Large-scale biofuels production threatens biodiversity and food security

Title
Current demand for biofuels is leading to conversion of natural habitats, on a huge and potentially catastrophic scale ? often also causing displacement of indigenous and rural communities. The savings in greenhouse gas emissions are generally small, and may be negative, especially when conversion of natural habitats is involved. Many countries have already mapped areas for potential large-scale biofuel production. However, there are few studies and policies in place to guide this. Most of the proposed biofuels production is being driven by renewable energy targets (e.g. European Renewable Energy Directive that requires member states to meet 10% of transport fuel from renewable sources by 2020), and would be exported rather than consumed nationally. Often, targeted areas are sensitive natural habitats that are highly important for biodiversity. For example, Dakatcha Woodland in Kenya recognised as an Important Bird Area and centre of endemism, home to many threatened and restricted-range species, and possibly the only nesting site for Clarke?s Weaver. Dakatcha is also a vital site for local communities? livelihoods; many depend on the goods and ecosystem services it provides. Despite its biodiversity importance as one of the last patches of relatively intact coastal woodland, Dakatcha has no formal protection status and is now a target for clearance for biofuels production. A similar threat is currently faced by Mabira Forest Reserve in Uganda and Mamuta-Mayoso Wildlife Sanctuary in Sierra Leone. In BirdLife?s view, the current CBD COP 10 negotiations on biofuels need to take into account the following: (1) Ensure that promoting the positive and avoiding or minimising the negative impacts includes a requirement that biofuels truly contribute to climate change mitigation, by providing substantial and clearly demonstrable greenhouse gas savings across their life cycle. (2) Issues surrounding biofuels and their potential impacts go beyond those of conventional agriculture, and they should be considered as a separate cross-cutting issue. (3) Biofuel production must apply the precautionary approach/principle. This should be clearly stated in the text, preferably in the preamble of the paper. Scientific assessments should be done to determine impacts and feasibility before any large-scale biofuels production is undertaken. (4) Issues of land security, food security, water provisioning, and rights of local and indigenous communities, should also be considered, in a consistent manner with previous decisions of the CBD. (5) International standards for biofuel production should be developed to be ensure their negative impacts are minimized and their positive impacts maximised. These should include that calculations of greenhouse gas balance must take into account the effects of land use change caused by production of biofuels (6) Biofuel production must avoid further

encroachment on natural habitats, and in particular avoid areas of particular importance for biodiversity, such as Key Biodiversity Areas. (7) Parties should develop effective intersectoral and regional policies and regulations to guide investment in and development of biofuel production, to minimize negative impacts of biofuel production and use and in particular addressing direct and indirect land use and water use changes. (8) Developed countries re-examine their bio-energy policy, ensuring that these are not causing damage to biodiversity and poor peoples? livelihoods and food security, and commit funds for further research and monitoring in this area.