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HIGHLIGHTS OF SBSTTA-2 MONDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 1996

The first day of the second session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-2) commenced with an opening Plenary. Following this, two Working Groups met in the late morning and afternoon.

OPENING PLENARY

The meeting was opened by J. H. Seyani (Malawi), the SBSTTA-1 Chair. He noted that the work of SBSTTA is recognized and valued by the Conference of the Parties (COP). Peter Johan Schei (Norway), SBSTTA-2 Chair, noted that SBSTTA is neither a "mini-COP" nor a "drafting group", and he highlighted the importance of scientific integrity. Speaking on behalf of UNEP's Executive Director, Jorge Illueca, Assistant Executive Director, noted that the CBD can only succeed if it is built on a sound scientific foundation. Calestous Juma, Executive Secretary of the CBD Secretariat, stated that he looked forward to working closely with the SBSTTA Bureau.

The Secretariat introduced the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/1/Rev.1 and SBSTTA/2/1/Add.1/Rev.2). He noted that the Bureau had agreed to delete Agenda Item 3.12.2 (bio-prospecting of the deep sea bed) because the Secretariat had not had time to consult with the Secretariat of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as required by COP-2. The Plenary then adopted the Agenda.

The CHAIR invited Bureau nominations from regional groups. The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) nominated Francesco Mauro (Italy) and Peter Johan Schei (Norway), and the African Region nominated a representative from Swaziland and Zeineb Belkhir (Tunisia). The Plenary will reconvene briefly on Tuesday to complete the election of officers. The Plenary then adopted the organization of work. The CHAIR urged Working Groups to return to the final Plenary with agreed recommendations to avoid further substantial discussion. He also urged participants to consider ways of making use of the existing scientific community to limit the creation of new subsidiary bodies. The CHAIR then announced the appointments of rapporteurs: Zeineb Belkhir (Tunisia), Working Group 1; Gabor Nechay (Hungary), Working Group 2; and Setijati Sastrapradja (Indonesia), Plenary.

WORKING GROUP 1

The CHAIR introduced Agenda Item 3.1 on assessment of biodiversity and methodologies for future assessment (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/2). NORWAY distinguished between knowledge assessments and status assessments. The US proposed

flexible methodologies. CAMEROON noted the conflicting needs for reporting convenience and harmonization. SOUTH KOREA suggested that reporting should be tied to country capacity. GHANA proposed funding for countries lacking capacity. SWEDEN called for adding biodiversity to resource assessment in a number of sectors. NIGERIA called for capacity building to assist assessment and data management. SWITZERLAND said SBSTTA and the CBD should take advantage of 1995 UNEP assessments. He noted the work of the FAO on agricultural biodiversity. ZIMBABWE noted that some harmful agricultural methods in need of assessment involve transferred technologies.

Under Agenda Item 3.2, the Secretariat introduced the report on identification, monitoring and assessment of components of biodiversity and processes that have adverse impacts (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/3). NEW ZEALAND proposed that the Secretariat develop "pragmatic" guidelines on assessments and consider the experience of other biodiversity-related conventions. KENYA proposed that the Secretariat prepare a background paper on freshwater ecosystems. GERMANY noted the importance of biosphere reserves, and called for clear priorities on the monitoring of processes and categories of activities. Monitoring and indicators need to be reflected in SBSTTA's work programme as a joint standing item.

The MARSHALL ISLANDS, supported by JAMAICA, noted that radioactive contamination resulting from nuclear testing should be listed as a threat to biodiversity. URUGUAY said that information on laws and regulations should be included in national reports and called for assessment of temperate zone ecosystems, particularly grasslands and wetlands. The UK stressed the importance of national action, capacity building and improved training. He urged the initiation of intersessional work on identification and monitoring.

SWEDEN stressed that "assessment" has taken on many different meanings. She said there are generally accepted best methods for assessing the status of resources, but no methods for assessing related components of biodiversity. The NETHERLANDS highlighted his country's efforts under UNEP's Global Environment Outlook programme. The US noted that states should consider carefully what they are assessing and why. He suggested focusing on short-term strategies as a start.

ARGENTINA questioned a Secretariat reference to biodiversity information beyond national sovereignty, and the competence of SBSTTA to make financial recommendations to the COP. The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY drew attention to conventions with developed criteria for identifying components of biodiversity. SRI LANKA added improper land management to a paragraph on categories of activities leading to threats to biodiversity. AUSTRALIA suggested that MOUs be pursued with other

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*© <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Chad Carpenter, LL.M. <chadc@iisd.org>, Deborah Davenport <ddavenport@unix.cc.emory.edu>, Peter Doran <pdf@ukc.ac.uk>, Anja Jänz and Daniel Putterman, Ph.D. <dputterman@igc.apc.org>. The Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The sustaining donors of the *Bulletin* are the International Institute for Sustainable Development <iisd@web.apc.org>, the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation and the Pew Charitable Trusts. General support for the *Bulletin* for 1996 is provided by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Swedish Ministry of Environment, the Swiss Federal Office of the Environment, the Ministry of the Environment of Iceland, the Ministry of Environment of Norway and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. Specific funding for coverage of the CBD has been provided by the German Ministry for International Cooperation and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). The authors can be contacted at their electronic mail addresses or at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are automatically sent to e-mail distribution lists (ASCII and PDF format) and can be found on the gopher at <gopher.igc.apc.org> and in hypertext through the *Linkages* WWW-server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/> on the Internet.

organizations and conventions already using indicators. ZIMBABWE noted that the secretariat's categories failed to take account of the possible harmful effects of non-use of biodiversity, citing the example of prohibitions giving rise to uncontrolled use. COSTA RICA asked for additional references to: threatened ecosystems in a section on components of biodiversity; hunting sports and airport/port construction in the categories of activities leading to threats; and unsustainable consumption habits to a paragraph on ultimate causes of threats. CANADA, commenting on global and national indicator initiatives, said his country has learned that one cannot wait for the perfect product. BURKINA FASO added over-exploitation of natural resources to categories of activities leading to threats to biodiversity. PERU added migratory agriculture to the same paragraph.

