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SBSTTA-7

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SEVENTH SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE: 12 – 16 NOVEMBER 2001

The seventh session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-7) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opens today and will continue until 16 November 2001, in Montreal, Canada. The meeting will be followed by the Open-ended Inter-sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports, and Implementation of the Convention, which will meet from 19-21 November 2001.

Following the opening day of Plenary discussions, SBSTTA-7 is expected to meet in two working groups. Working Group I will focus on forest biodiversity, the primary theme of the meeting, with emphases on: status, trends and threats; options for conservation and sustainable use; and enabling activities addressing the underlying causes of forest biodiversity loss and degradation. Working Group II will address: agricultural biodiversity; the plant conservation strategy; incentive measures; and indicators and environmental impact assessment. The working groups will meet from Tuesday to Thursday. On Friday, the Plenary session will consider the reports of the working groups as well as proposed agendas, dates and venues for SBSTTA-8 and SBSTTA-9.

Jan Plesnick (Czech Republic) will serve as the Chair of SBSTTA-7. The recommendations of both SBSTTA-6 and SBSTTA-7 will be reported to the sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) to be held from 8-19 April 2002, in the Hague, the Netherlands.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The CBD, negotiated under the auspices of UNEP, was opened for signature on 5 June 1992, and entered into force on 29 December 1993. To date, 182 countries have ratified the Convention. The three objectives of the CBD are to promote "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources."

COP-1: The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-1) took place from 28 November - 9 December 1994, in Nassau, the Bahamas. Key decisions by COP-1 included: adoption of the medium-term work programme; designation of the permanent Secretariat; establishment of the Clearing-house Mechanism (CHM) and SBSTTA; and designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism.

SBSTTA-1: SBSTTA-1 met from 4-8 September 1995, in Paris, France. SBSTTA-1 delegates discussed and produced recommendations on: the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA; components of biodiversity under threat; access to and transfer of technology; scientific and technical information to be contained in national reports; contributions to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) meetings on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA); and marine and coastal biodiversity. SBSTTA-1 also requested flexibility to create: two open-ended working groups to meet simultaneously during future SBSTTA meetings; *ad hoc* technical panels of experts as needed; and a roster of experts.

COP-2: The second meeting of the COP was held from 6-17 November 1995, in Jakarta, Indonesia. Major outcomes of COP-2 included: designation of the permanent location of the Secretariat in Montreal, Canada; establishment of the Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety; adoption of a programme of work; designation of the GEF as the continuing interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism; and consideration of its first ecosystem theme, marine and coastal biodiversity.

SBSTTA-2: SBSTTA-2 met from 2-6 September 1996, in Montreal, Canada. The meeting produced recommendations on: monitoring and assessment of biodiversity; approaches to taxonomy; economic valuation of biodiversity; access to genetic resources; agricultural biodiversity; terrestrial biodiversity; marine and coastal biodiversity; biosafety; and the CHM.

COP-3: At COP-3, held from 4-15 November 1996, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, delegates adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: elaboration of work programmes on agricultural and forest biodiversity; a Memorandum of Understanding with the GEF; an agreement to hold an intersessional workshop on Article 8(j) regarding traditional knowledge; an application by the Executive Secretary for observer status to the World Trade Organization's Committee on Trade and the Environment; and a statement from the CBD to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review implementation of Agenda 21.

SBSTTA-3: At SBSTTA-3, held from 1-5 September 1997, in Montreal, Canada, delegates considered the implementation of the CHM's pilot phase, and a progress report on SBSTTA's work and the effectiveness of its advice. Additional recommendations were formulated on: biodiversity in inland waters; marine and coastal biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; forest biodiversity; and biodiversity indicators. SBSTTA-3 also adopted a recommendation on participation of developing countries in SBSTTA.

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COP-4: At its fourth meeting (COP-4), held from 4-15 May 1998, in Bratislava, Slovakia, the COP adopted decisions on: inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; forest biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; implementation of the CHM's pilot phase; implementation of Article 8(j); national reports; cooperation with other agreements, institutions and processes; activities of the GEF; incentive measures; access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing (ABS); public education and awareness; and the long-term work programme.

SBSTTA-4: During its fourth meeting, held from 21-25 June 1999, in Montreal, Canada, SBSTTA-4 delegates made recommendations on: the SBSTTA programme of work; the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI); guiding principles to prevent the impact of alien species; control of plant gene expression; options for sustainable use of terrestrial biodiversity; incorporation of biodiversity into environmental impact assessments; and approaches and practices for the sustainable use of biological resources, including tourism.

ISOC: The Intersessional Meeting on the Operations of the Convention (ISOC) met from 28-30 June 1999, in Montreal, Canada, to consider preparations for and conduct of COP meetings. ISOC also held discussions on: ABS; *ex situ* collections acquired prior to the Convention's entry into force; and the relationship between intellectual property rights (IPR) and the relevant provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and the CBD.

