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## REPORT OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:

1 - 5 SEPTEMBER 1997

The Third Session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-3) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held from 1-5 September 1997 in Montreal, Canada. Delegates to SBSTTA-3 met in Plenary to consider the implementation of the pilot phase of the Clearinghouse Mechanism (CHM) and a progress report on the work of SBSTTA and the effectiveness of its advice. Two working groups produced recommendations and work programmes to be adopted at the Fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) on: biodiversity in inland waters; marine and coastal biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; forest biodiversity; and biodiversity indicators. SBSTTA-3 also adopted a recommendation produced by the Bureau on developing country participation in SBSTTA.

Delegates to SBSTTA-3 left Montreal with some tangible accomplishments, having agreed to recommendations and work programmes for all of their issue areas. Some aspects of SBSTTA-3 evidenced a marked improvement over previous meetings. A notable number of delegates commented on the much-improved quality and scope of Secretariat documentation. Nonetheless, not all reviews of SBSTTA-3 were favorable. Some delegates commented that discussions lacked a sense of urgency and at times bordered on ambivalent. Others noted that SBSTTA-3 was confronted with some of the same dilemmas as SBSTTA-2, such as an "identity crisis," reflecting a divergence between SBSTTA's scientific mandate and its political practice.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF TECHNICAL ISSUES UNDER THE CONVENTION

The Convention on Biological Diversity, negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), entered into force on 29 December 1993. To date, more than 150 countries have become Parties. Article 25 of the CBD establishes a Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to provide the Conference of the Parties with "timely advice" relating to implementation of the Convention.

**COP-1:** The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP-1) took place in Nassau, the Bahamas, from 28 November - 9 December 1994. Some of the key decisions taken by COP-1 included: adoption of the medium-term work programme; designation of the Permanent Secretariat; establishment of the Clear-

inghouse Mechanism (CHM) and SBSTTA; and designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism.

**SBSTTA-1:** The first session of SBSTTA took place from 4-8 September 1995 in Paris, France. Delegates considered operational matters, as well as substantive issues, particularly with regard to coastal and marine biodiversity. Recommendations on the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA affirmed its subsidiary role to the COP, and requested flexibility to create: two open-ended working groups to meet simultaneously during future SBSTTA meetings; *Ad Hoc* Technical Panels of Experts as needed; and a roster of experts.

Substantive recommendations of SBSTTA-1 included: alternative ways and means for the COP to consider components of biodiversity under threat; ways and means to promote access to and transfer of technology; scientific and technical information to be contained in national reports; preparation of an annual Global Biodiversity Outlook by the Secretariat; contributions to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) meetings on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA); and technical aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity. On this last issue, SBSTTA-1 identified three priorities: sustainable use of living coastal and marine resources; mariculture; and the control of alien organisms. Time constraints prevented consideration of education, training and public awareness as key delivery mechanisms for coastal and marine biodiversity conservation, and of bio-prospecting of the deep sea bed.

**COP-2:** The second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-2) to the CBD met in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 6-17 November 1995. Some of the key decisions taken by COP-2 included: designation of the permanent location of the Secretariat in Montreal, Canada; agreement to develop a protocol on biosafety; operation of the CHM; adoption of a work programme funded by a larger budget; designation of the GEF as the continuing interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism; consideration of its first substantive issue, marine and coastal biodiversity; and agreement to address forests and biodiversity,

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including the development of a statement from the CBD to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

COP-2 approved SBSTTA's medium-term programme of work for 1996-97, and adopted a statement on PGFRA for input to the FAO's Fourth International Technical Conference on PGRFA (ITCPGR-4). The statement notes the importance of other conventions to the CBD's three objectives, urges other international fora to help achieve these objectives through the CBD's overarching framework, and invites the FAO to present the outcome of ITCPGR-4 to COP-3.

**PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:** The FAO established an intergovernmental Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 1983, and adopted a non-binding International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which is intended to promote harmonized international efforts to create incentives to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA. Since the inception of the CBD, the FAO has begun revising the International Undertaking (IU). Subsequent revisions have emphasized national sovereignty over PGRFA, in line with Article 15 (sovereignty over genetic resources) of the CBD.

The Second Extraordinary Session of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-EX2) was held in Rome from 22-27 April 1996. Delegates worked their way through all agenda items in spite of a staggeringly slow start, persistent procedural problems and a near-paralysis in Plenary over forests, funding and follow-up, and addressed several issues in preparation for the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources (ITCPGR-4). These included: the first comprehensive state-of-the-world report on plant genetic resources, which was forwarded to the Conference; and a heavily bracketed Global Plan of Action, which was further consolidated by a two-day working group meeting held immediately prior to ITCPGR-4.

ITCPGR-4 met in Leipzig, Germany, from 17-23 June 1996. Representatives of 148 States adopted the Leipzig Declaration, the Conference's key political statement, and a "delicately balanced" Global Plan of Action (GPA), an international programme for the conservation and utilization of PGRFA.

The Third Extraordinary Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-EX3) was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 9-13 December 1996. Delegates focused on Farmers' Rights and scope and access to genetic resources in relation to the revision of the IU in harmony with the CBD. They confronted both the political and intellectual complexities of revising the IU. Although the meeting technically constituted the third formal negotiating session for the revision of the IU, CGRFA-EX3 can be characterized as a constructive pre-negotiation exercise. The meeting did not produce any negotiated text, but it did make progress on difficult and often divisive issues. Many delegations moved beyond political posturing in order to clarify the concerns and interests that underlie their different positions.

The Seventh Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA-7) was held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 15-23 May 1997. During the meeting, delegates continued negotiations on the revision of the IU in harmony with the CBD. The Commission also established the mechanisms that will allow it to carry out its broadened mandate effectively, considered reports from FAO and international organizations, and addressed follow-up to (ITCPGR-4). Most delegates agreed that CGRFA-7 marked the beginning of real negotiations toward revising the IU. However, the level and seriousness of the negotiations were not consistent across issue areas. While deliberations on Farmers' Rights remained largely rhetorical, scope and access were the subject of intelligent and detailed discussion.

**BIOSAFETY:** Article 19.4 of the CBD provides for Parties to consider the need for and modalities of a protocol on biosafety. At COP-2, delegates established an Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety (BSWG), which held its first meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, from 22-26 July 1996 (BSWG-1). It was attended by more than 90 delegations, which included scientific and technical experts, representing both Parties and non-Parties to the CBD, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and industry representatives. BSWG-1

marked the first formal meeting to develop a protocol under the CBD and to operationalize one of its key and most contentious components. Governments listed elements for a future protocol, agreed to hold two meetings in 1997 and outlined the information required to guide their future work.

The second meeting of the Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety (BSWG II) met from 12-16 May 1997 in Montreal and continued its discussions on the elaboration of a protocol on safety in biotechnology. Delegates discussed a range of issues, including: objectives; procedures for transfer of living modified organisms; competent authorities, information sharing and a CHM; capacity building; and risk assessment and management. BSWG II also convened contact groups to consider the proposals on definitions of key terms and studies to be completed by the Secretariat in preparation for BSWG-3. Delegates agreed to a structure for discussions and the programme of work for future meetings.

**SBSTTA-2:** The Second Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-2) met in Montreal, Canada, from 2-6 September 1996. Many Parties sent scientific and technical experts to the meeting, which was also attended by observers from non-Parties, NGOs, indigenous peoples' organizations, industry groups and scientific organizations. Delegates grappled with a crowded agenda, which included complex technical issues. Despite Chair Peter Johan Schei's plea to delegates to maintain "scientific integrity" and avoid turning SBSTTA into a "mini-Conference of the Parties," the issue of identity and the precise role of SBSTTA in managing the scientific content continued to occupy many participants as they departed at the conclusion of the week-long meeting. While a few issues were covered in adequate technical detail, notably economic valuation and taxonomy, the primary outcome of SBSTTA-2 seemed to be a desire to reform the process. Publicly, delegates called for sharp limits to the agenda and greater involvement of scientific organizations.

**COP-3:** The third session of the Conference of Parties met in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 4-15 November 1996. If COP-1 established the basic machinery of the Convention and COP-2 adopted decisions for programming, COP-3 sought to address implementation in the context of these decisions. To this end, the COP took several key decisions, including: elaborating a realistic work programme on agricultural biodiversity and a more limited one on forest biodiversity; a long negotiated Memorandum of Understanding with the GEF; an agreement to hold an intersessional workshop on Article 8(j); application by the Executive Secretary for observer status to the WTO Committee on Trade and the Environment; and a statement from the CBD to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review implementation of Agenda 21.

