

SBSTTA 27 Highlights: Tuesday, 21 October 2025

The 27th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 27) continued its deliberations focusing on: biodiversity and climate change; scientific and technical needs to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF); risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms (LMOs); a progress report on intersessional activities on invasive alien species (IAS); and biodiversity and agriculture. Two contact groups met in the evening, addressing issues related to the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the GBF, and biodiversity and climate change.

Election of Officers

South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, nominated Dickson Chitupa (Zimbabwe). Bangladesh, for ASIA-PACIFIC, nominated Camille Inatio (Federated States of Micronesia), and Bo Karl Bengt Fellenius (Marshall Islands) as an alternate, for matters relating to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Grenada, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP, nominated Kishma Priums-Ormond (Antigua and Barbuda). All nominees were elected by acclamation.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Delegates continued their discussions from Monday.

Many delegates underscored that biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification, and land and ocean degradation are interdependent and inseparable crises, requiring coordinated, integrated, and holistic solutions. They supported strengthening policy coherence and synergies across the three Rio Conventions.

The EU, NORWAY, and others noted that nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches are crucial in increasing resilience to climate change impacts, especially in areas of extreme vulnerability. GUATEMALA, YEMEN, and others called for increased recognition of the disproportionate challenges facing developing countries.

NEW ZEALAND suggested that further steps toward enhanced policy coherence take the form of informal technical exchanges among the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements. CANADA suggested the exchanges take place among the Rio Conventions and further called for a mapping study on gaps and overlaps in policies and procedures as well as a multi-level roadmap.

GERMANY proposed: requesting the Secretariat to collaborate with the Secretariats of the other Rio Conventions on further technical information exchange and develop concrete proposals to enhance policy coherence, supported by BELGIUM and the NETHERLANDS; requesting the Joint Liaison Group and

experts to develop a joint workplan and a multi-level roadmap to enhance synergies and policy coherence, supported by the NETHERLANDS and CANADA; and urging parties to prioritize the protection, restoration, enhancement, and sustainable management of carbon-rich and high ecological value ecosystems.

MADAGASCAR highlighted strengthening the Joint Liaison Group with clearer mandates and resources. URUGUAY and CHILE suggested strengthening the engagement with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. SAUDI ARABIA stressed the importance of respecting the competencies of each Rio Convention to avoid overlaps.

FINLAND and others welcomed the short, medium, and long-term actions on the roadmap. PANAMA supported shared indicators to measure progress across the three Rio Conventions.

GUATEMALA called for fully respecting free, prior, and informed consent. PANAMA, JORDAN, and MOROCCO emphasized respecting and conserving traditional knowledge, with COLOMBIA calling to recognize, and CANADA to value, the diversity of knowledge systems. AUSTRALIA, the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE), ICELAND, and CHILE stressed the ocean's essential role in climate regulation.

CHINA said that views expressed in the technical workshop hosted by the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre do not represent consensus.

CANADA and ARGENTINA noted that the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights is not recognized by all CBD parties, suggesting deleting reference to its [advisory opinion AO-32/25](#) on the climate emergency and human rights. CHINA emphasized that SBSTTA should not interpret the [advisory opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice on obligations of states in respect to climate change. JAPAN stressed that SBSTTA is a scientific and technical body and representatives do not necessarily have legal expertise to address court orders and advisory opinions. INDIA, opposed by MEXICO, CHILE, and others, suggested deleting references to both advisory opinions.

CANADA suggested including language in the draft decision on identifying capacity-building needs and offering support through the Clearing-House Mechanism. ARGENTINA called for deleting references to the Sustainable Development Goals, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the global environmental data strategy.

JORDAN called for capacity building in developing countries, with MADAGASCAR proposing creating regional capacity hubs. GUATEMALA valued regional centers for technical and scientific cooperation to strengthen capacities. BELGIUM prioritized maximizing synergies between climate change and biodiversity finance. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that copying negotiations, policies, and initiatives of other instruments is redundant.

On the draft supplement to the [Voluntary Guidelines](#) for the Design and Effective Implementation of Ecosystem-based Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, MALAYSIA, UGANDA, and others welcomed it, while many delegates looked forward to further discussions. JAPAN suggested “encouraging” rather than “urging” countries to use the guidelines. SAUDI ARABIA preferred that SBSTTA “take note of” rather than “adopt” the supplement. BRAZIL and URUGUAY noted endorsing the draft supplement would be premature.

