



SBSTTA-6 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 12 MARCH 2001

Delegates to the sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) met in Plenary to hear opening statements and address organizational matters. Keynote presentations were delivered addressing linkages between biodiversity and climate change, and invasive alien species. Delegates also discussed progress reports on *ad hoc* technical expert groups, assessment processes, marine and coastal biodiversity and biodiversity of inland water ecosystems.

OPENING STATEMENTS

Chair Cristián Samper (Colombia) opened the meeting and called for a moment of silence in memory of Ebbe Neilson (Australia). Chair Samper then welcomed participants, thanked the Secretariat and the government of Canada for hosting the meeting, and noted changes in the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA to streamline the agenda. He outlined the meeting's main theme of invasive alien species and sub-themes on scientific assessments, the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), and cooperation with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

Paul Chabeda, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, highlighted the work of UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions in identifying areas of synergy among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), contributing to the work programmes of these agreements and strengthening sub-regional and regional cooperation. He reviewed UNEP's recent activities, including meetings of MEA subsidiary scientific bodies, secretariats and regional seas agreements, and emphasized that developing environmental agreements and international discussions require substantial scientific input. He further stated that issues involving invasive alien species and migratory species require increased coordination with other relevant agreements and bodies.

Hamdallah Zedan, CBD Executive Secretary, outlined recent developments on: invasive alien species; coral reefs; agricultural biodiversity; the GTI; the Clearing-house Mechanism; the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; and the revision of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. On the *ad hoc* technical expert groups, he noted progress in groups on forest and marine and coastal protected areas, and delays in groups on mariculture and dry and sub-humid lands due to lack of funding. On joint work with other institutions, he referred to cooperation with the UNFCCC and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); UNESCO; IUCN; the Ramsar Convention

on Wetlands of International Importance; the CMS; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna; regional seas conventions and action plans; and the World Commission on Dams (WCD). On invasive alien species, he noted submission of thematic reports by 49 countries, highlighting that the issue represents a major challenge to the international community.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/1) and the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/1/Add.1) without substantive debate. They agreed to establish two working groups, and approved Anastasios Legakis (Greece) as chair of Working Group I, Raed Bani Hani (Jordan) as chair of Working Group II, and Dimitri Pavlov (Russian Federation) as rapporteur of the meeting. Regional groups were requested to present their nominees for the SBSTTA Bureau, and some requested time for further consultations. The NETHERLANDS highlighted a host country agreement with the CBD Secretariat regarding the sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6), and expressed hope that the first Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety would be held back to back with COP-6.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY: Robert Watson, Chair of the IPCC, discussed an IPCC summary report of key climate and biodiversity interactions (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/11) and presented scientific data relevant to climate change. He highlighted: inter-linkages among food production and global environmental issues; synergies between environmental science and policy; and underlying causes of climate change, including population increase, inefficient resource use, inappropriate technologies and lack of economic incentives. He said that most global warming is attributable to humans, noting that over the next 100 years a mean surface temperature increase will create changes in precipitation patterns, increased floods and droughts, and a rise in sea levels. In assessing future carbon and precipitation models, he emphasized associated threats to human health, agricultural systems, forests, water resources, coastal areas and species diversity. Additionally, he said that climate change would seriously affect: water, agricultural, physical and ecological systems; runoff; crop yield changes; species composition; and habitat fragmentation. He further identified coral bleaching, emergence of pests and fires, loss of coastal wetlands and shifting composition of forest systems as directly related to climate change. Regarding mitigation options, he highlighted afforestation, deforestation and reforestation, improved cropland and rangeland management and agro-forestry, noting that no decision had yet been reached on whether these activities would be allowed under the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development

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Mechanism. He concluded by emphasizing the reality of adverse consequences for biodiversity at the ecosystem, species, and genetic levels due to climate change.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: Harold Mooney, Stanford University (USA), noted that society depends on the movement of biological material, and highlighted the need to concentrate on those invasives that threaten ecosystems, habitats and species. He noted that vectors of transmission are both intentional and accidental, and that invasives come from all taxonomic groups and are found worldwide. He highlighted the range of ecological and economic damage caused by invasives, including, *inter alia*: depleting water supplies; disrupting fire cycles; transmitting diseases; destroying forests, fisheries, rangelands and agricultural systems; eliminating species; and impeding navigation. He noted that problems in addressing invasives include: their self-replication; their alteration of biological systems; their ability to evolve quickly; lag times in identifying their effects; and inadequacies in existing information. He concluded by noting the need to develop prediction models, environmentally benign and cost-effective control methods, and means to regulate their flow.