## REPORT OF THE MEETING

During SBSTTA-3, delegates met in Plenary and in two working groups. Following discussion in the working groups, delegates met in contact groups and "friends of the Chair" meetings to draft recommendations and work programmes. Delegates considered the CHM and the progress of SBSTTA in Plenary on 1 September. From 2-4 September, Working Group I considered biodiversity in inland waters and marine and coastal biodiversity, and Working Group II considered forest biodiversity and agro-biodiversity. Both Working Groups considered aspects of biodiversity indicators. Delegates held brief morning Plenary sessions on 2 September, to announce the nominations of working group and drafting group chairs, and on 4 September, to hear an address from the Executive Secretary of UNEP. The closing Plenary was held on 5 September, wherein delegates adopted recommendations and works plans.

### PLENARY

On 1 September, outgoing SBSTTA Chair Peter Schei (Norway) noted the increased involvement in SBSTTA by Parties, international organizations and the scientific community, and highlighted the need to build on their work. He underscored the mandate of the COP to reduce the agenda of SBSTTA so that discussions remain focused. He thanked the Secretariat for raising the standards of its papers.



Professor Zakri A. Hamid (Malaysia), the new SBSTTA Chair, noted that more than half of the agenda items at each COP are issues that must first be addressed by SBSTTA. He stressed the crucial role that SBSTTA plays in achieving the goals of and ensuring the success of the Convention. Reiterating a comment made by the previous Chair, he cautioned that SBSTTA is neither a "mini-COP," nor a COP drafting committee. He also highlighted several areas in the current work programme that remain problematic: gaps in knowledge and lack of expertise concerning the extent of biological diversity; the need for capacity building, particularly in developing countries, in taxonomy and other relevant scientific disciplines; and the need for speedy dissemination of information, particularly through electronic means.

Rueben Olembo, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNEP, highlighted SBSTTA's successful service to the CSD and ECOSOC as indicative of the need for SBSTTA to become not only an advisor to the CBD COP but the benchmark by which other conventions and institutions address biodiversity-related issues.

Calestous Juma, Executive Secretary of the CBD, highlighted the Secretariat's strong working relationship with the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), and the Governments of Canada, Quebec and Montreal. He noted that the Secretariat continues to enjoy the full support of the Parties and has broadened its support from other organizations, due in part to the CHM. He commented that, in order for the Convention to achieve its aims, SBSTTA must evolve into the leading authority on scientific, technical and technological aspects of biodiversity within the UN system. Citing the decisions of the COP relating to cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and FAO, the Executive Secretary suggested that the advice of SBSTTA has already begun to influence other biodiversity-related processes.

A statement was made on behalf of participants in the EIGHTH GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM (GBF-8), held in Montreal from 28-31 August 1997. GBF-8 conducted workshops on: biodiversity communication and education; policy research capacity to implement the CBD; incentives, private sector partnership and the marine and coastal environment; forest biodiversity; and biodiversity and inland water systems. Recommendations call for, *inter alia*: COP-4 prioritization of CBD Article 13 on Public Awareness and Education; inclusion of educators on SBSTTA delegations; information on policy analysis capacity in national reports; increased financial support for policy research capacity; mechanisms for transparency and multiple stakeholder participation; information on inland water ecosystems' environmental services; applications of an ecosystem-based approach; use of environmental economics methodologies; applications of biodiversity impact assessment; removal of market disincentives for conservation; and strengthened negotiating capacity of weaker stakeholder groups.

The CITES SECRETARIAT reported on CITES COP-10, which called for: national measures to reduce duplication of activities for the two conventions; investigation of opportunities for CITES participation in implementing provisions of the CBD; and support for harmonization of reporting requirements of biodiversity-related conventions. A memorandum of cooperation (MOC) between the CITES and CBD Secretariats stresses development of working relations with organizations addressing trade and intellectual property rights.

The UN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS stressed the need for actions to protect forest and aquatic ecosystems and to identify measures for their sustainable use. He also acknowledged the valuable input of the CBD to the IPF and the Intergovernmental Task Force on Forests (ITFF).

The FAO drew attention to its mandate of assuring sustainable food security and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity for food and agriculture. She noted the complexity of addressing agrobiodiversity linkages and suggested that the FAO act as a broker for the scientific and policy needs of Parties. The FAO continues its work on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources, and has signed a MOC with the CBD Secretariat on: assessment of genetic resources; technologies for agrobiodiversity management; gender and local knowledge; biodiversity valuation and trade; policies, standards and codes of conduct; and biodiversity indicators and information systems.

UNESCO noted its: research and education expertise; commissions' and centers' work on biological diversity, particularly on marine and coastal biodiversity; support for 300 biosphere reserves in over 100 countries; and co-launching of Diversitas, the Integrated Programme of Biodiversity Science, to further mobilize the international scientific community.

The INTERNATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION is developing a marine biodiversity strategy consistent with the three CBD objectives and is collaborating with its 125 members on the scientific research and monitoring of ocean and coastal areas. The WORLD BANK is mainstreaming biodiversity into its policies and projects.

The Secretariat of the CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar) reported on its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the CBD Secretariat and said it could act as a lead partner on wetlands and inland water ecosystems. SBSTTA's work programme could incorporate Ramsar's Strategic Plan and "wise use of wetlands" concept.

The INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR LIVING RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (ICLARM) highlighted its training and information activities on aquaculture and fisheries, including genetic resources. ICLARM is collaborating with IUCN and WWF on the Fishes for the Future Project to document the status and threats to the world's freshwater species.

The SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL (STAP) of the GEF is actively collaborating with SBSTTA. It is currently organizing a workshop on the sustainable use of biodiversity and related social, economic and ecological dimensions such as the interplay between local and global benefits, possible indicators, best practices and case studies on the sustainable use of marine and arid ecosystems.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** The following delegates were elected to the Bureau: Mbongu-Sodi Nagahuedi (Democratic Republic of the Congo); Elaine Fisher (Jamaica); Patricia Gudiño (Costa Rica); Mick Naimegi Raga (Papua New Guinea); Gábor Nechay (Hungary); Jan Plesnik (Czech Republic); Peter Schei (Norway); Jameson Seyani (Malawi); and Martin Uppenbrink (Germany).

**CLEARINGHOUSE MECHANISM:** The Secretariat introduced a report on the implementation of the pilot phase of the CHM in facilitating and promoting technical and scientific cooperation in research and development (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/3). The Report outlines the guidance provided by the COP regarding the CHM and elaborates on three components: organization and linking of information; visualization of information; and the decision-support function, under which the CHM would provide syntheses of global trends and priorities identified by the Parties and others. The report also describes the CHM's World Wide Web home page and the action programme until the end of the pilot phase in December 1998.

Many delegations thanked the German government for their efforts to develop the CHM. In SBSTTA's discussions on the CHM, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA encouraged countries to host regional workshops and said the Secretariat should develop a list of country-specific needs and priorities. COLOMBIA emphasized the importance of regional workshops to define priorities and, with PERU, said the CHM should focus on improving the content of its information. With ARGENTINA, she expressed concern at the lack of financial support offered to support regional meetings. INDIA proposed using a common agenda for all regional workshops.

CANADA expressed concern regarding the workload of the Secretariat and questioned, *inter alia*, the need for a "decision-support" function. He supported establishing an informal advisory committee. GERMANY urged the Secretariat to explore the development of synergies with existing international programmes and modalities for integrating information from biodiversity-related conventions. He said SBSTTA should explore ways to make national clearinghouse activities self-sustaining after the pilot phase. PERU supported the development of a common format for information. AUSTRALIA said the pilot phase needs to be finalized rapidly and suggested conducting a survey of national focal points.



The EU expressed disappointment that the report did not elaborate on how the CHM will be maintained and sought detailed information on the operational framework. NEW ZEALAND noted its efforts to develop databases and said they should be made accessible to others. With AUSTRALIA, she supported the development of discussion groups for national focal points. SWITZERLAND noted that few models of national CHMs have been developed and called upon the Secretariat to develop indicative information that could be used at the national level.

MALAYSIA, COLOMBIA and MALAWI said the CHM should not be limited to information exchange but should identify technology and facilitate its acquisition and transfer. NORWAY said developed countries should identify relevant technologies, as well as the institutions and companies that own them. He stressed the importance of providing information on how developing countries can obtain technology and possible sources for assistance. BRAZIL noted that the scope of the CHM's activities, although originally focused on information exchange, has been expanded by several subsequent COP decisions. SWEDEN, supported by SWITZERLAND, said limiting the CHM to facilitating information exchange, rather than investigating scientific and technical cooperation, would not be in compliance with the Convention. He requested a study on ways to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.

The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO said many developing countries are concerned with obtaining the principle tools needed for information distribution and, with INDIA and KENYA, noted that many countries lack Internet access. KENYA also stated that the CHM should be decentralized, support the decision-making process and involve the private sector. The BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION INFORMATION SYSTEM highlighted other ongoing initiatives and networks regarding biodiversity information. He recommended a consultative process for creating a coordination mechanism that would facilitate information exchange between existing networks.

