

CBD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 20 MAY 2008

Delegates to the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 9) met in two working groups throughout the day. Working Group I (WG I) considered agricultural biodiversity and biofuels, and forest biodiversity. WG II addressed: financial resources and mechanism; guidance to the financial mechanism; technology transfer; and cooperation with other organizations and stakeholders. The budget group met, and informal and regional consultations on access and benefit-sharing (ABS) were held throughout the day.

WORKING GROUP I

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY: WG I considered a draft decision arising from the in-depth review of the work programme on agricultural biodiversity and an accompanying document on biofuels (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/26).

Many delegates supported the ongoing implementation of the work programme, and welcomed collaboration with FAO. MALAYSIA and others requested support for capacity building and information exchange, with ARMENIA, GUATEMALA and IRAN calling for special attention to centers of origin. MEXICO said the ecosystem approach should be applied and EL SALVADOR called for regional workshops on the issue. Vanuatu for the PACIFIC ISLANDS and PERU urged research on climate change impacts on agricultural biodiversity. THAILAND requested the FAO develop options to minimize the impacts of agriculture and trade on biodiversity.

Debate focused on biofuels. Slovenia for the EU noted the need to ensure sustainability of biofuel production and proposed establishing an *ad hoc* technical expert group (AHTEG) to develop biodiversity guidelines for emerging industry standards. NEW ZEALAND recommended development of best practices to assess and demonstrate the sustainability of biofuel production. Qatar for the ARAB GROUP suggested holding a scientific conference to improve knowledge on the impacts of biofuels on biodiversity, noting, with others, that biofuel issues should be considered in the context of food security.

Liberia for the AFRICAN GROUP called for the precautionary approach to be applied to large scale biofuel production, and for suspending introduction of new measures for biofuel consumption until policy frameworks are adopted and risk and benefit assessments concluded. GHANA warned that genetically modified (GM) biofuel crops could contaminate natural habitats.

BRAZIL highlighted the contribution of biofuel production to sustainable development, food and energy security and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Agreeing that biofuels be considered under the work programme on agricultural biodiversity, he also drew attention to the effects of developed countries' perverse agricultural incentives on world food prices. NORWAY stressed the need to address land-use conflicts and, with CANADA, biodiversity considerations regarding biofuel production.

GREENPEACE recommended ending any supportive measures for agrofuels until appropriate safeguards are in place, with the INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) and the CIVIL SOCIETY CAUCUS calling for an immediate ban on agrofuels. The INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES called for agrarian reform.

A Friends of the Chair group was established, chaired by Linus Spencer Thomas (Grenada), and a Chair's text will be prepared.

FOREST BIODIVERSITY: Delegates considered SBSTTA recommendation XIII/2 (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/3). IRAN, GUATEMALA and INDIA requested support for implementation and capacity-building. SWITZERLAND agreed that adequate financial resources must be made available, but from multiple sources, and combined with effective forest governance. Jamaica for SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, supported by the PACIFIC ISLANDS, highlighted: their vulnerability to the negative effects of unsustainable forest management; lack of institutional capacity; and, with INDONESIA, governance and law enforcement issues.

Serbia for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE emphasized measures to enhance forest ecological stability and application of the precautionary approach in climate change mitigation activities. NEW ZEALAND called for research and national level efforts to implement sustainable forest management in line with the ecosystem approach.

The AFRICAN GROUP called for suspending release of GM trees until risk assessments are carried out. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION and ARGENTINA stressed preservation of virgin and native forests. The EU called for control of illegal logging. JAPAN suggested enhancing traceability to eliminate illegal trade. KENYA requested resources to overcome barriers such as inadequate incentives for local communities. VENEZUELA noted its opposition to the market-based concept of payments for ecosystem services. SOUTH AFRICA requested continued work on timber licensing and trade to ensure only legal products enter the market, while MALAYSIA considered this to fall under the mandate of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF). BRAZIL emphasized that UNFF is the only universal forum for discussion of political issues concerning forests, and that CBD guidance must be in line with UNFF's four Global Objectives.

Many suggested applying the ecosystem and precautionary approaches with regard to biofuels and GM trees. NORWAY highlighted emissions from deforestation and said data should be generated to conduct risk assessments on GM trees. THAILAND called for establishing linkages between the Global Strategy on Plant Conservation and the work programme on forest biodiversity. Discussions will continue on Wednesday.

WORKING GROUP II

FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISM: Delegates considered the review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/4), the in-depth review of the

availability of financial resources (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/16), the draft strategy for resource mobilization (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/16/Add.1/Rev.1), and the message on biodiversity and financing to the Follow-Up Conference on Financing for Development (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/16/Add.2).

Developing countries called for: new and additional funding, with some stressing funding for specific issues such as protected area management; fulfillment of funding commitments; facilitated access to GEF funding; and prioritized funding for poverty alleviation projects. Developed countries acknowledged the need for increased funding, but urged developing countries to prioritize biodiversity conservation. THAILAND and GABON proposed a donors' meeting on biodiversity funding.

On the resource mobilization strategy, the EU proposed including indicators for funding needs, mainstreaming innovative funding mechanisms, and references to ecosystem goods and services, and with CANADA and COLOMBIA called for a more realistic and specific mission statement. INDONESIA requested an additional section on funding sources and financing mechanisms. MEXICO said the strategy requires further elaboration before adoption. The AFRICAN GROUP supported the proposed economic analysis of the cost of biodiversity loss, while NORWAY opposed requesting the Executive Secretary to conduct it.

