

diversity, and launching policies, program and strategies to preserve that diversity.

Access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Until now, Northern pharmaceutical and biotech companies have had free access to the genetic resources of the South, and to the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples (which has been important for many pharmaceutical discoveries). Southern countries argue that they should receive a share of the profits from the use of genetic resources within their territories. Likewise, indigenous communities believe that they should share in the benefits arising from the use of their traditional knowledge. Some

Northern countries argue that companies must earn maximum returns on their investments if they are to continue to develop products the world needs.

Funding. Not only will the level of funding for conservation in the South be a critical test of political will in the North, but the way the funding will be channelled is also under discussion. The principal funding mechanism is likely to be the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which is closely associated with the World Bank, though its implementing agencies include UNEP and the UN Development Programme. Many NGOs have been sharply critical of the GEF and the Bank for failing to consult

adequately with local communities where projects are carried out, and failing to disclose full information about projects. The NGOs argue that for conservation projects to work they must have the full support and involvement of local and indigenous communities. **6**

This material is based on an EarthAction Media Alert. EarthAction Network consists of more than 750 citizen groups in 101 countries. EarthAction focuses on one critical peace, environment or development issue each month and produces an Action Alert for distribution to individual activists. ICLARM is a member of EarthAction.

Ecosystem Function and Biodiversity on Coral Reefs

J. Ogden, T. Done
and B. Salvat

Of the species known to science, it has been estimated that about 20% are marine. However, almost all of the phyla occur in the sea. Coral reefs are acknowledged to be one of the most diverse shallow marine ecosystems, but understanding of their biodiversity is in its infancy as sampling difficulties have defeated any attempts to inventory even a significant fraction of the taxa.

During the first week in November 1993, a group of 35 international scientists attended a workshop in Key West, Florida, to discuss the topic of ecosystem function and biodiversity on coral reefs. Specific questions which were addressed at the workshop include: Do losses of biodiversity compromise the capacity of coral reefs to maintain their functional and structural integrity? What are the implications of biodiversity for the sustainable use of reef resources, both for reef-based recrea-



tion, eco-tourism and other commercial activity, and for subsistence farming and harvesting (particularly in poor and developing countries)? Over what spatial and temporal scales are alterations in biodiversity on coral reefs manifest as alterations in biogeochemical processes, and do they contribute significantly to changes in ocean-atmosphere fluxes?

This workshop is one of a series which ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions)/SCOPE (Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment) is sponsoring within 12 biotic regions: tundra, boreal forest, temperate forests, Mediterranean, savanna, tropical forests, freshwater systems, arid zones, islands, ocean upwelling systems, estuaries, and coral

reefs. Taken together the SCOPE workshops will synthesize our knowledge of the functional role of biodiversity and provide the background for an

experimental program within the International Geosphere Biosphere Program (IGBP). The SCOPE program is part of DIVERSITAS, a program jointly administered by the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) and the UNESCO/MAB (Man in the Biosphere) program. The former effort is directed at the origin and maintenance of biodiversity and the latter at inventory and monitoring. There will be an overall syn-

thesis meeting in Asilomar, California, in February 1994, leading to the publication of the Global Biodiversity Assessment of which coral reefs will be a chapter. This will be unprecedented knowledge base in support of future strategies for research and conservation of biodiversity.

J. OGDEN is from the Florida Institute of Oceanography, 830 First Street South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701, USA; **T. DONE** is from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, PMB No.3, Townsville M.C., Queensland 4810, Australia; and **B. SALVAT** is from the Laboratoire EPHE, Centre de Biologie & Ecologie Tropicale & Méditerranéenne, Université de Perpignan, 66860 Perpignan, France.