Jeff Waage, Chair of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), said GISP is coordinated by the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment in collaboration with IUCN and CAB International. It focuses on assembling and disseminating best management practices and stimulating new tools' development in science, information management, education and policy. He referenced its components, namely: education; pathways and risk assessment; human dimensions; ecology of invasives; early warning systems; economic consequences; current status and assessment; global change; legal and institutional frameworks; and best management practices. He underlined most countries' insufficient capacity to address the issue of invasives. He highlighted the need to: improve access to information and extend collaborative information exchange systems; identify pathways of invasion; identify priorities and gaps in research; develop a terminology guide; support activities at the national level; emphasize taxonomy; and raise public awareness.

REPORTS

AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUPS: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/2, on progress made to date on *ad hoc* technical expert groups for marine and coastal protected areas, mariculture, forest biodiversity, and biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands. CANADA distinguished between roles of experts nominated generally and those nominated specifically for expert groups, and suggested that lists of national experts for specific topics be maintained by national focal points. The NETHERLANDS and NORWAY expressed concern on lack of progress in expert groups on mariculture and dry and sub-humid lands due to absence of funds. The Secretariat noted discussions within the COP Bureau on securing funding. Regarding the forest biodiversity expert group, FINLAND, the NETHERLANDS and others called for input into and coordination with the UN Forum on Forests, as well as the UNFCCC, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Ramsar Convention. NEW ZEALAND expressed concern over lack of representation for Southern hemisphere countries and those interested in plantation forests. Regarding marine and coastal protected areas, ARGENTINA suggested consideration of access and benefit-sharing, and the EC called for coordination with the upcoming experts' panel.

ASSESSMENT PROCESSES: The CBD Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/3, describing three scientific assessment activities: the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA); the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA); and the Forest Resources Assessment 2000. A representative of the MA described its structure and methodology, noting objectives of providing information for decision-makers and building human and institutional capacity on multiple scales. KENYA underscored the need for collaboration among users of such information and said that information provision and capacity building should be extended beyond the MA's existing regional pilot activities. The NETHERLANDS, supported by the EC, called for an overview of regional assessments, and said the MA should provide input to the expert groups on forests and dry and sub-humid lands.

UNESCO referenced its work on water assessments. BRAZIL requested further information on GIWA before taking a decision on supporting joint initiatives.

MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/4, on implementation of the programme of work including integration of coral reefs. AUSTRALIA, supported by the BAHAMAS and SWEDEN, noted that the work plans for coral bleaching and physical degradation and destruction of coral reefs are ambitious and called for prioritization of activities. The SEYCHELLES and BRAZIL expressed concern that work to date has focused on research rather than concrete action. The NETHERLANDS emphasized the importance of national and regional experiences. GERMANY and NORWAY highlighted climatic impacts on coral reef habitats and cooperation with relevant organizations, such as the IPCC and UNESCO. The EC said that the focus should not be limited to tropical coral reefs. JAPAN announced its hosting of a regional monitoring center.

INLAND WATER ECOSYSTEMS: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/6/5 and Add.1, on biodiversity of inland water ecosystems, including recommendations by the WCD. The RAMSAR CONVENTION urged closer collaboration between subsidiary bodies through identification of relevant experts and a review of subsidiary bodies of relevant conventions. IRAN supported the CBD-Ramsar joint work plan. AUSTRALIA, supported by others, proposed reference to a third CBD-Ramsar joint work plan to be considered at COP-6. The WCD presented its report, which reviews experiences with large dams and calls for, *inter alia*, decision-making processes that respect the rights of people, address risks, follow strategic priorities, and sustain rivers and livelihoods related to them. The EC and others were hesitant to endorse the Add.1 Annex on strategic priorities and guidelines. ARGENTINA expressed reservations on WCD recommendations, noting the recently published report was still under review, and BRAZIL opposed the recommendation for policies excluding major interventions on selected rivers. SWEDEN noted absence of reference to freshwater fisheries. ITALY said that ecosystem assessments should apply to existing as well as future dams. CANADA suggested alternative text on watershed management and environmental impact assessments. BURKINA FASO called for reference to threatened species and endemic species preservation. The SEYCHELLES called for reference to the COP-4 decision on rapid assessment. The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY called for incorporation of views and recommendations from indigenous experts into the programme of work, and emphasized traditional knowledge.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The presentation on the IPCC's work renewed discussion on the need for a parallel independent scientific body to provide input into CBD discussions. Several participants highlighted the presence of numerous issue-specific groups, such as the MA, GISP, BioNET International and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, stating that the question is not designating a particular advisory body, but developing appropriate mechanisms for coordinating the multitude that already exist. Others cautioned that such input has to be provided in a transparent and apolitical manner that ultimately reflects the needs and capacities of countries to act at the national level.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: WG-I will meet at 10:00 am to address invasive alien species, including presentations and progress reports on case studies and collaboration with other relevant agreements and institutions.

WORKING GROUP II: WG-II will meet at 10:00 am to address scientific assessments.

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND PROTECTED AREAS: This lunchtime session will be held from 1:00-3:00 pm (location to be announced).

REAL FORESTS OR "KYOTO FORESTS"?: This lunchtime session will be held in Room F1 from 1:15-2:45 pm.