MEXICO requested eliminating a reference prioritizing ecosystem protection over restoration. PANAMA, SWITZERLAND, NEW ZEALAND, BRAZIL, AZERBAIJAN, and others called for a balanced approach to adaptation and mitigation. COLOMBIA called for regional and transboundary approaches.

NEW ZEALAND, supported by NORWAY, GERMANY, SPAIN, the UK, AUSTRALIA, ICELAND, SWEDEN, and the NETHERLANDS, suggested an intersessional peer review process for an updated version of the draft supplement to be considered at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17).

YEMEN, ICELAND, and AUSTRALIA cautioned against unnecessary emphasis on market-based approaches and, with MOROCCO, the UAE, and others, stressed the relevance of robust social and environmental safeguards. PERU stressed the need for new and additional financial and technical resources, technology transfer, capacity building, and technical assistance.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) urged the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs). The GLOBAL YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (GYBN) requested the Secretariat to compile information on the effects of carbon and biodiversity credits and offsets on biodiversity and IPLCs. The CBD WOMEN’S CAUCUS urged gender-responsive and human rights-based action. The CBD ALLIANCE called for environmental and social safeguards based on the precautionary approach. The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE proposed a coordinated decision among Rio Conventions at their respective COPs in 2026. The OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR) urged addressing the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Chair Mikissa established a contact group for further discussions.

Scientific and Technical Needs to Support the Implementation of the GBF

The Secretariat introduced documents [CBD/SBSTTA/27/5, Add.1, Add.2, and Add.3](#).

Parties welcomed the strategic review of the programmes of work under the Convention and generally agreed on the need to avoid duplication, increase efficiency, and ensure alignment with the GBF. NEW ZEALAND emphasized streamlining programmes of work as a key priority.

Zimbabwe, for the AFRICAN GROUP, and BRAZIL underscored the need for targeted technical assistance and new, predictable, easily accessible, and fast-tracked financial support for implementation.

Strategic review and analysis of the programmes of work under the Convention in the context of the GBF: Lamenting the short review time and limited party submissions, the AFRICAN GROUP requested more time and suggested the Secretariat organize an open-ended online forum to facilitate further review of the report. BRAZIL requested clarification on the process that authorized the Secretariat to initiate the review of forest and

protected area work programmes, stressing the process must remain party-driven.

CANADA noted the work conducted as a good first step, but stressed that “looking at the proposed approach, we fear that we are not undertaking the necessary overhaul of the existing system.”

DENMARK, BELGIUM, SWEDEN, and JAPAN sought clarifications on resource and workload implications for future work and collaborations. JAPAN emphasized focusing on practical implementation measures rather than discussing new plans. The UK and SOUTH AFRICA noted that some work areas can be taken forward with partner organizations. ARGENTINA queried the feasibility of updating programmes of work within the time frame of the GBF.

SWITZERLAND suggested identifying as priority areas those that contribute the most to GBF implementation. SOUTH AFRICA urged flexibility to allow for major adjustments to existing areas of work as new issues arise from national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and national reports. The COOK ISLANDS called to retain island biodiversity as a standalone programme. NEW ZEALAND suggested retaining the Global Taxonomy work programme as part of a broader dedicated species work area. BHUTAN underscored the critical importance of maintaining a dedicated mountain ecosystems work programme and, with AUSTRIA, called to strengthen it to align with the GBF.

The COOK ISLANDS, opposed by COLOMBIA and SOUTH AFRICA, called to place protected areas, restoration, and spatial planning under one umbrella programme with discrete work areas. DENMARK, BELGIUM, GERMANY, SWEDEN, and CHINA requested clarification on how merging would affect implementation. The UAE said that the benefit of any amendment or merger of the work programmes must be clear before it is undertaken.

PANAMA drew attention to methodological inconsistencies that may call into question the soundness of the conclusions and recommendations, in particular regarding synthetic biology, and the proposal to merge access and benefit-sharing with digital sequence information.

Strategic review of and update to the expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity in the context of the GBF: NEW ZEALAND suggested parties capitalize on progress made on forests and requested a contact group to resolve remaining disagreements.

