SBSTTA-5 HIGHLIGHTS
MONDAY, 31 JANUARY 2000

Delegates met in Plenary, heard opening statements, adopted the agenda and agreed upon the organization of work. Substantive discussion began on cooperation with other bodies, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, inland waters biodiversity, forest biodiversity, the Clearing-House Mechanism and guidelines for the second national reports.

OPENING STATEMENTS

SBSTTA-5 Chair Cristián Samper (Colombia) opened the meeting underlining the recently adopted Biosafety Protocol’s importance. He noted that the next step forward for the CBD is to bridge the gap between science and politics, and outlined the major agenda items for the meeting.

Paul Chabeda, on behalf of Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), highlighted specific concerns, including: biodiversity loss and genetic erosion; conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, especially regarding economic globalization; equitable benefit-sharing with attention to indigenous and local communities; and regional, national and local capacity-building.

Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the CBD, noted SBSTTA’s responsibility to develop recommendations on the ecosystem approach and highlighted the Norway/UN Conference on the Ecosystem Approach. He noted collaboration with the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) on preparing the background documents for drylands as an example for making use of potential synergies between environmental conventions.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The Secretariat presented the agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/1) and annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/1/Add.1), which the meeting adopted. Chair Samper requested regional groups to submit nominees for the SBSTTA Bureau. The Plenary then adopted the organization of work, which established two working groups. Chair Samper suggested Mary Fosi (Cameroon) as Chair of Working Group One, David Brackett (Canada) for Working Group Two and Ján Plesnick (Czech Republic) as the meeting’s rapporteur, which was adopted.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER BODIES

The Secretariat introduced the background note (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/2). The UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) summarized its relevant programmes and stressed cooperation with CBD implementation in areas of agriculture, and said there was room for further collaboration, in areas such as alien species. He stressed that sustainable agricultural practices could enhance biodiversity and highlighted the first report on the State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources. The UN EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO) stressed the links between cultural and biological diversity, and highlighted UNESCO’s global network of Biosphere Reserves. He noted ongoing work related to the SBSTTA-5 agenda including the ecosystem approach, taxonomy, marine and coastal biodiversity, and alien species. The CCD noted a memorandum of understanding with the CBD Secretariat and highlighted relations among desertification, biodiversity and climate change, and promotion of sustainable, resource-based approaches integrating traditional knowledge. The RAMSAR CONVENTION highlighted the second version of the joint work plan on inland water ecosystems developed with the CBD Secretariat, noting that such collaboration could be a model. He indicated that Ramsar’s working groups should cooperate with the envisaged technical experts. DIVERSITAS stressed the importance of investigating the interrelationship between the ecosystem functions of inland waters and biodiversity and noted various pilot studies on wetlands and African lakes.

The NETHERLANDS noted the need for cooperation with the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, and Oslo and Paris Conventions on marine and coastal biodiversity. Regarding the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), he expressed concern, with the EC, on the inadequate institutional framework to ensure participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. PERU also stressed the need for wider transparancy and availability of information within the GBIF. The EC suggested including the GBIF as a thematic/focal point in the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM). NORWAY, supported by BRAZIL, MEXICO and PERU, suggested increased cooperation with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The US supported cooperation with the Global Invasive Species Program and other relevant international bodies addressing forests and marine and coastal biodiversity.

REVIEW OF THE GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE (GTI)

The Secretariat introduced the background paper on the GTI (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/4) which includes: proposed baseline taxonomy initiatives and their elements; overall objectives, approaches and guiding principles; and identification of a coordination structure. On the coordination structure, SWEDEN said new administration should be minimized; BRAZIL noted the need for further clarification; and MEXICO called for increased representation from other UN agencies. ZIMBABWE requested the involvement of sustainable use and conservation groups. INDIA suggested establishing ways and means to support national initiatives.
NORWAY said methods must be established to sustain funding for taxonomic projects run by local institutions. ARGENTINA requested greater clarity on national strategies. GHANA said taxonomic initiatives could create jobs and attract students. The NETHERLANDS noted that the strategic plan should not promote a stand-alone approach. BRAZIL said that GTFI implementation should be oriented to capacity-building, access to information and information repatriation.

INLANDWATERSBIOLOGICALLYDIVERSITY

The Secretariat introduced the document on inland waters biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/LSBTTA/5/6). The NETHERLANDS, SLOVENIA, COSTA RICA, FRANCE and FINLAND supported the proposed “Joint Work Plan 2000 – 2001 of the CBD and the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)” (UNEP/CBD/LSBTTA/5/INF/12). The NETHERLANDS said the work plan was a role model for other themes and stressed the need to cooperate with relevant international bodies on inland waters biodiversity. SLOVENIA stressed the linkage with the Jakarta Mandate. IRAN highlighted Ramsar activity on a strategic framework and guidelines for a list of wetlands of international importance. CANADA highlighted four international initiatives; the Global Action Plan for Peatlands; an Assessment of Global Freshwater Ecosystems by the World Resources Institute; UNEP’s Global International Waters Assessment; and UNEP’s Water Policy and Strategy. ECUADOR expressed concern that public awareness is not in the proposed work plan. The US called for collaboration with NGOs and academic institutions, and recommended incorporating inland waters biodiversity in development programmes and water projects. The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY CENTRE said that the ecosystem approach and biodiversity should be integrated into river basin management and announced the River Basin Initiative to be launched at COP-5.

