



RECENT MEA ACTIVITIES

► BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

PROGRESS ACHIEVED ON LIABILITY NEGOTIATIONS UNDER THE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL

The second meeting of the Friends of the Co-Chairs on Liability and Redress under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety convened from 8-12 February 2010, in Putrajaya, Malaysia. The meeting attempted to conclude negotiations on international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of living modified organisms (LMOs), including: a supplementary protocol on liability and redress; guidelines on civil liability; the supplementary compensation scheme; and complementary capacity-building measures. The meeting did not conclude the negotiation of a supplementary protocol, however it achieved significant progress on several of the most contentious issues, including the elaboration of a legally-binding provision on civil liability. A number of issues remain outstanding, including the definitions of “operator,” “products” of LMOs and “imminent threat of damage,” the objective, and the issue of financial security. As a result, delegates decided to convene a third meeting of the Friends of the Co-Chairs in June 2010, in order to resolve all outstanding issues so the supplementary protocol can be adopted at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP5) to the Biosafety Protocol, to be held in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan (<http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/bs-gflr2/>).



L-R: Co-Chairs René Lefeber and Jimena Nieto, and Worku Damena Yifru, CBD Secretariat, during the closed door negotiations

In other biosafety news, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has published the seventh issue of the *Biosafety Protocol News*, focusing on experiences and lessons learned in facilitating the exchange of information on, and experience with, LMOs through the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) (<https://www.cbd.int/doc/newsletters/bpn/bpn-07.pdf>).

The CBD Secretariat has also launched an online forum on the BCH, designed to provide the opportunity for comments on the updated draft elements of the strategic plan, and the proposed framework for the second assessment and review of the Biosafety Protocol. The forum will be open until 28 February 2010 (<http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/spforum.shtml>).

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GUEST ARTICLE

Building Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform: Have we got all the blocks?

By Kerry Lang, IISD's Global Subsidies Initiative

Abstract

In the absence of a multilaterally-agreed outcome from Copenhagen, coordinated national efforts to eliminate subsidies to fossil fuels may provide an opportunity to significantly reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

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RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

TROPICAL FOREST UPDATE: OWNING AFRICA'S FORESTS

(ITTO, February 2010) The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) has published a special edition of its newsletter, *Tropical Forest Update*, reporting on the International Conference on Forest Tenure, Governance and Enterprise: New Opportunities for Central and West Africa, held in May 2009, in Yaoundé, Cameroon (http://www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics_pdf_download/topics_id=2269&no=0).

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► BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE



The Cantus Choir during the opening session of the Sixth Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity

TRONDHEIM CONFERENCE ADDRESSES POST-2010 BIODIVERSITY TARGETS, CBD LAUNCHES IYB OFFICIAL VIDEO

Co-hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, UNEP and the CBD Secretariat, the Sixth Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity was held from 1-5 February 2010, in Trondheim, Norway. Participants discussed the status of, and lessons learned from, the 2010 target to reduce significantly the current rate of biodiversity loss, and challenges for setting post-2010 targets. Other issues addressed included the economics of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into societal decisions. The Conference produced a Chair's Report, which will be forwarded as an information document to the upcoming 14th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD and the third meeting of the CBD Working Group on Review of Implementation, to be held in May 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya. The Report outlines 12 messages, including on biodiversity loss and human well-being, biodiversity targets, and the need for implementation, communication, resources, and science and knowledge (<http://www.iisd.ca/yimb/biodiv/tcb6/>).

In other CBD-related news, the CBD Secretariat, in close collaboration with Dev TV and UNEP, has launched the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) official video (<http://www.cbd.int/2010/multimedia/>). The CBD Secretariat has also published the first interim report on the celebration of IYB, highlighting achievements accomplished in the first month of global celebrations (<http://www.cbd.int/iyb/doc/iyb-report-2010-01-02-en.pdf>).