MALAYSIA supported endorsing the updated programme of work and underscored the importance of aligning future guidance with the GBF targets. CHINA stressed that the updated programme should respect national contexts and development stages, be flexible to accommodate diverse national plans and strategies, and avoid duplication of efforts.

Namibia, for the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed concern over “the poor progress made” on forest biodiversity, noting that the recommendations do not consider emerging issues. They also noted overreliance on quantitative data, neglecting important qualitative aspects of forest management. They agreed with work expansion but requested attention to: co-management concepts; forest restoration; and increased technical and financial support, especially on qualitative aspects of forest management and on forest inventories.

FRANCE drew attention to the need to update the programme to align with the GBF, better reflecting forest and climate science, and supported any activity to conserve and improve connectivity and integrity of ancient and primary forests.

SWITZERLAND called for promotion of “close to nature forestry.” SWEDEN supported language on “sustainable forest management.” AUSTRALIA suggested the work undertaken on

the definitions for a successfully “restored forest” by ecosystem type be led by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. BANGLADESH called for specifying that integrated land-use planning should be “collaborative” as well as participatory. ICELAND called for clear safeguards on the use of non-native species in forest spatial planning, distinguishing such forests from natural forests. FINLAND underlined the need to continue promoting active forest-related dialogues and called for a holistic approach that considers protected and managed forests together in a coherent manner to improve nature-based solutions.

SPAIN emphasized the need for priority measures and practices to prevent forest fires, prevent and control IAS, and improve ecological connectivity. SWEDEN underlined that the work programme must be aligned with Section C of the GBF (implementation), concerning rights of IPLCs, women, and youth. JAPAN proposed that the work should focus only on areas where consensus has already been reached.

Areas for potential further work in the context of the GBF: Togo, for the AFRICAN GROUP, called for a consensus definition of biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning.

GERMANY preferred exploring how existing structures and initiatives can be used more effectively. INDONESIA and MALAYSIA welcomed the areas of further work, with INDONESIA noting that new initiatives should avoid duplications. CANADA suggested prioritizing activities related to direct drivers of biodiversity loss.

On pollution and biodiversity, EGYPT supported the establishment of an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on the matter, stressing it could deal with thresholds and prevention measures. SWITZERLAND, JAPAN, and AUSTRIA did not support establishing an AHTEG at this stage. URUGUAY proposed work on the relationship between perverse incentives and pollution. The AFRICAN GROUP, NEW ZEALAND, BRAZIL, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, and SWITZERLAND emphasized the scope of work should be clearly defined and avoid redundancies with other conventions. AUSTRIA called for collecting relevant information to be discussed at COP 17. PANAMA urged strengthening coordination with other instruments addressing pollution.

On equity, gender equality, and the human rights-based approach, URUGUAY highlighted the need for a cross-cutting approach. MOROCCO suggested alignment with Article 8(j) and the Gender Plan, with disaggregated indicators and capacity building for IPLCs, women, and youth. EGYPT stressed the importance of incorporating gender equality and human rights across all programmes. SWEDEN supported ongoing collaboration between the Secretariat and the OHCHR. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION argued human rights fall outside the CBD’s mandate.

On different value systems, BELGIUM suggested adding a paragraph inviting regional and subregional support centers to take advantage of the IPBES Methodological Assessment Report on the Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature to encourage uptake.

Chair Mikissa established two contact groups for further discussions, one addressing the strategic review and analysis of programmes of work and areas of potential further work, and the other addressing the work programme on forest biodiversity.

Risk Assessment and Risk Management of LMOs

The Secretariat presented document [CBD/SBSTTA/27/6](#). Discussions focused on the work of the AHTEG on risk assessment and the outcomes of the structured analysis of the topics of risk assessment proposed by parties in relation to needs and priorities for further guidance.

Many delegates, including MEXICO, NORWAY, BELGIUM, GERMANY, AUSTRIA, SWEDEN, DENMARK, FINLAND, SWITZERLAND, MOROCCO, HUNGARY, and SOUTH AFRICA welcomed the conclusions of the AHTEG and its recommendation to develop additional voluntary guidance materials for living modified algae, living modified microorganisms, LMOs expressing genome editing machinery for pest or pathogen control, and living modified fish. They further supported establishing a new AHTEG and extending the open-ended online forum.

