

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF ODISHAS, KORAPUT

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS

PRESS RELEASE, DATE:23.12.2022

13th Odisha Environment Congress on 'Environment and Tribes' concluded at CUO

The three days 13th Odisha Environment Congress-2022 on the theme 'Environment and Tribes' started from 21.12.2022 at Central University of Odisha, Koraput has been concluded today with various important recommendations which to be submitted to the appropriate authorities for further course of actions. All the sessions of the Congress, based on the eight sub-themes, had very good presentations by invited speakers as well as researchers, each session ending with an interactive discussion. While earnestly appreciating the innate connect between the tribal communities and the nature, reflected in the form of their art, culture, livelihood and curative practices, the Congress sincerely advocates for continuance of such practices and disapproves of any intervention that causes damage to this sacred connect between environment and tribes. The Congress desires that such best practices need to be imitated by others in the society for conservation of the nature and flow of benefits.

Basing on the opinions presented by various speakers, including the guests of the inaugural and valedictory sessions, the following recommendations have been made as the take away of the 13th Odisha Environment Congress to be submitted to the appropriate authorities for further course of actions.

1. The part of Eastern Ghats situated within the Odisha state, which constitutes about 25% of this mountainous range, should be considered as a biodiversity rich and tribal community dominated zone. Accordingly, appropriate protection and eco-restoration measures need to be undertaken with top priority.
2. Tribals being the trustees of the natural resources, most of which are primitive tribal groups, their livelihoods, customs, culture and traditional skills need to be protected. Accordingly, future policy formulations may be made.
3. For the protection and conservation of the Deomali hill range from further ecological degradation, immediate steps may be initiated. Further, a study centre, in the light of the Similipal Study Centre, may be established under the CUO, Koraput for carrying out various study/research programmes.
4. The Gupteswar hill terrain being an important tourist spot from religious, archaeological and richness of flora and fauna points of view, it needs special conservation efforts. The Congress recommends for declaring it as a community reserve.
5. In appreciation of the decision taken at the CoP 15 held at Canada which concluded on Dec 19, to which India is a party, indigenous peoples' rights need to be safeguarded as they remain stewards of the land they use and ensuring that they are not evicted for mining and other such developmental activities.
6. Steps may be taken for preparation of People's Biodiversity Registers, required under the Biodiversity Act, 2002, in tribal community inhabited areas. Existing traditional knowledge/ practices used by tribals for treatment of various diseases with the use of herbal medicines prepared from different plant parts need to be recorded. Otherwise, these may vanish with the passing away of the concerned indigenous experts. Further,

scientific studies may be undertaken for authentication and promotion of such healing practices.

7. Special measures may be taken for the protection of the sacred groves by declaring the mass community reserves.
8. In the light of the climate change and other environmental challenges, traditional culture methods and plant species, such as paddy, millets and pulses, having climate resilient characteristics need to be conserved and promoted. Seed banks and gene banks are also to be established for the purpose.
9. The literature, art and folklores based on the description and praise of nature need to be documented, preserved and given wider exposure.
10. The State Govt. must introduce Green Budget concept for ecological restoration and conservation.
11. The Forest Right Act of India must be implemented in letter and spirit and there should not be any dilution so far protecting rights of forest dwellers.

The valedictory programme was attended by Dr. S. N. Patra, Chairman, Odisha Environment Congress (OEC); Mr. Sudarshan Das, Member, OES; Mr. Bhругu Baxipatra, Secretary, OEC; Prof. S. K. Palita, Dean, SBCNR and Convener, OEC at CUO, Dr. P. C. Mohapatra, Director, COATS; Prof. Reeta Roy, Social Scientist and former Professor, Utkal University; Mr. Urmi Daniel, Convener, OEC; Mr. Sharat Patnaik, Organiser, OEC; Prof. Jagabandhu Samal, Professor, COATS and Mr. Bijay Kumar Pradhan, Mahanadi Bancha Andolon. On this occasion the Odisha Environment Congress awarded three person and one industry for their outstanding contribution towards the protection of the environment. Reputed tribal healer of Koraput Shri Hari Pangi was awarded with Professor Radhamohan Green Ambassador Award, Mr. Prafulla Kumar Behera and Mr. Prakash Kumar Paraseth, Research Scholars of DBCNR were awarded with Dr. Ajay Patnaik Young Scientist Award and TAT Refractory Ltd, Belpahar was awarded with S. B. Mishra Green Corporate award.

The 14th Environment Congress will be held at Sambalpur University with the Theme "Environment and Sustainable Living".

Dr. Phagunath Bhoi, Public Relations Officer