



SIXTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 7 – 19 APRIL 2002

The Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-6) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will hold its first plenary today at 10:00 am at the Netherlands Congress Centre in The Hague. An official opening ceremony was held on Sunday, 7 April, which included welcoming remarks and introductory statements. Delegates to COP-6 will address substantive issues, including: forest biodiversity; alien species; identification, monitoring, indicators and assessments; the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI); the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC); the ecosystem approach; sustainable use; incentive measures; liability and redress; progress on ecosystem themes; access and benefit-sharing (ABS); the strategic plan, national reporting and CBD operations; financial resources and mechanisms; the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM); education and public awareness; cooperation with other conventions and international initiatives; a contribution to the ten year review of Agenda 21; and Article 8(j) on traditional knowledge. It is expected that work on these issues will be split between two working groups.

OPENING CEREMONY

Laurens-Jan Brinkhorst, Minister of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands, welcomed delegates to The Hague. He stressed the need for specific initiatives and funding, timetables and technology transfer. He also called for synergies between environmental conventions and other international fora, and for global participation in the CBD. COP-5 President Joseph Kamotho, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Kenya, noted intersessional progress in the development of the strategic plan and in ABS, called for rapid ratification of the Biosafety Protocol and highlighted the CBD's participatory approach with regard to indigenous and local communities and stakeholders. Upon his proposal, participants elected Geke Faber, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands, as COP-6 President.

Faber highlighted the necessary shift from policy dialogue to implementation and from conservation to sustainable use. She stressed work on genetic resources, ABS, forests and the strategic plan. She also highlighted the importance of a parallel youth conference. Willem Deetman, mayor of The Hague, stressed the city's cultural and religious diversity. He noted The Hague's role as the seat of the national government, and emphasized its recognition as the international city of peace and justice.

Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, highlighted the relevance of the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and emphasized targeted and timetable-oriented activities (Type I) and collaborative activities of stakeholders to implement past and future decisions (Type II). He said that COP-6's deliberations should be strengthened by the planned multi-stakeholder dialogue, especially with regard to ABS, and by the high-level ministerial segment. He mentioned the pressing need to replenish the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Hamdallah Zedan, CBD Executive Secretary, noted the link between biodiversity loss, economic conditions and social injustice. He underscored: the importance of the draft Bonn guidelines on ABS; forest biodiversity; the massive damage caused by invasive species; and the strategic plan's potential to help focus and prioritize the CBD's work. He stressed the need to seize the opportunity provided by the WSSD to draw attention to the interlinkages between biodiversity, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

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, 183 countries have ratified the Convention. The three goals 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 from the use of genetic resources."

COP-1: The first meeting of the COP (Nassau, November - December 1994) adopted decisions on: the medium-term work programme; designation of the permanent Secretariat; establishment of the CHM and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA); and designation of the GEF as the interim financial mechanism.

COP-2: The second meeting of the COP (Jakarta, November 1995) adopted decisions on: designation of Montreal, Canada, as the permanent location for the Secretariat; establishment of the Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety; the programme of work; and marine and coastal biodiversity.

COP-3: At its third meeting (Buenos Aires, November 1996), the COP adopted decisions on several topics, including: 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); 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.

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COP-4: At its fourth meeting (Bratislava, May 1998), the COP adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; agricultural and forest biodiversity; the CHM's pilot phase; Article 8(j); national reports; cooperation with other agreements, institutions and processes; the GEF's activities; incentive measures; ABS; public education and awareness; and the long-term work programme. A Ministerial Roundtable was convened to discuss integrating biodiversity concerns into sectoral activities, such as tourism, and private sector participation in implementing the Convention's objectives.

EXCOP: The first Extraordinary COP (Cartagena, February 1999) followed the sixth and final meeting of the Working Group on Biosafety, yet was unsuccessful in developing a compromise package during its two days of non-stop negotiations. After a decision to suspend the meeting, three sets of informal consultations were held over the following months to address outstanding issues, including: the Protocol's scope; its relation to other agreements; application of the advance informed agreement (AIA) procedure and the precautionary principle; and documentation and identification requirements. The ExCOP resumed a year later (Montreal, January 2000), where delegates finally adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

The Protocol addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity, by establishing an AIA procedure for imports of LMOs for intentional introduction into the environment. It also incorporates the precautionary principle and mechanisms for risk assessment and management, and establishes a Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) to facilitate information exchange. The Protocol currently has 108 signatories and 14 ratifications.