EXPERTS' PANEL ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: COP Decision IV/8 called for the establishment of a regionally balanced panel of experts on ABS, which received guidance from the ISOC. The Panel met twice from 4-8 October 1999, in San José, Costa Rica, and from 19-22 March 2001, in Montreal, Canada. The first meeting focused on: ABS arrangements for scientific and commercial purposes; review of legislative, administrative and policy measures at national and regional levels; review of regulatory procedures and incentive measures; and capacity building. The second meeting addressed user and provider experiences in ABS and the involvement of stakeholders in ABS processes.

ExCOP FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY: The first Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties for the Adoption of the Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD (ExCOP) was held from 22-23 February 1999, in Cartagena, Colombia, following the sixth meeting of the CBD's Biosafety Working Group (14-22 February 1999). Unable to reach an agreement, the meeting was suspended. Following three informal consultations, the resumed session of the ExCOP was held from 24-28 January 2000, in Montreal, Canada. Delegates adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity, with a specific focus on transboundary movements. It establishes an advance informed agreement procedure for imports of LMOs, incorporates the precautionary principle and details information and documentation requirements. To date, 106 countries have signed the agreement, with seven ratifications.

SBSTTA-5: The fifth session of SBSTTA met from 31 January - 4 February 2000, in Montreal, Canada. SBSTTA-5 developed recommendations on, *inter alia*: inland water biodiversity; forest biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; marine and coastal biodiversity, including coral bleaching; a programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands; alien species; the ecosystem approach; biodiversity indicators; the pilot phase of the CHM; the second national reports; and *ad hoc* technical expert groups.

COP-5: At its fifth meeting (COP-5), held from 15-26 May 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya, the COP adopted decisions on: dry and sub-humid lands; the ecosystem approach; access to genetic resources; alien species; sustainable use; biodiversity and tourism; incentive measures; the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; the GTI; scientific and technical cooperation and the CHM; identification, monitoring and assessment and indicators; and impact assessment, liability and redress. A High-Level segment on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, including a Ministerial Roundtable and a special signing ceremony, was convened during the second week of the meeting.

SBSTTA-6: The sixth meeting of SBSTTA took place from 12-16 March 2001, in Montreal, Canada. SBSTTA-6 featured a streamlined agenda with a focus on invasive alien species and emphasis on providing background information through presentations, side events, roundtables and additional documentation. Recommendations were adopted on the use of *ad hoc* technical expert groups, marine and coastal biodiversity, inland water ecosystems, invasive alien species, scientific assessments, the GTI, biodiversity and climate change, and migratory species.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ICCP-2: The second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol met from 1-5 October 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting continued discussions from ICCP-1 (December 2000; Montpellier, France) and developed recommendations on, *inter alia*: information sharing; handling, transport, packaging and identification; capacity building; the roster of experts; guidance to the financial mechanism; decision-making procedures; liability and redress; and compliance.

ABS-1: The *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing was established by COP-5 to develop guidelines and other approaches for ABS. The first meeting of the Working Group was held from 22-26 October 2001, in Bonn, Germany. Delegates developed a set of draft international voluntary guidelines (Bonn Guidelines), but left items on use of terms, derivatives and annexes for resolution by COP-6. ABS-1 also identified draft elements for an action plan for capacity building, considered approaches other than guidelines, and called for an open-ended workshop on capacity building for ABS. Regarding the role of IPR in implementation of ABS arrangements, the meeting produced recommendations on disclosure of PIC, country of origin and use of traditional knowledge in patent applications.

ITPGRFA: Negotiations on the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) (formerly the International Undertaking) were held from 30 October to 3 November 2001, in Rome, Italy. The FAO Council, and an Open-ended Working Group met to resolve outstanding issues following the agreement's adoption by the sixth Extraordinary Session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (June 2001; Rome, Italy). On 3 November 2001, the draft treaty was submitted to the FAO Conference, where it was adopted by a vote of 116 in favor, zero against and two abstentions.

The ITPGRFA establishes a Multilateral System for facilitated access to a specified list of PGRFA, balanced by benefit-sharing in the areas of information exchange, technology transfer, capacity building and commercial benefit-sharing. Its objectives are the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and equitable benefit-sharing for sustainable agriculture and food security.

BIODIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURAL ECOSYSTEMS: An International Symposium on Managing Biodiversity in Agricultural Ecosystems was held from 8-10 November 2001, in Montreal, Canada. Presentation themes included: managing crop and livestock genetic resources; agro-ecosystem services; and agricultural landscape, scale and change.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Opening Plenary is scheduled for 10:00 am in the main ICAO conference hall, and will address the agenda and organizational matters. Delegates will review reports by the *ad hoc* technical expert groups and regarding assessment processes. The afternoon Plenary session will consider reports on the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands and sustainable use. Keynote addresses will also be delivered by: Robert Watson on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; Eric Chivian on biodiversity and human health; Peter Wyse Jackson on targets in CBD implementation; and José Campos on biodiversity good and services.