
[Rome meeting to assess implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas](#)

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Parties, intergovernmental agencies, conservation NGOs, indigenous peoples and local communities, and civil society organisations will meet in Rome on 11-15 February 2008 to assess implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) for the period 2004-2007. The programme of work, which was adopted by COP7 in 2004 in Malaysia, contains various activities requesting Parties to increase the coverage of protected area while respecting the rights of indigenous and local communities and ensuring their full and affective participation. [\[1\]](#) It also calls for Parties to review the governance aspects of protected areas and to broaden them to include collaborative management of protected areas (CMPA), the recognition and support for community conserved areas (CCAs), and the right to Free Prior Informed Consent for indigenous peoples in cases of potential resettlement.

COP7 also established the CBD Ad-Hoc Working Group on Protected Areas (WGPA), tasked with providing guidance to Parties concerning the implementation of the PoWPA and to assess its implementation. The Rome meeting is the second meeting of the WGPA [\[2\]](#) and is charged with reviewing the implementation of the PoWPA and exploring options for mobilizing adequate and timely financial resources for its implementation. These matters are of great importance to indigenous peoples and local resource users as they deeply affect their relationship with protected areas in international policy making and in practice on lands and territories inhabited and/or utilized by indigenous peoples and local communities. A number of indigenous peoples and local community organizations and support NGOs will attend the meeting with the objective to ensure that indigenous peoples' views and input are taken into consideration in the review of implementation of the Programme of Work, in recommendations on how to improve its implementation and in addressing options for mobilizing financial resources for its implementation. Reports and case studies on national situations and the implementation of the PoWPA are being prepared by indigenous peoples and local coastal communities.

Although the data on implementation of the Programme of Work will be discussed and analysed in details in the Rome meeting, preliminary data from indigenous organizations indicate that there has been insufficient attention paid to the recognition of indigenous and local communities' rights, their participation, and to governance issues in general. This seems to also be confirmed by data collected by the CBD secretariat in preparation for the meeting. One of the official documents prepared for the meeting [\[3\]](#), states that, while there has been notable progress in achieving the targets related to expansion of the coverage of protected areas (2,300 new terrestrial protected areas and 50 new marine protected areas, covering approximately 50 million hectares have been established since 2004), limited progress has been made, *inter-alia*, with respect to the targets of the Programme of Work most relevant to indigenous peoples and local communities, such as goals 2.1 (Equity and benefit sharing), 2.2 (Involvement of indigenous and local communities), 3.4 (Sustainable finance), 3.5 (Public awareness and participation), 4.1 (Minimum standards) and 4.2 (Protected-area management effectiveness).

From this data, it can be hinted that, the so-called 'conservation paradigm shift' from conventional

conservation (which infringes on human rights and does not sufficiently address the social aspects of nature conservation) to participatory conservation (which respects the rights and emphasizes the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities), which was hailed as the way forward for biodiversity conservation following the World Parks Congress of 2003 and the CBD COP7 of 2004, is still far from being realized.

However, participants in the Rome meeting are also expected to identify obstacles obstructing the implementation of the Programme of Work and to recommend actions to overcome such obstacles. It is hoped that the goodwill to develop actions to overcome the obstacles preventing the implementation a rights-based approach to conservation will prevail so that more socially just conservation policies and practices can finally be implemented.

By Maurizio Ferrari, Forest Peoples Programme, maurizio@forestpeoples.org

[1] The PoWPA is available at <http://www.cbd.int/protected/pow.shtml> and our report on its adoption is available at http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/cop7_mtgs_pa_report_feb04_eng.shtml

[2] Information on the W GPA is available at <http://www.cbd.int/protected/adhoc.shtml> and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB)'s report on the first meeting of the W GPA is available at http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/conservation/iifb_rep_montecatini_jun05_eng.shtml

[3] See document UNEP/CBD/WG-PA/2/2 at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=2630>