



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE 3 SEPTEMBER 1997

Working Group I continued its debate on identification and monitoring of biodiversity in inland waters and methodologies for assessment. A contact group met in the morning, afternoon and evening to draft a comprehensive text on all issues related to inland water biodiversity. Working Group II discussed agricultural biodiversity. A contact group met in the afternoon and evening to draft a revised work programme on forest biodiversity.

### WORKING GROUP I

On biological diversity of inland waters (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/2), the US stated, *inter alia*, that SBSTTA should: give priority to the assessment of freshwater biodiversity; underline the importance of internalizing the mitigation costs for negative environmental impacts associated with development activities on inland water ecosystems; and establish rosters of experts nominated by governments.

The Secretariat's report on identification and monitoring of components of biodiversity of inland water ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/7) proposes, *inter alia*, that the COP endorse the Ramsar Convention's criteria for identifying wetlands (paragraph 50 (b)) and adopt the IUCN criteria and definitions of threatened species (paragraph 50 (c)). Under paragraph 50(b), CANADA questioned the purpose of preparing a list of lakes and agreed with NORWAY that such an idea is premature. BRAZIL, noting that other international instruments and conventions already consider the question of criteria for threatened species, suggested that the recommendation was unnecessary. GERMANY, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and MALAYSIA said that while the Ramsar criteria should be consulted for now, in the future the criteria should be adjusted to meet the scope of the CBD. The EC and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA said the inland water systems criteria under Ramsar, which focus on wetlands for waterfowl habitat, are not completely applicable to the CBD, which must also address rivers and streams. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO preferred consulting the Ramsar criteria instead of the CBD's classifications. HAITI could not agree to verbatim adoption of Ramsar criteria given the limited state of knowledge in his country. Regarding the recommendation urging Parties to carry out systematic taxonomic inventories, BURKINA FASO said that many developing countries' level of knowledge is very limited and the COP should support assessment work, especially for threatened species.

A representative of the Ramsar Convention cautioned against faulting the Convention's overall criteria framework by focusing on any single criterion. He explained that both the Ramsar criteria and

classification are currently under review and suggested that both Ramsar and CBD could benefit from working together to harmonize criteria, classification and other issues.

Under paragraph 50(c), CANADA requested that the text urge countries to adopt criteria, and include the IUCN criteria as an option. IUCN explained that it developed criteria and definitions of threatened species to support Parties' commitments under the CBD and that IUCN does not have a vested interest in having specific criteria adopted.

Regarding a recommendation that all Parties undertake assessments of threatened species of vertebrates (paragraph 50 (d)), CANADA requested a specific reference to the introduction of exotic species as a threat to ecosystems. NEW ZEALAND commented that priority should be given to threatened species of any taxonomic group and alien species. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, supported by BELGIUM, BRAZIL and MALAYSIA, suggested an additional paragraph to consider the threat to invertebrates. INDIA added that it was also important to understand the trophic status of any aquatic system.

The Secretariat introduced the report on the review of methodologies for assessment of biological diversity in inland water ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/8). ARGENTINA said the recommendations should include an exchange of information on methodologies to determine which species are most or least sensitive. A number of delegations expressed concern about the report's proposed listing of animal groups that are particularly important in assessing inland water ecosystems. DENMARK said a specific list of animal groups would not be commonly applicable to all regions and countries and offered alternative text establishing group criteria. GERMANY supported Denmark's proposal to develop a criteria list, and offered alternative text. SWEDEN said that it may be inappropriate to focus only on "spectacular" species. Many delegations, including COLUMBIA, PERU, the EC, the UK and AUSTRIA also noted the absence of aquatic invertebrates from the proposed list of indicator species. AUSTRALIA noted that invertebrate species might be more sensitive to environmental degradation than other proposed animal groups. However, the UK noted the need to prioritize and focus on practical methodologies, even at the risk of excluding some recognized as important. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA suggested that, because taxonomic knowledge is limited for many inland water systems, specific geographic sites should be studied from an ecosystem, rather than a species-specific, approach. He proposed development of criteria and indicators (C&I) for inland water systems, followed by determination of which sites meet the C&Is and subsequent assessments for such sites.

A recommendation that the COP consider fish species of inland waters as the specific focus of capacity-building in taxonomy was opposed by a number of delegations. While recognizing the importance of capacity-building, delegations such as SWEDEN and

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AUSTRALIA said it should not be split between different ecological groups. SWEDEN noted that such a focus would not be a high priority for some countries, as they already have a substantial knowledge basis on fishery resources. The UK, however, said it was unrealistic to expect to have taxonomic expertise applied across the board.

AUSTRALIA proposed a workshop or liaison group to address the development of taxonomic expertise and expressed willingness to make resources available.

Under the recommendations on fisheries, the COP would advise Parties and other international organizations that issues of biodiversity and subsistence use should be more fully addressed in fisheries reporting and management. SWEDEN called for a focus on commercial fisheries. COLUMBIA said assessments should be directed to local fisheries, but include global ecosystem aspects.

## WORKING GROUP II

In Working Group II, discussion continued on the Review of Ongoing Activities on Agricultural Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/6). Delegates generally supported the multi-year Work Programme (WP) but favored continuing review of current activities rather than proposing recommendations for new activities. The AFRICA GROUP, the US, the NETHERLANDS and ETHIOPIA called for SBSTTA analysis of the WP's gaps. The NETHERLANDS stressed an action orientation for the WP. PERU and MALI highlighted the importance of socio-cultural concerns for the WP, including conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources to ensure food security.

