

## **SBSTTA 23 Highlights: Thursday, 28 November 2019**

The 23rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 23) met throughout the day to discuss draft recommendations on the links between nature and culture, biodiversity and climate change, and new and emerging issues. The contact group on potential elements for the post-2020 framework met in the evening.

### ***Possible Elements of Work on the Links Between Nature and Culture***

SBSTTA 23 Chair Hesiquio Benitez Diaz (Mexico) introduced document CBD/SBSTTA/23/CRP.1.

BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA and opposed by many, reiterated their support for a paragraph noting that “nothing in the work programme on the links between nature and culture should be interpreted or used to support non-tariff barriers to trade.” BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, MOROCCO, and others also suggested retaining a recommendation on adding tasks for the programme of work on developing strategies for benefit-sharing with traditional knowledge holders and discussing the integration of cultural values attached to biodiversity into a supportive framework.

AUSTRALIA, supported by MEXICO, FINLAND, and others, suggested deleting both recommendations. FINLAND and others proposed that the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the post-2020 framework is the appropriate forum for discussing such items.

NORWAY, with others, suggested that trade-related discussions fall outside SBSTTA’s scope. JAPAN suggested that discussions on genetic resources fall under the Nagoya Protocol.

An informal group was mandated to address the unresolved issues of non-tariff barriers to trade, benefit-sharing, and integration of cultural values in a supportive framework. Following consultations, the paragraph referring to non-tariff trade barriers was bracketed, as was the paragraph referring to benefit-sharing with traditional knowledge holders. Language around discussing the integration of cultural values attached to biodiversity into a supportive framework was deleted.

The CRP was approved with these amendments.

### ***Biodiversity and Climate Change***

Delegates addressed document CBD/SBSTTA/23/CRP.3.

TURKEY reiterated its reservation regarding the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report “for scientific, technical, and political reasons.” ARGENTINA expressed disagreement with the baseline proposed in the IPBES Report. CANADA requested removing references to information documents.

On a paragraph taking note of important relevant initiatives, SOUTH AFRICA suggested including the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience. ISRAEL proposed “welcoming” rather than “taking note of” the reports.

A lengthy discussion took place on the use of the term “ecosystem-based approaches” vis-à-vis “nature-based solutions.” The EU noted that “in most cases, in the implementation space, the two notions are nearly identical.” ISRAEL and NORWAY stressed that the two terms “don’t always mean the same thing.” The EU suggested that ecosystem-based approaches “are often referred to” as nature-based solutions while JAMAICA proposed that they “may be sometimes referred to” as nature-based solutions. CUBA suggested that ecosystem-based approaches “include, but are not limited to” nature-based solutions. NORWAY, supported by ISRAEL, proposed that “nature-based solutions are an essential component of ecosystem-based approaches.” BELGIUM, with AUSTRIA, suggested referring to nature-based solutions with biodiversity safeguards. Delegates agreed to the proposal by Norway with the addition by Belgium.

On a paragraph highlighting the need for urgent climate action, ISRAEL suggested, and delegates agreed to, strengthening the language by “stressing” the aforementioned need. JAMAICA, supported by ARGENTINA, proposed recognizing that “global strategies adopted to address biodiversity and climate change must take into account national circumstances and capabilities, as well as principles such as common but differentiated responsibilities.” The EU, NORWAY, BELGIUM, the UK, AUSTRIA, JAPAN, and others noted that the proposal by Jamaica goes beyond SBSTTA’s mandate. BRAZIL and COLOMBIA suggested retaining the original language. The proposal remained bracketed.

On a paragraph inviting the OEWG for the post-2020 framework to consider the interlinkages between biodiversity, climate change, desertification, and land degradation, parties added reference to “considering different views discussed at SBSTTA 23 and scientific source material,” and removed a reference to “a transformational effect.”

Parties discussed CANADA’s proposed addendum to a paragraph requesting the Secretariat to invite written submissions on possible post-2020 targets and indicators related to biodiversity and climate change for the consideration of the OEWG on the post-2020 framework. BRAZIL, supported by ITALY and opposed by the UK and others, proposed referring to “biodiversity loss.”

On recommendations to the Conference of the Parties (COP), regarding the interlinkages of biodiversity with aspects dealt with under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, proposed to more specifically refer to the “voluntary targets” under the UNCCD.

The EU proposed an additional recommendation expressing “deep concern about the increasing impact of climate change, exacerbating biodiversity loss and weakening the delivery of crucial ecosystem services and functions,” which remained bracketed.

Argentina, opposed by the EU, suggested removing language referring to required “socioeconomic, cultural, and political changes.” BRAZIL, with JAMAICA, suggested bracketing the reference.

Participants agreed to replace language on “ecosystem-based approaches” with “nature-based solutions.” On globally agreed goals, FINLAND suggested a specific reference to the goals of the Paris Agreement.

On language regarding anthropogenic emissions and their causes, BRAZIL, opposed by the EU, argued to add language on the industry and energy sectors and to remove mentions of the “destruction of natural ecosystems.” ARGENTINA suggested, and delegates agreed to, not mentioning sectors at all and preserving language on reducing anthropogenic emissions.