Finally, the CBD Secretariat has circulated the agenda of the 14th meeting of the SBSTTA, to be held from 10-21 May 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya (<http://www.cbd.int/sbstta14/>).

NEW MOU ON SHARKS AGREED UNDER THE CMS

The third meeting on International Cooperation on Migratory Sharks under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) convened from 10-12 February 2010, in Manila, the Philippines. It was preceded by the Technical Meeting for the Elaboration of a Conservation and Management Plan for Migratory Sharks, held from 8-9 February. The meetings resulted in finalizing a non-legally binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on migratory sharks and a clear procedure for completing work on the conservation plan. Delegates agreed to include

all seven shark species in the CMS appendices under the new agreement: the Great White, Basking, Whale, Porbeagle, Spiny Dogfish, Shortfin and Longfin Mako Sharks. Ten delegations signed the MoU during the meeting, thus allowing the MoU to commence on 1 March 2010 (<http://www.iisd.ca/cms/sharks3/>; http://www.cms.int/news/PRESS/nwPR2010/02_feb/CMS_press_release_global_agreement_sharks.pdf).

The CMS Secretariat has also launched an encyclopedia on all 72 species of toothed whales, including the most recent scientific findings on the distribution, migration, behavior and threats to this group of whales. The report concludes that toothed whales are currently suffering from a major threat: unsustainable loss from by-catch in fishery operations (http://www.cms.int/reports/small_cetaceans/contents.htm; http://www.cms.int/news/PRESS/nwPR2010/02_feb/cetaceans_fisheries.pdf).

FOCUS ON BLUEFIN TUNA AS CITES COP APPROACHES

The Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has circulated a press release highlighting that over 40 proposals will be decided on at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention, to be held from 13-25 March 2010, in Doha, Qatar, including on the bluefin tuna, elephant populations and a wide range of sharks, corals, reptiles, insects and plants. Proposals are made to bring eight commercially fished species under the CITES appendices, with attention particularly focused on Monaco's proposal to list bluefin tuna under CITES Annex I (http://www.cites.org/eng/news/press_release.shtml).

The CITES Secretariat has also revamped its website, with a focus to the upcoming COP, including a countdown to its opening (<http://www.cites.org/>).

► INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

UNEP TO ASSESS OLYMPIC GAMES, UNEP FI RELEASES CLIMATE SURVEY

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced it will produce an Environmental Assessment Report in 2010 on the 2010 Winter Olympics. UNEP has been working with the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) of the 2010 Winter Olympics, to enhance the event's environmental performance and increase green awareness. UNEP

and VANOC have partnered on the "Do Your Part" video contest, which called on youth to live a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle during and beyond the 2010 Games (<http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=612&ArticleID=6460&l=en>).

In other UNEP news, the UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP FI) has launched a global survey to identify the climate change data needs of the financial services sector. The survey aims to estab-

lish: how and to what extent financial institutions (lenders, investors and insurers) are already affected by climate change and how their exposure will develop in the future; the information needs of the financial services sector with regard to the physical impacts of climate change; and how well financial institutions are already equipped with the climate change information needed and where gaps exist (<http://www.unepfi.org/>).

GUEST ARTICLE (cont.)

It is increasingly recognized that taxing carbon with one hand while with other continuing to subsidize the production and consumption of fossil fuels makes no sense. A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study found that removing consumer subsidies to energy in 20 non-OECD countries would reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent in 2050. The impact could be much higher if subsidies in OECD countries, and subsidies provided for the production of fossil fuels, were to be included.

The Group of Twenty largest industrialized and emerging nations (G-20) are leading efforts to reform energy subsidies as part of their Energy Security and Climate Change agenda. Last September, G-20 Leaders announced a commitment to rationalize and phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption, and called on other nations to follow suit.

Picking up the G-20's call for action, APEC Leaders similarly announced, in November 2009, a commitment to phase out subsidies to fossil fuels that encourage wasteful consumption.

