

## SBSTTA 23 Highlights:

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

The 23rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23) met in plenary throughout the day to address sustainable wildlife management, technical and scientific cooperation, ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) in the North-East Atlantic, and new and emerging issues. A contact group met in the evening to discuss possible target themes and elements for the post-2020 framework.

### Sustainable Wildlife Management

Kristina Rodina, FAO, Secretary of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW), and Carolina Behe-Harris, Inuit Circumpolar Council, delivered opening presentations.

Rodina highlighted findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment, including the importance of direct exploitation of wildlife as a driver for biodiversity loss. She urged parties to address the root causes of over-exploitation of wildlife and to recognize the contribution of sustainable wildlife management to sustainable livelihoods.

Behe-Harris highlighted the practices of Inuit peoples in sustainably and holistically caring for and harvesting wildlife, comparing it to a dynamic puzzle with cultural and spiritual components. She pleaded for the rights, values, and traditions of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) to be accurately reflected in the post-2020 process.

The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CBD/SBSTTA/23/5).

Many welcomed the Secretariat's report, noting, *inter alia*: the importance of the sustainable use of biodiversity in wildlife management; the need to tackle illegal wildlife trade; the importance of subnational, national, regional, and international cooperation; and national efforts to promote sustainable wildlife management.

The AFRICAN GROUP, with many African countries, pressed the need to valorize biodiversity in considering sustainable wildlife management through sustainable ecotourism and by ensuring benefits for local communities. The ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) noted its ministerial meeting on illegal wildlife trade and the need for legal literacy for local communities.

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (CEE) proposed that the Secretariat extend initiatives with regard to wildlife management in regions not previously studied and prepare additional guidelines. NEW ZEALAND stressed that complementary guidelines should take into account national circumstances. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) emphasized the need to address wildlife management at the subregional level.

FINLAND, supported by NORWAY, FRANCE, and ECUADOR, requested the Secretariat to: analyze the first draft of the IPBES thematic assessment of the sustainable use of wild species; and collaborate with all relevant stakeholders. The UK recommended

that the Convention take a "considered, longer-term" view of the sustainable use of biodiversity after COP15. FRANCE underscored taking into account wild species in sectoral policies.

MEXICO, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR, ARGENTINA, ISRAEL, and others called for balance between sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity. COLOMBIA suggested consideration of species not covered by the relevant CBD decision.

ISRAEL suggested including non-consumptive uses. ARGENTINA called for fully assessing negative and positive impacts of hunting. BOTSWANA stressed that when wildlife is in abundance, "the bushmeat industry must be supported and managed sustainably." NAMIBIA emphasized that alternatives should focus on demand management rather than demand reduction. INDIA distinguished subsistence consumption from luxury consumption.

EGYPT, ECUADOR, and others suggested strengthening the draft recommendations. MALAYSIA, SUDAN, GUINEA, and others emphasized the need for financial assistance and capacity building focusing on implementation. CHAD emphasized the need to address illegal trade by strengthening cross-border cooperation. GUINEA drew attention to public-private partnerships and the need to further involve IPLCs.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) highlighted that collaboration between all actors, including IPLCs, is crucial. The CBD WOMEN'S CAUCUS called for addressing current gaps regarding the role of women and IPLCs for a sustainable wild meat sector. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) called for ecosystems used for small-scale wildlife gathering and harvesting to be protected against commercial exploitation and pollution. TRAFFIC, the WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY, and the WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF) suggested that legal and illegal wildlife use be the subject of a post-2020 target.

A conference room paper (CRP) will be prepared.

### Technical and Scientific Cooperation

The Secretariat introduced document CBD/SBSTTA/23/6.

Many parties welcomed the document, highlighting the importance of scientific and technical cooperation for the implementation of the post-2020 framework.

CANADA, BELGIUM, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and others noted that the document goes beyond the mandate of decision 14/24, requesting the Secretariat to review it so that parties can first discuss the process before considering options for the review of cooperation initiatives. CEE, the EU, JAPAN, NORWAY, the UK, JAMAICA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, and others requested further information on the budgetary and operational consequences of the options for institutional mechanisms and modalities. NEW ZEALAND stressed the need for efficient, effective, and non-duplicative mechanisms. JAMAICA suggested noting "with concern" the constraints and challenges regarding technical and scientific cooperation, calling for a focused programme tailored to regional needs. SWITZERLAND cautioned against further stretching the limited resources of the Secretariat.

The UK and NORWAY noted that the scope should be broadened, and that research should address all fields relevant to direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. AUSTRALIA proposed recalling decision 14/24 on capacity building, and technical and scientific cooperation.

The AFRICAN GROUP highlighted the importance of many cooperation and training initiatives in Africa. ASEAN emphasized the value of setting up regional and subregional technical cooperation centers. ASEAN, ARGENTINA, MOROCCO, and THAILAND underlined the importance of South-South cooperation. JORDAN pressed for common research programmes across fora. TIMOR LESTE emphasized capacity building, and financial support for developing countries. PERU suggested the creation of an assistance unit to improve cooperation, technology transfer, and financing.

GERMANY, FINLAND, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, UGANDA, ARGENTINA, and others suggested taking into account existing arrangements and partnerships. FRANCE suggested formalizing the links between technical bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and IPBES.

