

SBSTTA 12 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 3 JULY 2007

On Tuesday, participants to the twelfth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 12) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) convened in the Committee of the Whole throughout the day to consider the in-depth review of the application of the ecosystem approach (EA) and of the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC).

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

APPLICATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:

Many delegates called for increased public awareness about the EA, particularly regarding its potential benefits for communities. HAITI suggested studies on community impacts and a brochure on EA application. MYANMAR encouraged sharing success stories. COLOMBIA questioned whether the main barrier to EA application is lack of understanding or lack of political will, while INDONESIA called for developing strategies on how to overcome these barriers. MALAWI highlighted the usefulness of the EA when working with local communities, and SAINT LUCIA inquired about the differences between the EA and other approaches, calling for short, medium and long-term implementation strategies.

NORWAY announced plans to apply the EA as a primary framework for marine environments and favored integrating the approach into management decisions. SWITZERLAND highlighted the need to promote: good governance; effective cooperation at different levels, including across sectors, and economic valuation of ecosystem services. MALAYSIA stressed mainstreaming the EA into national planning processes and education programmes for consistent step-by-step implementation. THAILAND called for cooperation with the Commission on Sustainable Development.

CANADA and the NETHERLANDS cautioned against the development of further standards, favoring performance indicators. ARGENTINA and BRAZIL opposed references to incentives, indicators and standards, with BRAZIL emphasizing the unsuitability of a marketing strategy to promote the EA.

AUSTRALIA voiced concern with the oversimplification of the EA concept, urging greater flexibility regarding targets, indicators and standards and, with MEXICO, favored dissemination of case studies on successful implementation of the EA. FINLAND called for EA demonstration sites and UGANDA requested financial support for such projects. SWEDEN proposed developing guidance on EA application in different sectors and ecosystems, rather than global standards

and indicators. NEW ZEALAND suggested examining the effectiveness of the EA sourcebook and identifying the critical elements of implementation. BELGIUM, with the UK, noted the need to further develop the sourcebook. The RAMSAR CONVENTION proposed an additional EA principle stating that ecosystem management should ensure that no ecosystem services are lost, even under conditions of rapid change.

On capacity building, CANADA said it should respond to local and regional needs and in cooperation with relevant international bodies; CHINA called for capacity building at all levels; JAPAN and COSTA RICA encouraged broader stakeholder engagement; and AUSTRALIA advocated better targeting of capacity-building efforts. TANZANIA questioned the effectiveness of workshops at the national level and suggested training be mainstreamed into other management activities. MICRONESIA and KIRIBATI called for enhanced financial resources, and capacity building targeted to the specific needs of Pacific island states.

The UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea reported that, in fulfilling its mandate on applying the EA to oceans, UNICPOLOS found that implementation had to take into account regional and local contexts. The COUNCIL OF EUROPE urged incorporating the EA into all CBD work programmes, especially on protected areas. WWF noted that the broader application of the EA is impeded by the lack of coherence in the implementation of CBD work programmes. UNEP reported on the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, which prioritizes implementation of the EA, and its recent work on clarifying the connection between the EA and sustainable forest management. GREENPEACE noted the lack of implementation of the EA in fisheries management, resulting in overharvesting of 75% of all commercial fish stocks, and called for applying the EA in all marine ecosystems. The IIFB called for the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of the EA and for the inclusion of relevant case studies in the sourcebook.

Chair Prip announced that a conference room paper (CRP) on the in-depth review of the implementation of the EA would be prepared.

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION:

The Secretariat introduced the in-depth review of the implementation of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/3).

Linda Collette, FAO, presented on the GSPC targets where limited progress has been made, examining existing processes in different sectors that can contribute to achieving these targets. She defined the three targets with limited progress as being

target 2 (preliminary assessment of the conservation status of all known plant species, at national, regional and international levels), target 4 (at least 10% of each of the world's ecological regions effectively conserved) and target 7 (60% of the world's threatened species conserved *in situ*). She highlighted opportunities to harness data collected in other sectors such as forestry and agriculture through national programmes, codes of practice and other assessments. She suggested strengthening the links between GSPC focal points and those from other sectors and increasing capacity building.

Jon Lovett, University of Twente, spoke of the need for new targets for the GSPC taking into account emerging threats to plant diversity such as climate change, which he said will have a major impact on the distribution of plant diversity. He also highlighted a global increase in atmospheric nitrogen deposition, and noted a lack of knowledge of its effects on plant diversity in biodiversity hotspots.

Neville Ash, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), presented on synergies between the GSPC targets and those outlined in the CBD framework for assessing progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target, highlighting opportunities for applying existing tools, such as assessments, case studies and databases, as indicators for tracking progress towards both the GSPC and 2010 targets. He emphasized the need to mobilize available data before 2010 and to consider a long-term strategy.

