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SBSTTA-4 HIGHLIGHTS FRIDAY, 25 JUNE 1999

Delegates to SBSTTA-4 met in Plenary to adopt its decisions and report. Six decisions drafted by two working groups and three decisions based on discussions in Plenary were adopted. One agenda item, *ad hoc* technical expert panels, was deferred to SBSTTA-5 for further consideration. Delegates also established the date and venue for SBSTTA-5.

PLENARY

SBSTTA-5 BUREAU AND SBSTTA-4 REPORT: SBSTTA-4 elected the following delegates to the SBSTTA Bureau: Mary Fosi Mbantenku (Cameroon); Tevita Savae Latu (Tonga); Evgeny Oreshkin (Russian Federation); and David Brackett (Canada). A representative from the Dominican Republic will be named later. Martin Uppenbrink (Germany), Kutelama Seleko (Democratic Republic of Congo), Zakri Hamid (Malaysia) and Jan Plesni (Czech Republic) will remain in office and Cristián Samper (Colombia) will Chair SBSTTA-5.

SBSTTA-4 Rapporteur, Jan Plesnik (Czech Republic) introduced the documentation for the meeting and invited delegates to consider it for adoption. The Chairs of Working Groups I and II, Martin Uppenbrink (Germany) and Zipangani Vokhiwa (Malawi), respectively, introduced the draft decisions their groups had negotiated. Delegates adopted the draft report on the opening of the meeting, organizational matters, reports, and priority issues (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.1), including priority issues discussed in Working Group I (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.1 Add.1) and Working Group II (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.1/Add.2) with several amendments. In a reference to "many" representatives supporting the establishment of a scientific body like the IPCC, the UK suggested noting instead that "a number" of representatives supported this idea. NEW ZEALAND noted that representatives thought the IPCC was a "model" for consideration. The NETHERLANDS suggested noting that the expert presentation on new plant technologies was broadly appreciated by delegates.

WORKING GROUP DECISIONS: Delegates then examined the Working Groups' draft decisions. They adopted the draft decision on alien species (UNEP/SBSTTA/4/L.2 and Add.1) without amendment. Delegates adopted the draft decision on terrestrial ecosystems (UNEP/SBSTTA/4/L.3) with one editorial amendment. Chair Hamid

introduced the draft on sustainable use, including tourism (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.4). NORWAY, supported by COSTA RICA, BRAZIL, NAMIBIA, ZIMBABWE, PERU, ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA and ETHIOPIA, stressed that a full discussion on sustainable use should be taken up at the next SBSTTA. This draft and its Annex (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.4/Add.1) were adopted.

The Chair then introduced the draft recommendation on new plant technology (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.5). NEW ZEALAND stated it could not accept the preambular paragraph on recognizing that any Party or government may establish a moratorium on GURTs without including reference to "uncontained" field testing. NORWAY, with MEXICO, the PHILIPPINES, SURINAME, INDIA, CAMEROON and GERMANY, opposed changing the text. NEW ZEALAND agreed to the Chair's suggestion that she record her reservation in the final report. The US noted for the report that it could not associate itself with any implicit call for a moratorium on testing or commercialization of this technology. RAIFI expressed strong concern that SBSTTA's failure to call for a moratorium sets a framework for enabling field-testing, commercialization and patenting of GURTs.

On a recommendation to not approve field-testing of GURTs until scientific assessments are validated, AUSTRALIA proposed, and MEXICO, NORWAY, GERMANY, the PHILIPPINES, INDIA, ECUADOR, and COSTA RICA opposed, relocating a reference to food security. AUSTRALIA agreed to the Chair's suggestion to record its position in the final report. On a recommendation on how to ensure the effective regulation of GURTs, AUSTRALIA, with NEW ZEALAND, proposed moving text on ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. NORWAY, with ECUADOR, COSTA RICA and others, opposed any changes, citing that the Australian formulation did not reflect the full objectives of the CBD. AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND agreed to record their reservations in the final report. The draft recommendation was adopted.

In adopting the draft decision on EIA (UNEP/SBSTTA/4/L.6), on a recommendation requesting the SBSTTA to develop guidelines on the incorporation of biodiversity-related issues into legislation on EIA, a phrase on the "concept of equivalency" in the application of mitigation measures was deleted at the request of NORWAY. A paragraph on requesting the Executive Secretary to make accessible detailed information by national biodiversity clearing-house focal points was deleted. The text was adopted. On the Global Taxonomy Initiative text (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/L.7), NEW ZEALAND said

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the paragraph encouraging Parties to include in their national reports measures adopted to strengthen national capacity in taxonomy repeated a previous CBD decision. Delegates agreed to delete the paragraph.

PLENARY ISSUES: During the afternoon Plenary, delegates considered three conference room papers that were based on earlier Plenary discussions. A fourth paper, on *ad hoc* technical expert groups, was withdrawn at the suggestion of the Bureau and the issue will be further discussed at SBSTTA-5.

