

## UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2016

On Monday morning, plenary heard statements from participants and high-level representatives, including the President of Mexico. In the afternoon, WG I initiated discussions on progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achievement of the Aichi Targets. WG II addressed issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity, including ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), biodiversity and acidification in cold-water areas, marine debris and underwater noise, and marine spatial planning; and started deliberations on invasive alien species (IAS). A contact group on EBSAs was established.

### PLENARY

**STATEMENTS:** FAO noted the importance of collaboration to achieve transformation in mainstreaming biodiversity. IUCN stressed the need to scale up efforts to achieve the Aichi Targets, which are essential for accomplishing the SDGs. The INTERNATIONAL UNION OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES (IUBS), on behalf of the Science for Biodiversity Forum held from 1-2 December, underscored the contribution of science to mainstreaming biodiversity and monitoring targets and ecosystem functions. The GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS BIODIVERSITY OBSERVATION NETWORK (GEO BON) emphasized that consistent monitoring is essential for reporting on CBD and SDG commitments. The INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (ITPGRFA) highlighted mutual supportiveness and enhanced collaboration between the Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol. The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY (GBIF) stressed that unlocking data, especially in developing countries, is critical to mainstreaming biodiversity.

Placing emphasis on indigenous women, the UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES (UNPFII) noted the importance of indigenous knowledge, culture, and environmental practices to reduce biodiversity loss and implement sustainable solutions. The INTERGOVERNMENTAL SCIENCE-POLICY PLATFORM ON BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES (IPBES) highlighted its assessment on pollinators and ongoing work on global and regional assessments. The CGIAR CONSORTIUM reported on their work on mainstreaming biodiversity into agriculture.

The SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (SPREP) highlighted alignment of its 2017-2020 Strategic Plan with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, and establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the region. The UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

(UNU) underscored the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into productive systems and linkages with biocultural diversity. The INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (IWBN) urged parties to continue contributing to the voluntary fund for IPLC participation. ARGENTINA called for addressing mainstreaming into additional sectors, including energy, extractives, manufacturing and urban planning.

**HIGH-LEVEL EVENT:** Carlos Manuel Joaquín González, Governor of the Mexican State of Quintana Roo, emphasized that sustainable development requires all countries to participate in the protection of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of its benefits. Conference President Pachiano highlighted Mexico's achievement of Aichi Target 11 (protected areas). UN Environment Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw called for a Biodiversity Summit to engage policy makers at the highest level. CBD Executive Secretary Dias commended Mexico's leadership in promoting the biodiversity agenda, including its updated NBSAP and recognition of IPLCs and peoples of African descent.

Pointing to the Mayan and other civilizations in the region, Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, underscored the need to learn from other cultures. He stressed that protecting biodiversity is a moral obligation, but also useful *per se*, as it contributes to the survival and development of human communities. President Nieto announced Mexico's decision to significantly expand protected areas (PAs), tripling previous targets on coverage of marine and terrestrial PAs. He concluded that "either we change our way of life to stop biodiversity loss or that loss will change forever our ways of life."

### WORKING GROUP I

**STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION (CBD):** The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/8/Rev.1, Add.1/Rev.1, Add.2/Rev.1 and Add.3). Many delegates reported that they updated their NBSAPs. MEXICO noted that NBSAPs are the most important national tool to meet the Aichi Targets and, with many, called for intensifying efforts to meet them. MOROCCO said that focusing on national priorities and targeted actions can ensure implementation. MALDIVES called for setting ambitious national targets.

GUATEMALA said implementation requires greater domestic investment and multilateral assistance and technological cooperation. VENEZUELA, with many, stressed the need for financial resources and resource mobilization strategies to implement the Strategic Plan and NBSAPs. Many called for support from international organizations. COLOMBIA underscored the importance of synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions. EL SALVADOR stressed the need for increased efforts to achieve Aichi Targets 3 (incentives) and 7 (sustainable management of areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry). The REPUBLIC OF KOREA called for additional indicators for the Aichi Targets that are harder to quantify.

INDONESIA suggested reflecting in the draft decision the central role of national focal points. INDIA requested encouraging all parties to raise the level of ambition. The PHILIPPINES proposed amendments on strengthening cooperation with other conventions and improving the efficiency of Convention processes. BOLIVIA suggested reference to the outcomes of the interactive dialogue on living in harmony with nature, to be held the following week, and next steps to continue the dialogue in subsequent COPs. BANGLADESH requested calling upon the GEF and other donors to provide fast track financial support for developments of NBSAPs. JAMAICA requested convening regional and subregional meetings to determine party needs.

SWITZERLAND, with the EU, CANADA, the PHILIPPINES, NORWAY and AUSTRALIA, suggested preparing for a follow-up to the Strategic Plan. SWITZERLAND, with CANADA, suggested a gap analysis identifying to what extent the Aichi Targets are covered by the SDGs. The Secretariat drew attention to an analysis of the links between the Aichi Targets and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/19/INF/9). The EU called for more detailed research, and MEXICO for a specific mandate for the Secretariat's work.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, on behalf of several conservation organizations, noted that national targets lack in ambition compared to the Aichi Targets. The IIFB, supported by many, proposed that NBSAP updates include IPLCs, particularly women, and address the resource mobilization targets agreed at COP 12.