Huang Hongwen, South China Institute of Botany, presented on the GSPC's contribution to poverty alleviation and rural development. He highlighted examples of how the work of botanical gardens has resulted in new crop varieties, improved food security and increased agricultural productivity.

Delegates and presenters then discussed, *inter alia*: the need to enhance forest and agriculture indicators; the reliability of the presented models; and the need to consider both terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

Many delegates shared national experiences with GSPC implementation. TURKEY analyzed obstacles to meeting the GSPC targets, pointing to the lack of sound regional information, difficulties in designating conservation areas, and illegal trade in wild flora. The SEYCHELLES noted its national experience could be of use to other small island developing states. SINGAPORE highlighted his country's experience in plant conservation in urban environments. SOUTH AFRICA encouraged synergies within Africa and regional coordination, and the NETHERLANDS drew attention to the European Plant Conservation Strategy. ZAMBIA encouraged the Secretariat to support the development of national plant conservation strategies.

SLOVENIA, MEXICO and others supported developing the GSPC beyond 2010, with MEXICO highlighting it as a CBD success and calling for greater cooperation with CITES on addressing illegal trade in wild flora species. CHINA called for accelerated implementation of the GSPC. GHANA and MALAYSIA highlighted funding needs for implementation and capacity building. COSTA RICA called for the development of a financial mechanism to aid the development of national strategies, and THAILAND requested studies on innovative financing schemes, including through private sector involvement. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the need to find effective ways of resolving the constraints hindering progress on several targets. INDONESIA, AUSTRALIA and ICELAND emphasized regional networks for implementation, and COLOMBIA proposed an additional recommendation on developing regional tools for information exchange and capacity building. INDIA called for cross-sectoral cooperation and, with RWANDA, for enhancing taxonomic expertise. FRIENDS OF THE EARTH highlighted the need to strengthen knowledge, including through

increasing the number of plant conservation professionals, to further enhance the GSPC implementation. IUCN highlighted RapidList, a new tool for the rapid assessment of species conservation status.

The UK, IRELAND, AUSTRALIA and NORWAY welcomed the development of a toolkit to assist parties in implementation, with IRELAND urging its speedy completion and noting the need to take into account the outcomes of the GSPC meeting held in Dublin in 2006. Supported by MALAWI and the NETHERLANDS, they also opposed the preparation of a plant biodiversity outlook, favoring incorporating plant data into GBO-3, while MALAYSIA and SLOVENIA called for the plant biodiversity outlook to be renamed. CANADA and FRANCE requested that the toolkit be translated into different languages and be made available online. BOTANICAL GARDENS CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL offered continuing support for toolkit development.

On the proposed new targets relating to climate change and nutrient loading, many favored their incorporation into existing targets and a review within the framework of the overall biodiversity targets beyond 2010. CANADA said that the inclusion of new targets should be based on sound science and BRAZIL stressed the need to focus on existing targets. PLANTLIFE INTERNATIONAL urged parties to take into account emerging issues like climate change in all actions towards achieving the GSPC targets.

The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY referred parties to its recently launched web portal making biodiversity data freely available over the internet and thereby supporting the objectives of the GSPC and the CBD. Bioversity International, on behalf of the CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, reported how its international research centers contribute to crop sustainability through its *in* and *ex situ* collections.

IN THE CORRIDORS

On Tuesday, conversations in UNESCO's corridors revolved around SBSTTA's new format, which allows for more time in sessions of the Committee of the Whole to enable participation by smaller delegations and promote a truly interactive scientific debate. One delegate quipped that SBSTTA 12 is an ideal point in time to introduce such a format, before the bulk of intersessional meetings will force SBSTTA to revert to its *alter ego* of a "mini-COP," while another worried that this week's "lightweight" agenda may mean that too many issues are being set aside for SBSTTA 13, scheduled a mere three months prior to COP 9. Others reflected that the new format could be streamlined by reducing the number of presentations and establishing a more formal channel for comments.

Nonetheless, several delegates commended the relatively relaxed pace at SBSTTA 12, giving time to explore emerging substantive matters like climate change or biofuels rather than revisiting old debates that rarely move forward, such as incentives. Indeed, inspired by several side events, some delegates expressed hope that the comparatively vast resources available for climate change work can be tapped for the biodiversity conservation cause.

Back in the conference room, discussions on the in-depth review of the ecosystem approach revealed that its application varies greatly from one sector to another. Most participants welcomed this exchange of information as a useful exercise to learn about broader implementation. One delegate, however, commented that attempts to apply all relevant CBD guidance, including ecosystem approach principles, thematic work programmes and cross-cutting issues, to a specific task result in "stacks of complicated documents" rather than a "user's manual" outlining concrete steps for implementation.