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HIGHLIGHTS OF SBSTTA-2 THURSDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 1996

The Plenary met on the morning of the fourth day of the second session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-2). Working Groups 1 and 2 convened afternoon sessions to adopt recommendations, and continued deliberations at 9:00 p.m. in evening sessions.

PLENARY

The CHAIR introduced Agenda Item 4, *modus operandi*, (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/16). On frequency and timing of meetings, CANADA and SWITZERLAND called for more time between COP meetings; a large number of countries called for earlier SBSTTA meetings but cautioned against setting dates that conflict with other meetings. Most countries favored the 5-day schedule of SBSTTA meetings, but EQUATORIAL GUINEA and the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF LAOS called for extensions. Numerous countries urged earlier document distribution. COLOMBIA, FRANCE, COTE D'IVOIRE, MONACO, MEXICO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA and COSTA RICA called for documents in Spanish and/or French. CHINA suggested on-line dissemination.

GERMANY, the UK and MALAYSIA called for thematic approaches for future meetings. FRANCE spoke against permanent agenda items, several countries called for priority setting. GERMANY, INDIA, the UK and SAMOA recommended the Secretariat's attendance at other processes' meetings. The UK and COLOMBIA called for increasing the scientific content of SBSTTA and leaving political issues to COP. GERMANY, MALAYSIA, SAMOA, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA and SOUTH KOREA favored Bureau elections at the end of SBSTTA meetings. SAMOA, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA, JAPAN, COTE D'IVOIRE and NEW ZEALAND supported two-year terms.

CANADA and NEW ZEALAND called for Bureau meetings with the Executive Secretary after COP meetings. Intersessional work was favored by many countries, but opposed by INDIA. MALAYSIA objected to the concept of a SBSTTA "seal of approval" for research initiatives. NEW ZEALAND and the US supported holding scientific and technical panels at SBSTTA meetings. Several countries called for careful selection of experts, COLOMBIA called for transparency. On expert work, GERMANY proposed informal electronic networks and CHM collaboration with other organizations.

MALAYSIA, SAMOA, COLOMBIA, the MARSHALL ISLANDS, the UK and SWITZERLAND opposed proliferation of ad hoc panels. COLOMBIA, NORWAY, COTE D'IVOIRE and JAPAN supported informal, open-ended liaison groups. Guidelines and terms of reference for liaison groups were requested. SAMOA asked for financial assistance for attendance, and balanced representation. The MARSHALL ISLANDS suggested that nominations of experts by Parties include NGO experts. Several delegations opposed the NETHERLANDS' proposals to limit expert panels to 10 members and to rule out regional meetings. COLOMBIA, the MARSHALL ISLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, and SAMOA supported regional workshops. COLOMBIA opposed recommendations on "centres of excellence". FRANCE expressed concern about the expense involved in the proliferation of new groups and ruled out a special committee to liaise with other institutions. NEW ZEALAND cautioned that a requirement for early translation and circulation of documentation could interfere with the quality of the preparation of documents and called for representation from indigenous peoples on expert groups. The CHAIR invited the Secretariat to prepare a revised text on the *modus operandi* and convened a Friends of the Chair group to resolve conflicting proposals.

The US suggested involving scientific societies in a peer review of documents. MALAWI drew attention to difficulties created by the recent relocation of the Secretariat in Montreal. AUSTRALIA and SWITZERLAND proposed the creation of a global calendar of relevant institutional meetings. NGOs invited SBSTTA to draw on the expertise of IGOs, NGOs, related international institutional processes and social scientists, and drew attention to the social, political and cultural dimensions of the ultimate causes of biodiversity loss. PERU suggested technical panels to augment SBSTTA's capacity.

The meeting then considered the medium term work programme (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/17). Many delegations called for a focused programme driven by the COP. CANADA, MALAWI and COLOMBIA suggested inland water ecosystems as the terrestrial biodiversity theme. INDONESIA and SWEDEN suggested forests. AUSTRIA asked for clarification on priorities. It was proposed that the SBSTTA and COP Bureaus communicate closely to prioritize work. The UK requested flexibility in responding to COP decisions.

The meeting also considered the draft provisional agenda for SBSTTA-3 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/18). INDIA suggested priorities and COLOMBIA asked for balance on the SBSTTA-3 agenda to include all CBD objectives. The Chair agreed to briefly attend the upcoming COP Bureau meeting.

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WORKING GROUP 1

The CHAIR proposed the adoption of UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/WG.1/CRP.1/Rev.1 on Items 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 (assessment, monitoring, and indicators). The text was adopted with an addition by DOMINICA on funding for capacity building and institutional strengthening.

