



SBSTTA-4 HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 24 JUNE 1999

SBSTTA-4 delegates met in two Working Groups. WGI completed work on alien species, drylands and the Global Taxonomy Initiative. WGII completed work on new plant technologies, tourism and environmental impact assessment.

WORKING GROUP

ALIEN SPECIES: On the Chair's draft recommendation on alien species (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.1/CRP.1), NEW ZEALAND and ARGENTINA said the decision to establish a liaison group should be left to the Executive Secretary. NEW ZEALAND and GERMANY both offered text for an annex on an outline for case studies on alien species. ARGENTINA proposed adding reference to Article 14 of the CBD (Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts). To text on assessing the socio-economic implications of alien species, CANADA suggested adding reference to indigenous people and local communities. Paula Warren (New Zealand) chaired a small group negotiation on the text and presented the resulting draft to an afternoon meeting of WGI. The revised draft deleted the reference to a liaison group, added a paragraph suggesting that the Executive Secretary develop an outline for case studies on alien species and deleted the annexed outline for case studies. It also added a reference to Article 14 of the CBD in a recommendation regarding a global strategy on alien species and included references to FAO, IMO, WHO and other relevant organizations to assist the CBD COP. WGI adopted the new draft without amendments.

DRYLANDS: Delegates discussed a revised Chair's draft decision on drylands (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.1/CRP.2/Rev.1). SWITZERLAND added text suggesting that the work programme identify synergies, gaps and overlaps within the current CBD work programme, in particular agriculture, forests and inland waters. On text calling for the draft programme of work to integrate issues such as fires, land-use management and water management, delegates agreed to request incorporation of their "negative and positive" impacts and to give attention to inappropriate land-use conversion. Delegates also agreed that *in situ* conservation would include "threatened species" and the identification of the most threatened components of dryland ecosystems would include "species." BRAZIL, supported by COSTA RICA, proposed shortening the text's lengthy title to avoid calling the work programme the "dryland ecosystem programme" and ignoring that it addresses more than arid ecosystems. ZIMBABWE thought the focus was with drylands. GREECE suggested "water-stressed ecosys-

tems." Delegates requested the Executive Secretary to propose a shorter compound title that would cover all the ecosystems set out in COP-4 Decision IV/16 Annex 2.

TAXONOMY: On the Chair's draft decision on the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.1/CRP.3), several speakers observed that elements not discussed were included in the draft, while other elements discussed were missing. AUSTRALIA proposed requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare a reporting framework for the work programme. The NETHERLANDS noted the COP-4 decision that SBSTTA should address issues related to the GEF only at the COP's request. CANADA said the GTI should be under the auspices of the Convention and not UNEP. CAMEROON stressed the need to call on the GEF to provide additional funding for the GTI.

A small group chaired by Linda Hedlund (Sweden) redrafted the text and presented it to WGI. The group added text welcoming the OECD's decision to support the establishment of a Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). They deleted text recommending that the GTI be formalized under the auspices of UNEP, recommending instead that the Executive Secretary further develop the GTI. They suggested that initial priorities should include capacity-building, the development of taxonomy-related products and the dissemination of and access to taxonomy information. They replaced text calling for the review of progress in the GTI with text calling for integrating GTI development and implementation in ongoing thematic and cross-cutting SBSTTA work programmes. They also replaced text requesting GEF funding with a recommendation that funding institutions recognize the cross-cutting nature of taxonomy and facilitate partnerships.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA proposed adding a preambular paragraph recalling a COP-4 decision that provides advice to the GEF regarding the GTI. BRAZIL suggested that the Executive Secretary report to SBSTTA-5 on his identification of options for a coordination structure and initiatives. Delegates agreed to these changes. CAMEROON proposed adding a paragraph "welcoming UNEP's offer to assist in the development of a project that would provide technical and financial support to initiatives in accordance with the priorities of a GTI." ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA proposed indicating that UNEP's activities be through the use of its own resources. ARGENTINA said text inviting the Executive Secretary to collaborate with UNEP and other relevant organizations allowed for UNEP's involvement. The GEF noted that, when UNEP presents a project to the GEF, 90% of the project's total costs are generally covered by the GEF. UNEP said it would be restrictive if they could not approach other partners. A small

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group briefly conferred, during which CAMEROON withdrew her proposal on the condition that the SBSTTA-4 report notes that one delegation strongly welcomed UNEP's offer to assist.

WORKING GROUP II

TOURISM: The Chair of the drafting group, Marcel Vernooij (Netherlands), introduced the draft recommendations on sustainable use, including tourism (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.2/CRP.2). The US suggested adding a new introductory paragraph based on PERU's call to emphasize the unique role of ecotourism in contributing to the conservation of biodiversity. This was accepted. AUSTRALIA, with GERMANY, proposed having the Executive Secretary examine the linkages between tourism and sustainable use of biodiversity. The EC supported, and ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ETHIOPIA, HAITI and COLOMBIA opposed, the use of the term "quality" in relation to tourism. The group accepted PERU's compromise to replace "quality" with "sustainable" tourism. On indigenous and local communities ECUADOR added recognition of the "need" to involve such communities. CANADA added a reference to monitoring cultural and spiritual impacts. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES BIODIVERSITY NETWORK encouraged development of legal frameworks to ensure indigenous peoples' involvement in tourism planning. The INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM noted the absence of guidelines for meaningful consultation with indigenous and local communities. On the Annex to the draft decision, CHINA requested a definition of the terms ecotourism and sustainable tourism. The CHAIR suggested that the CBD Secretariat could make this insertion.

