



CBD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 9 FEBRUARY 2004

The Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opened on Monday, 9 February in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Delegates met in Plenary throughout the day to hear opening statements, keynote presentations and reports on intersessional activities. They also addressed organizational matters.

PLENARY

OPENING STATEMENTS: Dato' Seri Law, Malaysia's Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment, welcomed delegates to Malaysia and outlined relevant developments in domestic legislation.

Hans Hoogeveen (the Netherlands), COP-6 President, opened the meeting. Stressing the need for a society-driven and integrated approach to achieving sustainable development, he urged delegates to: adopt the multi-year programme of work (MYPOW); increase the budget; agree on terms of reference to negotiate an international regime on access and benefit-sharing (ABS); and establish indicators and a monitoring system for achieving the 2010 target to significantly reduce biodiversity loss.

Delegates elected Dato' Seri Law as COP-7 President.

Dato' Seri Law said COP-7 delegates face the challenge of developing a framework for technology transfer that includes specific commitments to follow up on the WSSD, addresses gaps such as those relating to scientific assessments, and promotes benefit-sharing.

Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, highlighted the importance of COP-7 in taking stock of the Convention's achievements since its entry into force. He noted that, although biodiversity loss continues, successes have been achieved, including the entry into force of the Biosafety Protocol and the designation of the GEF as the CBD's financial mechanism.

Hamdallah Zedan, CBD Executive Secretary, encouraged the COP to address the 2010 target by focusing on implementation, strategic partnerships, financial resources and support. Highlighting technology transfer and cooperation, protected areas (PAs) and the international regime for ABS as crucial issues, Zedan invited participants to develop a global partnership on biodiversity.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS: Noting his concern regarding future generations' well-being, David Suzuki, David Suzuki Foundation, played a recording of a child's statement at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. She had called on governments to "stop creating problems they cannot fix," and urged turning promises into actions. Recalling indigenous peoples' wisdom regarding Mother Earth,

Suzuki explained that humans depend on water, air, fire and soil, and stressed that biodiversity is the source of the elements humans need for survival.

Emile Frison, International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, addressed the relation between biodiversity, nutrition and health. Highlighting the benefits of a balanced and diverse diet for human health, he stressed the need to address the qualitative aspect of nutrition, and said hunger reduction strategies should address product diversification, consumption and marketing.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Philip Buckley (Ireland) and Karen Brown (Canada) as Bureau representatives of the European Community, and JUSCANZ (Japan, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), respectively. The election of other Bureau members was deferred. Christian Prip (Denmark) was elected as Chair of SBSTTA-11 and SBSTTA-12.

President Dato' Seri Law introduced, and Parties adopted, the agenda with minor amendments (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/1 and Add.1). Delegates decided to establish two working groups, and appointed Hans Hoogeveen (the Netherlands) and Desh Deepak Verma (India) as Chairs of WG-I and WG-II, respectively.

COP-6 President Hoogeveen reported that informal consultations had not resolved the outstanding issues, namely the rules of procedure for COP meetings and the financial rules for the administration of the CBD's Trust Fund. President Dato' Seri Law encouraged delegates to continue informal consultations.

REPORTS: Reports of regional meetings: Ethiopia, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed regret that no regional meeting could be held due to insufficient financial resources, but said the Group met on 8 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur. He stressed the importance of considering implementation mechanisms for the Convention's Strategic Plan and its work programme. He emphasized the importance of capacity building, new and additional funding and a legally binding regime on ABS. India, for the ASIA AND PACIFIC GROUP, said the group did not hold a regional meeting but met on 8 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur. Argentina, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC), reported on a regional meeting convened in January 2003, in Buenos Aires. He stressed the importance of financial resources and of implementing the work programme on PAs, and expressed support for an international regime on ABS. Ireland, on behalf of the EU and Acceding Countries, stressed the need for increased commitment to the 2010 target and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including by adopting and implementing a work programme on PAs, and mobilizing public support to the CBD's work. He expressed commitment to negotiating an ABS regime, built on a gap analysis and experiences gained with the Bonn Guidelines on ABS. He called for conveying the message that halting biodiversity loss is a crucial means for sustaining livelihoods, eradicating poverty and protecting human health.

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SPAIN reported on the third intergovernmental "Biodiversity in Europe" conference, held in January 2004, in Madrid, which aimed to prepare the pan-European contribution to COP-7 (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/35). He highlighted recommendations to: engage the CBD in the WSSD follow-up process; establish a global network of PAs at land by 2010 and at sea by 2012; and refine the proposed work programme on technology transfer. FRANCE announced a UNESCO conference on biodiversity research, to be convened in January 2005, in Paris.

Reports of intersessional meetings: SBSTTA-8 Chair Jan Plesník (Czech Republic) introduced the SBSTTA-8 report (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/3), highlighting a recommendation regarding MYPOW to focus future activities of the Convention on existing work programmes, rather than consider new items.

Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) presented the SBSTTA-9 report (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/4), noting the meeting's recommendations, including on mountain biodiversity, PAs, technology transfer and cooperation, and the ecosystem approach.