The CHAIR then proposed adopting UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/WG.1/CRP.2, a recommendation on Agenda Item 3.12 (coastal and marine biodiversity). The UK proposed that the meeting of experts have regard to "the views of", rather than "using", the roster of experts more widely. AUSTRALIA proposed noting that "little", rather than "no", substantial action in the area of marine and coastal biodiversity occurred this year. After comments by DOMINICA, JAMAICA and CANADA, the CHAIR proposed amending the final paragraph to clarify that the COP should ensure the availability of resources to fill posts within the Secretariat. AUSTRALIA, supported by CANADA and SWEDEN, proposed deleting "including document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/14, of which the SBSTTA takes note", but DOMINICA objected. GERMANY, supported by JAMAICA and MONACO, suggested retaining only the reference to the document. AUSTRALIA, supported by GERMANY, JAMAICA, and NEW ZEALAND, suggested "which the SBSTTA had before it". DOMINICA expressed concern. The document was adopted as amended.

The CHAIR then proposed adopting the revised text produced by the contact group on agriculture and biodiversity. He noted that this text, which contained a bracketed reference to the GEF, represented a "delicate equilibrium". NEW ZEALAND deleted a reference to "local breeding activities" from the paragraph on farmers' knowledge, and replaced a reference to "SBSTTA" with text on the Secretariat's role in initiating the work programme. CANADA introduced a related amendment on FAO collaboration and the role of the Secretariat. Supported by GERMANY and MOROCCO, and with NETHERLANDS' agreement, he also proposed removing brackets from a reference to the GEF. MALAWI objected to the removal.

SWEDEN and GERMANY reserved on a paragraph on the benefits to biodiversity which "have accrued from sustainable intensification of agriculture." He said the paragraph does not reflect the current state of knowledge. GERMANY said agroindustry has created a multitude of environmental problems. The UK, supported by GERMANY, recommended that international funding agencies report to the COP, and not SBSTTA. SWITZERLAND introduced a new introductory paragraph on the important role of science in understanding the "dynamic, evolutionary and environmental processes which shape biodiversity". The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by MALAWI and COSTA RICA, then called for an additional reference recognizing the status and role of indigenous people's science. MOROCCO added resource management to a list of items for gap analysis. THAILAND replaced a reference to "bees" with "insect pollinators". PERU added a recommendation on strengthening indigenous communities' *in situ* conservation. CUBA added a reference to soil biota in a paragraph on soil biological diversity. The draft recommendations were adopted as amended.

WORKING GROUP 2

On the draft recommendations on Agenda Item 3.5 (technology transfer), SWITZERLAND called for a reference to incentive instruments and a liaison person to reinforce the exchange of information with the private sector in the already adopted recommendation. Draft recommendations on Item 3.7 were adopted, taking into consideration concerns expressed by ANTIGUA &

BARBUDA and INDIA that GEF funding should only be referred to in connection with capacity building in biosafety.

The draft recommendations on Agenda Item 3.8 (the CHM), contained in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/WG.2/CRP.3, were adopted. MALAWI called for GEF funding for implementing the CHM at sub-regional and regional level, INDIA urged the financial support primarily at the national level. CANADA emphasized GEF support beyond the pilot phase. The meeting discussed draft recommendations submitted by the Chair on Agenda Item 3.4, capacity building for taxonomy. The paragraph recognizing a lack of taxonomists, advocating regional centres in developing countries and calling for a practical direction to taxonomy was amended to mention taxonomic collections, to link capacity building to implementing the CBD, and to call for identifying areas of high diversity as national priorities.

The paragraph urging taxonomic needs assessments and action plans was modified to call for needs assessments "where appropriate". The paragraph calling for the return of existing taxonomic knowledge to countries of origin was modified by COLOMBIA, who added taxonomic "data", and by AUSTRALIA, who added taxonomic collections "on occasion" as well. The paragraph calling for information on capacity building in the CHM while avoiding duplication of existing information was modified to call for making existing information "readily accessible worldwide". SWEDEN proposed language on furthering the objectives of the CBD, while AUSTRALIA proposed recognizing the value of incorporating "traditional taxonomic systems" into the knowledge base.

COLOMBIA proposed augmenting the paragraph that mentions general guidelines for funding with a specific list of priorities, including training and data dissemination funded by the GEF for developing countries. CANADA suggested a more general reference to support adequate long-term housing of collections and research programmes in all countries. INDIA suggested adding a paragraph on serving national priorities through the financial mechanism.

The meeting adjourned by 7:00 p.m. and was scheduled to reconvene at 9:00 p.m. to consider draft recommendations on economic valuation, Agenda Item 3.11. The CHAIR proposed simultaneously convening a small group to add delegates' recommendations to an informal paper on indigenous knowledge.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Some delegations and NGO representatives, who had sought a "balanced" view of the impact of agro-industry on biodiversity, expressed some disappointment over the late-night and all-morning contact group on agricultural biodiversity. It was suggested by some participants that formal reservations to a paragraph on agro-industry in the Chair's draft recommendations, tabled in Working Group 1, would more accurately reflect the "current state of knowledge" on the issue. Others noted that the negotiations of the contact group highlighted the difficulty of avoiding a political-rather than knowledge-based approach to the issue, referring to the ongoing debate over whether SBSTTA functions as a technical body or a "mini-COP." One participant pointed to the large number of delegates from non-technical ministries attending this SBSTTA session.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary is scheduled to convene at 10:00 a.m. in room 407A.