NEW PLANT TECHNOLOGY: In the morning, WGII continued their deliberations on Chair Vokhiwa's draft recommendations on new plant technology (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.2/CRP.1/Rev.1). They deliberated on alternative texts for an additional recommendation. NORWAY proposed recommending a moratorium on GURT commercial use and field-testing. CANADA proposed that GURTs' use not be approved by Parties until further scientific assessment. GERMANY proposed that GURTs' use in the field not be approved until their viability is demonstrated. Both CANADA and GERMANY included the precautionary approach.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE, with INDIA, CAMEROON, ECUADOR and the THIRD WORLD NETWORK, supported the Norwegian proposal, emphasizing the need to address GURT field-testing and food security. AUSTRALIA, with the US, said SBSTTA is an inappropriate forum to call for a moratorium. The UK submitted compromise text recognizing the precautionary approach and recommending that Parties not approve commercial use of products incorporating GURT technologies until authorized scientific assessments validate their safe use. GREECE, with MEXICO, supported the UK proposal suggesting that "strictly controlled field tests" be incorporated.

Delegates established a contact group chaired by Andreas Gettkant (Germany). In the afternoon, Gettkant introduced a new preambular paragraph recognizing that any country may establish a moratorium. The EC added "subject to national legislation," and AUSTRALIA added reference to CBD Article 22 (Relationship with Other International Conventions). Chair Gettkant then introduced a revised recommendation suggesting that GURTs not be approved for field-testing without "appropriate scientific data can justify such testing, and for commercial use until appropriate, authorized and strictly controlled scientific assessments." Delegates accepted this text.

On requesting the Executive Secretary to analyze GURT impacts on the rights of farmers to *inter alia*, keep seed, CANADA added "subject to national law." SURINAME added reference to indigenous and local communities. INDIA preferred "Farmers' Rights." Delegates agreed to take into account Farmers' Rights under the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resource for Food and Agriculture. On

how to address concerns raised by transgenic organisms for germ-plasm use, WGII supported INDIA's replacement of transgenic organisms with GURTs.

On assessments for dealing with living modified organism risks, delegates agreed to: INDIA's deletion of assessing patented molecular biology information; GERMANY's addition of ecological, economic and social effects, inducers used, molecular level effects and potential positive applications of V-GURTs; and EL SALVADOR's addition that the possibility of GURTs out-crossing with threatened wild crop relatives be assessed.

On ways to address potential GURT impacts on agro-biodiversity, delegates agreed to INDIA's addition of food security and CANADA's insertion of impacts on "*ex situ* and *in situ*" conservation. On regulations at the national level, WGII opposed SWITZERLAND's suggestion to delete and supported INDIA's reference to impacts on food security. The recommendation that the Executive Secretary prepare a report for SBSTTA review prior to COP-6 was accepted.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: The Secretariat introduced draft recommendations from the Chair on environmental impact assessment (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/WG.2/CRP.3). In the preambular paragraph, the group agreed to the EC's proposal to carry out complete EIAs in many countries. The NETHERLAND proposed considering mitigating measures and elaborating compensation measures in case of biodiversity loss. The US stressed the importance of cumulative adverse effects. ECUADOR asked for reference to human quality of life.

Under recommendations, HAITI called for reference to biodiversity loss and human health. The EC proposed new regulatory frameworks in order to integrate biodiversity into relevant sectoral policies. MEXICO asked for reference to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEAs). On encouraging governments to use SEAs, the NETHERLANDS added consideration of mitigation measures. On national reporting of statutory planning, INDIA proposed a general reference to reporting on experiences. On instructing the SBSTTA to develop guidelines on biodiversity-related issues into EIA legislation, AUSTRALIA proposed reference to precautionary and ecosystems approaches. GERMANY added equivalency in mitigation measures. CANADA set a COP-6 completion date for this work. A recommendation to develop a roster of experts was deleted at the request of INDIA. In a call for case-studies on biodiversity consideration in EIAs, GERMANY added a call to evaluate existing guidelines for EIA. Further recommendations on continuing analysis of information and collaborating with the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context were deleted at the suggestion of CAMEROON.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Participants observed that long-running tensions and turf wars between UNEP and the CBD resurfaced in discussions over the GTI. Many delegates expressed surprise at the appearance of a suggestion in the Chair's draft that the GTI would be formalized as a project under the auspices of UNEP. They indicated that the draft did not reflect the Parties' discussions, and redrafted it to give primacy to the Executive Secretary. UNEP supporters, however, highlighted their positive experience with UNEP as an implementing agency. A related concern circulating in the corridors was the vacant status of the new Secretariat position on taxonomy.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary is scheduled to meet during the morning and afternoon to adopt the Working Groups' decisions. Delegates will also discuss and adopt draft decisions on cooperation with other bodies, the SBSTTA work programme, the SBSTTA-4 report and other matters.