

SBSTTA 14 HIGHLIGHTS:

WEDNESDAY, 12 MAY 2010

Working Group I discussed draft recommendations on inland water biodiversity, forest biodiversity and marine and coastal biodiversity. Working Group II addressed a draft recommendation on biodiversity and climate change and established a contact group to address outstanding issues, which met in the evening.

WORKING GROUP I

MOUNTAIN BIODIVERSITY: Co-Chair Fazel announced the removal of brackets from language on encouraging parties to develop and implement regional collaboration strategies and action plans for mountain biodiversity with the “assistance from regional and international organizations as needed and when requested by all the parties.”

INLAND WATERS: On a draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/WG.1/CRP.3), HUNGARY preferred “urging” rather than “encouraging” parties to refer to the programme of work on IAS in implementing the programme of work on inland waters. On a paragraph urging the development and implementation of measures to halt unsustainable utilization of inland water biodiversity, CANADA and INDIA requested deletion of references to legal and policy frameworks, with INDIA proposing to include the promotion of inland waters biodiversity conservation.

NEW ZEALAND suggested making indicative a list of measures to increase capacity for implementing the programme of work. UGANDA, opposed by TURKEY and supported by PORTUGAL, requested inclusion of language on “transboundary management of shared inland water resources” in the list. Delegates eventually agreed to insert “international cooperation in the management of inland water resources.”

BURKINA FASO proposed text encouraging the inscription of wetland areas on the Ramsar List. NEW ZEALAND, opposed by BELGIUM and UGANDA, favored recognizing the economic benefits of ecosystem services, rather than proposed text on further developing the payment for ecosystem services approach. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed on the original wording “as appropriate.”

FINLAND proposed inserting language on maintaining and restoring the connectivity of inland water ecosystems with terrestrial and marine ecosystems for climate change adaptation and to minimize biodiversity degradation, with TURKEY requesting insertion of “where appropriate.” BELGIUM proposed to take measures to reduce pressure of cities on inland water ecosystems, with BURKINA FASO stressing the need to involve urban authorities and stakeholders in support of these measures.

NEW ZEALAND, supported by TURKEY, remarked that water security for people is outside the CBD mandate, requesting to focus on ecosystems. Delegates discussed and eventually agreed to: “encourage” rather than “urge” parties to ensure water allocation policies are based on the need for both urban and rural sectors to achieve water security for ecosystems, bearing in mind the demands and need for sustainable supplies for all uses; requesting the CBD to investigate ways to reduce the negative impacts from irrigation and agriculture on inland water ecosystems and to enhance the ecosystems’ ability to contribute to improve water security and quality for food production for present and future generations; and encourage consideration of inland water biodiversity and ecosystems services’ values in national accounting systems. BELGIUM proposed new language urging collaboration in national implementation of elements of programmes of work on inland and marine biodiversity, taking into account biodiversity’s role in the global water cycle. BRAZIL proposed recognizing the interdependence of carbon and water cycle both in mitigation and adaptation activities.

On a paragraph inviting coordination between MEAs on water issues at the national level, CHINA requested to have the “crucial role of the CBD in this context” recognized. NEW ZEALAND proposed to focus capacity-building efforts on improving the contribution of “inland water” biodiversity only on “natural” disaster risk reduction.

CANADA, supported by NEW ZEALAND and BELGIUM, requested deleting language establishing water as an “overarching subject” across the thematic and cross-cutting issues under the CBD. NEW ZEALAND, supported by INDIA and opposed by PORTUGAL, MALAWI and CHINA, suggested deleting reference to the role of biodiversity in water security. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed: to urge parties, other governments and relevant stakeholders to mainstream biodiversity, while recognizing the role of biodiversity in achieving water security; and on preambular language recommending the WGRI to develop a goal or target to reflect the importance of biodiversity for water security.

FORESTS: On a draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/WG.1/CRP.4), IRAN proposed new language on collaboration between the CBD Secretariat and the Low Forest Cover Countries Secretariat on implementation of the programme of work.

On preparing country reports on forest genetic resources, FINLAND, opposed by CHINA, BRAZIL, NEPAL and SOUTH AFRICA, proposed to delete reference to the need for financial assistance, considering this outside SBSTTA’s mandate. Delegates eventually agreed to refer to “other support.” On inadequacies in forest biodiversity reporting and monitoring, delegates agreed on a meeting to investigate

whether inadequacies could be addressed by “proposing revised” definitions and types of forests. On collaboration between national focal points of the Rio Conventions and UNFF, delegates eventually agreed to delete reference to benefit-sharing from forest genetic resources.

On REDD, SWITZERLAND and FINLAND suggested clarifying that CBD’s cooperation concerns “biodiversity and other” safeguards. NORWAY proposed adding reference to the UN-REDD Programme, with BRAZIL objecting to the use of the acronym “REDD.” BELGIUM suggested deleting reference to exploring the implications of safeguards. The UK stressed the link between safeguards and the new strategic plan. CHINA suggested that the CBD carry out consultations with parties and promote the sustainable management of forests in the context of REDD and other forest-related climate change responses, requesting deletion of reference to monitoring, verification and reporting on biodiversity and to clarifying the concept of sustainable management of forests. COLOMBIA recommended that the CBD contribute to the “discussion” on relevant safeguards, while GERMANY and FINLAND favored a contribution to the “development” of relevant safeguards. Co-Chair Fazal proposed bracketing options for a sub-paragraph on REDD, noting relevant ongoing discussions in Working Group II.