On 5 September, Martin Uppenbrink (GERMANY), Chair of the CHM drafting group, presented the draft report on the CHM pilot phase (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.5). The report recommends that the COP: request the GEF to play a critical role as a catalyst in the full development and implementation of the CHM; provide guidance to the GEF so that financial resources are provided to support the pilot phase and to strengthen national biodiversity information systems; and request all governments and bilateral and multilateral funding institutions to provide funding for the development and implementation of the CHM. The COP would also: request all Parties to make available information on best practices; invite Parties to disseminate information on funding sources; invite Parties to use the CHM logo as a unifying element; and support the Executive Secretary in convening an informal CHM Advisory Committee.

The COP would also recommend that regional workshops examine, *inter alia*: potential users of information; Parties' information needs and priorities; ways and means to exchange information; information and communication resources available; and actions that contribute to capacity building at the national level. The COP would direct the Secretariat to undertake an independent review of the pilot phase of the CHM in 1998, to be presented at SBSTTA-4. The review would evaluate, *inter alia*: the number of national focal points effectively connected; the number of thematic focal points connected; the amount of information transferred to participating nodes; and the effectiveness of guidelines.

The EC proposed deleting the reference to the GEF as playing a "critical role as a catalyst," and proposed that the GEF play a "substantial" or "important" role. GERMANY favored retaining the existing language. Delegates agreed to delete "critical."

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WORK OF SBSTTA:** On 2 September, SBSTTA discussed of the progress report on the work of SBSTTA and the effectiveness of its advice (1995-1997) (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/10). The report notes that previous meetings have considered elements related to SBSTTA's *modus operandi*. The report also outlines the discussions to date on the overall review of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. The report contains an annex describing

SBSTTA's *modus operandi*, including: its functions; rules of procedure; frequency and timing of meetings; documentation; organization of work during meetings; *ad hoc* technical expert group meetings; contribution of NGOs; cooperation with other relevant bodies; regional and sub-regional preparatory meetings; focal points; and the roster of experts.

The Secretariat proposed that since the *modus operandi* had been considered previously, delegates could decide to forgo considering it as a separate matter and instead consider it in the context of the overall review. He also noted that since the preparation of the report, the Secretariat had received further information from Parties. He proposed the preparation of an information document containing those submissions that would be made available to Parties during the course of the meeting. Delegates met in an informal session chaired by Peter Schei (Norway).

On 5 September, Schei gave an oral report on the group's work and proposed that the written report of the meeting be annexed to the report of SBSTTA-3. He stated that the date for submissions on the *modus operandi* will be extended until 1 December and urged the use of other CBD meetings prior to COP-4 as "satellite" opportunities for further discussion. He reported that the UK plans to host a workshop on the *modus operandi* in January 1998 that will focus on institutions with a recognized need for further cooperation and will incorporate the private sector. CANADA proposed that the Executive Secretary report on the composition and terms of reference of different liaison groups and make the reports available regularly.

#### WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I, chaired by Elaine Fisher (Jamaica), met from 2-4 September. Delegates had before them reports on: biological diversity in inland waters (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/2); identification and monitoring of components of biological diversity of inland water ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/7); the review of methodologies for assessment of biological diversity in inland water ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/8); and conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/4). A contact group met on 3 September to draft a comprehensive text on all issues related to inland water biodiversity. Another contact group was established on 4 September to draft text on issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity.

**BIODIVERSITY IN INLAND WATER ECOSYSTEMS:** The report on biodiversity in inland waters discusses: status and trends; the ecosystem approach; *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation; sustainable use; and equitable benefit sharing. The report also outlines options for action, including: identification and monitoring of the status of inland water biodiversity; impact assessment; access to and transfer of technology; institutional arrangements; capacity building; and financial resources and mechanisms. It also outlines the possible future programme of work.

Many delegations, including NORWAY, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, the UK, the EC, SWEDEN, FINLAND, GERMANY, AUSTRALIA and DENMARK, supported the proposed work programme and noted the importance of applying the ecosystem approach and integrated watershed management. Many delegations, including NORWAY, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, the UK, SWEDEN, FINLAND, GERMANY and SOUTH AFRICA, also noted the need to ensure coordination between the CBD's biodiversity efforts and the CSD-6 work programme, which will focus on freshwater. KENYA, CAMEROON, the NETHERLANDS, ARGENTINA, CANADA and FRANCE supported the establishment of partnerships with specialized organizations from the wetlands and water resources sectors at local, national, regional and international levels.

NORWAY and SWEDEN highlighted the conclusions of the Workshop on Freshwater Biodiversity, which took place in Selbu, Norway, from 5-7 June 1997, and which stressed: conservation of national and regional waters; national capacity building; and the need for taxonomic inventories of freshwater systems. The UK suggested that priorities include the sharing of information and experience on managing



the natural processes of whole catchments and raising awareness on controlling alien species. Several delegations, including IRELAND, PERU and INDIA, underscored the importance of catchment areas.

The US recommended, *inter alia*, participatory watershed management and better integration of inland water ecosystems with traditional resource management. She also stated, *inter alia*, that SBSTTA should: give priority to the assessment of freshwater biodiversity; stress internalization of the mitigation costs for negative environmental impacts associated with development activities on inland water ecosystems; and establish rosters of experts nominated by governments. CANADA called for a focus on issue-driven technological adaptation and an assessment of the ongoing programmes of international organizations.

Noting that freshwater ecosystems or inland waters represent a variety of habitats, FINLAND and GERMANY suggested that the ecosystem approach to freshwater management requires the integration of both terrestrial and aquatic components. SWEDEN noted that while much emphasis has been placed on water pollution, acidification related to agricultural uses and airborne pollutants are also serious issues.

COLOMBIA favored a work programme that strengthens national capacity and focuses equally on conservation and utilization. With BRAZIL, she called for defining priorities at the regional level. BRAZIL recommended addressing integrated river management and, with MEXICO, proposed consideration of transboundary impacts. ARGENTINA said the report should address activities affecting inland waterways, such as deforestation, mining and tourism. PERU highlighted: training and public awareness; technical guidelines and management plans; and technical assessments. INDONESIA noted that public awareness is particularly important in countries with dense populations.

The NETHERLANDS and KENYA stressed the need for a taxonomic inventory of inland water systems. KENYA, HAITI, GUINEA, SOUTH AFRICA and the AFRICA GROUP emphasized: increased financial support and technology transfer; institutional arrangements for incorporating indigenous knowledge; and local self-help programmes. The AFRICA GROUP also highlighted: synergy with relevant conventions; impact assessments; and watershed management, with local community participation. He urged SBSTTA and the COP to: establish regional expert groups; include inland waters in the SBSTTA-4 agenda; and facilitate participation in regional workshops and meetings. SWITZERLAND and INDIA said the GEF should finance projects that promote inland water conservation and sustainable use.

A representative of RAMSAR noted that its Strategic Plan could contribute to the CBD's emphasis on inland water systems and requested guidance from the CBD on how to operationalize this role. The WORLD BANK said its review of project impacts on inland water ecosystems indicated that certain irrigation, water supply and hydroelectric projects are bereft of biodiversity management and could benefit from improved monitoring and impact assessment. WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL stressed the need to enhance communication with and participation by cross-sectoral groups. A representative from the EIGHTH GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM highlighted the need for information on threats to individual species and whole system functioning and, with SWITZERLAND, suggested that information exchange could be implemented through the CHM. The INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S BIODIVERSITY NETWORK observed that the summary document does not adequately reflect the role of traditional technologies and underscored the need for specific case studies regarding the knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples. The FAO observed that reports of fishery production data often do not include information from inland sources and that improved catch and effort data could provide indicator information.

On 3 September, the Working Group also addressed a Secretariat paper concerning the identification and monitoring of components of biodiversity of inland water ecosystems (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/7). This document proposes, *inter alia*, that the COP: implement Articles 8(f) and 10(d) of the Convention concerning the restoration of

degraded ecosystems; endorse the Ramsar Convention's criteria for identifying wetlands; and adopt the IUCN criteria and definitions of threatened species. On restoration, IRELAND expressed its reservation that restoration should be a priority, or even a main priority, mainly because it is too expensive, and noted that, as many aquatic systems are pristine, their protection should be of equal importance.

On wetlands identification, the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO preferred consulting the Ramsar criteria instead of developing CBD classifications. BRAZIL, noting that other international instruments and conventions already consider the question of criteria for threatened species, suggested that the recommendation was unnecessary. While CANADA and NORWAY were reluctant to recommend that Parties prepare indicative lists, NORWAY supported endorsing the criteria regarding threatened species. FRANCE agreed with the adoption of existing Ramsar criteria, but cautioned against adding new criteria. 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 UK, COLOMBIA, SWEDEN and JAPAN noted that the Ramsar criteria may be helpful but did not support their adoption by the CBD. BURKINA FASO suggested that the proposed criteria for assessing specific sites are too simplistic. PERU said that guidelines should include physical and biological risks to humans, plant and animal life caused by pollution.

