WGRI 2 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2007

On Wednesday, WGRI 2 participants convened in plenary throughout the day and addressed options for streamlining guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and operations of the Convention. They also considered the draft recommendation on the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan.

PLENARY OPTIONS FOR STREAMLINING GUIDANCE TO THE GEF: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the agenda item (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/5 and INF/8).

ALGERIA commended efforts to shorten the GEF project cycle, and noted the need to take into account the ecosystem approach, the 2010 target and the MDGs. AUSTRALIA welcomed the ongoing GEF reforms and, supporting concerns expressed by SIDS, noted that all funding applications should be treated with equity and fairness.

Noting delays in project implementation, MEXICO called for indicators on how guidance has been implemented. Malawi, for the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested that the COP adopt a mechanism to monitor GEF’s interpretation of COP guidance. NORWAY, ALGERIA, INDIA and others underscored the importance of collaboration at the national level, specifically between the GEF and CBD focal points. NIGERIA suggested inviting GEF Council members to attend future CBD COPs. The EU and MALAYSIA encouraged the Executive Secretary to further the dialogue with the GEF CEO/Chairperson.

BRAZIL noted the need to develop a four-year framework for programme priorities coinciding with the fifth GEF replenishment cycle, and proposed requesting the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau, to submit to COP 9 a proposal for programme priorities. CANADA and NORWAY questioned the mandate of the Bureau to develop a four-year framework for programme priorities, and welcomed discussions on how the COP could best provide advice. SWITZERLAND, COLOMBIA and others supported organizing an open-ended meeting to discuss the framework immediately prior to COP 9, with NEW ZEALAND proposing that future COPs negotiate a stand-alone decision on guidance to the GEF, separating guidance from thematic decisions.

THAILAND noted the need to explore co-funding options involving the GEF and other funding bodies, with NIGERIA pointing to the UNFCCC’s Least Developed Countries Fund and the Adaptation Fund, to leverage funding for biodiversity activities. ARGENTINA requested reference to “funding schemes” rather than “sustainable financing.”

Drawing attention to the GEF’s draft biodiversity strategy, TANZANIA prioritized capacity building on biosafety and ABS issues. ETHIOPIA and UGANDA advocated consideration of local communities in GEF funding. MALAYSIA questioned why some COP priorities, such as traditional knowledge, are not prioritized by the GEF. INDIA noted that it is time to reassess, streamline and consolidate guidance to the GEF, in a transparent and participatory manner.

The FOREST PEOPLES PROGRAMME, on behalf of several NGOs, advocated: entrusting GEF project management to national focal points; expanding and simplifying the procedures of the Small Grants Programme; and allocating funding to priority areas identified in the revised NBSAPs. He also raised concerns regarding the GEF’s Public-Private Partnerships Initiative.

In the afternoon, NEW ZEALAND introduced text on streamlining guidance to the GEF calling for, inter alia, parties to submit their views on priorities before COP 9, and for the COP to: include in its MYPOW a stand-alone item on guidance; and align new guidance with the GEF replenishment cycle, thereby replacing previous guidance.

OPERATIONS OF THE CONVENTION: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the agenda item (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/7, INF/12, and Adds.1 and 2). Delegates discussed draft recommendations on the review and retirement of COP decisions, and admission of observers.

Retirement of decisions: The EU, COLOMBIA, ARGENTINA, ALGERIA and others supported the recommended eight-year period for the review and retirement of COP decisions. THAILAND noted that some decisions, such as those relating to the 2010 target, could become irrelevant in the future. BRAZIL expressed concern that in withdrawing decisions, guidance on policy and programme matters, of particular importance to developing countries, could be lost. MEXICO urged that the review and retirement of COP decisions not follow a timeframe, and suggested using the CITES model in identifying decisions that are still relevant or that may need amendment. He further proposed a mechanism for consolidating decisions that relate to the same theme.