MARINE BIODIVERSITY: On a draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/WG.1/CRP.2), JAPAN made a distinction between “protected” ocean surfaces and those “declared as PAs.” NEW ZEALAND preferred not to specifically and exhaustively list national strategies, action plans and programmes into which parties are requested to integrate climate change-related aspects of marine biodiversity. SPAIN proposed deleting reference to the establishment of ecologically representative and effectively managed MPA networks. Delegates agreed to refer to the “2012 target of establishing marine protected areas consistent with international law and based on scientific information, including networks.”

WORKING GROUP II

CLIMATE CHANGE: On a draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/WG.2/CRP.1), BRAZIL, CHINA, ARGENTINA and CUBA, opposed by COSTA RICA, objected to recognizing the LifeWeb initiative as a funding mechanism, preferring a more general reference to funding. On inviting the GEF to consult with the Executive Secretary on ways to better inform its implementing agencies of COP decisions, CHINA, IRAN and INDIA, opposed by BELGIUM, LIBERIA, NORWAY and CANADA, proposed deleting reference to decisions, especially those related to building synergies between the Rio Conventions.

On national reporting and data collection, CHINA proposed “taking into account particular conditions of countries.” On guidance on ways to conserve and restore biodiversity, BELGIUM added reference to “sustainably use” biodiversity and NEW ZEALAND to “according to national circumstances and priorities.” On assessing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, NORWAY proposed reinstating language on the impacts of climate change on particularly vulnerable livelihoods. On reducing climate change impacts, INDIA proposed including reference to the negative impacts on “biodiversity and biodiversity-based livelihoods.” Highlighting that connectivity can contribute to biodiversity decline, DENMARK proposed enhancing connectivity “where appropriate.” On adaptation, MEXICO, FINLAND, ARGENTINA, DENMARK and CHINA proposed new language emphasizing that natural adaptation would be difficult and a precautionary approach should be adopted to avoid unintended ecological consequences of measures adopted to facilitate adaptation.

On ecosystem-based approaches for adaptation and mitigation, CANADA proposed “recognizing that ecosystems can be managed to limit climate change impacts on

biodiversity and help people adapt to adverse effects of climate change impacts; where appropriate ecosystem-based adaptation measures that may include sustainable management, conservation, restoration of ecosystems as part of an overall adaptation strategy.” This was opposed by SOUTH AFRICA and INDIA who noted lack of reference to multiple social, economic and cultural co-benefits for local communities. On implementing activities in the agricultural sector, AUSTRALIA proposed, and delegates agreed, to delete language on sustainable traditional agricultural practices.

On ecosystem-based adaptation, SWITZERLAND, SWEDEN, SPAIN, the UK and FINLAND proposed alternative text on different ecosystem management options and objectives. On bracketed text on adaptation, the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, supported by SWAZILAND, proposed replacing “urging parties” with “ensuring that parties” liaise with their UNFCCC focal points. SPAIN, supported by CUBA, proposed reference to ecosystem-based mitigation and forest degradation. AUSTRALIA suggested including reference to conservation and sustainable management of forest carbon stocks.

On bracketed text on REDD, CHINA asked to remove the reference to biodiversity safeguards. On integrating biodiversity and ecosystem services in mitigation and adaptation efforts and on implementing ecosystem-based adaptation measures, CANADA proposed “recognizing that ecosystems can be managed to limit climate change impacts on biodiversity and help people adapt to adverse effects of climate change impacts,” opposed by SOUTH AFRICA and INDIA who noted lack of reference to multiple social, economic and cultural co-benefits for local communities.

On geo-engineering, debate centered on whether to refer to CBD decision IX/16C (ocean fertilization). CANADA and AUSTRALIA proposed applying the precautionary approach to all geo-engineering activities. The PHILIPPINES suggested that due consideration be given to associated risks to biodiversity and economic and social consequences for local communities. The US proposed making reference to the work of the international regime on ocean dumping. On valuation, NORWAY proposed indicating that economic and non-economic values should be taken into account by using a range of valuation techniques.

To address outstanding issues, Co-Chair Benitez-Diaz established a contact group.

CONTACT GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

During the evening contact group chaired by Ole Hendrickson (Canada), delegates discussed the possible role of the LifeWeb initiative as a funding mechanism and that of the GEF in relation to COP decisions on building synergies among the Rio Conventions. Delegates also discussed references to REDD in the context of cooperation with UNFCCC national focal points under the recommendation on biodiversity and climate change, and in the context of collaboration with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests under the recommendation on forest biodiversity. Delegates debated whether to extend reference to a broader concept encompassing all forms of geo-engineering or retain more restrictive language. Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

The optimism that accompanied the first two days of negotiations started to fade away as delegates got “lost in translation” struggling to find compromise language for the recommendation on biodiversity and climate change. Similar difficulties surfaced in discussions on forest biodiversity, which got stuck on REDD and biodiversity safeguards. The timing of ongoing negotiations at CBD and UNFCCC may be one of the causes of the impasse, and lack of flexibility of some parties another. Some are hoping that the imminent release of the Chairs’ text for the UNFCCC *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action will bring some inspiration to CBD negotiators.