

Geneva Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Saturday, 26 March 2022

The Geneva Biodiversity Conference continued its work on Saturday, with an SBI plenary meeting in the morning to address resource mobilization and the financial mechanism; capacity building and cooperation; the gender plan of action; the post-2020 implementation plan and capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol; and communication for the GBF. In the afternoon and evening, two Contact Groups under the Working Group on the GBF (WG2020) continued work on GBF targets. An informal group continued working on digital sequence information (DSI) at lunchtime, and another focused on marine and coastal biodiversity in the evening.

This daily report includes the deliberations of the SBI plenary, the WG2020 Contact Group that met in the afternoon, and the WG2020 that met in the evening of Friday, 25 March. The remaining WG2020 Contact Group will be summarized in the Bulletin on Sunday, 27 March.

SBI Plenary

SBI Chair Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden) opened the session, outlining the items under discussion.

Resource mobilization and the financial mechanism: Chair Sörqvist drew attention to the conference room paper (CRP) on resource mobilization (CBD/SBI/3/CRP.15/Rev.1). She said that the relevant Contact Group has advanced work related to resource mobilization but could not finalize discussions due to lack of time. She explained that paragraphs 26-40 as well as Annex 1 (on the resource mobilization component of the GBF) have not been considered by the Contact Group. She highlighted additional elements on resource mobilization for the GBF, as suggested by parties, contained in a distinct section of the document. She explained that they should be considered as placeholders to allow further discussion in preparation for and during COP-15.

The EU requested bracketing the section containing additional elements proposed by parties. ARGENTINA requested bracketing six preambular paragraphs of the draft recommendation under the section on financial reporting, noting that these have not been thoroughly discussed. The AFRICAN GROUP stressed that progress has been insufficient, calling for a formal meeting of SBI prior to COP-15 to continue discussions on resource mobilization and the financial mechanism.

The CRP was approved with the additional brackets as requested by parties. An L document will be produced for further consideration.

Chair Sörqvist introduced document CBD/SBI/3/CRP.20 on the financial mechanism, noting it contains elements of guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF). She said that the fourth operative paragraph of the draft recommendation has bracketed text, as does the Annex, which contains the four-year framework of programme priorities of the Convention for the eighth replenishment cycle of the GEF (GEF-8).

The CRP was approved with no further comments. An L document will be produced.

Capacity building and development, technical and scientific cooperation, and technology transfer: Chair Sörqvist introduced the relevant document (CBD/SBI/3/CRP.13/Rev.1), noting that the Contact Group established during the first part of SBI-3 continued its work during this meeting. She invited the Contact Group Co-Chairs to report back on informal consultations.

Co-Chair Haike Jan Haanstra (the Netherlands) reported that consensus was reached regarding “taking note of” rather than “welcoming” the proposals to strengthen technical and scientific cooperation in support of the GBF, as contained in Annex II.

Co-Chair Laura Bermúdez (Colombia) reported that parties agreed to: add a preambular paragraph noting that the GBF and related decisions are to be implemented in accordance with national priorities and capabilities; and delete references to “according to their capabilities” in the operative paragraphs of the draft recommendation.

Parties approved the CRP with these changes. An L document will be developed.

Gender plan of action: Chair Sörqvist introduced the draft gender plan of action for the GBF (CBD/SBI/3/CRP.18). She noted that the document had been thoroughly negotiated in both the relevant Contact Group and the informal Friends of the Co-Chairs Group.

The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO and ALGERIA reiterated that all CRPs directly linked to the GBF should remain bracketed.

The CRP was approved with these amendments. An L document will be produced. Following the document’s approval, PARAGUAY suggested amendments. Chair Sörqvist noted that these will be addressed when the L document is discussed.

Post-2020 implementation plan and capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol: Chair Sörqvist introduced the document (CBD/SBI/3/CRP.14/Rev.1), noting that the relevant Contact Group established in the first part of SBI-3 continued its work during the meeting.

