



## **EIGHTH SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE: 10 – 14 MARCH 2003**

The eighth session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-8) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opens today and will continue until 14 March 2003, in Montreal, Canada. The meeting will be followed by the Open-ended Inter-sessional Meeting on the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties up to 2010, which will meet from 17-20 March 2003.

Following the opening day of Plenary discussions, SBSTTA-8 delegates are expected to meet in two working groups from Tuesday to Thursday. Working Group I will address: mountain biodiversity, which is the theme for in-depth discussion at this session; biodiversity and tourism; the SBSTTA strategic plan; and assessment of SBSTTA recommendations. Working Group II will consider: the work programme on inland water ecosystems; the work programme on marine and coastal biodiversity; and biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands. On Friday, Plenary will consider the proposed agenda, dates and venue for SBSTTA-9, and will adopt the meeting's report.

The recommendations of both SBSTTA-8 and SBSTTA-9 will be forwarded to the seventh Conference of the Parties (COP-7) to be held in March 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CBD**

The CBD, negotiated under the auspices of UNEP, was opened for signature on 5 June 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993. To date, 187 countries have ratified the Convention. The three goals of the CBD are to promote "the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources."

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the Convention. From 1994 to 1998, it held four meetings (Nassau, the Bahamas, November – December 1994; Jakarta, Indonesia, November 1995; Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 1996; and Bratislava, Slovakia, May 1998). Major decisions included: establishment of a Clearing-house Mechanism (CHM); designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the interim financial mechanism and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding;

designation of Montreal, Canada, as the permanent location for the Secretariat; and cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions. The COP also established two Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Groups on Biosafety and on CBD Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge), as well as a regionally balanced expert panel on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). The COP developed thematic work programmes on: inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; and forest biodiversity.

In accordance with Article 25 of the Convention, SBSTTA was established by a COP-1 decision to provide the COP with "timely advice" relating to the Convention's implementation. From its establishment to 1999, it held four meetings (Paris, France, September 1995; Montreal, Canada, September 1996, September 1997, and June 1999).

**ExCOP:** The first Extraordinary COP (Cartagena, Colombia, February 1999) was convened to adopt the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and followed the sixth and final meeting of the Working Group on Biosafety. Delegates were unsuccessful at developing a compromise package and the meeting was suspended. Following three sets of informal consultations to resolve outstanding issues, the ExCOP resumed in Montreal in January 2000, where delegates finally adopted the Protocol. The Cartagena Protocol addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity, with a specific focus on transboundary movements. The Protocol will enter into force 90 days after receipt of the 50th instrument of ratification. To date, 44 countries have ratified.

**SBSTTA-5:** The fifth session of SBSTTA (Montreal, Canada, January – February 2000) developed recommendations on: inland waters; forests; agricultural biodiversity; marine and coastal biodiversity, including coral bleaching; a work programme on dry and sub-humid lands; alien species; the ecosystem approach; biodiversity indicators; the CHM's pilot phase; the second national reports; and *ad hoc* technical expert groups.

**COP-5:** At its fifth meeting (Nairobi, Kenya, May 2000), the COP adopted decisions on: a work programme on dry and sub-humid lands; the ecosystem approach; access to genetic resources, including the establishment of an Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group; alien species; sustainable use; biodiversity and tourism; incentive measures; the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC); the Convention's operations; the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI); the CHM; financial resources and mechanism;

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identification, monitoring and assessment, and indicators; Article 8(j); education and public awareness; and impact assessment, liability and redress. COP-5 also included a high-level segment on the Biosafety Protocol, with a Ministerial Roundtable and a special signing ceremony.

**SBSTTA-6 AND 7:** At its sixth meeting (Montreal, Canada, March 2001), SBSTTA focused on invasive alien species, including draft guiding principles, and developed additional recommendations on: *ad hoc* technical expert groups; marine and coastal biodiversity; inland water ecosystems; scientific assessments; the GTI; biodiversity and climate change; and migratory species. SBSTTA-7 (Montreal, Canada, November 2001) developed a draft work programme on forest biodiversity and produced recommendations on: agricultural biodiversity, including the International Pollinators Initiative; the GSPC; incentive measures; indicators; sustainable tourism; and environmental impact assessments.

