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CBD COP-3 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 1996

Delegates to the third Conference of the Parties (COP-3) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) began their two-week session with opening statements by the outgoing and incoming Presidents, as well as representatives of the GEF, UNEP and UNDP and the CBD Executive Director. Organizational and substantive issues were also addressed during the morning and afternoon in Plenary. Louis Currant (Switzerland) was elected to Chair the Committee of the Whole (COW) and presided over an afternoon discussion on agricultural biodiversity.

PLENARY

OPENING OF THE MEETING: The President of COP-2, Indonesia's Minister of Environment Sarwono Kusumaatmadja, opened the third session of the Conference of Parties to the CBD and urged delegates to consider the Convention in the broader context of international action. Minister Maria Julia Alsogaray, Argentina's Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, was then elected by acclamation to serve as President of COP-3. She called for effective measures to implement the Convention and highlighted important issues, including: resource availability; the financial mechanism; the establishment of norms to guide sustainable agricultural practices; and access to genetic resources.

Mohamed El-Ashry, CEO of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), noted that relations have been strengthened between the GEF and the Convention Secretariat and underscored the importance of partnership-building in the search for sustainable development.

Reuben Olembo, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, acknowledged progress made by the CBD to date, but cautioned that the COP can no longer theorize but must act now. He expressed hope that COP-3 would: initiate implementation of the CBD; adopt additional practical resolutions; resolve outstanding issues; improve intergovernmental interaction; and devise a mechanism for the Council of the GEF to solve the urgent needs of the CBD.

CBD Executive Secretary Calestous Juma noted distinctive phases of the CBD: COP-1 established the organs necessary for internal function; COP-2 adopted decisions needed to make the transition toward implementation; and COP-3 should attempt to implement the CBD in the context of decisions made at COP-2, with few changes. He called for implementation of the clearing-house mechanism (CHM) and enhanced collaboration among related institutions. Deputy Assistant Administrator of

UNDP Thelma Awori emphasized the centrality of the CBD's goals to the organization's programmes and affirmed UNDP's commitment to working in supportive partnership with UNEP, the CBD Secretariat and other institutions to implement the Convention.

Costa Rica, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, emphasized both the need to prioritize the steps necessary to implement the Convention and the importance of promoting the third objective of the Convention, the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources.

INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES: Secretary of State for the Ministry of Agriculture Feiter (Germany) presented the report from the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) held in Leipzig from 17-23 June 1996. He stated that delegates adopted a Global Plan of Action (GPA) for the conservation and utilization of PGRFA and the Leipzig Declaration. He called for immediate implementation of the GPA at all levels.

The host countries of each of the four regional preparatory meetings reported the results of their meetings, which were held in the weeks preceding COP-3. The report of the Central and Eastern European Regional Preparatory Meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/Inf.28) outlined 14 recommendations, including training of national and regional focal points to coordinate regional and sub-regional activities. The report of the African Regional Preparatory Meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/Inf.29) emphasized the urgent need for access to financial resources and scientific and technical capacity-building, and deplored the under-representation of African countries in CBD-related meetings. The report of the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/Inf.30) expressed concern regarding the growing perception of the CBD as a conservation tool and called for equal consideration of all three CBD objectives. The report of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/Inf.31) recommended: a two-year budget cycle to ensure smooth functioning of the administration of the CBD; Secretariat staff positions to address the specific needs of SIDS; and use of the Internet to complement, rather than replace, regular distribution through government-designated channels. The Chair of SBSTTA-2, Peter Johan Schei (Norway), introduced the report of SBSTTA-2 (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/3) and highlighted recommendations not on the COP-3 agenda, such as developing linkages with the existing scientific community and receiving clear advice from the COP on how to "get things developed" at SBSTTA-3. The PRESIDENT postponed discussion on the SBSTTA-2 report.

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Emily Gardner <egardner@hawaii.edu>, Désirée McGraw <dez@interramp.com>, Daniel Putterman, Ph.D. <dputterman@igc.apc.org>, Kira Schmidt <kiras@iisd.org>, Lynn Wagner <grund@chaph.usc.edu> and Steve Wise <swise@igc.apc.org>. The Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. Free translation by Mongi Gadhhoum <mongi.gadhhoum@enb.intl.tn>. 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, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Austrian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Specific funding for coverage of the CBD has been provided by the German Ministry for International Cooperation and Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). Funding for the French version has been provided by ACCT/IEPF with support from the French Ministry of Cooperation. The *ENB* can be contacted in Buenos Aires at +54 1 811-5403 Ext. 130 and fax: +54 1 813-8647. 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.

ITALY presented the results of the International Symposium on Mediterranean Biodiversity held from 14-15 October in Rome. Highlighting the historical, cultural and biogeographic importance of the Mediterranean, he called for a "common science-based" approach to regional cooperation. SYRIA, reporting on an intersessional Arab regional meeting on biodiversity, underscored the need for the COP to consider the importance of preserving ancient monuments and the role of Arab women in protecting biodiversity.