Contact Group Co-Chair Rita Andorkó (Hungary) reported that the group held one meeting to address outstanding issues. She noted that parties agreed to keep a column on indicators on the capacity-building action plan, and made amendments. Many delegates requested deletion of a column on actors, but a regional group preferred retaining it. She added that parties agreed to develop two separate decisions on the implementation plan and the capacity-building action plan.

The EU noted that some paragraphs were missing at the end of the draft recommendation, addressing the mid-term assessment with regard to the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat explained that the draft recommendation was streamlined following instructions by the Contact Group, pointing to a relevant operative paragraph.

Parties approved the CRP. An L document will be developed for further consideration.

Communication for the GBF: Chair Sörqvist introduced the relevant document (CBD/SBI/3/CRP.17).

On a section on communication, access to information, and awareness, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION requested that language

suggesting the strategy has an impact on intentions and planning remain bracketed.

On the section on the scope and purpose, the EU, UK, PERU, and NEW ZEALAND suggested, and delegates agreed, to lift brackets around reference to strong participation of IPLCs, women, and youth in implementation of the strategy. The EU, supported by UK, suggested that experts in behavior change be involved in supporting implementation of the strategy. ARGENTINA and SOUTH AFRICA opposed, requesting retaining all brackets referring to behavior change.

On a paragraph on the implementation of communication elements of the GBF, several parties, including ARGENTINA and TOGO, preferred to retain an option inviting parties to create national versions of the strategy immediately after COP-15. TOGO, supported by the EU, suggested this be done “as soon as possible” rather than “immediately.”

On the table on timelines for activities, CANADA, supported by the EU, suggested text inviting parties to integrate relevant actions from the communication strategy in their planning and reporting mechanisms. PERU suggested bracketing the text for further consideration. On reporting, the EU suggested revising the reporting activities for the different SBI sessions such that parties report on the strategy biennially in national reports, using the Convention’s Clearing-house mechanism in between reporting periods.

BRAZIL noted that the strategy should provide guidance to parties, cautioning against being over-prescriptive.

Delegates agreed to remove brackets on a reference to the communication strategy also supporting the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity.

On goals of the communications strategy, on a paragraph describing activities to support Goal A (increase understanding, awareness, and appreciation of the different visions and approaches to achieve sustainable development and the multiple values of biodiversity), delegates accepted BRAZIL’s suggestion to keep a sentence on the inclusion of the associated knowledge, values, and approaches of IPLCs.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION, with TOGO, supported deleting language on the International Day of Mother Earth, and, with the EU, retaining brackets on references to “cosmobiocentric” values.

BOLIVIA, opposed by the EU, requested lifting brackets on a paragraph about developing joint communications with the Harmony with Mother Earth Interactive Dialogue of the General Assembly of the UN.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION supported lifting brackets on a paragraph on education, while BRAZIL asked to include language on building synergies with SDG 4.7 (on knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development) and SDG 12.8 (on information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature).

On Goal D (demonstrate the relevance of the GBF to poverty eradication, climate change, land degradation, human health, human rights, equity, and sustainable development), ARGENTINA, opposed by the EU and TOGO, requested that a sentence on messaging about the interdependence of climate change and biodiversity be bracketed. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION requested removing brackets on the alignment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the GBF.

On human health and biodiversity, BRAZIL requested amending the text to align it with CBD Decision 14/4 (health and biodiversity), taking into account health-biodiversity linkages and removing reference to pandemic prevention.

MEXICO, opposed by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, requested lifting brackets on references to human rights. BOLIVIA requested lifting brackets on language about the rights of Mother Earth and the rights of Nature.

On a subsection on parties to the CBD, its protocols, and other relevant MEAs under a section on audiences, the UK suggested lifting brackets around political coalitions developing joint communication actions and further regional cooperation. TOGO suggested including sub-regional cooperation.