FORESTBIOLOGICALLYDIVERSITY

The Secretariat introduced the item on forest biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/LSBTTA/5/8). The NETHERLANDS, supported by NORWAY and ECUADOR, expressed concern over the lack of progress, especially in the area of joint activities. BRAZIL, ECUADOR, FINLAND, HAITI, INDIA, INDONESIA, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND and TURKEY supported formation of an ad hoc expert group on forest biodiversity. NORWAY recommended that Parties, international forest organizations and other bodies present case studies and use national reports to inform the work programme. FINLAND recognized the need to assist SBSTTA and the Secretariat to complete work on status, trends and options, and called for better use of national reporting. The US noted that preliminary work on status and trends provides a useful framework for a more detailed assessment. ECUADOR urged that Parties take concrete measures. JAPAN and BURKINA FASO stressed avoiding duplication of work and NEW ZEALAND suggested conducting a gap analysis of ongoing work. NEW ZEALAND and BRAZIL advised looking at afforestation and the role of plantations. BANGLADESH called for a moratorium on clearcutting and examination of plantation forestry to meet timber demands. MALI expressed concern about the role of reforestation and plantations, and, with HAITI, requested an examination of the root causes of forest biodiversity loss. TURKEY and SWITZERLAND called for attention to forest management outside of protected areas. INDIA stressed that indicators be used as national benchmark tools and suggested documenting case studies of local government and grassroots forest management. BURKINA FASO stressed links with semi-arid zones. ARGENTINA noted ongoing work under the IPCC and recommended future collaboration. SWITZERLAND stressed the need to look at biodiversity criteria for carbon sequestration projects.

PILOTPHASEOFTHECLEARING-HOUSEMECHANISM

The Secretariat outlined the background note (UNEP/CBD/LSBTTA/5/3), which includes: synergies with related information initiatives; review of the pilot phase; the strategic plan; and the longer-term work programme. Guy Rochon (Canada), Chair of the CHM informal advisory panel, offered possible additions on, inter alia: standardization issues; criteria definition; strategic priorities; linkages with existing information networks; and identification of funding for capacity-building. These suggestions were generally supported by BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, COSTA RICA and the US. NORWAY, supported by ZIMBABWE, called for language addressing Parties’ obligations to provide technical assistance to developing countries. CHINA called for concrete work plans and increased financial resources. ETHIOPIA noted the lack of CHM focal points in many developing countries and said benefits of participation must be explicit. POLAND requested more specific direction for national focal points. SWITZERLAND said the CHM’s scope should include government policy-makers, and ITALY said it should include all stakeholders. BELGIUM and the EC highlighted bilateral partnerships. NEW ZEALAND requested an increased focus on partnering with Parties to develop better information management approaches and that web site construction was deemed inappropriate in her country. The NETHERLANDS, supported by GERMANY, stated that the CHM should not be used to repatriate information. The EC stressed links with NGOs holding databases and the role of the general public as users. The GEF asked Parties to consider their report submitted to the CBD Secretariat.

GUIDELINESFORTHESECONDNATIONALREPORTS

The Secretariat introduced the background paper on guidelines for the second national reports (UNEP/CBD/LSBTTA/5/14). The UK, followed by NEW ZEALAND, UGANDA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION, JAPAN, MOROCCO, SEYCHELLES, NORWAY, The NETHERLANDS, INDIA, CANADA, CUBA, CAMEROON, BRAZIL, KENYA, FRANCE, HAITI, SWITZERLAND and TUNISIA supported submitting national reports every 4 years, while COLOMBIA and BURKINA FASO suggested every 2 years. The UK, GERMANY, NORWAY, The NETHERLANDS, COLOMBIA, CUBA, SWEDEN and BRAZIL supported examination of thematic items on the COP-5 agenda. The UK and PORTUGAL stressed the need to ensure that developing countries can implement COP-5 decisions on national reports. The UK, SLOVENIA and PORTUGAL stressed streamlining reporting on biodiversity-related conventions. FRANCE supported joint reporting, and BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL proposed a modular approach for joint reporting. FINLAND, FRANCE, IRELAND, PORTUGAL and TUNISIA stressed a focus on thematic areas. NEW ZEALAND stated it did not support development of a core set of indicators. GERMANY and SLOVENIA highlighted the importance of a pilot project on continuous reporting through the CHM and, with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, of reporting at the regional level. UGANDA and KENYA emphasized the need for national capacity-building for reporting. MOROCCO, CHINA and CAMEROON suggested a recommendation to the COP on financial assistance from the GEF to developing countries. HAITI and SWITZERLAND stressed including elements on national strategies and action plans (NSAPs). UNEP noted it would present the results of NSAP assessments and national reporting at COP-5.

INTHECORRIDORS

Despite the plethora of information systems, networks and assessments, delegates mentioned the need for more comprehensive and accessible scientific contributions. Some expressed concern that a reliance on regional or independent initiatives could compromise transparency and participation, especially in the developing world. Attention was also paid to the utility of, compatibility among and interests behind GBAs, GBOs, Millennium Assessments (a.k.a. MA), GBF, IABIN, IBIN and other information tools and assessments.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Plenary will meet at 10:00 am to hear presentations by Ambouta Karima on sustainable use, agricultural biodiversity and drylands, and by Daniel Janzen on the ecosystem approach.

WORKINGGROUPS: Working Group One will then convene to address drylands and Working Group Two will address the ecosystem approach.