Under Agenda Item 3.3, the Secretariat introduced the report on indicators for assessing the effectiveness of measures taken under the Convention (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/4). GERMANY welcomed the establishment of an expert group. SWITZERLAND said SBSTTA should ensure that this item is on the permanent work agenda for the COP and the UK called for concentrating on proven successful indicators. COLOMBIA proposed criteria for the selection of indicator species, including: the availability of taxonomic expertise; a minimal sample requirement; avoiding groups with seasonal or long-term cycles; low impact sampling; and sensitivity to human activity. AUSTRALIA suggested a timetable for the development of the Clearinghouse Mechanism (CHM). The WORLD BANK said indicators should be straightforward at project level and linked to incentive structures.

WORKING GROUP 2

Chair Francesco Mauro (Italy) introduced Working Group 2 (WG2) emphasizing the need for solid and scientifically-based contributions. The order of items to be discussed was changed to the following: transfer and development of technology (Agenda Item 3.5); capacity-building for biosafety (3.7); CHM (3.8); indigenous knowledge (3.6); capacity building for taxonomy (3.4); and economic valuation of biodiversity (3.11).

In the afternoon, the Secretariat introduced the document on technology transfer, including biotechnology (UNEP/SBSTTA/2/6), which outlines technology transfer issues and recommends a liaison group to encourage private sector participation. During subsequent discussion, delegates generally agreed with the document on the role of the private sector in the CBD process. MALAYSIA called for elaboration of the linkage between biotechnology and biodiversity conservation, particularly in bio-prospecting. GERMANY, CANADA, NORWAY, COLOMBIA, the UK, FRANCE and the US questioned the need for an additional subsidiary body on technology transfer, as proposed in the Secretariat's document.

GERMANY stressed the need to integrate the issue of access to and transfer of technology with other issues of the Convention. UNCTAD emphasized a number of its activities related to the biodiversity process, including work on strategic technology partnerships and launching the Biotrade Initiative promoting conservation and capacity building. CHINA called for SBSTTA to facilitate the exchange of experts and the promotion of training with regard to technology transfer.

INDIA emphasized the need to make use of genetic resources to achieve the CBD's objective of the equitable sharing of benefits. SWITZERLAND called for incentive measures, such as concessional terms, risk sharing and financial mechanisms. CANADA called on the CHM to facilitate the interaction between technology users and providers. ZIMBABWE emphasized that transferred technology can sometimes contribute to environmental degradation. Supported by THAILAND, he stressed the need for investment in capacity building. NORWAY drew attention to the importance of control and management mechanisms for biotechnology.

JAPAN suggested that the proposed liaison group distinguish needs for public versus private sector technology. COLOMBIA called upon governments of developed countries to create incentives for private sector technology transfer. The UK called for a "bottom-up" and a sectoral approach. FRANCE said individual states should decide whether to provide incentives for technology transfer and called for safeguards for patented technology.

The US suggested that technology transfer could be dealt with in specific agenda items. NORTH KOREA called for priority areas for technology transfer. The PHILIPPINES called for: an inventory of needed technologies; incentives for private sector technology transfer; linking technology transfer to biosafety issues; and intellectual property protection without monopoly control. MALAWI recommended developing terms of reference for a liaison group, and the CHAIR stated that the topic would be revisited later. AUSTRALIA stressed the role of multilateral development banks and intellectual property rights to facilitate technology transfer. INDIA highlighted the transfer of indigenous technologies to developed countries.

The Secretariat next introduced the document on capacity-building in biosafety (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/8). The document recognizes the work of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety and outlines overall capacity building needs. The NETHERLANDS, supported by CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, SWITZERLAND, the UK, and INDIA, called for a twin-track approach to continue discussions on an international legal instrument on biosafety while implementing the UNEP International Technical Guidelines on Biosafety (UNEP Guidelines). Supported by most delegations, he cautioned against duplicating the work of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group.

The MARSHALL ISLANDS highlighted the need for capacity building. SWITZERLAND suggested funding capacity building through the GEF. INDONESIA emphasized the link between biosafety and technology transfer. The UK, supported by INDIA, suggested that COP-3 develop funding recommendations on capacity building. SOUTH KOREA highlighted insufficient capacity for risk assessment and management. ARGENTINA recommended regional training programmes on biosafety.

GERMANY suggested confining the discussion to capacity building. AUSTRIA joined GERMANY and the UK in stating that capacity building for biosafety could not be separated from other capacity building programmes. COLOMBIA stressed consideration of biotechnology products, risk assessment and management, and social and economic impacts.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Having taken delivery of what one delegate described as an "encyclopedic" series of reports from the CBD Secretariat, a number of participants have signaled a desire that SBSTTA-2 begin to reconcile the conflicting demands of a heavy and complex workload with the need to make progress on clarifying objectives and priorities. Another underlined the danger that SBSTTA may be "trying to do everything and doing nothing." A common call was: "What first? What most?"

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP 1: Working Group 1 will meet at 10:00 a.m. in room 407A

WORKING GROUP 2: Working Group 2 will meet at 10:00 a.m. in room 406.

ROUNDTABLE ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: A roundtable discussion on indigenous knowledge and biodiversity conservation will convene at 1:00 p.m. in room 403B.