**COP-6:** The sixth meeting of the COP (The Hague, the Netherlands, April 2002) adopted: a revised work programme on forest biodiversity; guiding principles for invasive alien species; the Bonn Guidelines on ABS; and the Strategic Plan for the CBD. Decisions were also adopted on: the GSPC; the GTI; the ecosystem approach; sustainable use; incentive measures; liability and redress; the CHM; financial resources and mechanism; cooperation with other conventions and international initiatives; a contribution to the ten-year review of Agenda 21; Article 8(j); and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGR). COP-6 hosted a high level segment on the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), with a Ministerial Roundtable and a multi-stakeholder dialogue.

### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**WSSD:** The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, August - September 2002) concluded with the adoption of the Plan of Implementation and the Johannesburg Declaration. Both instruments include elements relevant to biodiversity and the CBD, incorporating and elaborating upon COP-6 decisions on: financial resources; capacity building; scientific and technical cooperation; cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements; the ecosystem approach; indigenous and community-based rights and actions; hot spot areas; invasive alien species; and biotechnology and biosafety. Key commitments include achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, and negotiating, within the CBD framework, an international regime for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. In relation to mountain ecosystems, the Plan of Implementation stresses the need for programmes and policies that, *inter alia*: integrate environmental, economic and social components of sustainable mountain development; address deforestation, erosion, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity; promote traditional economies and small-scale production systems; and are participatory and sensitive to gender and indigenous issues. It also includes provisions on sustainable tourism, including promoting eco-tourism, enabling indigenous and local communities to benefit from it, and assisting development of and investment in sustainable tourism. In relation to oceans and coastal areas, the Plan of Implementation calls for establishing by 2004 a regular process for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment. It also contains elements on vulnerable areas, and approaches and tools for marine

conservation and management, including marine protected areas and networks, and watershed planning. During the Summit, 32 Type II partnerships relevant to biodiversity were presented on, *inter alia*, ABS, sustainable development in mountain regions, coral reefs and fisheries, and invasive alien species.

**FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERIM COMMITTEE FOR THE ITPGR:** The first meeting of the Committee on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) acting as the Interim Committee for the ITPGR (Rome, Italy, October 2002) adopted its rules of procedure and established an open-ended expert group to propose draft rules of procedure and financial rules for the Treaty's Governing Body, and draft procedures for compliance. Delegates also adopted the terms of reference for an intergovernmental expert group to address the terms of the standard Material Transfer Agreement (MTA). The ITPGR aims at the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) and equitable benefit-sharing for sustainable agriculture and food security. It establishes a multilateral system for facilitated access to a specified list of PGRFA, balanced by benefit-sharing in the areas of information exchange, technology transfer, capacity building and commercial development.

**CGRFA-9:** The ninth regular session of the CGRFA (Rome, Italy, October 2002) considered issues related to: animal genetic resources; plant genetic resources, including an interim MTA to be adopted by the Centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; FAO's policies on agricultural biodiversity; cooperation with the CBD; and codes of conduct, including the draft Code of Conduct on Biotechnology as it relates to genetic resources for food and agriculture.

**CBD EXPERT MEETINGS:** Numerous intersessional CBD expert meetings have been held since COP-6, including on: marine and coastal protected areas (Nelson, New Zealand, May 2002); mariculture (Rome, Italy, July 2002); biodiversity and climate change (Montreal, Canada, September 2002); dry and sub-humid lands (Montreal, Canada, September 2002); and rapid assessment of inland water ecosystems (Montreal, Canada, December 2002). Their reports will be available at SBSTTA as information documents.

Other expert meetings were also held on: inland waters biodiversity (Wageningen, the Netherlands, June 2002); the GSPC (Cartagena, Colombia, October 2002); capacity building for ABS (Montreal, Canada, December 2002); biodiversity indicators (Montreal, Canada, February 2003); potential impacts of genetic use restriction technologies (Montreal, Canada, February 2003); and traditional knowledge and the CHM (Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, February 2003).

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** SBSTTA-8 will open at 10:00 am in the ICAO building. The morning session will address the agenda and organization of work, and consider progress reports on implementation of thematic programmes and cross-cutting issues, and the Chair's report on the Bureau's intersessional activities. The afternoon session will address the multi-year programme of work of the COP up to 2010 and hear a keynote presentation on mountain biodiversity, delivered by Christian Koerner, University of Basel, Switzerland.

A poster session on mountains, marine and coastal biodiversity, and inland waters will be launched at 6:00 pm.