CEE, THAILAND, and others recommended enhancing capacity building. ASEAN pressed for the process to include all stakeholders. MOROCCO called for the development of networks and partnerships for biodiversity-related research. COLOMBIA suggested a focus on transformative change, taking into account the principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities. EGYPT suggested that the notion of “technology transfer” be expanded to “technology access.”

SOUTH AFRICA suggested supporting parties in the development of essential foundational science to implement the post-2020 framework, and noted the need to ensure traceability of shared data for benefit-sharing from commercial use of digital sequence information (DSI). CAMEROON, UGANDA, GHANA, and MALAWI also stressed the need to address DSI. SAINT LUCIA urged building capacities for biodiversity research at the genetic level. BRAZIL stressed that biotechnology transfer should be explicitly addressed. The PHILIPPINES noted that technological cooperation should be subject to appropriate safeguards, such as legal requirements.

The UK proposed amendments to the terms of reference (TORs) of the informal advisory committee. BELGIUM suggested discussing the TORs during the third meeting of the subsidiary body on implementation (SBI).

IIFB underscored the importance of access to information. The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY (GBIF) shared experiences from supporting data access in all regions. The GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS BIODIVERSITY OBSERVATION NETWORK (GEO BON) highlighted remote sensing observation methods. IPC criticized current arrangements, highlighting the importance of traditional knowledge. The CBD ALLIANCE, supported by Ethiopia and the Philippines, proposed inviting parties to submit proposals to enable technology horizon-scanning, assessment, and monitoring.

A CRP will be prepared.

### ***Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas in the North-East Atlantic Ocean***

The Secretariat introduced document CBD/SBSTTA/23/7.

Many noted their appreciation for the workshop on EBSAs in the North-East Atlantic Ocean. FINLAND, with PORTUGAL, SWEDEN, DENMARK, and ICELAND, supported the draft recommendation with minor amendments.

PORTUGAL called on parties in the region to submit the results of their national EBSA processes. MOROCCO noted that the workshop had included the Azores and the Canary Islands. GHANA commented on the need for financial outlays and SOUTH AFRICA noted the need for an enhanced process including areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

IIFB underlined that knowledge holders, including IPLCs, hold vital knowledge and should be included in such processes. IPC stated that small-scale fishing communities must be included, respected, and protected when identifying EBSAs.

A CRP will be prepared.

### ***New and Emerging Issues***

The Secretariat introduced document CBD/SBSTTA/23/8.

Many supported the suggested recommendations in principle, highlighting the criteria of decision IX/29 to be applied in evaluating proposals for new and emerging issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

CANADA, with BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, COLOMBIA, NEW ZEALAND, SWITZERLAND, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, and AUSTRALIA, requested deleting a recommendation on “open environmental transformation technologies,” stating that the necessary information is lacking, and that it should be considered neither under synthetic biology nor as a new and emerging issue.

BELGIUM, the UK, and others agreed with the proposed recommendations stating that the long list of SBSTTA topics should not be expanded. MOROCCO opined that synthetic biology should be considered as a new and emerging issue if it presents a risk of negative consequences for biodiversity. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA, SOUTH AFRICA, and others agreed to postpone the relevant discussion to SBSTTA 24.

NORWAY emphasized that synthetic biology has already gained momentum within the Convention, urging not to underestimate the potential negative and positive effects on biodiversity. ETHIOPIA and TURKEY supported the proposals for new and emerging issues on synthetic biology, and on the open-air use of nucleic acids and proteins to alter traits, genes, or other kinds of genetic material.

IPC described biopiracy and cultural piracy as new forms of plunder upon IPLCs. The ETC GROUP stressed that open environmental transformation technologies are part of synthetic biology, emphasizing the need for mechanisms on horizon scanning and monitoring in the post-2020 framework.

A CRP will be prepared.

### ***Contact Group on Potential Elements for the Post-2020 Framework***

In the evening, delegates met in a contact group to discuss elements for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in document CBD/SBSTTA/23/2/Add.4, considering possible target themes and elements, including biodiversity and conservation outcomes, direct drivers, and the use and value of nature. Discussions continued into the night.

### ***In the Corridors***

Politics became more visible on Wednesday when discussions on synthetic biology emerged in plenary. While considering whether synthetic biology is a new and emerging issue was effectively curtailed until the next SBSTTA, the discussion left many participants with concerns. “Procedure has made it basically impossible to consider any new or emerging issue,” one seasoned observer bemoaned, referring to the relevant criteria. “Synthetic biology is already under the Convention’s realm,” another added, lamenting what he perceived as “delaying tactics that have gone on for far too long.”

Some observers noted the tension inherent in maintaining the SBSTTA’s mandate, especially as a contact group on goals and targets began to move towards midnight. “There’s a lot of mission creeping going on,” one said, referring to the struggle to keep politics out of science-based discussions. “We’re a scientific body, but policy talk before the COP seems inevitable.” Most delegates agreed that finding agreement on sticking points in discussions, including emerging technologies, requires more than scientific exchange. They pointed to high-level political decisions that can pave the way forward before, during, or after the forthcoming conference of the parties in China.