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HIGHLIGHTS OF BIOCOP-2 MONDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 1995

Delegates to the second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-2) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) heard a number of statements during a morning opening ceremony, following which the Technology Fair was officially opened. During morning and afternoon Plenary meetings, delegates listened to reports on a number of issues, including the SBSTTA meeting, the GEF, the outcome of the third session of the CSD, and the Report of the Administration of the CBD. Presentations by the four countries bidding to host the CBD Secretariat were also made.

OPENING CEREMONY

COP-1 President and Bahamas Minister of Education and Training, Dr. Ivy Dumont, officially opened COP-2. She noted that the Nassau meeting was convened and organized in record time due to the CBD's rapid entry into force and was politically significant, as demonstrated by the participation of 133 States, 120 NGOs and 75 high-level representatives during the Ministerial session. She expressed hope that COP-2 would succeed in furthering the successful outcome of COP-1.

The Philippines, on behalf of the G-77, nominated Indonesia's Minister of Environment Sarwono Kusumaatmaja as President of COP-2, who was elected by acclamation. Welcoming delegates on the 50th anniversary of Indonesia's independence, Minister Kusumaatmaja encouraged delegates to build on the promising start made at COP-1 and subsequent intersessional work, and to take decisive action on financial contributions, technology transfer, biosafety, genetic resources, IPR, coastal and marine biodiversity as well as terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity. He further emphasized the need for: a code on bioethics; new strategies for sectoral development; national follow-up to COP-2 decisions; and coordination with other relevant treaties and programmes to build on synergies and meet multiple goals given limited resources.

Executive Secretary Dr. Calestous Juma noted that many States have formed action plans and adopted national legislation; substantive discussions have taken place in the second committee of the UN General Assembly, and UN bodies such as the CSD are examining their relationship with the CBD; and SBSTTA and regional meetings have taken place.

PLENARY

The President led delegates in a minute of silence in memory of Yitzhak Rabin. Delegates then elected representatives from India, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Slovakia, Canada and the United Kingdom to the Bureau. The remaining Bureau nominees have not yet been decided. Delegates adopted the Provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/1) and the Provisional organization of work (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/Add.2). The President announced that facilities have been arranged for two Plenary sessions on Saturday, 11 November.

The Chair of the African Regional Meeting on CBD, held in Pretoria, South Africa on 9-10 October 1995, presented the Pretoria Declaration that: urges African States to ratify the CBD; suggests that funding decisions based on consensus voting will undermine African States; calls for early operation of the clearing-house mechanism; calls upon COP-2 to adopt a medium-term programme of action to strengthen national capacities of African States under CBD; and requests a second African regional meeting before COP-3 to be held in the Seychelles.

The Chair of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Meeting on CBD, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 18-19 October 1995, summarized a report that calls for early operation of the clearing-house mechanism with funding in the 1996-1997 budget; urges COP-2 to adopt the recommendations of the first SBSTTA meeting on Article 16 and on the biosafety protocol; and reaffirms the importance of marine and coastal biodiversity and of the International Coral Reef Initiative. The report endorses recommendations of SBSTTA on an ecosystem approach to conservation, and proposes Argentina as the host for COP-3.

The Chair of the Asian Regional Meeting on CBD, held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 4-5 November 1995, suggested that national biodiversity strategies will be the centerpiece of Parties' obligations under CBD, and requested a report from the Secretariat on national experiences with sustainable use.

The report of the first meeting of SBSTTA was presented by its Chairman, Prof. J.H. Seyani (Malawi). Noting the participation of 82 Parties, 10 observer States, 6 UN bodies and specialized agencies, 7 IGOs and 50 NGOs, he highlighted several key recommendations (as contained in UNEP/CBD/COP/2/5) for consideration by COP-2 on the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA and its medium-term programme of work (1995-97), as well as substantive matters relating to the components of biodiversity, particularly those under threat, technology transfer, national reports, and coastal and marine biological diversity.

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Mohamed T. El-Ashry, Chair of the GEF, reported on GEF biodiversity projects, and stated that the GEF's activities for biodiversity are consistent with COP instructions. He referred delegates to the Report of the Global Environmental Facility, UNEP/CBD/COP/2/8. He noted that the draft Memorandum of Understanding is an example of collaboration between the Secretariats of GEF and CBD.

In her capacity as COP-1 President, Dr. Dumont reported on the Outcome of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/Inf.4). She noted a number of reasons for decision I/8 by COP-1 to participate in the CSD, including the importance of a substantive relationship with the CSD. The CSD welcomed the statement of the CBD and recognized that the CBD is the principle mechanism for biodiversity protection.

The order of speakers regarding the location of the Secretariat was based on the agreed scenario for deciding the location of the Permanent Secretariat (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/CRP.1). Delegates will vote on Monday, 13 November.

