



Appendix B

Message from The Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation

HE Robert G. Brinks
Ambassador, Embassy of the Netherlands
Manila, Philippines

Mr. Arsenio Balisacan, Director of SEARCA and fellow researchers; Dr. Delfin Ganapin, Manager of the Global Environment Facility - Small Grants Programme; representatives of the other conference organizers: ACB, ICRAF, Biodiversity International and the Silliman University; representatives of donor organisations; ladies and gentlemen, friends.

It is an honour and indeed a pleasure for me to have been invited to speak to you here today. I am pleased to be allowed to address you as a layman among experts on a subject very much related to biodiversity about which as an active birdwatcher and having come to experience this beautiful country recently, I care much about. As a civil servant of a country in a low-lying delta, with about one-third of the land area below sea level, I am quite aware of the enormous challenges facing all of us today. The rising sea-level caused by global warming will not only pose, in combination with the subsidence of the land, a new threat to us in modern day Netherlands but also to other coastal countries in the world. However, these threats will not have severe effects for the Netherlands as much as they will have for the economically developing countries. They are the most vulnerable and they will face a bleak future if all of us do not take action now. This is particularly distressing, because global warming is primarily caused by industrialised countries, including my own.

Having been invited to attend this important and well-timed International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change, gives me the opportunity to also reflect shortly on the completion of the Netherlands-funded Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme for Development in Mindanao, with particular focus on Mount Malindang and its surroundings (in short the BRP).

The very first foundations for the BRP were laid more than a decade ago. In 1996, the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council took the initiative to assess the possibilities of setting up in the Philippines a research programme in the field of biodiversity and sustainable development. The idea was to design a demand driven research programme, in which both the local researchers and the local users in the Philippines would be involved in the formulation of research questions. Both in the Netherlands and in the Philippines interest existed to start such a joint, demand-driven, research programme.

SEARCA in the Philippines was identified as being in the best position to be the Dutch counterpart. After a number of meetings, workshops and seminars in both our countries, the Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation agreed to fund the joint Biodiversity Research Programme during a five year period. The guiding concepts of the BRP focussed on what we would now routinely call "ownership".

Realizing Challenges, Exploring Opportunities

**Proceedings of the International Conference-Workshop on Biodiversity
and Climate Change in Southeast Asia: Adaptation and Mitigation**

19-20 February 2008 • Sofitel Philippine Plaza Hotel • CCP Complex, Pasay City, Philippines



The input and priorities of both local researchers and local research users were to be taken into account. It would no longer suffice nor would it be sensible or useful to determine the research agenda at for example a Dutch University or research institute. In our view the Philippine side not only had the right, but even the obligation to participate in the research design, otherwise the data results and analysis could be flawed and possibly irrelevant.

This has led to the following guidelines for the Research Programme:

- It should be location-derived and development oriented: the needs of the people in the research areas were to be taken into account when designing the research agenda, the priorities and the methodology.
- It should promote multi-stakeholder participation: not only should the research community be involved, but the local communities and stakeholders as well.
- It should be system-oriented and interdisciplinary: the conceptual framework was designed to study and understand the interaction of different elements of ecosystems.
- And, therefore, it should use an integrated ecosystem approach. The interactions of the different elements within an ecosystem are fundamental when one studies biodiversity, but equally important are the interactions between different ecosystems.

Officially, the Programme started in July 2000 with a two year period of “first generation research”. This provided the baseline data upon which the research in the three years from 2002 to 2005 could be based. This three year research phase was aptly called the “second generation research”, research which would deepen the knowledge of biodiversity, by focussing more on the interactions within ecosystems.

Seven years after the start of the BRP, we are participating in its closing Conference. A conference, which focuses on the effects of climate change on biodiversity. will not go into the specifics and technicalities of global warming, nor on its effects on biodiversity, for that there are too many real experts in this room, but I will say a few words on the consequences of climate change for the development policy of the Netherlands and possibly others in the international community. More specifically, I will dwell shortly on the consequences of the effects of climate change in reaching the Millennium Development Goals.

It is nowadays virtually impossible to open a newspaper or to switch on the television without reading or watching something about climate change. The man, who used to be the next president of the United States of America, has been largely responsible for the current world-wide attention for global warming. Al Gore’s book and film have reached millions of people and his influence, particularly during the Bali conference, cannot be underestimated. He has made the point, accepted by most experts, that human activity causes global warming and that climate change is here to stay.



However, there is something we can do about it. Sir Nicolas Stern, former Chief Economist of the World Bank, appointed by the former British Prime-Minister Tony Blair to conduct a review on the economics of climate change, concluded in his "Stern Review" of 2006, that it would cost 1 % of global GDP to put the brakes on global warming. This is an important conclusion,

because it means that it is not only theoretically possible to stop climate change, but that the global community can afford to do so.

As you know, mitigation and adaptation have been identified as the two main types of action possible. Referring to mitigation: we need to slow down global warming by attacking its causes. It is absolutely necessary to agree on lower carbon dioxide emissions. Whilst the Netherlands Government targets to reduce emissions by 30 % in 2020 compared to the reference year 1990, the member states of the European Union have agreed to reduce emissions by 20 % - and are willing to reduce emissions by 30 % if other countries join in this effort. These are enforceable targets and need to be achieved, because even with mitigation efforts in place, global warming will continue until well into the 21st century. Mitigation alone will not be enough. It is not sufficient to look only at the causes; we will also have to address the effects of global warming. Therefore, adaptation measures are required.

Currently, my government is preparing our country for the effects of climate change. We are increasing the volume some of our rivers by returning them to their previous water course, so that they can cope with heavy rainfall up-stream; we are strengthening our coast line by increasing the level of our famous dykes and our Ministry of Health is developing plans to deal with the likelihood of increasing heat waves, a pressing concern, especially for vulnerable groups such the elderly and the sick. Fortunately, the Netherlands can financially afford adaptation measures. Our concern is not whether the Netherlands and other economically developed nations can adapt to global warming, but whether financially dependent countries can. Probably not; so help is indeed needed. The links between development co-operation and the effects of climate change are abundantly clear.

Let me give you some stark facts:

- Each year during the last decade, some 300 million people in developing countries were affected by weather-related disasters.
- According to the World Bank, almost half of all the projects they are funding are under threat of climate change.
- Global warming may lead to a breakdown of agricultural systems due to droughts, leaving up to 600 million more people facing malnutrition.
- It may further lead to the displacement through flooding and tropical storm activity of up to 330 million people living in coastal and low-lying areas.



Global warming affects the development opportunities of countless people and will make it very difficult to reach the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, which is the number one priority of the Dutch development policy. We are doing all we can to convince also the other economically developed countries to keep their promises made in Monterey against the backdrop of diminishing aid levels in US dollar terms.

On this note, I wish to return to the Philippine-Netherlands Biodiversity Research Programme. The BRP has advanced a long way in introducing an innovative concept in biodiversity research. Research, which resulted from a consultative process in which local communities, but also academic communities and non-governmental organisations, have all been working with each other and have been learning from each other. Learning how to preserve or sustainably use biodiversity. The BRP may show that the global phenomenon of climate change has far reaching consequences for local communities. Hence, it may show that climate change is not just an environmental phenomenon. It also produces a development challenge. Fighting climate change and fighting poverty must go hand in hand. Let us all make our local and national politicians aware that it is not too late to reverse dangerous trends and - to quote from one of the researchers of the BRP - that we need to preserve what precious little there remains of biodiversity in some places; that we need to repair what we have damaged and to replace what we have taken away in order to secure a life of dignity for generations to come.

I wish all of you an interesting and fruitful conference and thank you for your attention.