CANADA said retirement of decisions is a low priority and, with the AFRICAN GROUP and others, noted that retired decisions should be made available online. NIGERIA cautioned against retiring decisions that have not been implemented, and ECOROPA decisions that might contain principles central to the future work of the CBD. GREENPEACE, supported by WWF, called for BD decisions to be adopted by qualified majority, to allow for focused decisions that set clear objectives and facilitate implementation of the CBD.
Admission of observers: COLOMBIA called for the strict application of qualification criteria in the admission of NGOs to CBD meetings, and for the Secretariat and parties to be able to check applications. The EU called for open access for all qualified organizations, and for interpreting “qualified” in the broadest possible sense. BRAZIL supported participation by civil society, especially from developing countries. ARGENTINA called for new applicants to undergo the procedure for admission on an ad hoc basis, and be granted admission only for the meeting in question. He also favored access of associations, such as chambers of commerce, rather than individual private sector entities. NIGERIA and QATAR called for clearly defining private sector participation, with QATAR suggesting excluding private sector representatives from informal consultations.

MEXICO underscored the importance of participation by indigenous groups and the private sector. CANADA called for a flexible process to ensure the widest possible participation. AUSTRALIA, supported by NIGERIA, suggested that admission be limited to plenary and working group meetings, and access to informal meetings be at the discretion of those convening the meetings. The AFRICAN GROUP requested that NGOs, IGOs and indigenous groups be notified of their eligibility to attend CBD meetings.

Highlighting the contribution of indigenous peoples and NGOs to the CBD, the TEBTEBBA FOUNDATION, supported by several NGOs, called for removing barriers to their full and effective participation, and suggested that observers be requested to submit either their statutes or relevant information brochures. WWF reminded delegates that open and flexible participation is an essential prerequisite for effective participation, and suggested that observers be requested by several NGOs, called for removing barriers to their full and effective participation, and suggested that observers be requested to submit either their statutes or relevant information brochures. WWF reminded delegates that open and flexible participation is an essential prerequisite for effective participation, and suggested that observers be requested to submit either their statutes or relevant information brochures.

On a list of actions to be undertaken by parties in developing, implementing and revising NBSAPs, AUSTRALIA, supported by NIGERIA, suggested clarifying that relevant implementation agencies be encouraged to address nationally identified capacity needs. MALAYSIA supported subnational implementation agencies be encouraged to address nationally identified capacity needs. YEMEN and ARGENTINA requested on the potential deliverables of the group. BRAZIL, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested clarifying that relevant implementation agencies be encouraged to address nationally identified capacity needs. THAILAND suggested that NBSAPs should mainstream gender issues.

Chair Rezende de Castro referred discussions on actions by parties in developing, implementing and revising NBSAPs to informal consultations.

On capacity building, and access to and transfer of technology, the EU, opposed by many developing countries, suggested deleting the paragraph on the ad hoc technical expert group, while AUSTRALIA sought compromise by focusing on the potential deliverables of the group. BRAZIL, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested clarifying that relevant implementation agencies be encouraged to address nationally identified capacity needs. MALAYSIA supported subnational coordination and consultative mechanisms in preparing national capacity development plans.

Discussions will continue on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As WGRI 2 reached its half-point mark, several delegates were commenting on the smooth sailing of the meeting, with one joking that it might be “a worrying sign.” Another noted that the relatively non-confrontational and low-key discussions at WGRI 2, such as on resource mobilization, may mean “extra heat” at COP 9 when considering these vital issues. Some regretted the missed opportunity to have in-depth discussions on some of these issues at WGRI 2, while others pointed out that without such debates, intersessional efforts to produce substantive proposals for the COP might not be seen as fully participatory and transparent.

Similarly, the issue of admission of observers to future CBD meetings, which initially created some apprehension among the NGOs, came and went without major debate. Only the proposal to establish a universal rule for observer participation in informal consultations led some to have qualms that a few countries might insist on a general exclusion despite the majority of parties being open to broad stakeholder participation in all negotiation settings.