On a recommendation to note certain practices harmful to biodiversity, JAPAN proposed to mention intensive bioenergy plantations as “one example of unfavorable trade-offs.” BRAZIL, with ARGENTINA, suggested to delete the whole recommendation, or, supported by NEW ZEALAND, to at least add the “large-scale deployment of subsidies to agriculture” as another harmful example. The EU stated that the recommendation used language from the IPBES Global Assessment Report, and should therefore not be amended. The recommendation was bracketed as amended.

Regarding promoting and upscaling the use of ecosystem-based approaches, COSTA RICA proposed adding “ecosystem protection.” The EU, supported by MEXICO, suggested mentioning the multiple benefits of synergies for addressing biodiversity loss and climate change. CANADA, with NEW ZEALAND, proposed using a broader term rather than referring to “agroecosystems,” while JAPAN suggested adding the avoidance of “unfavorable trade-offs” as a benefit. MEXICO proposed adding the “productive sector” as an addressee of this paragraph of the COP’s decision.

On a recommendation regarding strengthening the efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation into climate change adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction, SWITZERLAND, opposed by NORWAY, the EU, and PERU, suggested deleting reference to nationally determined contributions. The reference was bracketed.

Regarding encouraging parties and others to maximize potential synergies and avoid potential risks for biodiversity, including those from the renewable energy transition, particularly for vulnerable ecosystems and communities, COSTA RICA, with MEXICO and BRAZIL, suggested also referring to “irreplaceable ecosystems.” MEXICO proposed reference to “vulnerable communities.” The UK suggested “communities that particularly depend on biodiversity.” ARGENTINA and BRAZIL, opposed by SPAIN and BELGIUM, suggested deleting the reference to the renewable energy transition. The reference was bracketed. BRAZIL further suggested using the language from decision X/37.

INDONESIA suggested adopting voluntary and generic standards when developing a global standard for the design and verification of nature-based solutions. The EU, BRAZIL, and others requested clarifications on the proposal.

Delegates bracketed a sub-paragraph on stakeholder investments for ecosystem-based approaches, with BRAZIL, opposed by the EU, suggesting specifying that these investments are targeted especially to developing country parties; and a sub-paragraph on including ecosystem-based approaches in sectoral policies and budgets, with ARGENTINA proposing that this be done “according to national priorities.” Delegates also bracketed a paragraph encouraging stakeholders to “consider the potential risks to businesses and other sectors.”

On a recommendation to COP about guidance to address threats to vulnerable ecosystems, MOROCCO suggested that the Secretariat should be requested “to develop” such guidance. GERMANY proposed “to develop and provide,” which was agreed. BELGIUM

suggested clarifying the paragraph by adding a reference to “the ways and means to address threats.” With regard to “communities that directly depend on ecosystem functions and services,” ARGENTINA, opposed by JAMAICA, suggested reducing the scope to indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). BRAZIL requested for the entire paragraph to be put in brackets as amended.

Regarding a request to the Secretariat to provide capacity building to increase awareness and understanding of ecosystem-based approaches, the UK, supported by JAPAN and opposed by BURKINA FASO, ARGENTINA, and BRAZIL, suggested framing this under the long-term capacity-building strategy of the post-2020 framework. BURKINA FASO suggested highlighting capacity building for developing countries. BELGIUM noted that reference to the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions should be retained. Following discussions, BRAZIL proposed, and delegates agreed, to keep the original language “as a complement to the capacity-building initiative under the post-2020 framework.”

Delegates decided to bracket two further requests to the Secretariat to continue collaboration among IPLC-relevant bodies and to support initiatives of IPLCs on community-based monitoring and information systems for climate change.

The CRP was approved with these amendments and brackets.

### ***New and Emerging Issues***

Delegates addressed document CBD/SBSTTA/23/CRP.4 and approved it without amendments.

### ***Potential Elements for the Post-2020 Framework***

Jorge Murillo (Colombia), Co-Chair of the contact group on potential elements for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, reported on the group’s discussions, noting that it had developed a number of key messages regarding elements for the mission and targets of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to be submitted to the OEWG on the post-2020 framework.

### ***Contact Group on Potential Elements for the Post-2020 Framework***

The contact group on potential elements for the post-2020 framework, co-chaired by Anne Teller (EU) and Jorge Murillo (Colombia), met in the evening. Delegates addressed direct drivers of biodiversity loss, focusing on invasive alien species; climate change; and pollution. They further exchanged ideas on the use and values of nature, and relevant tools, solutions, and leverage points. Discussions continued into the night.

### ***In the Corridors***

For all the discussion of the SBSTTA’s mandate for scientific and technical advice on Thursday, delegates were unable to avoid politics. What was meant to be a straightforward acceptance of conference room papers before an afternoon’s contact group turned into a full-day process with debates breaking out on conservation versus protection, indigenous rights, and biodiversity’s effects on trade. Some seasoned observers called out what they saw as “a slow dilution of options.” “We spelled out all the possibilities, but in the end, most of them got removed—and now what we thought had been agreed upon is in brackets,” one bemoaned, pointing to what they considered “the influence of certain geopolitical realities on the process.”

Delegates returning to the contact group were divided as the sun set over the streets of Montreal. Some found cause for optimism, noting that “discussions have been fruitful” in previous days. Others pointed out that talks had been so because part of the discussions had focused on gathering opinions rather than actually negotiating. “Information is good, but we need more than that,” one observer tutted. “If we want to give good advice to the working group at some point, probably before the meeting ends, we’re going to have to make decisions.”