

IMPLEMENTING THE BIODIVERSITY CONVENTION

Nigerian and African Perspectives



Edited by
I.A. Ayua
and
Olawale Ajai



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IMPLEMENTING THE BIODIVERSITY CONVENTION Nigerian and African Perspectives

(Papers delivered at the Roundtable
on the Convention on Biodiversity)

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Preface

The roundtable on the Convention on Biodiversity held at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies on March 5, 1996 was originally conceived as a cross-disciplinary and Regional meeting. Owing to financial, communication and other constraints, the Roundtable featured participants from Nigeria. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) attended the opening ceremony and made some felicitative remarks.

Nevertheless, although some of the papers focussed exclusively on Nigeria, a number of the papers discussed also African interests, perspectives and problems. Hence the title of this publication.

Suffice it to say, however, that enough has been said and sufficient data presented to afford the researcher, policy maker, legislator, community or N.G.O. activist as well as casual reader a reasonable overview of the issues, interests, constraints and solutions required for implementing the Biodiversity Convention in Nigeria and to a lesser extent in Africa.

At the very least, this publication is a useful introduction to the subject under discussion and should provoke further enquiry and concrete practical steps towards implementing the Biodiversity Convention.

I.A. Ayua
(Director-General)
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**CONVENTION ON BIODIVERSITY:
FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO
CONFERENCE OF PARTIES - ISSUES OF
INTEREST TO AFRICA**

by

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The International Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity was adopted in May 1992. The Convention for the first time creates a fairly comprehensive international legal regime for managing the biological resources of the earth in a sustainable way. Prior to it all that existed was a mosaic of conventions protecting bits and pieces of biological resources, mostly species conservation conventions which were generally also sectoral and therefore not interlinked. The most significant contribution of the Biodiversity Convention however, is the fact that it requires conservation of biological resources to be integrated with national economic development in order to achieve sustainable development.

The interesting thing about biological diversity is that it refers to the variability or diversity of life forms. The unique thing about God's creation, in this case the earth is that it is breathtakingly diverse but is an integrated and inter-dependent system of ecosystems, species and genes. The major aim of Biodiversity conservation therefore is to preserve this diversity as well as the balance and integrity of this inter-dependent system.

The most significant factor that has shaped the character and nature of bio-diplomacy (i.e the international relations relating to biodiversity or to the convention) is the fact that most of the biodiversity exists in developing countries, whilst most of the technology and capability to exploit and conserve global biodiversity exists in the developed countries. Furthermore, the major benefits of the use or conservation of global biodiversity is enjoyed by the developed countries.

With these preliminary remarks we now briefly examine the most significant issues of interest to Africa, both in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the convention and from the work of the Convention Secretariat and the Conference of Parties.