Many parties, including NORWAY, AUSTRIA, DENMARK, GERMANY, HUNGARY, SWEDEN, BELGIUM, FINLAND, and GUATEMALA, noted that the AHTEG’s workload is excessive and suggested prioritizing a few of the seven identified topics for the development of additional guidance during the intersessional period, with the remaining issues to be considered at the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP-COP/MOP 13).

Many parties expressed flexibility on the topics to be prioritized. GUATEMALA suggested the development of guidance material on the use of LMOs in centers of origin and in traditional agricultural systems as well as considering socioeconomic impacts. MEXICO called for focusing on the precautionary principle, centers of origin, and IPLC concerns. NORWAY, SWITZERLAND, MOROCCO, and BANGLADESH prioritized guidance for living modified fish, with SWITZERLAND and BANGLADESH adding microorganisms. EGYPT noted that microbial and aquatic species introduce new risks and complexities.

INDIA emphasized the importance of voluntary and flexible guidance, avoiding duplication of efforts, promoting capacity building and knowledge sharing, and respecting national sovereignty, biodiversity priorities, and socioeconomic contexts.

NEW ZEALAND and PANAMA noted that the development of additional guidance is unnecessary, stressing that sufficient guidance exists and suggesting focusing on capacity-building activities. BRAZIL emphasized that the proliferation of new guidance risks creating non-tariff barriers and regulatory uncertainty. ZIMBABWE and MALAWI noted that efforts should focus on capacity building to use existing guidance material, expressing reservations on the development of additional material. BRAZIL, NAMIBIA, PANAMA, and others emphasized that Annex 3 of the Cartagena Protocol provides the foundational framework for the case-by-case risk assessment of LMOs.

MEXICO and others further supported the development of technical notes for voluntary use for long-term and cumulative effects of genetic constructs and LMOs. JAPAN noted that long-term and cumulative effects of genetic constructs do not meet the relevant inclusion criteria, suggesting avoiding duplication of efforts. NEW ZEALAND, BRAZIL, and PANAMA opposed the development of technical notes, emphasizing that the Cartagena Protocol does not establish technical notes as a tool, and suggested not creating new instruments without a clear mandate.

BRAZIL proposed inviting all stakeholders to share information and experiences on the Biosafety Clearing-House to be considered by SBSTTA. EGYPT, UGANDA, NAMIBIA, SOUTH AFRICA, MOROCCO, and MALAWI called for enhancing national and regional capacities for risk assessment, including sharing of case studies and experiences through the Biosafety Clearing-House.

Chair Mikissa established a contact group for further discussion.

Progress Report on Intersessional Activities on IAS

The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents, [CBD/SBSTTA/27/7](#), [INF/2/Rev.1](#), and [INF/3](#).

Parties converged on the critical threat posed by IAS not only to biodiversity, but also to livelihoods, well-being, health, and the economy. CHILE suggested adding language to recognize cross-cutting impacts of IAS on biodiversity, nature's contributions to people, and human well-being. DENMARK, supported by BELGIUM and NEW ZEALAND, suggested referencing [Decision 16/19](#) (biodiversity and health).

South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized institutional and capacity strengthening and urged resource mobilization. GHANA, INDIA, the Cook Islands, for the PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (PSIDS), and INDONESIA underscored the need for increased funding, capacity building, and technology transfer, as well as the strengthening of regional cooperation platforms. GHANA requested regular knowledge sharing events on the various guidance documents by the Inter Agency Liaison Group. CHINA suggested requesting the Secretariat to collaborate with the Global Environment Facility and other financial mechanisms.

Many supported broad stakeholder engagement and underlined the need for cross-sectoral coordination, encompassing trade, transport, agriculture, fisheries, and environmental sectors. The EU and JAPAN underscored the need for private sector engagement, with DENMARK, FINLAND, and SPAIN suggesting explicit references to international and online trade. INDIA and INDONESIA underscored the need for enhanced cooperation across all levels.

MEXICO proposed adding reference to national entry points for early IAS detection and prevention.

CANADA proposed spreading out additional IAS work through to 2030 to provide predictability and clear timelines for the work, set expectations on remaining gaps, and alleviate the agenda for COP 18.

