

SBSTTA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY 30 APRIL, 2012

The sixteenth session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opened on Monday in Montreal, Canada. In the morning, delegates heard opening statements, addressed organizational matters and considered ways and means to increase SBSTTA's effectiveness.

In the afternoon, delegates convened in two working groups (WGs). WG I considered the preparation of the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 4) and biodiversity and climate change. WG II addressed the in-depth review of the Programme of Work (PoW) on Island Biodiversity and ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs).

OPENING PLENARY

SBSTTA Chair Senka Barudanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) welcomed delegates, thanking former Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlafor for his commitment to the Convention and welcoming new Executive Secretary Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias. She highlighted agenda items on increasing SBSTTA's effectiveness, island biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, and biodiversity and climate change.

CBD Executive Secretary Bráulio Dias called for SBSTTA 16 to focus on issues that hinder progress on achieving the Aichi Targets and implementing the Strategic Plan, and highlighted the recent establishment of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), noting the need to further understand how SBSTTA and IPBES can collaborate.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/1/ and 1/Add.1/Rev.1) after deleting reference to "fisheries" in the title of the agenda item on adverse impacts of human activities on marine and coastal biodiversity, as requested by JAPAN. Delegates then established two WGs: WG I co-chaired by Maadjou Bah (Guinea) and Ole Hendrickson (Canada); and WG II co-chaired by Gabriele Obermayr (Austria) and Larissa Maria Lima Costa (Brazil) and elected Monyrak Meng (Cambodia) as the meeting's rapporteur.

WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE SBSTTA'S EFFECTIVENESS: Neville Ash, UNEP, reported on the second plenary meeting on an IPBES (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/40), highlighting the establishment of the Platform and outstanding challenges. The Secretariat introduced documentation on SBSTTA's effectiveness (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/2). Many welcomed the establishment of IPBES and supported collaboration among SBSTTA and the Platform and with other biodiversity-related Conventions. Several cautioned against duplication of work, noting premature suggestions in the draft recommendation.

MEXICO and INDIA called for ensuring two-way collaboration between the bodies. MEXICO also suggested using the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets as a framework. DENMARK and EGYPT said collaboration should be defined by the COP. ETHIOPIA called for respecting both bodies' mandates. NORWAY highlighted the need to formalize cooperation, while the NETHERLANDS said this was premature.

SWITZERLAND emphasized IPBES' independence. ARGENTINA supported keeping IPBES' activities simple. SOUTH AFRICA said collaboration with IPBES is one of several means to improve SBSTTA's effectiveness. MALAYSIA said IPBES should not diminish SBSTTA's role. GUATEMALA suggested prioritizing investments and cautioned against only focusing on creating new expert groups.

CHINA asked to clarify whether the COP or SBSTTA should make requests to IPBES. BRAZIL and JAPAN supported that SBSTTA make direct requests on scientific and technical issues, whereas ETHIOPIA, MEXICO, NIGER and SOUTH AFRICA only COP should make requests.

On establishing an expert process on how IPBES can enhance SBSTTA's effectiveness, the UK and CHINA expressed concern about the broad scope and tasks. AUSTRALIA suggested deleting text on reviewing existing policy support tools, noting this was preemptive. JAPAN said that inviting IPBES to consider how its work plan supports the Aichi Targets was beyond IPBES' mandate. On inviting IPBES to contribute to GBO 4, the UK and INDIA expressed concern about timing. NORWAY and DENMARK suggested that IPBES provide input to GBO 5.

The International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB) suggested SBSTTA's work should support the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (ILCs). IUCN suggested refocusing SBSTTA's work on implementation and building capacity for existing assessments. The ETC Group said IPBES' creation should not interfere with SBSTTA's work on recognition of ILCs.

A revised draft recommendation will be prepared by an informal group.

WORKING GROUP I

GBO 4: The Secretariat introduced documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/3, INF/1 and 2. NORWAY said GBO 4 could provide relevant information for achieving the Aichi Targets.

SWITZERLAND, supported by COLOMBIA, called for the urgent establishment of a GBO 4 advisory group to make recommendations to COP 11. AUSTRALIA opposed and, with MEXICO and CANADA, suggested the SBSTTA Bureau provide oversight of the GBO 4 preparation process. BRAZIL said the advisory group should be geographically balanced and MALAYSIA recommended that selection of its members should be transparent and involve ILCs.

BELGIUM and others suggested incorporating information from national reports, while others expressed concern over the short timeline between submission of national reports and peer review. CANADA, supported by COLOMBIA, suggested that countries submit case studies prior to the national reports. SOUTH AFRICA called for timely report submission. JAPAN called for a simple, and ETHIOPIA a common, reporting format. THAILAND suggested using the regional and sub-regional capacity-building workshops for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and case studies to complement information provided through national reporting.

AUSTRALIA suggested ensuring that conclusions of the GBO 3 evaluation be considered in GBO 4. DENMARK and BRAZIL proposed linking GBO 4 to other assessment processes, such as reports on progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, with BRAZIL suggesting considering Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) if they are adopted by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). DENMARK requested the Secretariat submit the evaluation of GBO 3, the plans for GBO 4 and the CBD Strategic Plan to the IPBES interim Secretariat for consideration for IPBES' future work programme. IIFB called for GBO 4 to include the contribution of ILCs.

