

SBSTTA 23 Highlights: Tuesday, 26 November 2019

The 23rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23) finalized plenary deliberations of potential elements for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and addressed climate change and biodiversity, and the links between nature and culture. A contact group on potential elements for the post-2020 framework met in the evening.

Informing the Scientific and Technical Base for the Post-2020 Framework

Potential elements for the post-2020 framework: On goals, SWEDEN and MALAWI supported long-term, outcome-oriented goals for 2050, and short-term goals to 2030, with AUSTRIA requesting a reference to vulnerable ecosystems. ICELAND and the UK favored long-term goals.

On targets, SWEDEN suggested an overarching goal of “living within the planetary boundaries for the benefit of all people and nature.” SWITZERLAND and the CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES (CMS) pleaded to address ecological connectivity as a stand-alone target. AUSTRIA supported sector-oriented targets.

The UK, with JORDAN, called for targets to be accountable, measurable, time-bound, and implementable. The UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, with EGYPT, reiterated that the targets need to be practical and easy to communicate. ICELAND opposed the inclusion of “benefits,” suggesting “ecosystem services,” while MALAWI stressed the need for the equitable sharing of benefits.

SOUTH AFRICA and INDIA stressed that access to finance and technology must be addressed by specific targets. PERU highlighted the importance of centers of genetic origin of important species for food and agriculture. JAPAN and others urged for an ecosystem-based approach and for making use of the list of global indicators. TURKEY suggested clarifying the concept of transformational change.

On the mission of the post-2020 framework, AUSTRIA suggested that the mission should be short, compelling, and address transformational change. The UK said that it should provide milestones towards 2050 using outcome-based indicators.

On indicators, ICELAND, with JORDAN, the UK, SPAIN, MALAWI, AUSTRIA, AUSTRALIA, the ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD), and others, supported developing indicators early in the process alongside other elements. The EU and others underlined that targets and indicators have to be clear, coherent, and logical, and must also address implementation, transparency, and party to party review.

The UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD) highlighted the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, including land cover and land productivity. The

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) suggested targets and indicators that support ecosystem and human health outcomes holistically. The WORLD BANK suggested developing a definition of targets that focuses on actions.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN (FAO) suggested that the post-2020 framework address sustainable agriculture and focus on soil biodiversity, and marine and freshwater ecosystems. The INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (ITPGRFA) highlighted targets on food security and sustainable agriculture.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) and the GLOBAL YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (GYBN) pressed for collective but differentiated action in implementing the post-2020 framework. The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) underscored equity and requested “traditional knowledge” to be modified to “indigenous and traditional knowledge, innovations, practices, and technologies” across the Convention. The CBD ALLIANCE argued that the post-2020 framework should anticipate future technology disruptions.

The UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (UNU) highlighted the importance of landscape approaches. UN WOMEN and WOMEN’S CAUCUS stressed the need for a dedicated target on gender equality. The ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS called parties to engage with subnational and local governments.

The GLOBAL FOREST COALITION (GFC) and FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL pleaded to remove all perverse incentives and harmful subsidies. WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF), with BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, also speaking for other environmental organizations, offered specific language under the concept of ecological integrity.

A contact group, co-chaired by Anne Teller (EU) and Jorge Murillo (Colombia), was established to further deliberations.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CBD/SBSTTA/23/3).

Via video link, Paul Watkinson, Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), emphasized the importance of strengthening the ties between the Convention and the UNFCCC. He underscored the need to be well-informed on the links between the impacts of climate change on biodiversity, nature-based solutions, and potential conflicts.

Many outlined national efforts to address climate change and biodiversity loss, and emphasized the need to: address biodiversity and climate change in an integrated manner; strengthen synergies across the Rio Conventions and biodiversity-related conventions; and apply nature-based solutions to disaster risk reduction, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN), highlighted the need to take into account best practices at the regional and sub-regional levels. The AFRICAN GROUP drew attention to the African Ministerial Declaration on Biodiversity, suggesting guidelines for the implementation of ecosystem-based solutions. SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), stressed the need to invest in ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation.

FINLAND suggested integrating ecosystem-based approaches on climate policies. NORWAY noted that impacts of climate change on biodiversity are expected to surpass the impact of all other drivers of biodiversity loss. SWITZERLAND emphasized that climate change considerations must be integrated in the design and management of area-based conservation measures (ABCMs).

SWEDEN and JAPAN noted that certain climate change mitigation measures could degrade biodiversity, with JAPAN adding that ecosystem-based approaches minimize potential trade-offs between biodiversity and climate priorities. BRAZIL and ARGENTINA expressed concerns regarding references to food consumption and production patterns, and bioenergy.