Having garnered the necessary political support for fossil-fuel subsidy reform, the challenge now lies in turning the announcements into coherent action.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), OECD, Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the World Bank are working with others such as the Global Subsidies Initiative (GSI) to provide support to G-20 governments in preparing their implementation plans and timeframes.

The GSI's policy brief *Building Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform: Have we got all the blocks?* presents an overview of the status of the six blocks needed to undertake reform of fossil-fuel subsidies at a global scale, with reference to the GSI's research in this area:

Mapping the Characteristics: Consumer subsidies are relatively easy to identify, but lack of information on producer subsidies is an impediment to reform. Research is underway to investigate the types of producer subsidies that are prevalent across a range of countries such as the United States, China, Germany and Indonesia. In order to produce comprehensive and internationally comparable data, an agreed-upon methodology for defining and calculating subsidies is needed.

Assessing the Impacts: In the last 20 years, six studies have attempted to analyze the global impacts of subsidy reform for all fuels. Most considered effects on greenhouse-gas emissions and gross domestic product (GDP) but very

little of the work considered other environmental or social impacts.

Understanding the Politics: Subsidies exist, not simply due to demand for them, but because the supply mechanisms require little administrative capability and policymakers the world over find them politically difficult to resist.

Developing Reform Strategies: There is no set formula or model for developing national strategies for subsidy reform, although experience provides important guidance for other policy-makers.

Improving Transparency: In the absence of an effective international framework, including a widely-agreed definition of 'subsidy', data collection and reporting on fossil-fuels subsidies remains fragmented, incomplete and inconsistent.

International Agreement: An international agreement on energy subsidies could provide the basis for establishing the necessary reporting and monitoring framework for fossil-fuel subsidies and bind governments into subsidy-reduction commitments. Alternatives including the WTO and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are explored.

For more information on the Global Subsidies Initiative, visit <http://www.globalsubsidies.org/en>

► SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**CSD 18 BUREAU DISCUSSES PREPARATIONS FOR MAY SESSION, SIDS PREPCOM CONVENES**

The Bureau of the 18th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 18) convened on 31 January 2010, the day before the Multistakeholder Dialogue on Implementation of the CSD 17 decisions (see MEA Bulletin issue 85, <http://www.iisd.ca/mea-l/meabulletin85.pdf>, for information on the Dialogue). Bureau members from CSD 17 and 18 attended the 31 January meeting and discussed the organization of the CSD 18 high-level segment and innovations, including the Dialogue and a seminar series at UN Headquarters on the CSD 18 thematic issues, among other topics. CSD 18 Chair Luis Alberto Ferraté Felice indicated he would attend a session during the UNEP Governing Council Meeting in Bali, Indonesia, that would explore how UNEP should contribute to the proceedings of CSD 18. Bureau members reported on the Regional Implementation Meetings (RIMs)

they had attended and noted that outcome documents were now available for all of the RIMs (http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd18_rims.shtml). Discussion papers from the major groups have been posted on the CSD 18 website and advance, unedited versions of the reports for CSD 18 are expected by the end of February (http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_docucsd_18.shtml). Bureau members are expected to consider, at their next meeting, the request for accreditation from the Secretary-General of the International Lead and Zinc Study Group, International Nickel Study Group and International Copper Study Group ([http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd_csd18_buremeet_3rd.shtml](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd18_buremeet_3rd.shtml)).

In preparation for the CSD 18 contribution to the preparations for the high-level Mauritius Strategy review, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, convened the Pacific High-Level Dialogue on the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy, from

8-9 February 2010, in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The meeting adopted strategies for strengthening the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) including: a call on the international community to honor their commitments; the adoption of green growth policies; and the strengthening of implementation mechanisms and adequate budget allocation. Meeting participants included Ministers and senior officials from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_sids/sids_milemajomeetmsi5_paci.shtml).

In other news, the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) has released the Hashimoto Action Plan II (http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_publsdt_wat.shtml).

► CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERE

SUBMISSIONS REQUESTED FROM UNFCCC PARTIES ON ADDITIONAL MEETINGS IN 2010

The Chairs of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) have invited submissions from parties on additional meeting time in 2010. Parties were given until 16 February 2010 to submit their views on the need for additional meeting time of the AWGs in 2010. Based on the views expressed by parties, the Chairs will make a recommendation to the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties on the timing of the first session of the AWG-KP and AWG-LCA in 2010. The AWG-LCA Chair also invited submissions from parties by 16 February on how best to advance the work of the AWG-LCA in 2010 (http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/notifications/application/pdf/information_note_20100202.pdf).

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat has also published an information note informing parties that Lykke Friis, the Danish Minister for Climate and Energy, has replaced Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the Prime Minister of Denmark, as the President of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP) for the remainder of the mandate of Denmark's presidency (http://unfccc.int/files/parties_and_observers/notifications/application/pdf/information_note_20100205.pdf).

In other news, Clifford Mahlung (Jamaica) has been chosen by the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to serve as its Chair for 2010. In addition, Pedro Martins Barata (Portugal) has been chosen to serve as Vice-Chair.

Mahlung, who was the Board's Vice-Chair in 2009, takes over from Lex de Jonge (the Netherlands) (<http://cdm.unfccc.int/EB/Members/index.html>).



Lykke Friis



Clifford Mahlung

IPCC CLIMATE PROJECTIONS MEETING TO FEED INTO FIFTH ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has convened an expert meeting on Assessing and Combining Multi-Model Climate Projections. The meeting, which convened from 25-27 January 2010, in Boulder, US, was held under the auspices of IPCC Working Groups (WGs) I (Physical Science Basis and Impacts) and II (Adaptation and Vulnerability). The outcomes of the meeting will feed into the Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), which is due in 2013-2014. This joint WG I and II expert meeting addressed possible ways of analyzing and evaluating model results in order to provide more robust and reliable projections of future climate, along with improved estimates of uncertainty. Topics under consideration included methods of multi-model analysis, spatial and temporal applications, specific user needs, and feasibility and implications. Discussions also focused on the provision of information for the Atlas of Global and Regional Climate Change Projections, which is an important new feature of the WG I contribution to the AR5. A meeting report will be published in the second quarter of 2010, which will include a short Guidance Paper for the use of the authors of the respective chapters of WGs I and II in the AR5, and for the WG I and WG II research communities in general (<http://www.ipcc-wg1.unibe.ch/meetings/boulder/boulder.html>).

The IPCC has also released two documents: an information note on its role and key elements of the assessment process, and a statement on its principles and procedures. The information note stresses that the role of the Panel, which is an intergovernmental body, is to "assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-economic information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation." The note further elaborates on the stages of the IPCC assessment process, namely: scoping of the report; selection of authors; writing process; review; and approval, acceptance and adoption of the report and their summaries. It also underlines a special focus on communicating uncertainties in the Panel's assessments and clarifies IPCC budget and financing issues (http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/press/role_ipcc_key_elements_assessment_process_04022010.pdf).

In its statement, the Panel notes that the body represents a unique interface between scientists and governments, which aims to provide policy-relevant

but not policy-prescriptive information on various aspects of climate change. The IPCC also highlights that its assessments have become, over the last 20 years, "an international gold standard" in the scientific assessment of climate change. It further says that such exercise cannot be completely free of errors but that the IPCC assessments are as close to this goal as possible. The Panel also clarifies its principles and procedures. In particular, it notes that each assessment involves a large portion of the climate change scientific community and reviewers, and contains the following four main components: broad, balanced participation in the author teams; emphasis on a comprehensive treatment of the relevant scientific literature; two stages of widely distributed, independently monitored review; and word-by-word, consensus approval of the Summaries for Policy-Makers by governments. The Panel stresses that it does not conduct research itself but instead assesses available peer-reviewed literature, sometimes using reports of governmental and non-governmental organizations according to IPCC procedures (<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/press/ipcc-statement-principles-procedures-02-2010.pdf>).