CANADA, SPAIN, NEW ZEALAND, MEXICO, and the EU stressed the importance of data availability, accessibility, and knowledge sharing. Many supported ongoing efforts to improve the IAS portal on the CBD website.

QATAR and PSIDS supported reference to using artificial intelligence for early detection, and PSIDS further strongly endorsed integrating traditional knowledge and community-based management systems with modern scientific tools.

Chair Mikissa established a contact group for further discussion.

Biodiversity and Agriculture

On 18 September 2025, the Bureau approved pilot modalities for the early submission of statements, in accordance with [Notification 2025-120](#). In response, 20 parties and four observers submitted written statements ([CBD/SBSTTA/27/INF/12/Rev.1](#)) on a voluntary and informal basis, aimed at undertaking an abbreviated first reading of this agenda item.

According to the modalities, Chair Mikissa queried whether there were any objections from parties and observers listed in the information document to include their statements on the record; in the absence of any, the early statements were entered on the official record, with Chair Mikissa noting that only statements of observers present in the room and supported by a party would be considered. The written statements from GYBN, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and IIFB entered the record.

The Secretariat introduced documents [CBD/SBSTTA/27/8](#), [INF/7](#), [INF/14](#), [INF/16](#), and [INF/17](#).

Ghana, for the AFRICAN GROUP, welcomed progress made by the FAO and other relevant organizations in supporting

the implementation of the [Plan of Action \(2020–2030\)](#) for the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Soil Biodiversity. They expressed concern about the challenges highlighted in the review, including inadequate data and coordination mechanisms.

MEXICO supported requesting that the Secretariat further engage with the FAO, particularly regarding next steps in establishing a global pollinator platform. EGYPT stressed the urgent need to fill the identified gaps and to strengthen collaboration to address soil pollution.

Chair Mikissa noted that a conference room paper will be prepared for further consideration.

Contact Group on the Global Review of Collective Progress in Implementation of the GBF

In the morning, Sanne Kruid (the Netherlands), Co-Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Scientific and Technical Advisory Group for the Preparation of the Global Report on Collective Progress in the Implementation of the GBF, provided a report on the contact group's deliberations on Monday evening. She emphasized that the group discussed five contentious issues: data information and relevant sources to use for the global report; information on contributions from actors other than state actors; progress toward the CBD 2050 Vision; provision of means of implementation; and policy relevant suggestions and the path forward.

In the evening, the contact group proceeded to textual negotiations on the basis of a [non-paper](#) of the annotated outline of the global report, aiming to finalize it by the end of the evening. Co-Chairs Kruid and Hesiquio Benitez (Mexico) noted that the non-paper is based on discussions in the contact group on Monday evening and submissions in plenary. Discussions focused on, among other issues, how contributions by actors other than national governments will be reflected, and how to address the limitations in the report, including limited data representativeness.

Contact Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change

Co-chairs Clarisse Kehler Siebert (Sweden) and Sikeade Egbuwalo (Nigeria) invited delegates to share views on the proposed peer review process, and then discuss the SBSTTA recommendation and the COP draft decision contained in the [non-paper](#). The Secretariat noted that the annex with the supplement to the voluntary guidelines will be addressed during another session of the contact group.

In the Corridors

The need for complementary and holistic approaches to tackle the interconnected environmental crises dominated the morning agenda of the second day of SBSTTA's deliberations. While most participants lauded ongoing efforts to enhance policy coherence among the three Rio Conventions, there were cautious calls to avoid overstepping each convention's mandate and repeated appeals to address the challenges faced by developing countries. Others went further, requesting stronger social and environmental safeguards, better integration of human rights approaches, and improved participation of IPLCs, women, and youth in processes to foster synergies. As one Indigenous representative said, "our world views are holistic and our governance and practices are already based in synergistic approaches."

As discussions turned to the strategic review of the Convention's work programmes, delegates sought to balance their ideas for updated programmes with limited resources available for such an endeavor. In the late afternoon, concerns about the limited time to complete SBSTTA's workload appeared to hit home, with delegates significantly picking up the pace, swiftly completing a first reading of risk assessment and risk management, invasive alien species, and biodiversity and agriculture before dashing off to the evening's contact group discussions.