COP-5: At its fifth meeting (Nairobi, May 2000), the COP adopted decisions on: a work programme on dry and sub-humid lands; the ecosystem approach; access to genetic resources; alien species; sustainable use; biodiversity and tourism; incentive measures; the GSPC; the Convention's operations; the GTI; the CHM; financial resources and mechanism; identification, monitoring and assessment, and indicators; and impact assessment, liability and redress. COP-5 also included a high-level segment on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety with a Ministerial Roundtable and a special signing ceremony.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

SBSTTA-6 & 7: During its sixth meeting (Montreal, March 2001), SBSTTA focused on invasive alien species, including work on guiding principles, and produced additional recommendations on: *ad hoc* technical expert groups; marine and coastal biodiversity; inland water ecosystems; scientific assessments; the GTI; biodiversity and climate change; and migratory species. SBSTTA-7 (Montreal, November 2001) focused on forest biodiversity and its draft work programme, while also producing recommendations on: agricultural biodiversity, including the International Pollinators Initiative; the GSPC; incentive measures; indicators; and environmental impact assessment.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY: The ICCP met twice in the inter-sessional period. ICCP-1 (Montpellier, December 2000) and ICCP-2 (Nairobi, October 2001) considered and developed recommendations on: information sharing and the BCH; capacity building; a roster of experts; decision-making procedures; handling, transport, packaging and identification; compliance; monitoring and reporting; guidance to the financial mechanism; liability and redress; the Secretariat; Rules of Procedure; and cooperation with the International Plant Protection Convention. ICCP-3 (The Hague, May 2002) will meet after COP-6 to continue discussions on the substantive issues from ICCP-1 and 2.

WORKING GROUP ON ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING: At the first meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing (Bonn, October 2001), delegates developed the draft Bonn guidelines on ABS and also: identified elements for a capacity-building action plan; called for an open-ended workshop on capacity building for ABS; and considered the role of IPR in implementation of ABS arrangements. Input into the Working Group was provided by the second meeting of the Experts' Panel on ABS (Montreal, March 2001), which addressed user and provider experiences in ABS and the involvement of stakeholders in ABS processes.

MEETING ON THE STRATEGIC PLAN, NATIONAL REPORTS AND IMPLEMENTATION: The Open-Ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and Implementation (Montreal, November 2001) considered the strategic plan, the CBD's implementation and operations, national reports and inputs into the WSSD.

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE: The ITPGRFA (formerly the International Undertaking) was adopted by the 31st FAO Conference (Rome, November 2001). 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 activities. Its objectives are the conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA and equitable benefit-sharing for sustainable agriculture and food security.

WORKING GROUP ON ARTICLE 8(j): The second meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Inter-Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions (Montreal, February 2002) considered: an outline for the composite report on the status and trends of traditional knowledge; draft guidelines/recommendations for the conduct of cultural, environmental and social impact assessments regarding developments proposed on or impacting the lands of indigenous and local communities; participatory mechanisms; and the effectiveness of existing instruments impacting the protection of traditional knowledge, particularly intellectual property rights.

OTHER MEETINGS: Numerous other intersessional meetings were held addressing issues including: the CBD's ecosystem themes; education and public awareness (Paris, July 2000; Bergen, November 2000; Bilbao, November 2001); biodiversity and tourism (Santo Domingo, June 2001); financing for biodiversity (Havana, June 2001); liability and redress (Paris, June 2001); incentive measures (Montreal, October 2001); sustainable use (Maputo, September 2001; Hanoi, January 2002; Salinas, February 2002); biodiversity and climate change (Helsinki, January 2002); cooperation with the UN Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (Accra, January 2002); potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies on local and indigenous communities (Montreal, February 2002); the GSPC (Gran Canaria, February 2002); and regional preparations for COP-6 (Africa – Nairobi, March 2002; Asia and the Pacific – Bangkok, March 2002; and Latin America and the Caribbean – Kingston, March 2002).

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Plenary will convene at 10:00 am in the Main Hall to consider organizational matters and hear reports on intersessional activities.

WORKING GROUPS: At 3:00 pm, Working Group I will meet to begin discussions on forest biodiversity, and Working Group II will address access and benefit-sharing.