On cooperation with other bodies (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/CRP.2), MALAWI called for text on cooperation with the World Trade Organization, which was incorporated through a Norwegian proposal. NORWAY said the recommendation to develop cooperation with scientific advisory bodies of biodiversity-related conventions was too limiting. He proposed replacing that text with a recommendation for increased cooperation between the CBD and other relevant international conventions or agreements important for achieving the CBD's objectives. BRAZIL added text inviting the Executive Secretary to enhance cooperation with scientific and technical organizations. The NETHERLANDS proposed inviting the Executive Secretary to consider the utility of enhancing communication with Parties by introducing a notification system. INDIA, supported by BURKINA FASO, suggested deleting the recommendation that such a notification system take due consideration of confidentiality. The EC and JAMAICA noted that peer reviewers might want their names to remain confidential. INDIA agreed to a suggestion by the NETHERLANDS that the text use language similar to a previous COP decision on the roster of experts indicating that their names would be made accessible through the CHM unless an expert objects. Delegates adopted the text as amended.

On progress in the work programmes on thematic areas (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/CRP.3), CANADA, supported by FINLAND, proposed deleting a paragraph inviting Parties to provide human and other resources to assist the Executive Secretary in its work programme on forest biodiversity. CANADA also suggested adding a phrase urging the Executive Secretary to report to SBSTTA-5 on the forest biodiversity issue. At the request of ECUADOR, an additional paragraph recommending education and public awareness in line with Article 13 of the CBD (Public Education and Awareness) was added. COLOMBIA requested the Executive Secretary, in preparing the report on the work programme, to give emphasis to elements of thematic areas to facilitate the next meeting's discussion. BRAZIL proposed a reference to the development of indicators. NEW ZEALAND proposed urging the Executive Secretary to make progress on the coral bleaching issue. The text was adopted as amended.

On the draft proposal on the programme of work for SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/CRP.4), the NETHERLANDS proposed amending the first paragraph to include a recommendation for the preparation of a strategic plan to guide the implementation of the programme of work. The UK, with support from CANADA, suggested deleting a paragraph noting the call to consider the work programme at the fifth meeting. BURKINA FASO and NEW ZEALAND opposed the deletion and proposed looking at the programme again if necessary. The text remained as amended. MALAWI raised the issue of including reference on access to benefit sharing. NORWAY responded that this issue should be considered at SBSTTA intersessional and expert group meetings. ECUADOR proposed that the issue be taken up by respective bodies under the Convention dealing with access and benefit sharing. The NETHERLANDS added that the recommendations should be directed to the COP, and the proposal was accepted.

BRAZIL proposed adding a new recommendation to recognize the

need to: better consider micro-organisms and genetic diversity; enhance intersessional initiatives; start considering assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity; and acknowledge that this meeting did not consider sustainable use in a broad manner. The proposal, without the point on sustainable use, was accepted and the text was adopted.

On the proposed programme of work for SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/CRP.4/Add.1), the Secretariat noted the Bureau decision to move discussion on *ad hoc* technical expert groups to SBSTTA-5. BRAZIL recalled that the GTI decision called for the Executive Secretary to deliver a paper to SBSTTA-5. SOUTH AFRICA noted that the decision on alien species also called for further consideration at SBSTTA-5. The US and NEW ZEALAND noted their understanding that coral bleaching would have to be discussed by SBSTTA-5. These amendments were noted and the text was adopted.

Delegates agreed that the date and venue of SBSTTA-5 would be 31 January-4 February 2000 in Montreal, Canada. The US noted that the dates overlap with the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF-4). The Secretariat said the SBSTTA dates were decided before those for IFF-4.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: In closing, PERU, on behalf of GRULAC, expressed satisfaction with the progress made during the week, but noted that work remains to be done. BURKINA FASO offered a tribute to the host government, Canada. INDIA, on behalf of the Asian Group, commended the initiative to invite experts and scientists to address the meeting on relevant subjects. CANADA thanked the CBD Secretariat for organizing the meeting.

Hamdallah Zedan, Acting Executive Secretary, noted that SBSTTA-4 recommendations put forward a challenging agenda, and set forth implications for the Secretariat's human and financial resources. He called for Parties to make the necessary funding available to make the job possible. SBSTTA-4 Chair Zakri Hamid noted that the meeting received input from a wide range of actors, including international organizations, the public sector and indigenous groups. He said these inputs provided a variety of views and make the meeting report a living process. As Chair of SBSTTA-3 and SBSTTA-4, he said he had seen the evolution of the body from tentative beginnings to a global center of referral on biodiversity information. He closed SBSTTA-4 at 5:30 pm.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite a number of expressions of appreciation for SBSTTA as a whole, a number of delegates expressed dismay at the numerous interventions made during the final day of SBSTTA-4. Some suggested that the presence of non-diplomats and people unfamiliar with the previous CBD decisions contributed to, what one delegate called, "meeting sloppiness." Others suggested that excessive text renegotiations were due to the problem that SBSTTA is exceeding its mandate and delving into sensitive political decisions and that these issues are too difficult to resolve in such a short meeting.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

ISOC-1: The Intersessional meeting on the Operations of the Convention (ISOC-1) is scheduled to commence at 10:00 am. The President of COP-4, Lazlo Miklos (Slovakia) will open the meeting, following which delegates will consider organizational matters and move onto other agenda items, including a review of the operation of the Convention and the programme of work and access to genetic resources and benefit sharing.