

Wednesday, 31 October 2012

## **World Wide Views on Biodiversity citizen participation project recognized at COP11 in India**

One of the outcomes of the recently concluded meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP11) about the future protection of biodiversity, has been a recognition of a new and interesting approach to raising awareness and involvement of the public. The draft decision text highlights: *“The Conference of Parties (COP) encourages Parties, relevant organizations and stakeholders to support and contribute to communication initiatives, such as the World Wide Views on Biodiversity, which combine the implementation of Strategic Goals A and E regarding mainstreaming of biodiversity, participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building”.*

WWViews on Biodiversity is the first ever global citizen consultation about biodiversity, designed by the Danish Board of Technology and the World Wide Views Alliance in close collaboration with the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Danish Ministry of the Environment. Its model supplements existing awareness raising and communication activities with initiatives aimed at involving members of the public in discussing the causes of biodiversity loss and solutions to these global problems. Such initiatives have long been a part of the CBD decision-making processes, but WWViews differ by involving lay citizens in this process as a supplement to the involvement of civil society organisations and NGO's. Such involvement is important in order to strengthen public ownership to decisions made, thereby increasing the likeliness of their implementation. Discussions have now been initiated about how to strengthen the process and make WWViews on Biodiversity a recurrent practice during the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, 2011-2020.

The results of WWV-biodiversity have been compiled in a Results Report that was distributed to conference delegates and presented at the COP 11 in India to the Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity Mr. Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias. It was also presented and discussed at several events by members of country delegations, international organisations and some of the citizens that participated in the consultations. Upon receiving the citizens views in the WWViews Results Report from the Global Coordinator, Bjørn Bedsted, the Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity, said about the future of WWViews: *“I think this is very important because Governments react to demands from the public. If the governments do not see that there is a big demand from the public, they tend to regard this as a secondary issue.”*

The Danish Head of Delegation and International Director at the Danish Ministry for the Environment, Mr. Aaroe-Hansen said: *“It is very positive that the views of the citizens are now reaching the policymakers and that this kind of citizen participation has been formally recognized by the Parties to the Convention.”.*

### **IMPORTANT RESULTS OF WWVIEWS ON BIODIVERSITY**

- Citizens worldwide are very concerned about the loss of biodiversity
- The establishment of new protected areas should be given higher priority than economic aims
- Efforts should be made to protect nature areas

- Eat less meat and intensify agricultural production
- Incentives and subsidies leading to overfishing should be phased out
- Protection of coral reefs is a shared responsibility
- More protected areas should be established in the High Seas
- All countries should pay for protecting biodiversity in developing countries
- Benefit sharing should apply to genetic resources already collected
- Use of genetic resources from the High Seas should benefit biodiversity

Bjørn Bedsted, Global Coordinator of WWViews at the Danish Board of Technology explains that *“the results show that there is strong public support worldwide for taking political action in order to stop the decline in biodiversity”*

#### **FACTS**

WWViews on Biodiversity involved 3,000 citizens in 25 countries spanning five continents. The citizens gathered in their respective countries to deliberate about some of the core issues at stake in the on-going, international discussions and negotiations about how to stop the decline in biodiversity and fulfil the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. They received balanced information about biodiversity, discussed the issues with fellow citizens and voted individually on the questions presented to them. They did so at daylong meetings on September 15, 2012. Results were instantly reported at [biodiversity.wwviews.org](http://biodiversity.wwviews.org) so that anyone with Internet access could – and still can – compare answers to the various questions across countries, regions, political and economic groupings, etc.

#### **ABOUT**

WWViews on Biodiversity has received financial support from the Danish Ministry of the Environment, The VILLUM FOUNDATION, and the Government of Japan through the Japan Biodiversity Fund. They will be pleased to see that this novel citizen participation method has now received recognition from the parties to the Convention. The World Wide Views process and results can be studied in more detail at the World Wide Views website. A short documentary about the citizen consultation and the results is also available there.

#### **PHOTO offer:**

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/79516077@N06/8099979798/in/pool-wwviewsonbiodiversity>

**Caption:** Upon receiving the citizens views in the WWViews Results Report from the Global Coordinator, Bjørn Bedsted, the Executive Secretary to the Convention on biological diversity, Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, said about the future of WWViews: *“I think this is very important because Governments react to demands from the public. If the governments do not see that there is a big demand from the public, they tend to regard this as a secondary issue.”*

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Results Report: <http://bit.ly/SLIJaG>

Video material on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7DFA9B4D2FB0822F>

Project web page: [biodiversity.wvviews.org](http://biodiversity.wvviews.org)