The EC and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA said the Ramsar criteria, which focus on wetlands for waterfowl habitat, are not completely applicable to the CBD, which must also address rivers and streams. 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 the level of knowledge in many developing countries 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 the CBD could benefit from working together to harmonize criteria, classification and other issues.

Regarding the IUCN criteria, CANADA requested that the text urge countries to 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, 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 to 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 is important to understand the trophic status of any aquatic system.

During the Working Group's deliberations 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.

SWEDEN said it may be inappropriate to focus only on "spectacular" species. Many delegations, including COLOMBIA, PERU, the EC, the UK and AUSTRIA, also noted the absence of aquatic invertebrates from the proposed list of indicator species. AUSTRALIA stated 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&I, and 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 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 to help accomplish this proposal.

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. COLOMBIA said assessments should be directed to local fisheries but include global ecosystem aspects.

In presenting the report to Plenary on 5 September, delegates considered the draft recommendation for biodiversity in inland waters (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.8), which consolidated into one text the draft recommendations based on each of the Secretariat papers related to inland water biodiversity.

In the draft recommendation concerning biodiversity of inland waters, SBSTTA recommended that, *inter alia*: the Executive Secretary continue to develop collaborative relations with relevant organizations, institutions and conventions; the COP encourage the Secretariats of the CBD and Ramsar Convention to elaborate a work plan that avoids overlap between the two conventions; the COP continue its close relationship with the CSD in its development of the Strategic Approach to Freshwater Management; the COP request the Executive Secretary to develop a roster of experts on the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity of inland waters, noting also that the Ramsar Bureau is establishing a similar list of experts; and the CHM be used to promote and facilitate the exchange of information and transfer of technology.

SBSTTA also recommended that the COP develop a SBSTTA work plan on inland water ecosystem conservation that addresses, *inter alia*: status and trends, including the identification of areas where the lack of information limits the quality of assessments and the development of regional guidelines for different types of inland water ecosystems; and conservation and sustainable use through the compilation of case studies of effective watershed management and best practices and the development of methods and techniques for the valuation of goods and services of inland water ecosystems, incentives and policy reform and the understanding of ecosystem function.

SBSTTA further advised the COP to, *inter alia*: encourage the use of the integrated watershed management in relation to land use planning within the river catchment; encourage the use of appropriate technologies to meet watershed management goals; emphasize more effective conservation and efficiency in water use and identify environmentally appropriate technologies; encourage research on the application of ecosystem-based approaches; promote the development of C&I for the evaluation of impacts on inland water ecosystems from both physical infrastructure projects and watershed activities; undertake assessments of threatened species and conduct inventories and impact assessments of alien species; promote guidance on sustainable use and consider the use of gene banks for fish and other species; encourage environmental impact assessments; promote transboundary cooperation and the involvement of local and indigenous communities; review the range and effectiveness of national incentives, subsi-

dies and regulations that have the ability to affect water ecosystems; and provide guidance to the GEF concerning inland water biodiversity and encourage the GEF to consider such issues in projects in its other focal areas.

Concerning the identification and monitoring of components of biodiversity of inland water ecosystems, SBSTTA recommended that the COP, working with the Ramsar Bureau, advise Parties to prepare indicative lists of inland water ecosystems listing the criteria set out in Annex I of the Convention.

Concerning methodologies for the assessment of biodiversity in inland water ecosystems, SBSTTA recommended that, *inter alia*: the COP urge Parties to adopt an integrated approach in their assessment, management and, where possible, remedial action of inland water ecosystems, including associated terrestrial and inshore marine ecosystems; suitable organisms be identified as being particularly important in the assessment of inland water ecosystems; the COP consider as a specific focus of capacity building in taxonomy the importance of some groups and the large gaps in taxonomic knowledge; and that the COP direct the Executive Secretary to take decisive action to advance the Global Taxonomic Initiative detailed in decision III/10.

**MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY:** On 4 September, the Secretariat introduced the document on conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/4), which transmitted the advice and recommendations of the first Meeting of Experts, held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 7-10 March 1997, along with the Executive Secretary's proposed three-year work plan (WP). During morning and afternoon sessions, delegates considered issues in five thematic areas related to conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity: integrated marine and coastal management areas (IMCAM); marine and coastal protected areas; sustainable use of marine and coastal living resources; mariculture; and alien species.

Many delegations cited the need for further focus and prioritization. The UK, supported by the US, JAPAN and INDONESIA, outlined a possible task management structure, designed to increase involvement by the roster of experts, improve Internet communications, and decrease the cost and time components of large meetings. CANADA and ICELAND, supported by several NGOs, underscored the need for broadened representation on the roster of experts, including a role for local resource users and indigenous peoples. On application of the precautionary approach, CANADA said that SBSTTA should limit activities to well-defined areas where gaps exist, while the US saw no need to make this a separate programme element, as proposed in the Secretariat's report.

There was general support for the proposed implementation of integrated marine and coastal area management (IMCAM). The US stated that IMCAM offers a framework for bringing together the four other plan elements, and INDONESIA, MEXICO and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA also identified IMCAM as a priority area. NEW ZEALAND requested that development of ecosystem approaches to sustainable use of marine and coastal living resources include the identification of critical components of ecosystem functioning. The SEYCHELLES said that approaches should address causes of resource destruction.

The US identified marine and coastal protected areas as a plan element where the CBD could provide "added value." Many delegations expressed concern about using the IUCN category definitions for marine and coastal protected areas. AUSTRALIA explained that the IUCN protected area categories were specifically designed to apply to terrestrial, coastal and marine areas and that their use should not be problematic. The SEYCHELLES, noting the importance of marine and coastal protected areas to small island developing States (SIDS), said their isolation and lack of funding constrains effective management in such areas, particularly in their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

SWEDEN expressed a need for additional data on loss of biodiversity resulting from mariculture. ICELAND, along with PERU, objected to the rationale that mariculture offers possibilities for enhancing genetic aspects of biodiversity. ICELAND, JAPAN,



AUSTRALIA and NORWAY questioned the relevance of the objective that directed collaboration with CITES in identifying vulnerable and endangered commercial species.

Regarding threats to marine and coastal biodiversity from introduction of alien species, BRAZIL, NEW ZEALAND, the SEYCHELLES and the US supported an increased focus on this issue. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA also proposed that the discussion incorporate the debate on Genetically Modified Organisms from the Biosafety Protocol Working Group. SAINT LUCIA observed that development by some island States might include alien species and emphasized the importance of information exchange. CANADA also thought such work was a priority, noting that it was not being handled in a comprehensive process by other institutions. However, SWEDEN and ICELAND suggested that, because organizations, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), are already addressing alien species, SBSTTA should rely on their expertise and efforts.

Several delegations discussed the recommendations of the First Meeting of Experts, which recommended that SBSTTA evaluate initiatives in other sectors regarding eco-labelling of fishery products for conformity with the CBD. BRAZIL said that this subject is better dealt with in other fora and PERU suggested that any efforts undertaken by SBSTTA be coordinated with the World Trade Organization (WTO). TANZANIA and MALAYSIA recommended that emphasis be placed on information exchange.

GERMANY and BRAZIL advocated recognition of the impacts of tourism on biodiversity in coastal regions, with GERMANY cautioning that without sufficient attention, this issue may become political. The BAHAMAS added that impacts of tourism pose a particular threat to SIDS.

The Chair appointed a "friends of the Chair" group to produce revised recommendations. In an evening session, the revised recommendations were presented and approved by the Working Group. The revised draft recommendations increased uniformity with other international agreements and clarified SBSTTA's role in accomplishing its stated objectives. The programme element devoted to the precautionary approach was deleted and the Working Group approved preambular language that instead recognized that such an approach underlies effective use of all coastal and marine living resources. Under the revised recommendations, the COP would direct the Executive Secretary to utilize the roster of experts to monitor and moderate outputs from the work plan. SBSTTA would promote exchange of information and experience, instead of convening workshops to identify and select key indicators to assist in the management of marine and coastal areas. The revised recommendations also removed references to the IUCN categories regarding marine and coastal protected areas.

The revised recommendations address concerns regarding risks posed to marine and coastal biodiversity from mariculture. The draft work plan originally proposed an operational objective on the promotion of sustainable mariculture. This objective was substantially altered to focus on assessing the effects of mariculture on marine and coastal biodiversity and promoting techniques to minimize adverse impacts. The reference to collaboration with CITES in identifying vulnerable and endangered commercial species was deleted.

The revised recommendations also deleted calls for: establishment of a process for dealing with reckless or deliberate introduction of alien species with transboundary effects; and examination of the need for additional effective legal instruments to address such introductions, with a particular focus on IMO guidelines regarding introductions from ship's ballast and sediment discharges. The revised work plan includes proposals to identify gaps in existing and proposed legal instruments and guidelines and would have Parties provide views on the need for additional legal instruments related to deliberate or reckless introductions.

