



SBSTTA-7 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2001

Delegates to the seventh 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, address organizational matters and discuss progress reports on: *ad hoc* technical expert groups; assessment processes; biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands; and sustainable use. Delegates also heard keynote addresses on biodiversity and human health and on targets in CBD implementation.

OPENING STATEMENTS

SBSTTA Chair Jan Plesnik (Czech Republic) opened the meeting. He outlined the main theme of forest biodiversity, commending the work of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group and stressed the need for practical action.

Paul Chabeda on behalf of Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, expressed concern over a looming extinction crisis and the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and called for development of effective and implementable incentives measures. He noted that the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) would consider forms of international environmental governance, while underscoring that SBSTTA-7 and COP-6 will be crucial in shaping the CBD's involvement in that process.

Hamdallah Zedan, CBD Executive Secretary, outlined recent developments including: development of the draft Bonn Guidelines on access and benefit sharing; adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; the second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; and completion of guidelines for sustainable tourism in vulnerable areas. He reviewed work by the *ad hoc* technical expert groups and joint work with other international institutions. On agricultural biodiversity, he noted the international initiative for conservation and sustainable use of pollinators and emphasized SBSTTA's opportunity to contribute its expertise to help stem forest biodiversity loss.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/1). Delegates then adopted the proposed organization of work using two working groups and elected Grace Thitai (Kenya) as rapporteur of the meeting and Paula Warren (New Zealand) and Lily Rodriguez (Peru) as chairs of Working Groups I and II, respectively.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Eric Chivian, Director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, said that the linkages between biodiversity and human health have so far been largely ignored in the CBD's work. He stressed that human life and health depend on biodiversity and that destruction of species will damage human health. He noted progress in preparing a book on the subject, highlighting chapters on: status of biodiversity; medicine from natural sources and species' contributions to medicinal research; the relation between the spread of diseases and biodiversity destruction; biodiversity and food production; and policy options.

Peter Wyse Jackson, Director of the Botanical Gardens Conservation International, reviewed the need for targets in the CBD's implementation. He said targets should be specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time-bound. He discussed issues related to an evaluation process to be integrated into the CBD Strategic Plan and establishment of criteria for assessing performance. He noted an increasing trend toward the incorporation of targets into strategic and other plans adopted for biodiversity conservation at national, regional and international levels. In conclusion, he said that CBD targets provide useful reference points for monitoring progress and for generating public support behind priority issues. He also stressed that targets need to be developed through consensus, present demanding but realistic challenges to the global community, and help to highlight geographic and thematic priorities.

REPORTS

AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUPS: The Secretariat introduced the agenda item on reports of the *ad hoc* technical expert groups and the background document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/2). NEW ZEALAND reviewed the work of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas. She noted the group's first meeting held from 22-26 October 2001, in Leigh, New Zealand. She outlined the key issues addressed in the meeting and topics for inter-sessional work. She said that consensus was reached on underlying philosophical issues and information gaps were identified, noting that the group's report would be finalized to reflect inter-sessional work. HAITI proposed that the expert group on marine and coastal protected areas address linkages with watershed management. Several countries noted the need for biogeographical representation, problems with participation and the need for transparency.

ASSESSMENT PROCESSES: The Secretariat introduced background documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3 and Add.1. Robert Watson, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

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(IPCC), reviewed a technical paper on climate change and biodiversity requested by CBD COP-5, which addresses, *inter alia*: observed and projected changes in climate and terrestrial and marine ecosystems; mitigation and adaptation options; and information and assessment gaps. He highlighted impacts of species migration, reassembly of ecosystems, changes in productivity and vegetation, and mitigation measures. He noted the report would soon be disseminated for review.

Watson, as co-chair of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), underscored the MA's focus on ecosystem goods and services, their intrinsic value, and consequences for human well-being. He explained that the MA is multi-scalar from the village to the global level and is designed to build capacity, provide information to and support for the CBD, the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and the Ramsar Convention. He outlined the MA's history, organizational structure, conceptual framework and timelines leading to completion in 2004. He requested further input from SBSTTA-7 on particular needs and experts' nomination.

Under discussion of the item and the background document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3), the EUROPEAN COMMISSION highlighted the importance of regional and national assessments and called for criteria on including external assessments within the CBD process. BRAZIL stressed that SBSTTA should play a proactive role in promoting assessments to reduce uncertainties and called for mechanisms to involve the scientific community. CHINA said assessments should focus on human activities to guide development of national policies. NORWAY stressed the importance of assessments' credibility and acceptance. The NETHERLANDS proposed, and ARGENTINA objected, that SBSTTA engage in external assessments through the establishment of an expert group, whose advice would be sent directly to the COP.

