



SBSTTA-4 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 22 JUNE 1999

SBSTTA-4 delegates broke into two working groups. Martin Uppenbrink (Germany) chaired discussions of drylands ecosystems and alien species. Zipangani Vokhiwa (Malawi) chaired discussions on new plant technology and sustainable use, including tourism.

WORKING GROUP I

DRYLANDS: Several speakers identified areas where the Secretariat's document could be improved (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/7). CANADA said a wider range of conservation techniques needs to be applied than the paper implies. COSTA RICA said the section on rehabilitation and restoration should be developed. MEXICO, CHILE and others suggested that its focus on protected areas was too limited. NAMIBIA suggested considering the impact of land use. AFRICA RESOURCES TRUST added sustainable use options. BRAZIL and ETHIOPIA said the document did not give enough attention to the issue of genetic resources.

Additional issues proposed for consideration included CANADA's call to recognize the Arctic as a dryland ecosystem. PERU said sub-humid areas should be considered. The EC said hyperarid lands should be considered. BRAZIL stressed the importance of savannah ecosystems. The NETHERLANDS added wildlife utilization and supported BRAZIL's proposal to consider fire control and management. BURKINA FASO called attention to the drought problem. ARGENTINA suggested addressing benefit sharing under this issue. INDIA stressed capacity-building and information sharing. INDONESIA said *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation are equally important. The HOLY SEE supported others who stressed focusing on socio-economic aspects and granting priority to local communities and indigenous groups. ZIMBABWE drew attention to the relationship between biodiversity degradation and poverty. KENYA suggested identifying the impact of civil wars and inflows of refugees. CHINA and the ARAB CENTRE FOR STUDIES OF ARID ZONES AND DRYLANDS proposed a region in China and the Middle East, respectively, for special case studies. Many speakers, including CANADA, SWITZERLAND, SWEDEN, GERMANY, MALI and BRAZIL, stressed the need to complement and not duplicate the work of other conventions and organizations.

Regarding next steps, SOUTH AFRICA, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ALGERIA and others supported developing a separate work programme on drylands. JAPAN called for clearly identifying what a programme will deliver. ETHIOPIA supported establishing a technical expert group. CANADA, supported by COSTA RICA, the

UK, SWITZERLAND and others, suggested establishing a liaison group to help develop recommendations for the work programme. AUSTRALIA said the liaison group should identify priorities and gaps. NORWAY said it should have clear terms of reference to avoid establishing a pseudo-expert group.

ALIEN SPECIES: Harold Mooney, on behalf of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), opened the discussion with a presentation on the GISP's activities. He discussed the situation in the Galapagos Islands to illustrate ecological problems and control costs of invasive species and stressed the importance of capacity-building. Delegates then considered the Executive Secretary's paper on developing principles for the prevention of impacts of alien species and further development of the GISP (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/8).

Several speakers supported the development of a database on control and prevention strategies, and making it available through the CHM. The US said a work programme should focus on areas where the CBD can add value, including standardization of terminology and developing technical and financial resources for a distributive network of information. GERMANY requested the Secretariat to compile more case studies on invasive species and make them available on the CHM. The UK, SOUTH AFRICA and others supported New Zealand's informal paper on principles to prevent the introduction of invasive species, but noted the difficulty in predicting whether a species is likely to be invasive. MICRONESIA highlighted the importance of this issue in Pacific Island countries and suggested using his region as a trial site for implementing recommendations.

SOUTH AFRICA and PORTUGAL noted the need for trans-boundary control. HUNGARY, AUSTRALIA and NAMIBIA said regional initiatives should be considered. SOUTH AFRICA, the US, INDONESIA and TOGO stressed the need for public awareness programmes. FRANCE, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA and others supported using the precautionary principle on this issue.

Several speakers noted relevant work underway in other conventions and organizations. CANADA supported the work done by the GISP and highlighted work by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The EC, the FAO and the INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF INSECT PHYSIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY noted areas for cooperation with the International Plant Protection Convention. IUCN drew attention to its guidelines for reducing biological loss due to the invasion of alien species, which will be finalized next year. The RAMSAR CONVENTION noted that COP-7 adopted a resolution specifying that Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel should collaborate with SBSTTA, GISP and IUCN on invasive species.

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Changbo Bai <changbo@sprint.ca>, Ian Fry <ifry@pegasus.com.au>, Nabih Megateli <nmegateli@igc.apc.org>, Mark Schulman <markschulman@hotmail.com>, and Lynn Wagner, Ph.D. <lynn@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree <kimo@iisd.org>. Digital engineering by Andrei Henry <ahenry@iisd.ca>. French translation by Mongi Gadhoum <mongi.gadhoum@enb.intl.tn>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1999 is provided by the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Community (DG- XI), the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Finland, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above New York ©1999 The Living Earth, Inc., <http://livingearth.com>. For more information, please send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



On whether to establish an expert group, JAPAN said the budgetary implications should be clarified before deciding on its establishment. INDIA said a new expert group would duplicate efforts. SWEDEN opposed establishing a new group. NEW ZEALAND, supported by SOUTH AFRICA, the NETHERLANDS, COTE D'IVOIRE and others, recommended asking the GISP to develop principles for COP-5's consideration. Several speakers, including SWITZERLAND and NORWAY, supported establishing a liaison group to coordinate action on this recommendation.

WORKING GROUP II

CONSEQUENCES OF NEW PLANT TECHNOLOGY:

Richard Jefferson, Chair of the Center for the Application of Molecular Biology to International Agriculture (CAMBIA), gave a presentation on the genetic use of restriction technologies (GURTs), including both variety-level V-GURTs and trait-specific T-GURTs. He suggested that commercially viable V-GURTs could have some merit in decreasing the frequency of transgene spreading, but outstanding issues remain, such as: toxicity of inducing compounds and cellular toxins; environmental spreading of V-GURT traits; and patents as a means of control of V-GURTs. He noted that GURT technology will not be commercially available for 5 years.

