

SBSTTA 12 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 4 JULY 2007

On Wednesday, SBSTTA 12 participants convened in the Committee of the Whole in the morning to consider draft recommendations on the in-depth review of the application of the ecosystem approach (EA) and of the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). Two working groups met in the afternoon to address: the review of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) in Working Group I (WG-I); and biodiversity and climate change, and dry and sub-humid lands in WG-II.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION:

Co-Chair Hutacharern introduced the CRP (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/COW/CRP.3).

On constraints to implementation, delegates agreed to include taxonomic capacity and define lack of data as relating to taxonomy, biology and conservation.

On the proposed new targets on climate change and nutrient loading, CANADA, supported by GERMANY and NORWAY, proposed amendments stating that these issues be addressed during the implementation of existing targets.

On the development of the GSPC beyond 2010, the UK, BRAZIL, GERMANY, MEXICO and others opposed reference to including additional targets, noting that a review of the current targets implies consideration of new ones. BURKINA FASO, FRANCE, ETHIOPIA and JORDAN preferred retaining the reference to considering new targets.

On the toolkit for GSPC implementation, COLOMBIA suggested developing regional tools for the exchange of information and capacity building. CHINA asked to delete references to climate change and nutrient loading since these emerging issues are addressed separately in the draft recommendation.

NORWAY suggested that the Executive Secretary facilitate the development of capacity-building programmes, with BRAZIL requesting technology and financial support programmes.

Delegates agreed to developing a chapter on plant conservation within GBO 3 that can serve as a communication and awareness-raising tool.

The revised CRP will be considered on Thursday.

APPLICATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:

On the CRP (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/COW/CRP.2), BRAZIL proposed referring to the EA as a "useful" rather than an

"excellent" normative framework. KIRIBATI requested a reference to the EA's cultural dimension.

Delegates also agreed to add language proposed by MEXICO on widely promoting and communicating examples of successful EA application. Delegates stressed the need to enhance access, awareness and transmission of straightforward messages using practical tools.

On the EA's contribution to the MDGs, BRAZIL, opposed by PALAU, the UK, SWEDEN, GERMANY, RWANDA and others, requested deleting reference to the wider application of the EA in development planning. ARGENTINA noted that development planning may be outside the CBD's scope, while CANADA suggested alternative language stating that the wider adoption of the EA can contribute to the achievement of all the MDGs. Co-Chair Prip encouraged informal consultations to resolve the matter.

BRAZIL and UGANDA opposed references to specific EA initiatives, while AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, ZAMBIA, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA, and SWEDEN supported their retention. These references were retained in a separate paragraph.

Many agreed with COLOMBIA to add human wellbeing to ecosystem goods and services in the section on incorporating MA findings into the EA, while BRAZIL, opposed by COSTA RICA, SWITZERLAND, MEXICO and the NETHERLANDS, favored deleting the section. BRAZIL agreed that the MA findings could be taken into account in the application of the EA, but no agreement was reached on referencing the role of ecosystem goods and services.

Discussions will continue on Thursday.

WORKING GROUP I

REVIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSEMENT: Introducing the agenda item (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/4), WG-I Chair Linus Spencer Thomas (Grenada) stressed similarities between the MA and GBO.

Ben ten Brink, GBO 2 contributor, presented on policymaking to counter biodiversity loss, advocating an IPCC-type process for biodiversity. SWEDEN suggested establishing a scientific panel on biodiversity based on the IPCC model.

Many highlighted the MA's role in promoting the concept of ecosystem services and catalyzing regional and national activities. CANADA supported an interagency strategy on MA follow-up, and prioritized addressing existing gaps in biodiversity information, as highlighted by the Potsdam Initiative of the G8 +5 and the IMoSEB process. DENMARK pointed to IMoSEB as an important step towards independent

scientific advice, while BRAZIL stressed that SBSTTA is the best source for such expertise; both noted a lack of focus on ABS.

ARGENTINA lamented insufficient implementation of the MA. SWEDEN, supported by IIFB, called for increased involvement of indigenous and local communities in future assessments. COLOMBIA suggested addressing linkages between direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and human wellbeing.

The NETHERLANDS proposed that the CBD communicate MA outcomes, use information in its work programme and promote effective collaboration with other bodies. GERMANY, BELGIUM and INDIA requested the Executive Secretary to seek information from parties and stakeholders for consideration at COP 9; and the UK stressed the need for the MA and any future assessments to support implementation of the CBD work programmes. THAILAND asked that national reporting format be based on the MA conceptual framework. MALAYSIA and COSTA RICA called for a financial mechanism to fund future assessments, with the UK encouraging the use of existing mechanisms.