A Chair's text will be prepared.

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: REDD+ Safeguards on Biodiversity: The Secretariat introduced the item (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/8 and INF/19-25). A statement by the UNFCCC was presented that, among other things, reported on four expert workshops organized by CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats. DENMARK, supported by BELGIUM, highlighted that REDD+ strategies should contribute to the achievement of the Aichi Targets. AUSTRALIA requested the inclusion of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices. INDIA called for improving advice on country specific biodiversity.

Observing that REDD+ has not been widely implemented, MEXICO noted that it is premature to encourage countries to apply national REDD+ safeguards that ensure benefits for biodiversity and ILCs drawing upon initiatives such as the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and UN-REDD.

BRAZIL said the proposed draft recommendation goes beyond the mandate of the relevant COP decision. SWITZERLAND supported a consistent implementation of REDD+ guidelines and safeguards to enhance national synergies between UNFCCC and CBD implementation.

DENMARK and FRANCE highlighted the relevant role of the CBD in promoting debate on positive and negative impacts of REDD+. THAILAND suggested further collaboration with the Ramsar Convention to integrate wetlands in REDD+.

Integration of Biodiversity Considerations into Climate-Change Related Activities: The Secretariat introduced the issue (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/9 and INF/26 and 27). MEXICO suggested ensuring that information on climate change mitigation is made available to national decision makers for territory planning. THAILAND suggested enhancing monitoring programmes related to natural disasters and ensuring predictability.

WORKING GROUP II

ISLAND BIODIVERSITY: Ronald Jumeau, Roving Ambassador for Climate Change and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Seychelles), presented on islanders' commitment to the conservation, management and protection of biodiversity and requested global cooperation to, *inter alia*: reduce invasive species threats and address climate change impacts.

Delegates then considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/4. Many recommended stressing all six priority areas of the island biodiversity work programme in the recommendation. DENMARK and FRANCE suggested including terrestrial ecosystems in the prioritization of marine protected areas (MPA) network management. INDIA proposed, among other issues: deleting references to sustainable and innovative financing

mechanisms and economic valuation tools; and recommended referencing sustainable tourism practice and habitat restoration research.

SOUTH AFRICA highlighted islands with non-permanent populations. TRINIDAD and TOBAGO and SAINT LUCIA suggested streamlining activities on island biodiversity into the review of NBSAPs. THAILAND proposed adding nutrient loading and transboundary pollution as a focus for international attention. FRANCE and AUSTRALIA suggested reference to all Aichi Targets. FRANCE, INDIA and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA underlined the need for adequate legislation and enforcement.

AUSTRALIA requested replacing financial "commitments" with "arrangements." Several developing countries and SIDS highlighted financial and human resources constraints, with some calling for direct access to GEF funding. ISLAND CONSERVATION noted the Global Island Partnership's (GLISPA) creation of an Invasive Species Working Group, and suggested referencing the Global Island Invasive Vertebrate Eradication Database.

A revised draft recommendation will be prepared by an informal group.

MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas: Ana Paula Prates (Brazil), David Johnson (Oslo and Paris Conventions for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic - OSPAR), Celia Le Ravallec (UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan) and Nic Bax (Australia) gave a joint presentation on the results of EBSA regional workshops (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/INF/5-8), noting that the EBSA process, *inter alia*: facilitated scientific collaboration and data sharing; and generated data that will contribute to regional and national conservation efforts.

Delegates then considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/5, 5/Add.1 and INF/5-10. MEXICO highlighted the CBD's role in supporting the UN General Assembly on marine matters in areas beyond national jurisdiction and called for an instrument on marine biodiversity and environmental impact assessments. DENMARK welcomed further efforts to harmonize the EBSA concept with FAO's work on vulnerable marine ecosystems. ICELAND, with JAPAN, opposed the COP endorsing reports on EBSA workshops.

IN THE CORRIDORS

SBSTTA 16 will be all about relationships. At least this is how many delegates felt heading into Monday's evening reception. The morning discussion on SBSTTA's effectiveness was dominated by exchanges on collaboration between SBSTTA and IPBES, which seems to be more complicated than many thought. "We really need to figure out how we are going to work with this new platform," one delegate said, while others were already concerned about IPBES' capacity. "If it took IPBES so many meetings to establish itself, how long will it take to address requests for collaboration by all the biodiversity-related conventions already filling its not-yet-existent secretariat's inbox?"

Less surprising, but nonetheless an issue in the corridors, was the concern that discussions on climate change, particularly on REDD+, would "prejudge" decisions under the UNFCCC. In the discussion on marine biodiversity, on the other hand, delegates noted that while sound scientific progress on EBSA criteria was made, the relationship between the CBD, UNCLOS and the UNGA on areas beyond national jurisdiction remains unresolved, leading one participant to ask "The criteria is great, but where will the implementing agreement come from?"

With all this confusion on relationships and mandates, many appreciated Chair Barudanovic's efforts to shed light on the relationships among the CBD and its many bodies and partners, using a picture of her own family, with one insider noting: "That's the kind of simplicity we will need this week!"