BOLIVIA asked about research on avoiding the spread of unknown traits into wild organisms. Jefferson said field trials of GURTs do not exist. The NETHERLANDS asked how far this technology had been applied to animal and human genes. Jefferson was unaware of any value for such research. EL SALVADOR questioned whether GURT gene flows may enhance the decline of wild relatives. Jefferson indicated that pollen transfer may occur and requires policies on planting. HUNGARY asked whether GURTs could be used to halt the spread of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Jefferson said commercial constraints make this unlikely. PERU questioned potential impacts on potato varieties. Jefferson suggested that farmers may prefer GURTs over other varieties. NORWAY asked whether problems arise from the imprecise location of genomes. Jefferson indicated that classical plant breeding has similar problems. INDIA asked how the technology would affect food security.

The Secretariat introduced documentation on consequences of the use of the new technology for the control of plant gene expression on biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/9/Rev.1 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/9/Inf.3). GERMANY and others requested studies on the impacts of new plant technologies. Several delegations disagreed with parallels drawn between hybrids and GURTs. NEW ZEALAND and CANADA recommended a study on factors effecting genetic erosion. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO with others highlighted the importance of the Biosafety Protocol. The Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) opposed CANADA's recommendation that new plant technologies be addressed by the FAO's Commission on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The NETHERLANDS said UNEP could coordinate future scientific assessments. UNEP said it would support future assessments.

BOLIVIA expressed concern that GURTs would not be used to stop the spread of GMOs in the wild. The NETHERLANDS expressed concern over the negative effects of GURTs on traditional plant breeding. INDONESIA, supported by the EC and CAMEROON, stressed capacity-building in developing countries. SURINAME supported biotechnology transfer. The US said other pervasive threats to biodiversity should be SBSTTA's focus. Supported by RUSSIA and the World Seed Industry Organizations, he emphasized their overwhelming positive aspects. CANADA emphasized that national regulation should focus on products. The INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR GENETIC ENGINEERING BIOTECHNOLOGY said current knowledge regarding the escape of wild genes was lacking. INDIA supported preventing the flow of GURT technology. NORWAY and RAFI recommended a moratorium until their safe use is guaranteed. HUNGARY, with MEXICO, TOGO, the EC and AUSTRIA called for the use of the precautionary principle.

SUSTAINABLE USE/TOURISM: The Secretariat introduced the discussion on the development of approaches and practices for the sustainable use of biological diversity, including tourism (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/11). The EC underlined the importance of an integrated approach to maximize advantages for all parties concerned. He added that local populations should share in benefits from tourism, both financially and socially. The NETHERLANDS, along with the UK, the US, NEW ZEALAND and SWITZERLAND, stressed inter-linkages between tourism and the sustainable use of biodiversity, and suggested including a major part of the Executive Secretary's report in an annex for COP adoption and forwarding it to the CSD. The EC said proposals for the CSD should come from the COP and not SBSTTA. INDIA said the SBSTTA should collaborate with the CSD. CANADA stressed the importance of linkages with other fora to avoid duplication. The NETHERLANDS emphasized, along with CANADA, ZIMBABWE, SURINAME, TONGA, COTE D'IVOIRE and the UK, the involvement of local and indigenous communities. PERU called for the use of the term sustainable eco-tourism and encouraged local management through capacity-building. GERMANY noted the importance of involving all stakeholders, as well as the importance of public awareness and the application of planning tools, such as environmental impact assessment (EIAs), economic incentives and environmental auditing. FRANCE stressed EIAs, indicators for adopting touristic processes and use of best practices in the management of open spaces, especially zoning and load capacity.

NATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM called for EIA legislation for tourism projects. GUYANA, supported by BOLIVIA, called for the development of guidelines, protocols and codes of conduct for sustainable tourism. AUSTRALIA called for regional planning and noted that international guidelines on sustainable tourism already exist. MEXICO suggested taking land use management into consideration. CUBA underscored the need for strict regulation of tourism to ensure sustainable management of resources. ECUADOR said tourism can be an effective tool for biodiversity conservation. PORTUGAL called for a balance between conservation and economic income. SWITZERLAND said the price of tourism should reflect the cost of environmental damage and suggested that mountain biodiversity be given special attention.

NORWAY with CUBA, AUSTRALIA, BOLIVIA, ARGENTINA, PERU, COLOMBIA, NEW ZEALAND and the EC expressed concern that the Secretariat paper did not include other aspects of sustainable use. The Netherlands will chair a contact group to draft recommendations.

IN THE CORRIDORS

While many delegates welcomed the decision to invite experts to introduce some of SBSTTA's topics with scientific presentations, a few participants in WGII were disappointed with the presentation on GURTs because they believed it was not impartial. The discussion on sustainable use and tourism also created considerable anxiety among some in WGII. They expressed concern that the inordinate dominance of tourism at the CBD's last COP appears to have carried over to SBSTTA. Some delegates suggest that this is due to the direct intervention of one prominent northern country that believes it has a lot to offer on this topic. Those concerned note that, meanwhile, other aspects of sustainable use languish in the background.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: WGI is expected to consider the Global Taxonomy Initiative during the morning. Chair's draft texts on drylands and alien species are expected to be distributed during the morning and considered during the afternoon.

WORKING GROUP II: WGII is expected to consider environmental impact assessments during the morning and continue its discussion of new plant technology during the afternoon.