On 5 September, the Chair introduced the draft recommendations and work plan (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.9). The document recognized the special significance of SIDS in the global conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity. SBSTTA also recognized the continued importance of conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity to all countries and recommended to the COP that it maintain and develop liaisons with partner and other organiza-

tions concerned with coastal and marine living resources. SBSTTA recommended that the COP: review instruments relevant to IMCAM; develop guidelines for ecosystem evaluation and assessment; promote ecosystem approaches to the sustainable use of marine and coastal living resources; develop guidance on criteria for, and operational aspects of, marine and coastal protected areas; facilitate research and monitoring of the effects of marine and coastal protected areas on sustainable use of marine living resources; assess the consequences of mariculture on marine and coastal biodiversity and promote techniques that minimize adverse impacts; improve understanding of the impacts on biodiversity caused by introduction of alien species; identify gaps in legal instruments and guidelines related to the introduction of alien species and genotypes; identify a process to deal with reckless or deliberate introductions of alien species and genotypes; establish an "incident list" on introductions of alien species through the national reporting process; assemble a database of case studies with an emphasis on IMCAM; and develop a database of experts available for development and implementation of national policies on marine and coastal biodiversity, promoting the strengthening of taxonomic expertise at regional and national levels. SBSTTA recommended that the COP direct the Executive Secretary to undertake the approved work programme. The work plan was approved, as amended.

## WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II, chaired by Gábor Nechay (Hungary), met from 2-4 September to discuss: a draft work programme for forest biological diversity; review of ongoing activities on agricultural biodiversity; and monitoring and development of a core set of indicators.

**FOREST BIODIVERSITY:** On 2 September, Working Group II exchanged views on forest biodiversity, and a "friends of the Chair" contact group, co-chaired by PERU and FINLAND, was formed. The Forest Contact Group (FCG) met on 3 September and presented draft recommendations to Working Group II on 4 September.

Working Group II focused on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice on Forest Biological Diversity, Taking Account of Research and Technical Priorities Previously Identified: Draft Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/5). The CBD Secretariat said this note was prepared to reflect: recognition of traditional forest biodiversity systems and knowledge and ongoing work under Article 8(j); the need for partnerships and transfer of environmentally sound silvicultural technologies; and COP-3 and SBSTTA-2 decisions to develop the initial focus for a forest biodiversity work programme, particularly regarding methodologies necessary to advance the elaboration and implementation of C&I for the conservation of biodiversity as part of sustainable forest management (SFM) and to analyze scientifically ways in which human activities, in particular forest management practices, influence biodiversity and to assess ways to mitigate negative influences." The CBD Secretariat added that the document also reflects the outcomes of the IPF and other relevant processes and incorporates input from Parties, intergovernmental bodies and the work programme recommendations of the forest biodiversity Liaison Group, which met in Helsinki, Finland, from 25-28 May 1997.

The draft proposed forest work programme included five programme elements: an ecosystem approach to forest biodiversity; integration of forest biodiversity into relevant national sectoral and cross-sectoral planning (Article 6(b)); formulation and implementation of C&I to capture the true state of and pressures on forest biodiversity; identification of research and information needs and mechanisms for coordination; and identification of best practices and approaches in relation to forest biodiversity.

GERMANY, with NORWAY, PERU, the UK, SWITZERLAND and the REPUBLIC OF CONGO, stressed the importance of cooperation with the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF) and non-duplication with the IPF, the International Forum on Forests (IFF) and other ongoing forest activities. FINLAND, with JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, ITALY, GERMANY and FRANCE, said there is no duplication with the IPF and the upcoming IFF. VENEZUELA, with BRAZIL, was concerned about inconsistency with forest-related UNGASS decisions and, with AUSTRALIA and BRAZIL, about possible duplication by



the CBD of the IPF's holistic work on forests. The IFF Interim Secretariat suggested that it is premature for SBSTTA-3 and COP-4 to adopt a work programme on forests before an IFF contribution is made. Alternatively, SWEDEN, PERU, the REPUBLIC OF CONGO, the GLOBAL FOREST POLICY PROJECT (GFPP), GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL and FUNDACION ECOTROPICO warned against other processes duplicating the legally-binding CBD mandate and, with SWITZERLAND, hoped the CBD would not wait to make its contribution to the IFF and would focus on its responsibilities in forest biodiversity. The GFPP reminded delegates that the IPF is over and the IFF dialogue has yet to begin.

The FAO expressed its commitment to cooperate with the CBD on forest and agro-biodiversity issues, particularly on the conservation and use of forest genetic resources and elaboration of forest C&I.

FINLAND and PERU welcomed the forest Liaison Group initiative, but other delegates raised concern over the Group and the means by which the work programme will be formulated and implemented. GERMANY and the UK suggested not being limited to liaison groups and technical workshops. AUSTRALIA, with the GFPP, JAPAN and GERMANY, questioned the transparency and participation of the liaison group model. VENEZUELA, JAPAN, INDIA and the REPUBLIC OF CONGO said the Liaison Group may be duplicating efforts, funding and time.

Delegates generally supported the draft work programme, but had specific and overall comments regarding its content. FINLAND, NORWAY, the UK, AUSTRALIA, SWEDEN, NEPAL, FRANCE, PORTUGAL and the NETHERLANDS called for clearer objectives, priorities and action-orientation. Many delegations objected to the selective inclusion of IPF proposals for action in the proposed work programme. VENEZUELA did not consider discussion of a global framework for forest biodiversity appropriate. The UK, AUSTRIA and JAPAN asked for clarification of who will oversee each work programme element and, with CANADA, requested full costing and timelines for the programme's implementation. CANADA proposed that SBSTTA recommend selection of an appropriate international agency to prepare costed options.

The US suggested prioritization of best practices. NORWAY proposed distinguishing management from scientific aspects. BENIN, with the NETHERLANDS and SOUTH AFRICA, highlighted the role of planted, agricultural and secondary forests in forest biodiversity maintenance. He also called for research on livelihood alternatives for farmers. Many delegations proposed complementing efforts to define SFM and advising on how to integrate biodiversity into national programmes and reporting.

FINLAND called for greater emphasis on: traditional forest related-knowledge (TFRK) and traditional systems of conservation and sustainable use; ongoing work on Article 8(j); and work on human influences and mitigation measures to counter the underlying causes of forest biodiversity loss. GERMANY suggested adding a separate work programme element on assessment of ways to minimize or mitigate negative influences. The AFRICA GROUP stressed the interrelationship of forest and non-forest ecosystems and called for incorporation of community participation and socioeconomic aspects. MEXICO, BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, the NETHERLANDS, FRANCE, AUSTRALIA, PORTUGAL and SWEDEN also stressed incorporation of socioeconomic aspects. SOUTH AFRICA and the NETHERLANDS stressed the restoration of degraded forests and, with KENYA and MALAWI, proposed an inventory and categorization of forests. PERU emphasized the need for national and regional consensus, particularly concerning C&I. With the GFPP, NEW ZEALAND and DENMARK stressed focusing on issues where the CBD can fill gaps.

Regarding the work programme element on the ecosystem approach to forest biodiversity, FINLAND, GERMANY, ITALY, MEXICO, AUSTRALIA and KENYA endorsed the ecosystem approach as a separate work programme element. DENMARK, CANADA, PORTUGAL and the US favored regarding the ecosystem approach as an implicit part of all other work programme elements rather than as a separate area of work. PORTUGAL and the NETHERLANDS proposed integrating all of SBSTTA's work on the ecosystem approach for forest biodiversity, inland waters, and marine and coastal

biodiversity. COLOMBIA, FINLAND and FUNDACION ECOTROPICO suggested clearer definitions and advice on links with national forest programmes, TFRK, Article 8(j) and mitigation measures. GERMANY opposed developing specific methodologies for assessing ecological landscapes, forest fragmentation and population viability. The SWEDISH SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON BIODIVERSITY suggested that research be supported on the history of natural and human ecological disturbance regimes, methods to mimic them in forestry, and ways to improve capacity in taxonomy and participatory processes.

Several delegates supported integration of forest biodiversity into national, sectoral and cross-sectoral planning (Article 6(b)). GERMANY proposed limiting analysis to non-legally binding recommendations for national reporting. AUSTRALIA and VENEZUELA favored national determination of stakeholder definition and participation. NEPAL, MALAWI and SWEDEN called for capacity building in this area through the GEF.