## **WORKING GROUP II**

**MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: EBSAs:** The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2/Rev.1 and 13/18). MEXICO, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and others, opposed by CHINA, favored removing brackets on: practical options for further enhancing scientific methodologies and approaches, including collaborative arrangements, for EBSA description; and, a request to the Secretariat to facilitate implementation of practical options and establish an informal advisory group for EBSAs. JAPAN considered it premature to establish an advisory group, suggesting deletion of the request. On options regarding procedures for modifying the description of EBSAs or facilitating the process of making descriptions of new areas, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION underscored the informational nature of a revised description of an EBSA within national jurisdiction and proposed "modifying information on EBSAs beyond national jurisdiction" as a standing agenda item for every second COP. BRAZIL suggested: different processes for areas within and beyond national jurisdiction; and an option to eliminate EBSAs, with SOUTH AFRICA calling for discussing a delisting process. The EU proposed refining the proposed options for a simpler and more coherent process. PERU suggested recommending that the Secretariat elaborate different options to modify or exclude areas proposed or described as EBSAs in collaboration with parties, as appropriate. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA underscored the need for scientific review processes, such as peer reviews, for describing new areas within one or more national jurisdictions. NORWAY called for reference to the sovereignty of coastal states. PAKISTAN and CANADA proposed providing for a time-period, rather than a number of submissions, as a basis for organizing global/regional EBSA workshops. ARGENTINA recommended clarifying that the convening of workshops should be a decision for parties to take. A contact group, chaired by Moustafa Fouda (Egypt) and Gunnstein Bakke (Norway), was established.

INDONESIA suggested eliminating EBSAs in areas within national jurisdiction, requesting organizations to assist parties in managing EBSAs, and clarifying the regime of transboundary EBSAs. FIJI urged parties and international organizations to report on progress and challenges in establishing management measures to safeguard values identified in the EBSA description. The IIFB noted a "major gap in the understanding of the cultural and spiritual value of EBSAs" and called for capacity building to ensure IPLCs' full and effective participation in EBSA workshops.

The INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE (IFAW) recommended using work on important marine mammal areas to inform EBSA description.

**Cold-water areas:** The Secretariat introduced a voluntary specific workplan (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2/Rev.1). MOROCCO called for adequate financing for implementation.

**Marine debris and anthropogenic underwater noise:** The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2/Rev.1). MOROCCO and INDIA called for capacity building to implement marine debris mitigation measures. TANZANIA recommended adding reference to the UNEA resolution on marine plastic debris and microplastics, with UN Environment recalling that it calls for identifying possible gaps and options. IFAW called attention to the International Whaling Commission's Scientific Committee recommendations on noise by shipping and seismic activities, inviting parties to reduce noise at its source.

**Marine spatial planning:** The Secretariat introduced the document (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2/Rev.1). INDONESIA shared lessons learned.

**IAS:** The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2/Rev.1, and INF/23, 34, 37 and 38).

On bracketed text on the precautionary approach and risk assessment concerning the use of biological control agents to manage IAS, AUSTRALIA, supported by MEXICO, PERU and the EU, offered compromise text: referring to potential for direct and indirect non-target impacts also on "ecosystem functions and services" and "in areas in which biological control agents might spread"; including "economic and cultural values, as well as IPLCs' values and priorities" among social factors to be "considered, as appropriate, in decisions for using biological control"; and eliminating reference to stakeholders' "cultural interests" in participatory decision-making processes on biological control programmes. South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, proposed replacing reference to standards recognized by the World Trade Organization (WTO) with "regional and international standards." INDIA emphasized the advisory nature of the text. Chair Malta Qwathekana (South Africa) invited informal consultations.

Antigua and Barbuda for the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) proposed, with JORDAN, strengthening coordination between the CBD and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). THAILAND pointed to the need for information to raise awareness among consumers, e-commerce traders and other stakeholders about the risks of biological invasions.

## **IN THE CORRIDORS**

After Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto inspired delegates to get down to work, participants launched into the first substantive negotiations of the UN Biodiversity Conference. Working Group I was dubbed by some delegates as the "mega-working group," because it is tasked with all items cutting across the Convention and its two Protocols. Still, some observed, that no sense of urgency was felt at its first session, which reviewed implementation of the Strategic Plan. Many developing country delegates, however, appreciated the time devoted to showcasing their national implementation efforts and specific needs.

Working Group II in turn, focusing on ecosystem work under the Convention, moved swiftly through its first reading of all marine issues. Predictably, EBSAs proved once again a controversial topic. Despite the prospect that scientific information about these areas can contribute to achieving several Aichi Targets, a proposed new process for modifying or describing new EBSAs raised concerns among those parties who believe that coastal states have the right to unilaterally modify or eliminate EBSAs within national jurisdiction, even though they were already "considered" through COP decisions. As a seasoned participant mused, "if in the past parties were concerned about the mandate of the CBD in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction, now areas within national jurisdiction have proven to be the apple of discord."