

## *Aroha Te Pareake Mead, Maori*

I received funding through ELCI to attend the COP7 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. I am a new member of the Steering Committee for ELCI's project, however, I am an 'old' participant of CBD and CBD related meetings.

I previously attended the meetings negotiating the Convention. I attended the UNCED and Rio+5, and was present when my home country signed the CBD. I subsequently took on a role in government, in the Ministry of Maori Development where one of my prime responsibilities was the domestic implementation of the CBD. I attended the first two Article 8(j) meetings, and the early COP and SBSTTA sessions, but I had not attended any CBD event in the past six years.

My main interest in attending the CBD COP7 was to:

- learn first-hand what developments had occurred within the CBD in recent years
- participate in the indigenous peoples' caucus
- ascertain what shifts had occurred, if any, in state responses to CBD issues surrounding traditional knowledge & resources.
- Find out what the current topical issues and perspectives of states, NGOs and indigenous peoples are on the CBD in general, as well as specific aspects of the CBD work programme
- Ensure a greater profile for the Oceania region, and for Maori

### Logistics Issues

Being funded through an umbrella organisation with the connections that ECLI has, was very beneficial. It meant that everyone from that network could stay together as a 'group' and maximise the informal times over breakfasts and sharing transport to and from the conference site, to meet, discuss and share issues and strategies. Having an organisation to secure a good Hotel and undertake most of the scoping of the practical aspects of the venue enabled me to arrive in KL and 'get to work' with minimum time being spent on finding out where facilities were. I must congratulate the team for their great work in keeping us all informed before and during the COP.

### CBD COP7

Much has changed since I last attended a CBD meeting, and yet I was surprised at how many familiar faces were there within the indigenous/NGO delegations. By contrast, few state delegates were the same and in discussions with indigenous peoples, it was evident that this 'knowledge and CBD institutional memory' gap was one of the more frustrating aspects of the dynamics of COP Meetings.

**The Indigenous Caucus** is more cohesive than it used to be, however I experienced some difficulties within the caucus that showed to me that some of the core values of the caucus were being ignored for the sake of 'efficiency'. One of the most notable values being the selection of those in leadership roles. From what I observed, the Canadian indigenous caucus had selected the 'Convenors' of the various working groups, and in some cases had selected young men who were not as experienced as the majority of the caucus members. This did create some tensions, as they grappled with the challenge of being an effective Convenor [as they understood that role to be], vs-a-vs, acknowledging that many members of the caucus had far greater and in-depth knowledge of the issues. This is something that is going to have to be more consciously dealt with.

**Negotiations amongst the Parties** seemed to be more ad-hoc than I had previously been exposed to. Perhaps the ground has shifted somewhat in that states are forming different alliances of 'like-minded'

on an issue by issue basis, rather than as regional blocks on all CBD matters. This was certainly evident in the Working Groups on Access & Benefit Sharing and 8(j).

Relevance of the COP7 to My Work Because of my past experience in CBD processes, and as a past delegate of both the NZ delegation and the indigenous caucus, COP7 was a real eye opener for me in terms of how remiss and sloppy my own government has become in relation to the domestic preparations for government's participation in such a key meeting. Government had not undergone any credible level of consultation or discussion with Maori about the COP7 agenda items and yet the delegation was actively participating in the text negotiations for the international regime on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources and associate traditional knowledge, as well as trying to limit the scope of the decision of 8(j).

I was able to use the extensive network I have maintained for many years now, to advise Maori what happened. I disseminated regular reports to Maori and also to Pacific indigenous organisations. I left the meeting after the first week, but because I had first-hand experience of the state of negotiations at COP7, I was able to provide support to the indigenous caucus, and also to keep Maori/pacific networks informed.

On my return to NZ, the work has not stopped. I provided a briefing to the Associate Minister of Maori Affairs, to inform her of the issues from an indigenous perspective. She in turn met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and was able to have an informed discussion with him. There have also been a number of media releases on aspects of the COP7. This was all made possible because of my direct attendance at the COP7 and the confidence I had therefore to report on negotiations. This of course is diminished when you are relying on second-hand or third-hand reports.

I would like to thank the funders for the opportunity to COP7.

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