The IIFB and the GLOBAL FOREST COALITION warned against financing mechanisms such as those of the World Bank, which may violate human and indigenous rights. GREENPEACE urged parties to honor their financial commitments to finance a global protected areas network and halt deforestation. BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, on behalf of several NGOs, called for turning perverse subsidies into new and additional resources.

GUIDANCE TO THE FINANCIAL MECHANISM:

Delegates addressed a priorities framework and the process for guidance (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/24). The GEF presented its report (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/9). Many developing countries demanded that the GEF take into account national priorities and COP guidance, noting that some priority issues, such as traditional knowledge, are not GEF priorities. The AFRICAN GROUP called for a review of the GEF Resource Allocation Framework and demanded a specific allocation for biodiversity-related activities.

A contact group was established to further consider items related to finance.

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COOPERATION:

Delegates considered a draft strategy for implementing the work programme on technology transfer, possibilities for a biodiversity technology initiative (BTI), and a study on the role of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in technology transfer (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/18, 18/Add.1 and INF/7).

CANADA, supported by NORWAY, proposed stating that the strategy is voluntary. BRAZIL emphasized joint technology development and complementary mechanisms such as South-South and triangular cooperation. The EU stressed long-term partnerships, cooperation with international organizations, and demand-driven technology transfer. NEW ZEALAND proposed examining which technologies are most helpful to CBD implementation.

Many developing countries said technology transfer should be based on national and local needs. The AFRICAN GROUP underscored technology transfer for ABS. Many welcomed the BTI, with CANADA suggesting it be hosted by the CBD Secretariat, and THAILAND proposing developing a list of criteria for selecting its host institution.

The PHILIPPINES recommended exploring policy tools to overcome barriers to technology transfer created by IPRs, with the THIRD WORLD NETWORK (TWN) and SEARICE suggesting local innovations and community endeavors as alternatives to technology transfer. The INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (ICC) stressed that IPRs form the basis of technology transfer.

COOPERATION: Delegates addressed: a gender plan of action for the Secretariat (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/12); business engagement (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/21/Add.1); biodiversity offsets (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/29); engagement of cities and local authorities (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/10); South-South cooperation (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/11); and cooperation with other conventions (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/21/Rev.1).

Gender plan of action: Participants welcomed the plan and encouraged the appointment of a gender focal point within the Secretariat.

Business engagement: Noting existing COP guidance, CHINA opposed a further COP decision. SWITZERLAND suggested a business investment scheme. The EU and the ICC stressed the inclusion of business representatives in national delegations. Other business representatives stressed the need for scientific expertise, reliable partnerships and targeted fundraising as conditions for engagement. The TWN and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) called for better regulation of business.

Cities and biodiversity: Delegates welcomed work on the issue, with some suggesting additions and clarifications to the draft decision. CHINA opposed preparing such a decision, noting that involvement of local authorities falls under sovereign affairs of parties.

South-South cooperation: Antigua and Barbuda for G-77/CHINA presented a draft decision encouraging developing countries to engage in South-South cooperation, supported by North-South cooperation, and requesting the Executive Secretary to organize a forum on South-South cooperation on biodiversity for development. The AFRICAN GROUP proposed references to cross-border ecosystems and incorporation of biodiversity concerns into regional cooperation agreements.

Cooperation with other conventions: The EU and the AFRICAN GROUP welcomed ongoing cooperation and suggested the liaison group of biodiversity-related conventions be more focused and address the linkages between biodiversity and climate change. Many delegates welcomed enhanced cooperation between the Rio Conventions and called for cooperation with other international organizations, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the UNFF and the UNPFII. GREENPEACE called for high-level cooperation with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change on reducing emissions from deforestation.

Chair's texts will be prepared.

BUDGET GROUP

The budget group met in the morning to hear presentations from the Secretariat on the vision and proposed budget for the 2009-2010 biennium, and on the need to supplement the 2008 budget to counter US dollar devaluation. In the afternoon, the group started addressing the draft decision.

ABS INFORMALS

ABS Working Group Co-Chairs Fernando Casas (Colombia) and Timothy Hodges (Canada) held open-ended informal consultations in the morning. The Co-Chairs proposed that an informal consultative group (ICG) be established on Wednesday, following discussion on ABS in WG II. They suggested a step-wise approach for agreement on a draft decision on ABS, focusing on process, funding, the basis for negotiations and then substance. The session was suspended to allow for regional and bilateral consultations.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Biofuels made a splash in Bonn on Tuesday. The "new and emerging issue," emanating from SBSTTA 12, is rapidly morphing into the most controversial aspect of the agricultural biodiversity work programme. Only months ago, at SBSTTA 13, the issue looked much like a "bilateral face off" between biofuel exporters and importers – now all parties are taking a stance. Noting broad concerns raised by parties, indigenous peoples and NGOs that biofuel production may lead to ecosystem degradation, land grabbing and community displacement, one participant dreaded that "the specter of biofuels might rise again when COP addresses perverse incentives," prophesying yet another transformation of the issue. Looking at the debate on biofuels and in the context of the current global food crisis, one delegate quipped: "Some countries called forth spirits they cannot control, and are now trying to summon the global community to bail them out."