

“VOICES FROM AROUND THE WORLD”
QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES

To inform the 2008 Symposium
“Sustaining Cultural and Biological Diversity
In a Rapidly Changing World: Lessons for Global Policy”
American Museum of Natural History
New York City
April 2-5, 2008

The American Museum of Natural History’s Center for Biodiversity and Conservation, IUCN-The World Conservation Union/Theme on Culture and Conservation, and Terralingua are convening the symposium, “Sustaining Cultural and Biological Diversity In a Rapidly Changing World: Lessons for Global Policy” at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City on April 2-5, 2008. The past two decades have witnessed an upsurge of interest in the links between cultural, linguistic, and biological diversity. These various manifestations of the diversity of life are under threat by some of the same forces, yet, both in scientific inquiry and in the realms of policy and management, nature and culture are often treated as separate and unrelated entities. The goal of this symposium is to bridge gaps, address challenges and opportunities, and help to forge a long-term, multi-dimensional vision for sustaining biological and cultural diversity. The four-day symposium will combine presentations, panels, discussion groups, performance, and art, and also target specific policy processes in order to affect decision-making.

In an effort to be as inclusive as possible and incorporate a diversity of voices and opinions from around the world we would like to hear from people and communities about the connections between their cultures and nature. We encourage participants to collect information in a variety of forms—through written responses, videotape, still photography, and voice recordings. Once submitted, we will compile the material and prepare an audio-visual presentation to share with those who attend the symposium. This material and also be to posted on the symposium website (<http://symposia.cbc.amnh.org/biocultural>). Some of the ideas expressed may be used in policy recommendations.

Protocol

Please use these questions as a framework for gathering responses; you may wish to adapt them to suit your responder and the conditions under which the interviews are conducted, or focus only on certain questions. We encourage you to capture the interviews as richly as possible (while realizing that your options may be limited). A videotaped recording of the interviews may provide the most engaging way to present individuals’ responses, in their own words and with their own voices. **(As the language of this conference will be English, a written translation from other languages will be essential.)** Still photographs and/or audio recording of interview responders would also be enormously helpful. If possible, capturing some of the sights and sounds related to each person interviewed would be of great value as well. It is our intention to make these responses available to a wide audience via a dedicated website that will be activated in the months leading up to the conference, and also to highlight the interviews—whether written, photographed, or recorded—on video screens throughout the April conference. The interview responses would also become part of the web-based archive, and would remain accessible for years to come.

Informed Consent Process:

In some instances, participants may be interviewed in lieu of directly submitting their own responses. In this case, participants should be read the following statements prior to participating in the survey:

“In order to contribute to a symposium taking place at the American Museum of Natural History in April 2008, we would like to explore the relationships between biodiversity (nature) and culture around the world and we would like to ask you some questions regarding your culture and language and their relation to nature. The results from this interview will be available, should you agree, to people around the world via an internet site hosted by the American Museum of Natural History. We will also use the information in helping to plan for and implement the April 2008 symposium on these topics and in recommendations to various international bodies concerned with sustaining cultures and biodiversity (nature). We welcome your continued participation in this process and can provide you with the information you need to track progress, should you be interested. We would be very grateful if you can spare the time to talk with us. We will not use your name or post the information to our website unless you give us permission to do so.”

Submissions to “Voices from Around the World” do not require that the individuals involved attend the April Symposium. All are certainly welcome to attend, and may register on the website, <http://symposia.cbc.amnh.org/biocultural>.

“Sustaining Cultural and Biological Diversity
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Guide Questions:

- 1) Can you share with us thoughts/ideas on some of the ways in which your culture is important to your People or community?
- 2) Can you share with us thoughts/ideas on some of the ways in which your culture supports the natural world? And ways in which the natural world supports your culture? (What links exist between your culture and nature?)
- 3) If your people have made efforts to sustain the natural world and your culture, can you share with us what you have been doing?
- 4) When you think of the natural world, are there things that would be difficult to translate into _____ [identify appropriate language(s), e.g. English/Spanish/Portuguese]? Can you give examples of what sorts of things?
- 5) Do you think that in your lifetime some elements/words of your language will be lost?
- 6) If no one spoke your language any longer, are there things that your community could no longer do? What sorts of things (e.g., rituals that you could no longer perform, etc.)?

Interviewers should also be sensitive to the fact that some important ritual or other information might be secret and make it clear that they are not asking interview responders to talk about things that can't be talked about with outsiders, but that in such cases, very general comments would be appreciated.

- 7) What kind of connection is there (if any) between maintaining your culture and maintaining the natural world?
- 8) What are the biggest obstacles that you've faced in sustaining the natural world, your language, and your culture?
- 9) I would like you to imagine that you no longer have direct, everyday contact with nature (translated using the closest appropriate term). How would this affect your life and that of your village (people, community, tribe, etc.)?

Submission Deadline(s): To be considered for inclusion in the “Voices from Around the World” selected-highlights presentation at the Symposium, please send your submission by **Monday, February 11, 2008**. Submissions will also be accepted beyond that date, for posting to the Symposium website. All accepted submissions will be available on the website until at least October 2008. After that, an archive of the Symposium’s content will continue to be accessible.

Please also submit a completed **Call for Participation Application Form**, available on the symposium website at <http://symposia.cbc.amnh.org/biocultural/forms.html>.

Please Note: The American Museum is unable to provide financial support to poster presenters for travel or accommodation. A list of local hotels, student centers, and hostels will be posted at <http://symposia.cbc.amnh.org/biocultural/travel.html>.

Please submit responses and any supplemental materials (audio, video, photographic) to:

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