms Minister has good point? Do you think it will help in biodiversity conservation? Why or why not?

Now, imagine you're writing for a leading newspaper or magazine in your area, spin a story or a couple of stories on related themes of biodiversity, UN conventions and COP 11.

You can even make a class newspaper or magazine around COP 11 in Hyderabad.



XI Conference of Parties
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
HYDERABAD INDIA 2012

Consider these facts –

- Hyderabad to host the sixth Meeting of Parties to Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety from 1 to 5 October, 2012 and eleventh Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) from 8 to 19 October, 2012.
- Organised by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India.
- At the HICC-HITEX Complex in Hyderabad, India.
- India will host the High Level Segment (HLS) of CoP-11 to CBD from 16 to 19 October, 2012.
- HLS is where ministers meet and discuss very important and urgent matters.
- The Minister of Environment of India, as the host of the meeting, has identified four key issues for discussion -
 - Implementation of the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity 2011-2020
 - Biodiversity for Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction
 - Coastal and Marine Biodiversity
 - Implementation of Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing.

What do you feel like writing about? Once you decide that, ask these basic questions – What is my story about? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why did it happen? How did the story unfold?

How much background information about CBD would you give?

What information would you give to make your reader feel like he/she was right there at COP 11 in Hyderabad? What are we missing by not being there?

What are the important thinking points/outcomes you want to highlight so that you engage with your readers and get them to think about biodiversity?

What would you add to the above facts to make your story up to date?

What is your conclusion?

Now put together the answers of the above questions and you have yourself a story!

Give it an interesting headline and you're ready to be published.

Your deadline for this magazine is October 24. What is on October 24?

Don't forget to send your story across to GT, we may have some use for it. What's more this activity can count as an Eco Club activity too!



If you found the activity sheet interesting, E-mail us at eeu@cseindia.org or write to:
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