On future integrated ecosystem assessments, many favored regional, subregional, national and local assessments, noting that a new global assessment would be premature. GERMANY, supported by many, requested consultations with parties and stakeholders, including IMoSEB, on options for improving availability of scientific information, for consideration at COP 9. MEXICO opposed conducting a new global assessment before 2010, favoring the proposed study on costs of inaction outlined in the Potsdam Initiative and GBO 3. COSTA RICA suggested a 10-year cycle for any MA follow-up. The UK noted that repeated global assessments would require a permanent secretariat and, with AUSTRALIA and JAPAN, cautioned against duplication of work.

The CRP will be presented on Thursday.

GBO: WG-I Chair Thomas introduced the discussion on the GBO (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/5), noting that SBSTTA 12 will focus on the scientific aspects of GBO 2 and 3, while WGRI 2 will consider the process of setting up GBO 3.

On lessons learned from GBO 2, many parties called for wider dissemination of its findings. Regarding GBO 3, several parties called for a communication strategy drawing on lessons learned from the IPCC. COLOMBIA pointed to the CHM and national focal points for disseminating information, CHINA called for assistance to developing countries in biodiversity monitoring, and BRAZIL emphasized adequate geographic representation.

The UK requested that GBO 3 contain a chapter on plant biodiversity and progress in implementing the GSPC, and suggested that IMoSEB assist in consolidating scientific data for GBO 3. MEXICO requested that GBO 3 consider: the socioeconomic implications of biodiversity loss; positive effects of biodiversity conservation; and marine ecosystems and IAS. INDIA and the EC said GBO 3 should make full use of the 2010 biodiversity indicators and review progress towards meeting the 2010 target.

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WORKING GROUP II

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: WG-II Chair Annemarie Watt (Australia) introduced relevant documentation on climate change and biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/7 and INF/14, 17 and 19). Faizal Parish, Global Environment Centre, presented on the global peatlands assessment, highlighting potential impacts of peatland degradation and loss on climate change and biodiversity.

GERMANY and others proposed integrating climate change considerations into CBD work programmes during upcoming in-depth reviews, while COLOMBIA favored general guidance. CANADA suggested integration under the EA. The UK and

SWEDEN suggested taking into account conclusions of the third IPCC assessment.

FINLAND highlighted the need for tools to measure how ecosystems and their services respond to climate change. DENMARK and others highlighted the importance of avoided deforestation, with GHANA proposing incentive schemes. FRANCE and others encouraged cooperation with the UNFCCC to incorporate biodiversity protection measures in all efforts to combat deforestation. AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL underscored that CBD and UNFCCC mandates and jurisdictions should be respected.

SLOVENIA and others noted the need to address the impacts of climate change response measures. THAILAND recommended that the Rio Conventions cooperate with the Ramsar Convention on conserving peatlands. MALAYSIA queried how peatlands can be used for palm oil plantations while still contributing to overcoming climate change.

CHINA called for adequate resources for research and development of response measures. KIRIBATI and others called for additional financial and technical assistance to address climate change impacts. MEXICO called for cost-benefit analyses of mitigation and adaptation strategies. HAITI called for initiatives on coastal ecosystem protection.

The UNFCCC reported on its Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change. The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION noted its drought management centers. The RAMSAR CONVENTION emphasized the role of wetlands for controlling climate change. GBIF stressed biodiversity data for developing scenarios of climate change impacts. The FAO drew attention to its specialized studies on climate change in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. GREENPEACE urged parties to prioritize conservation of intact forest landscapes.

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BIODIVERSITY OF DRY AND SUB-HUMID LANDS: WG-II Chair Watt introduced the relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/8 and INF/15).

Many urged making available further information on the status and trends of dry and sub-humid ecosystems, with several proposing closer collaboration with the UNCCD. On land use options, several raised concerns that assessments are based on too few case studies. ARGENTINA suggested using georeferenced data.

MEXICO and the NETHERLANDS proposed aligning definitions with the UNCCD. NORWAY suggested aligning activities with the UNCCD 10-year strategic plan. NEW ZEALAND called for explicit references on how funding benefits on-the-ground implementation. THAILAND called for guidance on private sector involvement. Stressing the impacts of overgrazing, FRANCE called for collaboration with the FAO on sustainable pastoralism. CHINA called for restoration of dry and sub-humid ecosystems.

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IN THE CORRIDORS

As Working Group I broached the review of the MA and GBO on Wednesday afternoon, corridors were abuzz with delegates commenting on the future of scientific assessments. Many expressed support for the idea of a Stern-type report on the economics of biodiversity spearheaded by the EU. Rumor has it the terms of reference for the review are being finalized, and candidates for the team leader of the review include an economics Nobel Prize laureate from a megadiverse country. Some were speculating that the initial findings will be produced in time for consideration at COP 9 or, in the worst-case scenario, will be ready before the symbolic 2010 deadline. Others, however, questioned the ability of a "Biodiversity Stern" report to generate the same impact as the original one, noting the enormity of the subject and the international limelight currently enjoyed by the climate change community.