On a subsection on specialized CBD audiences, BRAZIL introduced brackets around a list of business and finance audiences, and ARGENTINA around a list of large organizations.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed lifting brackets on IPLCs communicating their role in implementation based on their own knowledge systems. AUSTRALIA suggested including the tripartite definition of FPIC.

On a subsection on events under the section on open-source coordination mechanisms, and channels and multipliers, TOGO proposed a new paragraph, to include regional events on environmental themes and regional information bulletins. The proposal was bracketed.

On a section on champions, messengers of peace, and goodwill ambassadors, BRAZIL requested brackets around WWF and IUCN. The EU bracketed text on voluntary funding contributions from parties and other interested actors, in order not to prejudice outcomes from ongoing discussions on financial resources.

On a section on key messaging, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL proposed brackets for nature-based solutions (NbS). The RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested removing brackets around a paragraph on messages promoting immediate action to halt biodiversity loss and encouraging action by stakeholders in the GBF context. The EU proposed that a paragraph on reducing inequalities should include reference to a human-rights based approach in achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity. The UK suggested subnational governments and local authorities be involved in the creation of messages.

Delegates approved the CRP with these amendments. An L document will be produced.

WG2020 Contact Group 1

The third meeting of the Contact Group on GBF goals and overall structure, co-led by Norbert Bärlocher (Switzerland) and Vinod Mathur (India), took place on Friday, 25 March in the evening. Delegates heard a report from a Friends of the Co-Leads Group on milestones and their proposed placement as set out in a non-paper containing a table with goals, milestones, and their proposed placement along with respective arguments by parties. Co-Lead Bärlocher welcomed the work, noting it provides a basis for further discussion. One regional group and a party, while preferring a separate section on milestones, indicated flexibility to discuss other options. Co-Lead Mathur suggested bracketing the milestones and invited delegates to incorporate them into the goals.

Goal B: Delegates addressed a proposal developed by the Co-Leads based on previous interventions such that: “biodiversity is conserved, restored, sustainably used, and managed, and nature’s contributions to people (NCPs), including ecosystem services, are valued, maintained, and enhanced, contributing to human health and well-being and supporting sustainable development and the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, for the benefit of all in a just and equitable manner and achieving a reduction of ecological footprint.”

Delegates suggested including references to: the places most important for delivering the contributions to human health and well-being; taking into account historical patterns of production and consumption; and staying within the planetary footprint. Opinions diverged on whether to refer to ecosystem services or NCPs. Some delegates urged focus on sustainable use of biodiversity.

Two delegations then proposed alternative proposals. One refers to NCPs being valued, enhanced, and maintained through conservation, restoration, and sustainable use supporting the global development agenda for the benefit of all. The other sets out that biodiversity is sustainably used and managed, and ecosystem services are valued, maintained, and enhanced, achieving sustainable development. A number of delegates supported the latter, with some suggesting additions, including to achieving a reduction of the ecological footprint. Another delegate asked to include a reference to the right to a healthy environment. Delegates agreed to drop the initial proposal and maintain the alternatives in brackets as the basis for further discussion.

Goal C: This goal addresses the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of genetic resources and associated

traditional knowledge, with a substantial increase in monetary and non-monetary benefits shared. On a proposal to increase monetary and non-monetary benefits by X%, some reiterated that the target should not contain numerical elements.

A developing country regional group, supported by many, proposed alternative wording referring to a substantial increase in monetary and non-monetary benefits arising from sustainable use of biodiversity, including biological and genetic resources, DSI, and associated traditional knowledge. A developed country regional group proposed focusing on monetary and non-monetary benefits arising from sustainable use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge being shared fairly and equitably. A party proposed substantially increasing benefits from genetic resources in any form. Delegates agreed to keep the three alternative proposals as the basis for future negotiations.