The IPCC has also published a report of the expert meeting on Detection and Attribution Related to Anthropogenic Climate Change. The meeting, organized jointly by WGs I and II, was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 14-16 September 2009. The scientific core of the meeting report summarizes the discussions and conclusions of the expert meeting. It seeks to clarify methods, definitions and terminology across the two WGs, and is intended as a stand-alone Good Practice Guidance Paper for Lead Authors for the AR5. The report also includes the extended abstracts of the presentations from the expert meeting, as well as a general, non-comprehensive bibliography on detection and attribution of anthropogenic climate change (http://www.ipcc-wg1.unibe.ch/publications/supportingmaterial/EM_D&A_MeetingReport_Final.pdf).

OZONE SECRETARIAT RELEASES INFORMATION ON CFC STOCKS

In accordance with Decision XX 1/4 on unneeded ozone depleting substances (ODS) and ODS bank equipment, the Ozone Secretariat has initiated an information exchange mechanism on available chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) stocks. The initiative facilitates contact between the relevant industries holding pharmaceutical grade CFC stockpiles, and those that have an interest in them (http://ozone.unep.org/Exemption_Information/CFC_Stocks/index.shtml).

► FORESTS, DESERTS AND LAND

UNFF 9 CHAIR ADDRESSES ECOSOC MEETING

At a joint meeting of the Bureau of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Chairpersons of its functional commissions, Arvid Ozols, Chair of the ninth session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF 9), delivered an address on recent achievements of the UNFF with regard to sustainable forest management and its contributions to gender equality and internationally agreed development goals. On 29 January 2010, at UN Headquarters in New York, US, Ozols stated that the theme of the 2010 Annual Ministerial Review, "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women," is an integral part of the Forum's work, noting that one of the purposes of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests is to enhance the contribution of forests in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and, *inter alia*, gender equality. He also highlighted that UNFF 9's theme, "Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication," would include



Arvid Ozols,
UNFF 9 Chair

a discussion on the needs of women who are highly dependent on forests (http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/bureau/unff9/Chair_ECOSOC_29012010.pdf).

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR UNCCD REPORTING UNDERWAY

The Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has announced that the capacity-building project to support the fourth reporting and review cycle has begun. The US\$7 million project is financed in part with a US\$2.5 million grant from the Global Environment Facility. The project will include: development of reporting tools; provision of catalytic funding; conduct of technical training and backstopping; and development of a knowledge management portal for the reports. The UNCCD Secretariat and UNEP Division of the Global Environment Facility Coordination conceptualized the project, in collaboration with the Global Mechanism. The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC) is facilitating the project's implementation (http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/pressrel/showpressrel.php?pr=press10_02_10). The UNCCD Secretariat has also posted the status of contributions to the core budget for 2008-2010 as of 31 January 2010 (<http://unccd.int/secretariat/docs/OS%20Contributions%202008,2009%202010%2031%20January%202010%2007%2002%2010.pdf>).

In other UNCCD-related news, the Global Mechanism recently participated in a regional workshop organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Senegalese Agency for the Great Green Wall Initiative on "Guidelines on Practices for Sustainable Forest Management in Drylands of Sub-Saharan Africa." Participants at the 20-22 January 2010 workshop in Dakar, Senegal, discussed opportunities and challenges facing sustainable dryland forest management, including their role in biodiversity conservation, in contrasting climate change and their socio economic importance, as well as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative (<http://www.global-mechanism.org/news--events/news/promoting-sustainable-land-management-through-the-great-green-wall-for-the-sahara-and-sahel-initiative/>). The Global Mechanism also recently participated in a meeting on innovative financing mechanisms organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (<http://www.global-mechanism.org/news--events/news/innovative-financing-mechanisms-exploring-synergies-with-the-cbd>).