ARGENTINA stressed that investment in sustainable infrastructure is more important than investment in nature-based solutions. MEXICO called for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Reports on Climate Change and Land, and Oceans and the Cryosphere, to be taken into account. CUBA highlighted the importance of considering marine and coastal ecosystems.

CANADA requested additional work on climate change-specific goals, targets, and indicators for the post-2020 framework. INDONESIA underscored that any global standard for the design and verification of nature-based solutions should be generic and voluntary. SEYCHELLES underscored the use of ABCMs.

COLOMBIA, CUBA, INDIA, BOTSWANA, SPAIN, and others addressed the need to coordinate funding mechanisms between climate and biodiversity fora. PERU highlighted that, despite significant benefits, land-based sequestration efforts only receive three per cent of climate financing. SEYCHELLES and ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA emphasized that global warming of 2°C would lead to devastating impacts.

CAMEROON underscored the need to further study economic and social vulnerabilities, and the cost of adaptation to climate change. SOUTH AFRICA urged developing concrete tools for implementation of nature-based solutions.

NEPAL suggested including mountain biodiversity and ecosystems. MALAWI stressed that ecosystem-based approaches should be gender sensitive. The PHILIPPINES emphasized the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). SAINT LUCIA highlighted biodiversity conservation in hotspots, food security, and agro-ecological practices.

MOROCCO, GERMANY, MALAWI, and others underscored the CBD voluntary guidelines for ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. GERMANY noted that the guidelines could be broadly used in the context of nature-based solutions. The UK suggested inviting the UNFCCC to consider the Convention's guidelines on ecosystem-based approaches.

IIFB made proposals, supported by Australia and IUCN, for IPLCs to be able to fully and effectively participate in the post-2020 process. GYBN, with CBD WOMEN's CAUCUS, reminded participants of the significant effects of climate change on children, the elderly, women, and IPLCs. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY (IPC) stated that the small producer and peasant culture is key in addressing the biodiversity crisis. GFC and FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL suggested using "ecosystem-based approach" rather than "nature-based solutions," while BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, supported by Egypt, cautioned against the negative impacts of the transition to renewable energy on species and habitats.

A CRP will be prepared.

Possible Elements of Work on the Links Between Nature and Culture

The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CBD/SBSTTA/23/4), noting that the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Article 8(j) had already made draft recommendations (CBD/SBSTTA/23/4/Add.1).

Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt), Co-Chair of the OEWG on Article 8(j), presented the outcomes of the 11th meeting, noting the Global Thematic Dialogue for IPLCs.

Many supported the draft recommendations and the joint programme of work on the links between cultural and biological diversity between the Secretariat and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), highlighting that nature and culture are deeply integrated; and that indigenous knowledge and cultural management are an essential component of conserving biodiversity.

ASEAN, ETHIOPIA, and others appreciated new approaches to communication, education, and public awareness on the interlinkages between biological, cultural, and linguistic diversity. ASEAN drew attention to their heritage parks programme. MEXICO, FINLAND, FRANCE, and others stressed the full and effective participation of IPLCs.

CEE emphasized the importance of special indicators for cultural and biological diversity in the post-2020 framework. CAMBODIA and JAPAN highlighted landscape approaches. GHANA suggested reference to the IPBES indigenous and local knowledge programme.

BRAZIL and ARGENTINA cautioned against anything within the post-2020 work programme creating non-tariff barriers to trade. ARGENTINA further recommended developing a strategy for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge.

UNESCO stressed that traditional and indigenous knowledge is essential for transformation and societal resilience. IUCN underscored that the links between nature and culture provide untapped potential for achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity. IIFB stressed the importance of maintaining the integrity of the OEWG on Article 8(j) recommendation. IPC highlighted the need to recognize collective rights.

A CRP will be prepared.

Contact Group on Potential Elements for the Post-2020 Framework

A contact group co-chaired by Anne Teller (EU) and Jorge Murillo (Colombia) met in the evening to discuss SBSTTA's guidance regarding the mission, goals, targets, indicators, baselines, and monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Discussions continued into the evening.

In the Corridors

"Being inclusive and leaving room for comprehensive statements has always been standard practice under the CBD," one seasoned delegate calmly explained on Tuesday when neophyte observers balked at the frequently repeated talking points on biodiversity and climate change in the plenary. Another mused that the process meant that contact groups would be the scene of the real negotiation: "when everyone is this cautious, it shows how hard it is to thread the needle."

One such needle to thread is the role of IPLCs and traditional knowledge. As some insisted that nothing in the work programme could invoke the possibility of non-tariff trade barriers, other participants pointed fingers: "how can we protect the rights of IPLCs if we do away with the standards that guarantee those protections?" The question of what true progress could realistically be expected by the end of the week hung in the air. "Luckily, we still have two working group meetings for the post-2020 framework," one delegate suggested on the way to the evening contact group. "But I don't envy the co-chairs."