Goal D: Delegates discussed the goal on closing the gap between available financial resources and other means of implementation, and those necessary to achieving the 2050 Vision for biodiversity and the GBF goals and targets. They discussed a Co-Leads' proposal, which included bracketed references to: building on past investments; numerical elements on resources' increase and on reducing financing harmful to biodiversity; and aligning private financial flows with biodiversity objectives.

Parties suggested adding references to: non-financial means of implementation; CBD Article 20 (financial resources); public and private financial flows; consistency with nature-positive, carbon-neutral, and pollution-free development pathways; and removing harmful flows.

One party proposed that national and international public and private financial flows be aligned with the GBF and the 2050 Vision, harmful flows removed, resources from all sources increased and biodiversity values mainstreamed across all sectors. Another proposed that the gap between available financial resources and other means of implementation necessary to achieving the 2050 Vision and the GBF targets be closed, including by significantly and progressively increasing financial resources, capacity building, and technology transfer. A shorter provision proposed, with numerical values to be added, referring to securing adequate means of implementation and resources from all sources being accessible to fully implement the GBF. Another proposed establishment of a global biodiversity fund to significantly and progressively increase multilateral financial resources, capacity building, and technology transfer for developing countries. Following discussion and amendments, parties agreed to keep these alternatives for future discussions while deleting the original proposal.

Goal A: The goal addresses the socioecological integrity of natural and managed ecosystems, preventing their collapse, ensuring connectivity, and increasing the protection of ecosystems. Additional elements of the proposed goal include maintaining or enhancing the abundance and distribution of populations, and safeguarding genetic diversity, maintaining species' adaptive potential. A number of delegates called for a more comprehensive goal containing numerical elements, which others opposed.

Following informal consultations, two main proposals were tabled: one more comprehensive with numerical goals, structured from ecosystem level to the species and genetic levels. A briefer version sets out that: biodiversity is conserved, maintaining and enhancing the connectivity and integrity of all ecosystems, halting human induced extinctions, supporting healthy and resilient population of species, and maintaining genetic diversity of populations and their adaptive potential. A party lamented lack of specificity and ambition in the second option and urged a more systematic approach. Some welcomed a concise and communicable goal.

Delegates then proposed additions to both proposals such as references to: terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems; and the area and ecological integrity of a full range of natural ecosystems as well as their adaptive potential. Delegates agreed to keep the two versions for further discussion, and the Co-Leads urged delegates to keep working together to clean up the text.

A number of delegates suggested an additional meeting of the Contact Group. Some delegations urged specific and measurable

goals, saying that otherwise "credibility could be sacrificed for communicability."

2030 Mission: Delegates briefly discussed the mission: to take urgent action across society to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ensure fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the use of genetic resources, to put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of planet and people. Delegates tabled three alternative proposals which remain in brackets.

Timeframe: The Co-Leads asked delegates whether the timeframe for the GBF should be pushed back to 2032. Delegates agreed that the timeline should remain to 2030.

Section Bbis: The Co-Leads drew delegates' attention to their proposal for this section, which addresses principles and approaches for implementation, including to new elements on: national implementation; mainstreaming; accountability; common concern of humankind; equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and sovereignty over natural resources; provisions on IPLCs and UNDRIP; the right to development; cosmobiocentric approaches; trade law; One Health; NbS; Article 20; and education.

Discussions will continue.

WG2020 Contact Group 3

The Contact Group, co-led by Gabriele Obermayr (Austria) and Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica), addressed GBF Goals 9-13 on meeting people's needs through sustainable use and benefit-sharing. Co-Lead Obermayr opened the session, inviting delegates to: respect the logic of the theory of change and the targets' grouping; use clear and concise language; ensure that the targets are understandable to all; and use the glossary as much as possible for additional explanations.