On the MA, BRAZIL recommended that SBSTTA support the initiative and also highlighted the importance of assessments for the recent conclusion of negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). NORWAY suggested supporting participation of developing country experts in the MA. The US called for further clarification on the relevant outreach activities and initiatives under the CBD, UNFCCC and IPCC. NEW ZEALAND called for refinement of a proposed assessment of invasive alien species' impacts to better reflect the priority areas for action identified by SBSTTA-6, and drew attention to UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/3/Add.1 on a proposed project brief. The US stated that the Global Invasive Species Programme should have the flexibility to address priority ecosystems. The Secretariat noted lack of data for a pilot project on cost-benefit analyses of managing invasive alien species.

DRY AND SUB-HUMID LANDS: The Secretariat introduced the background document (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/4), noting the joint work programme agreed upon by the CCD and the CBD. The CCD Secretariat highlighted a recommendation of the liaison group meeting that called for projects on country and local levels to investigate the value of drylands. The UNFCCC Secretariat stressed the value of information sharing among the UNFCCC, the CCD and the CBD. The NETHERLANDS called for strengthened implementation at the national level. The UK called for a reference to *ex situ* conservation in carrying out the work programme. KENYA, with NIGERIA, TANZANIA and UGANDA stressed the work programme's importance for African countries and for people living in dry and sub-humid lands in particular. COLOMBIA noted the lack of reference to Latin American and Caribbean countries, and called for a more balanced work programme. UGANDA suggested prioritizing case-studies on the valuation of dryland biodiversity and noted the need to enhance capacity building for developing project proposals for GEF funding. ARGENTINA said that capacity building should focus on integrated policy making. With regard to implementation of the CCD and the CBD, BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL said national processes are insufficiently linked and called for integration of national biodiversity strategies and action programmes with CCD activities.

SUSTAINABLE USE: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/5 and its draft recommendations (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/7/1/Add.2). Having heard a report from the Workshop on Biodiversity and Tourism held in June 2001 in the Dominican Republic, COLOMBIA, with CUBA and MEXICO, noted the need to continue work on sustainable use in greater depth, and to refine and expand guidelines on tourism for application to all ecosystems. NORWAY suggested redrafting the guidelines. The EU, GERMANY and NEW ZEALAND said the guidelines could only be submitted to CSD-10 as a draft, and they should be further considered and approved by the COP.

UGANDA stressed there should also be national and local guidelines. MALAYSIA noted that mountain and upland systems should be included. CHINA suggested transmitting them to other tourism-related organizations for comments. The International Support Center for Sustainable Tourism stated that eco-tourism poses a danger to indigenous peoples and their homelands and expressed concerns that there was no meaningful involvement of indigenous peoples in the process of developing the guidelines. Delegates accepted a suggestion by ARGENTINA and BRAZIL to continue discussions in Plenary on Friday.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Delegates considered the results of a workshop on the CBD Strategic Plan held in May 2001 in the Seychelles and summarized in UNEP/CBD/WS-StratPlan/5/2 and a note by the CBD Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/MSP/2). These topics will be considered by the Open-ended Inter-sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and Implementation of the Convention, which will immediately follow SBSTTA-7. The proposed plan includes a mission statement, vision, operational goals and action plans, focused on: reversal of trends in biodiversity loss; reduction in incidence and impacts of unsustainable use; equitable sharing of benefits from use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge; and cross-cutting operational goals. Noting that SBSTTA has an important role to play in the Plan's development, Chair Plesnik requested that comments be limited to scientific or technical issues.

NEW ZEALAND emphasized the need to focus on implementation and to identify critical issues. COLOMBIA and CUBA objected to inadequate attention to sustainable use, equitable distribution and transfer of technology, and stated that the goals were not viable for most developing countries. JAMAICA noted that, as a management tool, it was difficult to limit review to scientific or technical issues. The NETHERLANDS emphasized that review of previous CBD accomplishments was necessary. CANADA stressed the importance of information exchange, including access and benefit sharing and with NORWAY stated that SBSTTA could make significant contributions in the area of scientifically appropriate targets. BRAZIL stated that the plan should provide a scientifically sound baseline to determine whether targets are meaningful and also urged focus on enhancing international cooperation.

IN THE CORRIDORS

One of the topics circulating in the corridors was what document the forest discussions would use as their basis: the note of the SBSTTA Chair; the report of the expert group; or the note by the Secretariat? Several participants expressed support for either the Chair's synopsis or the expert group's report, while also fearing that some delegations might find them overly ambitious. Of particular note was the issue of concrete targets to counter forest biodiversity loss, which some see as the only measurable basis for achieving more action-oriented work on forest biodiversity under the CBD.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: WG-I will meet at 10:00 am to hear a keynote address by José Campos on biodiversity goods and services, and then will start discussions on forest biodiversity, particularly, status, trends and major threats.

WORKING GROUP II: WG-II will meet at 10:00 am to start discussions on agricultural biodiversity.