A representative of the GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM, which was held from 1-3 November in Buenos Aires and attended by 145 people from 35 countries, outlined the results of the meeting's four workshops: investment in biodiversity; agriculture and biodiversity; integrating biodiversity and land use; and biodiversity and indigenous peoples. COORDINADORA INDIGENA DE LA CUENCA AMAZONICA noted that indigenous peoples' knowledge and practices have been taken without consent or compensation, and called for recognition of their right to self-determination and respect for the integrity of their lands and territories. NEPAL FEDERATION OF NATIONALITIES outlined several recommendations for the implementation of Article 8(j) (indigenous knowledge, practices and innovations) including: realization of indigenous peoples' focal point positions within the Secretariat; funding to facilitate participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of work of the CBD; development of alternatives to current IPR systems for the protection of indigenous knowledge systems; a moratorium on bioprospecting and ethnobotanical collections within indigenous peoples' territories pending adequate protection mechanisms for indigenous knowledge; and an open-ended intersessional working group on indigenous peoples and biodiversity.

OTHER INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS: Delmar Blasco, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention), noted that the Ramsar Convention shares many of the same objectives as the CBD and expressed his eagerness to implement the goals of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Ramsar Convention and the CBD in January 1996.

Arnulf Müller-Helmbrecht, Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (Bonn Convention), announced the agreement between the Bureau of the Bonn Convention and the CBD Secretariat on a Memorandum of Cooperation in June 1996. He highlighted the need for a common approach to conservation and utilization among the two conventions and appealed to the Parties to the CBD who have not yet done so to sign the Bonn Convention so that conservation measures can be undertaken in a more comprehensive manner.

Salvano Briceño, representing the Desertification and Climate Change Secretariats, outlined the activities under each convention and called for closer and more effective cooperation between the "Rio conventions," especially in the area of public education and participation.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: The Executive Secretary highlighted two unresolved issues — contributions to the CBD Trust Fund and voting procedures. The President invited comments on the provisional organization of work (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/1/Add.2). AUSTRALIA's proposal to discuss the budget of the Trust Fund after the medium-term work programme was supported by COLOMBIA, and its suggestion to create a limited number of small working groups to facilitate full consideration of the COP-3 agenda was supported by the EU. COLOMBIA, SENEGAL and the SEYCHELLES cautioned against simultaneous working group meetings. COLOMBIA emphasized implementing all three objectives of the CBD in a balanced manner.

The Executive Secretary called for the establishment of a budget for 1997, noting the need for an indicative budget at a minimum.

Also during the Plenary, the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/1/Add.1) was adopted and Bureau members were elected as follows: Suzana Guziova (Slovakia) and Igor Glukhovtsev (Kazakhstan); Manfred Schneider (Austria) and

Louis Currat (Switzerland); François Ndeckere-Ziangba (Central African Republic) and Terry Jones (Seychelles); and Mohammed Reza Salamat (Iran) and Raéd Bani Hani (Jordan). The Latin American and Caribbean regional group had not yet appointed its representatives.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Bureau met briefly during the afternoon and selected Louis Currat (Switzerland) as the Chair of the Committee of the Whole (COW). Chair Currat noted the need for the COW to establish its objectives to carry out the fundamental goals of the CBD. He highlighted the need to regulate the use of time; called for enhanced trust among the Parties; and said objectives should be framed for the long term rather than the short term.

The Executive Secretary introduced the Secretariat's report on agricultural biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/COP/3/14). The G-77/CHINA, generally supported by the EU, proposed creating two working groups, one on financial and legal aspects of the CBD, the other on such issues as Article 8j, agrobiodiversity, access to genetic resources, benefit-sharing, and technology transfer.

SRI LANKA underscored the need to address the biodiversity of agro-ecosystems. The EU highlighted integrated land use planning to minimize negative environmental impacts and underscored the Leipzig Technical Conference and the FAO GPA. ZIMBABWE highlighted the role of indigenous farmers and traditional communities in managing natural resources and achieving food security as discussed at a recent CGIAR International Centres meeting. BRAZIL stated that agriculture should be the major focus of the CBD, and called for a work programme including: *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation; access; technology transfer; biosafety; sustainable use; benefit sharing; and economic valuation.

NORWAY noted the need for an integrative approach in agriculture. He stressed the importance of focusing the work that is decided upon, and called for a proactive approach on the identified gaps. He stated that the FAO GPA is relevant for the Convention and for GEF funding, and suggested sending a message to FAO calling for a speedy renegotiation of the International Undertaking. MALAYSIA regretted that the fragile consensus reached during the Leipzig Technical Conference has diminished the opportunity for the GPA to be truly implemented. Farmers' Rights and benefit-sharing arrangements were among the issues he did not believe were adequately covered. He stressed the importance of resolving the issue of access to *ex situ* collections, and called for a built-in mechanism for their fair and equitable utilization.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Several delegations expressed concern about the prospect of numerous simultaneous working groups, particularly worrisome to small delegations. Some alternatives have been put forth to discourage the proliferation problem, including limiting the total number of working groups to two, commencing working group meetings immediately, banning concurrent meetings, and encouraging regional groups to work out consensus positions in advance. Participants speculated that working groups soon would be formed around agricultural biodiversity and financial issues. One delegate observed that ultimately a proliferation of working groups will be necessary given the large number of complex issues on the COP-3 agenda. Look for a Bureau decision regarding the establishment of working groups during the morning COW.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW will resume its discussion of agricultural biological diversity during a morning meeting in Salon Dorado. An afternoon meeting is expected. Issues related to the GEF will be addressed.