Regarding forest C&I, GERMANY and AUSTRALIA supported a testing and evaluation phase and, with FINLAND, ITALY, DENMARK, CANADA, JAPAN, BRAZIL, the US, SWEDEN and the GFPP, stressed compatibility with existing national, regional or international C&I processes. AUSTRALIA opposed the idea of a global framework for C&I. The GFPP, supported by PERU, the NETHERLANDS and FUNDACION ECOTROPICO, suggested that the CBD improve C&I processes. JAPAN added a proposal for selecting an executing agency such as the FAO or the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

Regarding research needs and information dissemination mechanisms, FINLAND stressed the need to involve national expertise and different stakeholders, and, with PERU, to improve coordination and conduct further analysis of gaps in knowledge. GERMANY suggested prioritizing the analysis of threats to forest biodiversity while AUSTRALIA recommended work on integrating traditional knowledge. FIJI and MALAWI stressed forest inventories. INDIA, with the NETHERLANDS, SOUTH AFRICA, SWEDEN, the US and BIONET, supported prioritization of best practices. SWEDEN suggested focusing on ecosystem and landscape best practices and the US emphasized examining local and regional approaches. The GFPP suggested consideration of how well best practices care for biodiversity. BIONET suggested that Parties, NGOs, and local and indigenous communities submit examples of success stories on, *inter alia*: community-based or collaborative forest and protected area management; alternative livelihoods; low impact silviculture; and independent forest certification that could be shared through the CHM. Although DENMARK noted that best practices for forest biodiversity are a condition for SFM and should be developed for national and biogeographical levels, he did not support best practices as an element of the work programme. GERMANY suggested postponing this element until the ecosystem approach is defined and a systematic analysis of the underlying causes of forest biodiversity loss and ways to mitigate such losses is undertaken.

Participation and procedures in the forest contact group were a source of tension and great concern to NGO observers. On 2 September, when the "open-ended" forest contact group was created, VENEZUELA, supported by ARGENTINA, BRAZIL and COLOMBIA, requested clarification and concern regarding the legal role of NGOs and observers. With BRAZIL, she insisted that UN customary rules of procedure restricting such groups to sovereign States should apply in order to allow them to draft "without pressure." The Chair highlighted SBSTTA's duty to consider all good ideas, including those of observers. At MALAWI's request, the CBD Secretariat read out the CBD rules of procedure that welcome the non-voting participation of non-Party observers and NGOs, unless one-third of Parties present object.

The Chair and NEW ZEALAND brokered a compromise, under which the contact group would meet briefly to continue the exchange of views and seek convergence. Based on that discussion, PERU and FINLAND would work with the Chair and interested governments to produce a draft forest work programme for Working Group II consideration. When the forest contact group met, however, on 3 September,



interested observers and NGOs were only included during the brief mid-day discussions, while further contact group evening discussions and drafting excluded NGOs.

On 4 September, Working Group II adopted the forest contact group paper on forest biodiversity with the work programme that would apply research, cooperation and technology development to: ecosystem approaches; C&I processes; and assessment of ways to mitigate negative influences. Although the GFPP attempted to comment on the contact group paper, the Chair supported BRAZIL's concern that the drafting group remain in the control of governments.

On 5 September, delegates considered the Draft Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.5). The programme of work recognizes the need to: take into account and complement the outcomes of the IPF, other forest related fora and C&I frameworks; SFM in accordance with the ecosystem approach; and traditional systems of forest biodiversity. It recommends that the Executive Secretary consider initiating additional activities on forest biodiversity and that the COP adopt a draft work programme comprised of the following elements: holistic, intersectoral ecosystem approaches that integrate the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity as well as socioeconomic considerations; methodologies necessary to advance the elaboration and implementation of C&I; scientific analysis of the ways in which human activities, in particular forest management practices, influence biodiversity; assessment of ways to minimize or mitigate negative influences; and remaining research and technical priorities. Each of these work programme elements will be undertaken to advance research, cooperation, the development of technologies, capacity building and collaborative efforts. The ways and means for implementing the work programme will include, *inter alia*: liaison groups; regional consultations; case studies; and the CHM.

On 5 September, several delegates reopened the debate on the relationship of the CBD forest work programme to ongoing forest policy fora. SOUTH AFRICA, for the AFRICA GROUP, expressed concern that the CBD would be subservient to the IFF, and with PERU, proposed deletion of language recommending that the CBD forest work programme be "in line with" the IPF, the ITFF and future discussions in the IFF. He argued that the CBD should not be restricted to decisions that have yet to be taken in other fora. BRAZIL and VENEZUELA strongly objected. The Plenary agreed to NEW ZEALAND's formulation that "the activities in the draft work programme be consistent with proposals for action of the IPF and in close cooperation with the IFF and other related fora, taking into account the decisions of UNGASS."

**INDICATORS AND MONITORING:** Working Group II's discussion on implementation of CBD Article 7 on monitoring and assessment was conducted on 4 September, and covered: national elaboration of Annex I of the Convention; assessment of biological diversity; current approaches to indicator development; and a preliminary core set of indicators of biodiversity, particularly those related to threats and capacity building in the application of guidelines and indicators for subsequent national reports. The final recommendations were adopted in Plenary on 5 September.

Discussions on monitoring and assessment were based on Recommendations for a Core Set of Indicators of Biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/9), which: outlines a two-track short-term and long-term approach to assessment and indicator development; highlights the need for a core set of biodiversity indicators and their role in linking policy-making and science; recognizes indicators as information tools for assessing national performance and providing verifiable targets, up-to-date status and projection information and plans for corrective measures; and proposes measuring the CBD's three objectives in terms of state (status and trends), pressure (processes of threat), use, and response (effectiveness of measures) indicators.

Delegations generally agreed with the importance of biodiversity indicators and were supportive of the proposed core set of indicators. Many delegations agreed that indicators could be an important link between policy making, science and public awareness. However, several questioned: the relationship between indicators to management targets; their overall comprehensiveness; and the adequacy of available data, finances and capacity to implement such indicator moni-

toring. A few delegates expressed concern over the prematurity of developing a global-level aggregated set of indicators, while others considered this essential to assessing CBD implementation.

Many delegates, including NORWAY, GERMANY, SWEDEN, FINLAND, DENMARK, CANADA, MALAWI and the AFRICA GROUP, noted the need to benefit from the many ongoing initiatives and to liaise with sister conventions, such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention to Combat Desertification, CITES and Ramsar, as well as with regional and international organizations such as the OECD, the European Environment Agency, UNEP and the FAO.

NEW ZEALAND, supported by the UK, the US, PERU and AUSTRALIA, recommended identifying key questions and principles for: rendering indicators more amenable to interpretation; designing national monitoring and indicator programmes; relating biodiversity indicators to management questions; and enhancing the ability to show trends, provide reliable results and distinguish between natural and human-induced changes. With FINLAND, AUSTRALIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, MEXICO and NORWAY, NEW ZEALAND also prioritized the synthesis of case studies and best practices. PORTUGAL suggested that the CHM be used to exchange information on such case studies.

GERMANY, PERU and NIGER stressed that indicators be practical, policy relevant and empirically based. The AFRICA GROUP cautioned against duplicating efforts and highlighted desertification. AUSTRIA raised the problem of first determining data availability and collection means. SWEDEN, AUSTRIA and INDIA questioned the cost-effectiveness of such work. BRAZIL, FINLAND, NORWAY, the AFRICA GROUP and BIONET supported the two-track approach to begin by pilot-testing existing knowledge in the short-term. The NETHERLANDS supported prioritizing quantity indicators to be later supplemented by indicators of environmental quality.

The AFRICA GROUP, with SWITZERLAND, the NETHERLANDS and CANADA, supported global and regional indicators. SWEDEN, with PORTUGAL and NORWAY, stressed local and national level indicators as a way to improve standards given different starting points. Some delegations favored national and regional indicators and a few commented on the prematurity of developing a core set of global-level biodiversity indicators. AUSTRALIA opposed aggregation of state indicators into a single "national index of national capital" for national accounting. CANADA said that aggregating national data to regional and global levels would give the CBD "teeth."

Delegations generally supported the work of the existing liaison group. However, MEXICO, supported by NEW ZEALAND, SWITZERLAND, the AFRICA GROUP, BIONET and the UK, suggested broadening it to include regional and ecosystem expertise. The US, with DENMARK and the ZIMBABWE TRUST, proposed including NGOs, academia and industry. SWITZERLAND suggested that a roster of experts be created before expanding the liaison group. PORTUGAL recommended that regional discussions precede global ones. ARGENTINA suggested using the CSD approach of regional consultations. FRANCE conveyed concern over the costly duplication of regional initiatives, but the AFRICA GROUP suggested "piggy-backing" meetings onto regional COP preparatory meetings.

The UK, NIGER, DENMARK and NORWAY supported the pressure-state-use-response model. GERMANY opposed the "use" category of indicators, while FRANCE suggested system self-regeneration indicators. MEXICO, with CANADA, FRANCE and AUSTRALIA, proposed adding genetic level indicators. PERU called for, *inter alia*: national indicators; the cautious use of threatened species; and the inclusion of capacity and political indicators. INDIA recommended linking indicators to SFM. ARGENTINA proposed sustainability, socioeconomic and demographic indicators. The AFRICA GROUP noted, *inter alia*, the need to balance conservation and sustainable use objectives, consumptive and non-consumptive uses, and pressure and response indicators. NIGER proposed drought and climate variability as pressure indicators.