► CHEMICALS AND WASTES

STOCKHOLM CONVENTION CONVENES CARIBBEAN WORKSHOP, UNEP AND UNIDO CONVENE WORKSHOP ON AFRICA PROGRAMME

The Stockholm Convention Secretariat convened the Caribbean Regional Capacity Building Workshop on New Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the Process for Reviewing and Updating National Implementation Plans, in Panama City, Panama, from 25-28 January 2010. At the workshop, participants identified the need for: additional information on sources of new POPs, alternatives, and disposal practices; multi-sectoral consultation on new POPs; and waste treatment and disposal. Key implementation challenges were identified as including: lack of information and capacity; the need to adjust legislative and management structures in light of new POPs; and the need for adequate funding (IISD RS Sources).

In other Stockholm Convention-related news, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) have convened a workshop on Capacity Strengthening and Technical Assistance for the Implementation of the Stock-

holm Convention on POPs for African countries of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) subregion. Participants at the workshop, which convened from 2-5 February 2010, in Nairobi, Kenya, discussed the region's needs in relation to POPs management, to inform the development of a subregional programme funded by the Global Environment Facility. Once finalized, the US\$32 million programme will be implemented in over 30 countries across Africa (IISD RS Sources).

BASEL CONVENTION RELEASES GUIDELINES ON MANAGING MERCURY WASTE

The Secretariat of the Basel Convention has released the fifth draft of the Technical Guidelines for the Environmentally Sound Management of Wastes Consisting of, Containing or Contaminated with Mercury. The draft contains sections on: application of Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices; waste minimization; and handling, collection, packing, interim storage and transport of mercury wastes (<http://www.basel.int/techmatters/index.html>).

GEF HEAD COMMENTS ON SYNERGIES AHEAD OF ExCOPs

Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson of the Global



Monique Barbut,
Chief Executive
Officer and
Chairperson, GEF

Environment Facility (GEF), has written to the Heads of the Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam Conventions, ahead of the first Simultaneous Extraordinary Meetings of the Parties (ExCOP) to those Conventions, scheduled to convene in Bali, Indonesia, from 22-24 February 2010. In the letter, Barbut comments on the synergetic implementation of the three chemicals Conventions to the benefit of developing country partners and the global environment, and notes the need to maximize the multi-convention benefits of GEF support. She also refers to the draft fifth replenishment of the GEF (GEF-5) Programming Document, which highlights the need to strengthen country's "foundational capacity for sound chemicals management" (<http://excops.unep.ch/documents/lmb.pdf>).

► TRADE, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

GEF HIGHLIGHTS SUCCESS OF AGROBIODIVERSITY PROJECT

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has featured the results of a project implemented with farmers in Georgia to reclaim forgotten crop varieties and landraces to diversify their agricultural production. Prior to the project, the seed material of the local landraces seemed to be completely forgotten. The

project established a seed multiplication system to encourage local farmers to use and sow local landraces and by 2009, 28 land-races and varieties (52% of all known for Georgia) were being used for subsistence production, and seven landraces (13% of all landraces) were in commercial use. Among the results of the project are: more than 80% of households are reporting higher pulse

diversity on-farm, diversification of the family diet, and higher nutrition levels; the revived landraces and local varieties have demonstrated a much higher resistance to droughts, pests and harsh winters; and sales revenue for the farmers is rising with further financial returns gained through almost zero application of chemical fertilizers (http://gefweb.org/interior_right.aspx?id=27926).

► WATER, OCEANS AND WETLANDS

MARINE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY WORKING GROUP FORWARDS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO UNGA

The UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) organized the third meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Participants at the 1-5 February 2010 meeting, which convened at UN Headquarters in New York, US, examined the scientific, technical, economic, legal, environmental, socioeconomic and other aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, including activities of the UN and other relevant international organizations. Discussions considered possible options and approaches to promote international cooperation and coordination for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, as well as key issues and questions for more detailed background studies.

