



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-276 3000

My ref:

Your ref:

Charles Powell Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

Eric Rinker

A progress report.

21 November 1989

CBP 21/xi

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Dear Charles

We understand from UKMIS New York that the Prime Minister has asked where matters stand on the proposed global Convention on biological diversity which she endorsed in her speech to the UN General Assembly.

There are a number of existing conventions in this area dealing with, for example, migratory birds, wetlands and endangered species but they are patchy in quality, coverage, effectiveness and participation. In addition they have been sponsored and are administered by a mixture of international bodies such as UNESCO, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Council of Europe, and inevitably this has created some inconsistencies. The IUCN has done some good work in bringing together the many strands with a view to co-operating with UNEP in drawing up an umbrella convention. The Convention was proposed at this year's UNEP Governing Council where the UK supported the idea and was instrumental in drafting a formal Decision (copy attached).

As you will see, the Decision goes further than simply advocating the merging of existing international agreements. It will also cover relevant aspects of biotechnology. The price of getting developing countries to agree to a global convention was the reference to "adequate machinery for financial transfers" in operative paragraph 4. This was a more acceptable formulation than the original one from Latin American countries which called for an international compensation fund.

UNEP has already done some preliminary work on the areas which might be covered by a Convention and formal negotiations will begin shortly in a group of legal and environmental experts. This department will be taking the lead in the negotiations in close association with other departments and particularly the ODA who are already considering how the aid programme can take account of projects for conserving biological diversity.

I am copying this to Stephen Wall (FCO), Ben Slocock (DTI), Steven Lambert (MAFF), Miles Wickstead (ODA) and to Sir Crispin Tickell.

Yours

CEJ Bush

KATE BUSH
Private Secretary

15/34. Preparation of an international legal instrument on the biological diversity of the planet

The Governing Council,

Having considered the report of the Executive Director on rationalization of international conventions on biological diversity, ^{77/}

Bearing in mind that, as stated in the note by the Executive Director on rationalization of international conventions on biological diversity, submitted to the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity at its first session, biological diversity encompasses all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the ecosystems of which they are part, ^{78/}

Recognizing the need to conserve biological diversity on Earth by, inter alia, the implementation of existing legal instruments and agreements in a co-ordinated and effective way and the adoption of a further appropriate international legal instrument, possibly in the form of a framework convention,

Recognizing that, for environmental, ethical, social, economic and technical reasons, the conservation and utilization of biological diversity is more than ever essential for environmentally sound and sustainable development, and continued functioning of the biosphere and human survival,

Aware of the establishment of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources and of the ongoing work of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources regarding draft articles for possible inclusion in the proposed international legal instrument on the biological diversity of the planet,

Agreeing that the full implications of the new biotechnologies should be taken into account in any international legal instrument on the conservation of the biological diversity of the planet,

1. Notes with appreciation the actions taken by the Executive Director pursuant to Governing Council decision 14/26 of 17 June 1987;

2. Agrees that the impoverishment of biological diversity and the consequent loss of natural resources of great potential economic value is a problem with global dimensions that calls for sustained multilateral co-operation towards its solution;

3. Urges the Executive Director to continue to support, within available resources, actions to promote effective co-operation in the implementation of existing international instruments and agreements in this field;

^{77/} UNEP/GC.15/9/Add.2, paras. 22-26.

^{78/} UNEP/Bio. Div.1/2, para. 3.