Kenya noted that it serves as a bridge between developing countries in Asia and Latin America. He stressed the rich variety of species in Kenya and his country's efforts to protect them. He noted that logistical benefits include: environmental faculties in several universities; existing telecommunications facilities and an offer to improve these; and co-location with other relevant organizations. He stated that the CBD is about environment and development and proposed that delegates place the Secretariat in the South.

Switzerland's bid to make the Interim Secretariat in Geneva the Permanent Secretariat highlighted the social and political stability of Switzerland. The headquarters of 17 intergovernmental organizations and 150 NGOs as well as 140 permanent missions to the UN located in Geneva offer significant opportunities for synergy. The high cost of living in Switzerland could be compensated for by financial contributions from the Swiss government, including rent-free office space until the end of 1997 followed by subsidized rent, free use of the Geneva International Conference Center, and the construction of the "Universal House" offering reduced rent to representatives from developing countries.

Canada, in conjunction with the City of Montreal and the Province of Quebec, presented a \$6 million package, including rent-free office space over 5 years, state-of-the-art telecommunications and a new convention centre built to UN requirements in Montreal's "International City," in addition to co-location with over 45 other international organizations, 60 consulates, the Ozone Secretariat and NAFTA's Environment Commission. He emphasized Montreal's cosmopolitan nature and centre of education, research and culture as well as its proximity to Ottawa and to UN and CSD headquarters in New York. According to several UN indices, he noted that Montreal had the lowest cost of living of the four candidate cities. Finally, as the first industrialized country to sign the CBD, Canada has demonstrated its commitment to both biodiversity and the Convention.

Spain stressed the importance of a stable, friendly and open environment to allow the Secretariat to concentrate on the objectives of the CBD. He noted that Madrid is host to many embassies and several international organizations, but is not saturated to the point where a new group would not be visible. Favorable logistical aspects of location in Madrid include: an increased contribution from Spain for the CBD; first rate telecommunications; many university faculties specializing in environment; and a low cost of living.

Sweden asked for more information on environmental considerations for office space.

A summary of recommendations to COP-2 from the third Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF), attended by 400 people representing NGOs, governments and business, covered four topics: marine biodiversity, access to genetic resources, decentralization of conservation governance, and forests and biodiversity. (See ENB Vol. 9, No. 29 for a summary of recommendations.)

The Executive Secretary presented the report on the administration of the Convention (UNEP/CBD/COP/2/15/Corr.1), which is a standing item of COP-1's decision I/9 on its medium-term programme of work. The report contains two main parts (implementation of COP-1 decisions I/4 and I/5 regarding the Permanent Secretariat and relationship with other relevant bodies and international organizations) and three annexes (contribution of Parties to the CBD Trust Fund as of 31 August 1995 and updated in corrigendum on 30 September 1995; voluntary contributions to the Secretariat; and list of documents prepared by the Secretariat since COP-1).

Japan, followed by Sweden, Australia, Malaysia noted paragraphs 40 and 41 regarding the Interagency Task Force on Forests' designation of the Biodiversity Secretariat as the lead agency to address the relation between indigenous peoples and forests. Several governments questioned the appropriateness of UN agencies assigning duties to a convention secretariat. They also expressed concern that some agencies (UNESCO and FAO) have yet to fulfill a commitment to second staff to the Secretariat for the purpose of fulfilling that mandate. Brazil and Austria noted that a task force headed by the Secretariat is not inconsistent with the CBD's objectives. Australia, followed by Sweden and Mauritius, expressed concern over the overloading of Secretariat staff, and urged all Parties to pay arrears and 1996 dues promptly.

In addressing these concerns, the Secretariat noted that when the Intergovernmental Panel of Forests (IPF) was established, all relevant international agencies were called on to service the panel, including the CBD Secretariat. Each organization assumed a responsibility based on its expertise. The responsibility for coordinating with other organizations on issues related to indigenous people and forests was given to the Secretariat of the CBD. The Secretariat stressed that the COP is the sovereign body for guidance on all policy issues. Dr. Juma suggested that the COP discuss how to guide the work of the Secretariat during the intersessional period.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While delegates primarily addressed organizational matters in the Plenary, in the corridors they were identifying the substantive issues they felt would dominate the next two weeks. Items to look for include the perennially contentious issues of: the status of the financial mechanism; technology transfer; the clearing-house mechanism; and a biosafety protocol. As originally discussed in the Global Biodiversity Forum, look for efforts to clarify the relationship between local or indigenous sovereignty over genetic resources versus national sovereignty.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will reconvene this morning in the Plenary Hall to complete consideration of its agenda for 6 November. The first items for today's meeting should be completion of the Report on the Administration of the Convention (Item 11.2) and the Budget of the Trust Fund for the CBD (Item 11.3). A decision on the Chair of the Committee of the Whole is also expected.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The Committee of the Whole is expected to convene in the Plenary Hall following adjournment of the Plenary. The Committee is expected to begin discussion on the Clearing-house mechanism (Item 4.2).