In accordance with UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 64/71 of 4 December 2009, this meeting was mandated in particular to continue discussions of the legal regime on marine genetic resources, as well as marine protected areas and environmental impact assessment processes in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Delegates eventually agreed by consensus to a package of recommendations to UNGA, with one of the recommendations calling for reconvening the Working Group in 2011 (<http://www.iisd.ca/oceans/marinebiodiv3/>; <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/biodiversityworkinggroup/biodiversityworkinggroup.htm>).

RAMSAR SIGNS MoC WITH UNWTO, RELEASES SC 41 AGENDA

The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Anada Tiega, and the Director of Sustainable Tourism of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Luigi Cabrini, on behalf of the Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on 2 February 2010, during the World Wetlands Week celebration in Victoria, Seychelles. The three-year term MoC calls for collaboration among the two institutions to reinforce the role that wetlands and their biodiversity ecosystems play for sustainable tourism development, through the demonstration of integrated management approaches at all levels. It also proposes that the two organizations should support the formulation of guidelines for wise use of wetlands through information sharing and the development of wetland policies based on sound scientific findings for the promotion of sustainable tourism, among other actions. The MoC also contains language on: the designation and management of wetlands of international importance for the purpose of sustainable tourism and poverty reduction; and fundraising and information sharing to facilitate implementation (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/moc/moc_wto_2010.pdf; http://www.ramsar.org/cda/es/ramsar-news-archives-2010-wto-moc-sign/main/ramsar/1-26-45-437%5E24391_4000_2__).

In other Ramsar news, the Secretariat has released the draft agenda for the 41st meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee (SC 41), which will take place in Kobuleti, Georgia, from 26 April-1 May 2010 (DOC. SC41-1) (http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/sc/41/sc41_agenda_e.pdf). Delegates are scheduled to: engage in the meetings of the Management Working

Group, the Subgroup on Finance, and the Subgroup on the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties; consider financial matters; take part in an excursion to wetlands of Georgia; and hold the SC's Plenary Session.

GESAMP SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN ITS REGIONAL CONTACT NETWORK

The Coordinating Body on the Seas of East Asia (COBSEA) is hosting the 37th session of GESAMP, the global Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, in Bangkok, Thailand, from 14-19 February 2010. GESAMP is a UN interagency body sponsored by, *inter alia*, the International Maritime Organization and UNDOALOS, and is comprised of marine scientists who advise the UN on marine and coastal issues. The agenda includes: the evaluation of the hazards of harmful substances carried by ships; the review of applications for 'active substances' to be used in ballast water management systems; the development of an ecosystem approach to mariculture; the scientific review of mercury and its compounds and threats to the marine environment; the establishment of trends in global pollution in coastal environments; the review of the contributions to the 'UN regular process'/GEF transboundary water assessment programme; and the identification of new and emerging issues regarding the degradation of the marine environment of relevance to governments and sponsoring organizations. In addition, a workshop/side event will convene on 18 February, around the theme: "The link and collaboration between GESAMP and Regional Bodies to protect the marine environment in East Asia on Marine Assessment Methodologies" (<http://www.gesamp.org/gesamp-session-37>).

► KEY UPCOMING MEA MEETINGS

- **CSD 18 Thematic Seminar Series: Chemicals:** 23 February 2010. UN Headquarters, New York, US. http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/susdevtopics/sdt_toxichemi_ss0210.shtml
- **Simultaneous Extraordinary Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions (ExCOPs), and Eleventh Special Session of the UN Environment Programme Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GCSS-11/GMEF):** 22-26 February 2010. Bali, Indonesia. <http://www.iisd.ca/unepgc/unepss11/>
- **UNFCCC Technical Workshop on Collaboration Among Regional Centres and Networks:** 2-5 March 2010. Apia, Samoa. http://unfccc.int/adaptation/nairobi_workprogramme/workshops_and_meetings/items/5258.php