COP-6 President Hoogeveen reported on WSSD outcomes and introduced the reports on the MYPOW meeting, the second meeting of the ABS Working Group, and the third meeting of the Article 8(j) Working Group (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/5 to 7). On WSSD outcomes, he stressed the need to integrate biodiversity-related elements of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation into the CBD work programmes and negotiate an international ABS regime. Regarding the MYPOW report, he highlighted the recommendation to develop a global partnership for biodiversity. On the ABS meeting, he outlined discussions and recommendations on, *inter alia*: use of terms; review of the implementation of the Bonn Guidelines on ABS; and compliance measures for prior informed consent (PIC) and mutually agreed terms (MAT). He identified the draft terms of reference for an international ABS regime as a major challenge facing COP-7. With regard to the Article 8(j) meeting, he highlighted: the Akwé: Kon Guidelines, an integrated framework for indigenous involvement in cultural, environmental and social impact assessment; elements for a *sui generis* system for the protection of traditional knowledge; and enhanced participatory mechanisms for indigenous and local communities.

Ambassador Philémon Yang (Cameroon) reported on the status of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/8). He highlighted the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), established by the resumed Extraordinary Meeting of the COP. He said the ICCP met three times to complete preparations for COP/MOP-1.

Gonzalo Castro, the GEF, presented a report on CBD-related GEF activities (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/9). Drawing attention to several publications, including the Beijing Declaration of the second GEF Assembly, he identified PAs, forests and mountain ecosystems as GEF priorities.

MEXICO said SBSTTA is diverting from its mandate by increasingly addressing issues of economic, political and social nature. COLOMBIA expressed concern that the majority of CBD-financed activities relate to biodiversity conservation, rather than to sustainable use and ABS. He stressed that the Convention's implementation in developing countries is dependent on developed country Parties' implementation of their commitments related to financial resources and technology transfer.

Executive Secretary Zedan introduced the reports on the administration of the Convention and the budget for the Trust Fund of the Convention (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/10), and on the proposed budget for the biennium 2005-2006 (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/2 and Add.1). CANADA highlighted its annual special contribution to the Secretariat of US\$1 million. JAPAN underscored its in-kind contribution for the support of workshops in Asia.

STATEMENTS: The Global Biodiversity Forum reported on its 19th session, held from 6-8 February 2004, in Kuala Lumpur. She said COP-7 participants should concentrate on, *inter alia*: implementing the ecosystem approach by focusing on land- and

seascapes, rather than on PAs; recognizing and legally guaranteeing the rights and responsibilities of local communities as key actors in natural resource management; and promoting effective and participatory technology transfer by ensuring that it is demand-driven, ecologically and culturally sensitive, based on PIC, and facilitated by access to information.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) outlined its opposition to the proposed international regime on ABS and international systems of registration of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. Noting that indigenous peoples are rights holders, she called for their full and effective participation in decision making. She noted the need for indigenous peoples' free PIC for the establishment of PAs and access to indigenous resources, territories and traditional knowledge. She expressed IIFB's support to the Akwé: Kon guidelines.

The RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS outlined its activities and highlighted its contribution to the CBD's work on specific ecosystems and cross-cutting issues.

UNDP stressed the poor's dependence on biodiversity and the role of the 2010 target in achieving the MDGs. He underlined UNDP's support to biodiversity-related projects, including the Equator Initiative.

UNESCO emphasized the interlinkages between the World Heritage Convention and biodiversity conservation, its role in developing the Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness, and its initiative on cultural and biological diversity.

The FAO noted biodiversity as a basis for food production, and said that biodiversity is crucial to halving hunger and poverty by 2015. She highlighted FAO's work on pests and on plant and animal genetic resources.

The WORLD BANK described its programmes for biodiversity conservation, noting that improved ecosystem management is hindered by lack of political will, rather than lack of knowledge. He stressed the need to protect ecosystems that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, drawing attention to the World Bank's funding of initiatives that contribute to conserving biodiversity and combating climate change.

Adjourning the session, COP President Dato' Seri Law congratulated Thailand on its ratification of the Convention.

IN THE CORRIDORS

In spite of inspiring keynote presentations, many delegates were rather cautious about the meeting's likely achievements. Several said they would be glad to see the COP endorsing the WSSD's call to develop a regime on access and benefit-sharing, and consider it an added bonus if it would be deemed legally binding. Many developing country delegates placed strong expectations on the work programme on technology transfer, leaving others to anticipate significant trade offs with those supportive of a strong work programme on protected areas.

In other parts of the corridors, informal consultations on the President's compromise proposal on invasive alien species were ongoing. Some delegates expressed fear that the implications of the tormented adoption of the relevant COP-6 decision may result in endless legalistic negotiations regarding the Convention's Rules of Procedure, and hinder substantial progress on crucial matters for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: WG-I will meet at 10:00 am in the Dewan Nerdeka Hall to initiate deliberations on mountain biodiversity.

WORKING GROUP II: WG-II will meet at 10:00 am in Room TR4 to discuss technology transfer and cooperation.

PLENARY: Participants will reconvene in Plenary from 4:00-6:00 pm to hear progress reports on the work programmes and to continue hearing statements by organizations.