On Target 10, a representative of the Friends of the Co-Leads group reported back on three meetings of the informal group. He noted that parties failed to come to a final agreement and offered a proposal containing brackets as the basis for further discussion. The suggested Target 10, including bracketed text, reads: "ensure that [all] areas under agriculture, aquaculture, [fisheries,] forestry, [and other productive uses] are managed sustainably, in particular through the sustainable use of biodiversity, contributing to the [long-term] [efficiency, productivity] and resilience of these systems, conserving and restoring biodiversity and mainstreaming [its ecosystem services] [nature's contributions to people (NCPs), including ecosystem services]."

On Target 11 (maintain and enhance ecosystem services such as regulation of air, water and soil quality and protection from natural hazards and extreme weather events, including through ecosystem-based approaches and/or nature-based solutions (NbS) for all people), Co-Lead Guthrie noted that parties prefer reference to ecosystem services, suggesting reference to CBD decision V/6 (ecosystem approach) under the relevant definition. She further recommended using the UNEA definition of NbS in the glossary.

A party, supported by many, suggested adding "restoring" to maintaining and enhancing ecosystem services. Some opposed the addition.

Some parties proposed referring to NCPs, including ecosystem services. A party suggested referring to ecosystem "functions," rights-based approaches, and Mother Earth-centered actions. On the list of ecosystem services, delegates suggested referring to soil "health" rather than soil quality and adding: water security, with some opting for water availability, accessibility, and affordability; climate, pollination, and contributions to health; and food provision. Some suggested deleting the specific examples of ecosystem services. Opinions diverged on a proposal to replace "such as" with "to ensure" regarding the list of ecosystem services.

On natural hazards and extreme weather events, delegates suggested references to land-use induced pathogen spillover and flooding. Many insisted retaining the original language. A party suggested replacing "extreme weather events" with "disaster risk."

Opinions diverged on reference to ecosystem-based approaches or NbS, with some preferring retaining both terms. A regional group supported using the UNEA definition of NbS either in the glossary or directly in the target.

Delegates suggested including references to, *inter alia*: restoring ecosystem services in key natural ecosystems where they are degraded or currently in decline; addressing places most important for providing the relevant services and benefits; and national legislation on payments for environmental services.

A suggestion to add a numerical element by actively improving critical ecosystem services in 20% of natural ecosystems where they have become degraded, in particular wetlands and coastal ecosystems, did not attract wide support. Some suggested referring to all ecosystems.

Many delegates proposed that benefits refer to all people “and nature.”

Co-Lead Guthrie suggested compromise target text, to: “restore, maintain and enhance NCPs, in particular ecosystem services such as air and water, soil health, pollination as well as protection from natural hazards and disasters through ecosystem-based approaches and/or NbS, through payment of environmental services to meet the needs of all people and nature.”

Parties had a number of disagreements and proposed additions to the compromise text, including:

- whether to refer to NCPs, ecosystem services, or NCPs including ecosystem services;
- the inclusion of pollination as an ecosystem service;
- the addition of rights-based approaches and Mother Earth-centered actions;
- whether to include reference to restoration;
- whether to refer to payments for environmental services; and
- whether to “meet the needs” or refer to “for the benefits” of peoples, nature, or both.

One party group said that pollination and climate change both have analogues in other targets. One observer group clarified that the definition of NCPs is broader than ecosystem services, and accommodates concepts from other worldviews.

On **Target 12** (significantly increase the area of, and access to, green and blue spaces in urban and other densely populated areas, for human health and wellbeing, while enhancing ecological connectivity by mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into urban planning and development), Co-Lead Guthrie stressed the focus is green and blue spaces.

Several delegates urged inclusion of connectivity, and suggested language such as “ecological integrity and connectivity.” Some objected to including integrity and others supported adding “enhancing connections to nature.” Enhancing native biodiversity was supported by many, as well as reference to increasing the quality of green and blue spaces. Suggestions to include “biodiversity-inclusive urban planning” was opposed by some, who pointed to Target 1 on spatial planning.