Regarding baselines, thresholds and targets as indicator reference points, BIONET emphasized verifiable targets. GERMANY, with the UK, FRANCE, ARGENTINA, PORTUGAL, FINLAND,



AUSTRALIA and the EC, opposed using a pre-industrial baseline. The AFRICA GROUP preferred a "pre-impact" baseline to account for differences between regions. The US supported a 1993 baseline.

During review of the Chair's draft paper, MEXICO and SWITZERLAND inserted reference to "all three levels," referring to genetic, species and ecosystem level biodiversity. CANADA added a reference to "standard methodologies" for ensuring the principle of indicator reliability. ARGENTINA added language on the role of indicators in assessing CBD implementation performance, while SWITZERLAND and the US added text on the wider "global and regional" role of indicators so that they follow global and regional trends in biodiversity. Working Group II participants adopted the Chair's revised draft on 4 September.

On 5 September, delegates reopened the debate on the role and appropriate level for indicators. NEW ZEALAND proposed replacing the role of indicators in "assessing the performance in the implementation of the Convention" with "ensuring that the objectives of the Convention are met." However, in stressing that indicators be management tools and not be control instruments for CBD implementation or for comparing countries internationally, SWEDEN, with COLOMBIA, suggested deleting this reference and the premature specification of their wider role at regional and global levels. SWITZERLAND and GERMANY insisted on the important future role of global indicators for assessing CBD implementation and ensuring better understanding of biodiversity at the global level. Delegates agreed to the formulation by SWEDEN, GERMANY, AUSTRALIA, SWITZERLAND, ITALY, NEW ZEALAND and FRANCE that the role of indicators be in assessing CBD implementation and in public awareness, and added a new point "that in the future the development of regional and global indicators will be necessary to assess specific aspects of the world's biodiversity."

The final recommendations to the COP adopted by the Plenary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.4) recognize: the vital importance of biodiversity indicators at all levels; the primary role of indicators in assessing CBD implementation and in the future assessment of specific aspects of the world's biodiversity at regional and global levels; and the need to avoid duplication and support continuous data collection. It recommends that the Secretariat and liaison group: work on indicators; represent a wide range of geographical and sectoral expertise; take into account other international indicator initiatives, particularly those relating to sustainable development and biodiversity; develop a key set of standard questions and principles for designing national-level monitoring programmes and indicators; and invite countries and organizations to put forward case studies. Parties should be urged to: share relevant experience on indicators through the CHM; consider means for regional coordination of indicator development and capacity building in indicator development; and adopt an annexed preliminary outline of work on indicators under a two-track approach that includes setting up a roster of experts, collecting case studies, developing capacity and a menu of thematic indicators and continues with further research and development on a second set of indicators.

**AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY:** On 2 and 3 September, Working Group II discussed the Secretariat's paper, Review of Ongoing Activities on Agricultural Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/6). Delegates generally supported the multi-year Work Programme, but favored continuing review of current activities rather than proposals for new activities. AUSTRIA and AUSTRALIA advocated acceptance of all draft recommendations. The AFRICA GROUP, the US, the NETHERLANDS and ETHIOPIA called for SBSTTA's analysis of the work programme's gaps. The NETHERLANDS stressed an action orientation. PERU and MALI highlighted the importance of socio-cultural concerns, including conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources to ensure food security.

The US noted that the FAO and CBD Secretariats have not yet been asked to develop further recommendations, 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 and earthworms, not just microorganisms. CANADA called for prioritizing completion of the review of ongoing activities on agro-biodiver-

sity, 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 semi-arid 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 work programme and for technology transfer.

The UK, the NETHERLANDS, the US, CANADA, ARGENTINA and GERMANY were pleased with FAO/CBD Secretariat collaboration. JAPAN urged further modalities for strengthening cooperation between 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, underscored 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 the FAO's attention to biodiversity and sustainability.

INDONESIA called for pooled efforts to enhance capacity for utilizing domestic resources. The US, GERMANY, ARGENTINA and CANADA encouraged work with other international organizations and NGOs such as UNEP, CGIAR and IUCN. The AFRICA GROUP and FRANCE called for better coordination, particularly on funding, at the international level. The FAO said it is establishing an internal working group dedicated to the CBD. She said the FAO works closely with 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 expressed "puzzlement" over calls for more work programme elements given the small number of Parties who submitted reports. PERU, INDIA and the AFRICA GROUP supported regional working groups. The GEF reiterated its support for national action programmes related to agro-biodiversity.

Regarding identification, monitoring and assessment, BRAZIL, supported by the UK, called for a core set of agro-biodiversity C&I for 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 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 agro-biodiversity 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 agro-biodiversity assessment, including the possible scope of a Global State of the World Report (GSR) 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 stressed that the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should initiate any future versions of the GSR. 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 agro-biodiversity; and the need for two-way feedback, including regional consultations and working groups. An NGO CONSORTIUM representative asked for inclusion of pollinators and soil microorganisms in the next GSR.

Draft recommendations on agro-biodiversity were reviewed on 4 September. A first draft was viewed as too long and redundant. A second draft was tabled. Delegates accepted a proposal by BRAZIL to change mention of "Annex 3" (case studies) to "Annex 2" (list of thematic areas) in the recommendation to expand the focus on soil microorganisms to soil biota. After much debate, delegates accepted MALAWI's proposal to delete mention of FAO initiatives from a paragraph on providing guidance to the GEF and other funding institutions. CANADA added language on "providing an opportunity for Parties and governments to provide input" in identifying issues related to trade and agro-biodiversity. The US changed C&I for agricultural biodiversity to "indicators," and deleted language on a core set of C&I and sustainable agriculture.

The final document on agricultural biodiversity, a Review of Ongoing Activities (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.6), was approved on 5 September. This document highlights collaboration with the FAO and notes the importance of successful renegotiations and adaptation of the IU in harmony with the CBD's objectives. It also highlights: the need to address ecosystem, species and genetic levels of biodiversity; the importance of traditional farming systems; all soil biota; the GEF's efforts to address agricultural biodiversity; the proposed collaboration between the CBD, WTO and FAO to identify issues connected to the relationship between trade and agricultural biodiversity; use of the CHM; development of indicators for agricultural biodiversity; and the importance of submitting information on relevant activities and existing instruments at the national level in national reports. Operational paragraphs recommend that the COP: note progress made in initiating development of a multi-year work programme to implement decision III/11 on conservation and sustainable use of agro-biodiversity; encourage ongoing review of activities and instruments and closer collaboration with other relevant international bodies; reaffirm that the multi-year work programme is an iterative process; and provide guidance to the GEF and other funding institutions to assist countries with implementation.

### CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday, 5 September, Chair Zakri A. Hamid (Malaysia) opened the final Plenary session by inviting Rapporteur Mgongu-Sodi Nagahuedi (Democratic Republic of Congo) to present the draft report of SBSTTA-3 and the recommendations produced by the Working Groups (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/L.1 - L.9). Delegates considered, amended and adopted the results, including SBSTTA's recommended work programmes.

The Chair introduced a draft recommendation proposed by the SBSTTA Bureau on the participation of Parties in the Convention process. Under the recommendation, SBSTTA would state that the decline in support for participation of representatives from developing countries and countries with economies in transition is one of the most significant threats to CBD implementation. SBSTTA would acknowledge the Secretariat's limitations in mobilizing funds resulting from its absence of authority in the budget of the CBD. SBSTTA would also, *inter alia*: recognize that contributions have been generous but insufficient; commend developing countries and countries with economies in

transition that have found alternative means of ensuring participation; and encourage all Parties to demonstrate more generosity and exert extreme care in the use of additional voluntary resources.

Under the two final provisions of the recommendations, SBSTTA would recommend that COP-4: include provisions in the core budget for funding one participant per developing country and country with an economy in transition, using additional voluntary contributions for additional delegates from the same countries; and include a provision in the core budget for enabling the Secretariat to mobilize additional financial contributions. SBSTTA would also recommend that the COP adopt a similar approach for other meetings under the CBD.

The UK, supported by AUSTRIA, CANADA and NEW ZEALAND, suggested replacing the two final provisions with language recommending that COP-4 give urgent consideration to the resolution of this serious problem, in relation to both SBSTTA and other meetings held under the CBD. ARGENTINA and MALAWI supported the retention of the final provisions. Delegates agreed to accept the UK amendment and refer to the points made in the final clauses in the report of the meeting.

Regarding the date and venue of SBSTTA-4, BELGIUM noted the need to set a definite date, and SWITZERLAND proposed the beginning of 1999.

The Chair said the dates would be decided at COP-4. GERMANY stated that if SBSTTA-4 were held in 1999, his country would offer to serve as host.