The US noted that the FAO and CBD Secretariat had not yet been asked to develop further recommendations on a WP, and, with the EC, called for an analysis of ongoing activities, possible priorities and the ten remaining issues in Annex II. CUBA stressed inclusion of all soil biota, not just microorganisms. CANADA called for prioritizing completion of the review on ongoing activities on agro-biodiversity, and hoped that FAO and CBD work would not precede the advice of SBSTTA. INDIA suggested prioritization of wild crop relatives and the enhancement of *in situ* farmer hill and semiarid landrace management. ARGENTINA, the US and the NETHERLANDS highlighted the relationship between agricultural biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, including the impacts laid out in Annex I.

JAPAN asked for an elaboration of rules on participation in working groups and technical workshops under the CBD. The WEST AFRICA SUB-GROUP proposed: creating centers for preservation of medicinal plants; updating or initiating case studies; and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits of plant genetic resources. ETHIOPIA highlighted the CHM's role, not just as a data center but also with regard to technology transfer. The CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR) expressed support for development and implementation of the WP and for technology transfer.

The UK, NETHERLANDS, US, CANADA, ARGENTINA and GERMANY were pleased with FAO/CBD Secretariat collaboration. JAPAN urged further modalities for strengthening cooperation between the them. Many delegates welcomed FAO work on global strategies, plans of action and assessments of food and agricultural resources, particularly the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources (IU) and its provisions for incorporating CBD objectives. CANADA, supported by SWEDEN, the EC, the AFRICA GROUP, FRANCE and the FAO, stressed the urgency of completing the renegotiation of the IU. ETHIOPIA and COLOMBIA stressed the IU issue areas of farmers' rights, technology transfer, access to genetic resources, and benefit sharing. SWEDEN and KENYA stressed the need to enhance FAO's attention to biodiversity and sustainability.

The US, GERMANY, ARGENTINA and CANADA encouraged work with other international organizations and NGOs such as UNEP, CGIAR and IUCN. The AFRICA GROUP with FRANCE called for better coordination, particularly on funding, at the international level. FAO said it is establishing a special working group dedicated to the CBD that includes CGIAR and UNESCO and is open to UNEP.

Regarding ongoing national, regional and international level activities, CANADA shared its work on an earthworm census, research on mycorrhizae and the biodiversity of pollinators and microorganisms. He noted his "amazement" over calls for more reviews given the small number of Party reports. PERU, INDIA and the AFRICA GROUP supported regional working groups. The GEF reiterated its support for national action programmes related to agrobiodiversity.

Regarding identification, monitoring and assessment, the UK supported BRAZIL's call for a core set of agrobiodiversity criteria and indicators (C&I) for WP priority setting. The US agreed, but did not favor adding this as a recommendation. SWITZERLAND suggested C&I for sustainable agriculture. The AFRICA GROUP called for a better definition of indicators for ascertaining the effects of agricultural development on biodiversity.

Regarding a review of issues related to international trade and agricultural biodiversity, CANADA emphasized that the WTO is the appropriate forum for discussion of trade and agrobiodiversity issues. The UK, the NETHERLANDS, GERMANY, and CANADA stressed the importance of collaboration with the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE). The UK, supported by CANADA, stressed that the Executive Secretary should work with the WTO CTE Secretariat to prepare a review of key issues to be addressed for the consideration of SBSTTA and the COP. CANADA suggested that Parties contribute to this list, and, with NEW ZEALAND and ARGENTINA, emphasized review by SBSTTA before submission to the WTO. JAPAN, supported by FRANCE and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, called for methodologies for ensuring that no scientific, technical and technological issues related to trade and agricultural biodiversity be excluded from review. The US stressed, however, that such a review was neither well defined nor mandated by the COP.

On the coordination of thematic and national focal points for agrobiodiversity assessment, including the possible scope for a Global State-of-the-World Report (GSWR) on biodiversity for food and agriculture, the NETHERLANDS, supported by CANADA and ARGENTINA suggested that such a report would be premature given ongoing work on the Global Biodiversity Assessment and Outlook. The UK and FRANCE observed that the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) should initiate any future versions of the GSWR. The CBD Secretariat clarified its intentions on this item by highlighting its consideration for: the large number of sectors and institutions concerned, including the GEF; the need for national level assessment and cross-sectoral coordination on agrobiodiversity; and the need for two-way feedback with mechanisms including regional consultations and working groups. An NGO consortium representative asked for inclusion of pollinators and soil microorganisms in the next GSWR.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

As discussion on a forest work programme continues, a debate has emerged on the relationship between the CBD and the IPF/IFF. While there has been little support for delaying SBSTTA's work on forests in order to incorporate contributions from the nascent IFF, there is a difference of opinion on the "hierarchization" of UN bodies. Some delegates noted that the IPF/IFF process is directly related to the General Assembly, a senior UN body. On the other hand, the CBD is the only legally-binding instrument dealing with forest-related biodiversity issues and UNGASS acknowledged the authority of established Conventions. Some observers speculate that many countries favor the IPF/IFF process because of its weaker environmental focus. Others noted a COP-3 decision to avoid duplicating the work of the IPF and other fora.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**PLENARY:** Plenary will meet from 10:00 - 11:00 am.

**WORKING GROUP I:** Working Group I will meet in Room I at 11:00 am.

**WORKING GROUP II:** Working Group II will meet in Room II at 11:00 am.