Support for including infrastructure included suggestions for “green infrastructure,” with one party adding “blue.” Some called for safeguarding livelihoods of rural communities due to expansion of urban areas. One party proposed including “disadvantaged areas” in addition to densely populated areas, which others opposed. One party urged synergies with SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities) and proposed adding “inclusive and sustainable urbanization, and the provision of ecosystem services.”

Regarding the link to health, one party proposed reference to the One Health approach. The inclusion of benefits from green and blue spaces was also met with resistance by some.

On **Target 13** (implement measures at a global level and in all countries to facilitate access to genetic resources and to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources, and as relevant, of associated traditional knowledge, including through mutually agreed terms (MAT) and prior informed consent (PIC), Co-Lead Guthrie explained that certain contributions from the Contact Group on DSI would be taken on board. She also presented Target 13bis, reflecting requests for two additional targets.

Many parties supported the target as drafted by the Co-Leads. Nevertheless, parties made a number of suggestions for additions, including:

- facilitating access to genetic and biological resources and any associated traditional knowledge, with a regional group

suggesting adding “associated with genetic resources,” and a party suggesting adding “biological” resources;

- linking the target with the provisions of the Nagoya Protocol, the CBD, and other relevant MEAs, with one suggesting “obligations” rather than “provisions,” and a group including language on “easy, standardized cost-effective procedures”;
- the effective application of ABS frameworks and rules;
- noting that measures should include regulations, policy measures, administrative arrangements, capacity-building and monitoring mechanisms at the national level, with some suggesting including the subnational level; and
- an encouragement to parties to ratify the Nagoya Protocol and other relevant international ABS agreements.

One party stressed the need to include FPIC in language on Indigenous Peoples, with another requesting its tripartite definition. An observer group stressed the need to include the local level.

Co-Lead Guthrie presented a streamlined target text incorporating suggestions and including brackets, now reading: “Implement effective legal, policy and administrative measures at the global, regional, subregional, national, and local levels to facilitate the appropriate access to genetic and [biological] resources [and derivatives] and any traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the utilization of all of the above [including DSI] [in any form] in accordance with the obligations under the Nagoya Protocol, the CBD and other relevant access and benefit sharing multilateral agreements and instruments, encouraging all Parties to ratify the Nagoya Protocol and other relevant international access and benefit sharing agreements.”

Delegates took note of **target 13bis** (facilitate the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources by increasing capacity development, technical and scientific cooperation, and technology transfer to develop and implement ABS measures/mechanisms at the national level).

A party proposed referring to MAT. An observer group requested addition of the local level.

One party introduced alternative text: “substantially increase the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources in any form, and relevant, of associated traditional knowledge, ensuring that resources from benefit sharing reach, by 2030, an amount equals to at least X% of the total amount of international public biodiversity finance for developing countries, contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.”

One party group proposed a new target: “By 2023 establish a global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism that is fully operational by 2025.”

Discussions will continue.

In the Corridors

Life is better when the sun is shining, or so some say. Perhaps the weekend vibes helped, but a warm Saturday found many delegates reluctant to leave the springtime weather on the balcony where they had been taking a breather or conferring with colleagues.

Moods seemed a bit lighter: progress was steady in the morning plenary, and participants even struck up applause when the SBI approved three CRPs in a single session. While very few L documents can boast clean text, it was a collective acknowledgement that the work and time spent in Contact Groups may finally be paying off. One delegate remarked that the brackets that remain are not new: “It’s the same old lines in the sand—there’s no point in trying to seek consensus.” While some pointed out that this will give the advantage of expedient conclusions, others pointed to the risk of sending too much divergence to an already contentious set of COP negotiations.

For now, delegates may have chosen their battles, but can the interessional work truly prepare parties for the political decisions they’ll have to make in a few months? “It’s great that we’re finally getting down to business,” one seasoned observer said. “We’ll survive this meeting. But for biodiversity to have a chance, we have to make sure the GBF survives the COP.”