The LATIN AMERICAN FOREST NETWORK, on behalf of NGOs, recalled that Agenda 21 noted the importance of civil society participation in international environmental agreements. She noted that it was recognized by the General Assembly and incorporated into the work programmes of its subsidiary bodies, and expressed concern about the attitudes of some governments which had agreed to the recognition. She characterized the "incident" in the forest drafting group as unfortunate, especially since SBSTTA is a scientific body. She highlighted the important role of NGOs, and noted that agreements will lose credibility without full participation.

CANADA supported the input from NGOs, but noted the need for flexibility. ARGENTINA said that while all Parties, observers and others have had the opportunity to contribute, there is a point where governments must "draw the line." He said that the rules of the game do not seem clear to some participants and, with BRAZIL, noted that COP-4 could change the rules of procedure, if needed.

The Chair thanked delegates, as well as the "long-suffering" Chairs of the working groups, for the high-quality discussions and their diligence. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:00 pm.

### A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SBSTTA-3

Delegates to SBSTTA-3 left Montreal with some tangible accomplishments, having agreed to recommendations and work programmes for all of their issue areas. Some aspects of SBSTTA-3 evidenced a marked improvement over previous meetings. A notable number of delegates commented on the much-improved quality and scope of Secretariat documentation. Nonetheless, not all reviews of SBSTTA-3 were favorable. Some delegates commented that discussions lacked a sense of urgency and at times bordered on ambivalent. Others noted that SBSTTA-3 was confronted with some of the same dilemmas as SBSTTA-2, such as an "identity crisis," reflecting a divergence between SBSTTA's scientific mandate and its political practice.

**MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY:** Work on conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity was relatively uncontroversial, perhaps owing to the strong framework provided by the first Meeting of Experts, and many delegates were pleased with the overall outcome. However, some NGOs expressed frustration with SBSTTA's failure to adequately recognize the potential contributions of traditional and local expertise, while other participants wondered if the roster of experts would ever become more than a roster. At the close of the meeting, some still expressed the need to make greater immediate progress, especially with respect to the adverse impacts of mariculture and introduction of alien species on marine and coastal biodiversity. If COP-4 mandates greater involve-



ment by the impressive roster of experts through, for instance, peer review of products or activities called for under the work programme, this may help resolve SBSTTA's identity crisis.

**INLAND WATERS:** Discussion on inland water biodiversity were relatively straightforward, with the exception of whether to endorse the Ramsar Convention's criteria for identifying wetlands and whether to adopt the IUCN criteria and definitions for threatened species. Some delegates questioned whether these criteria were comprehensive enough, given the scope of the CBD. In both cases, delegates called for future work and collaboration, but did not specify how or when this would be achieved. The status of work on criteria may reflect the delicate balancing act between SBSTTA's charge to develop scientifically robust standards against its need to make discernible progress.

**FORESTS:** As predicted by many observers prior to SBSTTA-3, the forest agenda proved tricky and controversial. COP-2 had asked SBSTTA to provide scientific advice on advancing SFM criteria and indicators and on ways to mitigate human impacts on forests. However, SBSTTA-3 focused on developing a work programme on forest biodiversity. Some participants were concerned that SBSTTA did not adequately focus on the two prior COP decisions. Other delegates were concerned about whether SBSTTA should be working on a forest programme, given that forests have not yet been a COP thematic agenda item. Other participants felt the resulting work programme was neither strategic nor specific on issues such as integration of biodiversity into forest management, voluntary certification and equitable sharing of benefits.

Some observers noted an effort to shift the lead on forest biodiversity to the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, a body of lower legal status that will consider biological questions on forests only within the context of many other issues directly or indirectly connected to forests. Some participants were delighted that SBSTTA delegates agreed to weaken a recommendation that would have the activities of the work programme be "in line with" the proposals for action of the IPF and with future deliberations of the IFF. In their view, language requiring the CBD work "in coordination with" the IFF would mean the forest work programme is not subordinate to or waiting upon the IFF outcomes.

**AGRO-BIODIVERSITY:** Some observers were pleased with the joint efforts of the CBD Secretariat and the FAO on agro-biodiversity issues and cited it as a positive example of the cooperation with other organizations so often called for at CBD meetings. A few participants, however, would have preferred SBSTTA-3 recommendations that could influence the renegotiations of the International Undertaking. Access and benefit sharing will continue to be difficult issues and SBSTTA-3 made no great strides toward addressing their linkage to trade issues. One observer was pleased that SBSTTA seemed prepared to collaborate with the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment, but said an opportunity was missed to consider all WTO activities and committees, such as TRIPS and the Committee on Agriculture.

**NGOS:** Many NGOs voiced strong disappointment and frustration regarding the forest contact group, wherein the "open-ended" group that met in the afternoon was closed to NGOs in the evening with little warning or explanation. Some were concerned about setting a precedent that could hamper future NGO contributions to SBSTTA and other UN scientific bodies. Others commented that the exclusion appeared politically motivated, particularly regarding the work programme's relationship with the IPF/IFF, indicating that SBSTTA is anything but a truly scientific body. Beyond the question of access and procedure, some NGOs said SBSTTA-3 could be regarded as having stalled the momentum on biodiversity.

**THE EVOLUTION OF SBSTTA:** In his opening address, Chair Hamid reiterated his predecessor's plea that SBSTTA become neither a "mini-COP" nor a "drafting group." By the end of the week, however, it appeared as though some observers were not satisfied that SBSTTA had followed its scientific and technical policy advisory mandate. Some participants commented that controversial political issues, including financial coordination matters and institutional turf battles, had sometimes subsumed SBSTTA-3 discussions. Others complained

that SBSTTA delegates did not seem well prepared for a truly science-based discussion. A more skeptical observer commented that some delegates do not know their algae from their invertebrates.

In her address to SBSTTA-3, UNEP Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell posed the question: could delegates say that the world's biodiversity is in a better state now, five years after Rio, because of their work as scientists and their influence to the COP. When asked privately for their response to this question, most delegates were either non-committal or appeared perplexed. It was unclear whether this uncertainty stemmed from lack of opinion or reluctance to denigrate the hard work of the many participants. What is clear, however, is the amount and complexity of work that SBSTTA-3 is sending to COP-4, the outcome of which could provide a better indicator of SBSTTA's contribution to biodiversity conservation.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY:** COP-4 is scheduled for 4-15 May 1998 in Bratislava, Slovakia. For more information contact the CBD Secretariat, World Trade Centre, 393 St. Jacques Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: [chm@biodiv.org](mailto:chm@biodiv.org); Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org>.

**AD HOC GROUP ON BIOSAFETY:** The third meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Group on Biosafety (BSWG-3) is scheduled for 13-17 October 1997 in Montreal. During BSWG II, delegates discussed the possibility of a fourth meeting to be held February/March 1998 and considered a fifth meeting in late 1998. For more information, contact the CBD Secretariat.

**REGIONAL WORKSHOPS ON THE CLEARINGHOUSE MECHANISM:** The Asian Regional Workshop is tentatively scheduled for 3-5 November 1997 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The African Regional Workshop is tentatively scheduled for November/December in a venue to be determined. The Workshop for countries with economies in transition is tentatively scheduled for November/December in Gödöllő, Hungary. For more information, contact the CBD Secretariat.

**PREPARATORY MEETINGS FOR COP-4:** The Asian Preparatory Meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 1998 in Beijing, China. The African Preparatory Meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 1998 in Morocco. The Latin American and Caribbean Preparatory Meeting is tentatively scheduled for February/March in a venue to be determined. The Preparatory Meeting for countries with economies in transition is scheduled for March 1998 in Almaty, Kazakstan. For more information, contact the CBD Secretariat.

**TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE WORKSHOP:** A workshop on the implementation of Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge) is tentatively scheduled from 24-28 November 1997 in Madrid. For more information, contact the CBD Secretariat.

**EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:** The next session of the CGFRA will take place during the second half of April 1999. For more information, contact FAO: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy; tel: +39-6-52251. Also try <http://www.fao.org> or <http://web.icppgr.fao.org>.

**CONFERENCE ON BIOTIC RESERVES AND MASS EXTINCTIONS:** The Conference on Biotic Reserves and Mass Extinctions, convened by UNESCO, will be held from 12-14 September 1997 in Prague, Czech Republic. For information, contact: Petra Hovorkova; fax: +42-2-612-11247; e-mail: [recovery@gli.cas.cz](mailto:recovery@gli.cas.cz).

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MEDICINAL PLANTS CONSERVATION, UTILIZATION, TRADE AND BIOCULTURES:** This meeting is scheduled from 16-20 February 1998 at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, India. The meeting will focus on the issue of medicinal plants for survival. For further information, contact the Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT), No. 50, 2nd Stage, MSHLayout, Anandnagar, Bangalore 560 024, India; tel: +91 80 333 6909/0348; fax: +91 80 333 4167; email: [root@frlht.ernet.in](mailto:root@frlht.ernet.in).