



SBSTTA-10 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2005

Delegates to the tenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) convened in Plenary throughout the day. In the morning, following a brief opening ceremony, Plenary heard opening statements, addressed organizational matters, and considered progress reports on the implementation of work programmes and cross-cutting issues. In the afternoon, delegates reviewed the SBSTTA's Operational Plan and a synthesis report on the draft reports of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), and heard a keynote presentation on island biodiversity.

OPENING

CEREMONY: Welcoming SBSTTA-10 delegates, Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana), Chair of SBSTTA-10, invited the observance of one minute of silence in memory of the victims of the December 2004 tsunami.

Hamdallah Zedan, CBD Executive Secretary, thanked the Government and people of Thailand for hosting the meeting.

Petipong Pungbun Na Ayudha, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand, noted that Thailand's rich biodiversity is at risk due to human activities, and emphasized the importance of public awareness for biodiversity conservation.

STATEMENTS: SBSTTA-10 Chair Oteng-Yeboah declared the meeting open. Reviewing SBSTTA-10's agenda and intersessional activities, he stressed the challenges faced by islands, including unsustainable tourism, invasive alien species (IAS) and climate change, and noted that island biodiversity, SBSTTA-10's topic for in-depth discussion, completes the list of thematic areas to be addressed by the CBD. He highlighted the MA's role as a basis for sound decision making and the need for ambitious, yet realistic, targets to achieve the 2010 target to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss.

CBD Executive Secretary Zedan congratulated Thailand on its efforts regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Noting that the December 2004 tsunami reminded of the vulnerability of humans to natural forces, he stressed the need to conserve and use biodiversity sustainably to prevent disasters and ensure the resilience of ecosystems. He highlighted COP-7's main outcomes and, introducing SBSTTA-10's agenda, noted that the development of the draft work programme on island biodiversity was guided by the CBD Strategic Plan, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He said the development of outcome-oriented targets should also be a priority for the SBSTTA. Noting the January 2005 Paris Biodiversity

Conference, Zedan highlighted the proposal by the French President Jacques Chirac to establish an intergovernmental process on changes to biodiversity.

Nehemiah Rotich, on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, stressed UNEP's support to the implementation of the CBD in a number of areas, including the development of indicators to assess progress towards the 2010 target, coherence between biodiversity-related conventions, and strengthening of regional implementation. Rotich stressed UNEP's support for an integrated framework on biotechnology and biosafety.

The UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION highlighted linkages between biodiversity conservation and food security, as well as areas of collaboration with the CBD, to be strengthened by the forthcoming signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and the "Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition" initiative. She drew attention to the outcomes of the tenth regular session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/INF/24).

Walter Reid, MA Director, introduced the MA process, noting the important contribution of the CBD in reviewing the draft reports (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/6 and INF/5), which should be approved by the MA Board in March 2005.

The Netherlands, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), stressed the importance of island biodiversity, and expressed hope that reconstruction activities following the tsunami may help restore and use biodiversity sustainably in affected countries.

Reporting on the outcomes of the Paris Conference on Biodiversity, FRANCE emphasized the need to mobilize and better communicate scientific information to decision makers and the public.

Algeria, on behalf of AFRICA, noted the importance of discussions on agricultural biodiversity, the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) and genetic use restriction technologies.

Iran, on behalf of ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, emphasized the need for appropriate funding mechanisms to implement the work programme on island biodiversity, and said strong actions are needed regarding climate change and biodiversity.

Ukraine, on behalf of CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, commended progress in implementing the CBD.

Saint Lucia, on behalf of LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, expressed hope that constructive discussions would help achieve the meeting's objectives.

PLENARY

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: The election of new regional representatives on the Bureau was postponed pending further consultations in regional groups.

Delegates elected by acclamation Bozena Haczek (Poland) as Rapporteur of the meeting, and Theresa Mundita Lim



(Philippines) as Chair of Working Group I and Christian Prip (Denmark) as Chair of Working Group II.

Delegates adopted the provisional agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/1, 1/Add.1, and 1/Add.1/Corr.1) without amendment.

REPORTS: Delegates took note of progress reports on the implementation of the thematic programmes of work and cross-cutting issues (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/2 and 3). JAPAN said reports other than the thematic reports on the GTI should be used to assess implementation of the GTI work programme.

SBSTTA'S OPERATIONAL PLAN: Prip, on behalf of the SBSTTA Bureau, introduced a document on the SBSTTA's Operational Plan (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/5), stressing synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions and the participation of the scientific community. The Secretariat introduced documents on pilot assessments and the review of methods and modalities for scientific assessments (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/7 and INF/4 and 5).

Many delegates urged reinforcing the SBSTTA's scientific role and improving participation of the scientific community in its work. NORWAY said all credible scientific sources, such as the MA, should be considered. BRAZIL called for strengthening the SBSTTA rather than creating a high-level panel of experts on changes to biodiversity. THAILAND called for timely notification mechanisms and financial resources to improve contributions by national focal points. The UK stressed the importance of peer reviews of documentation and bringing new and emerging issues to the attention of the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EC) proposed restricting the Operational Plan to the SBSTTA's mandate as laid out in CBD Article 25 (SBSTTA) and, supported by the NETHERLANDS, suggested emphasizing the Convention's Strategic Plan, the 2010 target and the MDGs. AUSTRALIA said the CBD should contribute to the MDGs within the limits of its mandate, which does not cover poverty alleviation.

On strategic ways and means for improving the SBSTTA's advice to the COP, many delegates opposed including specific activities in the Operational Plan, with MEXICO cautioning against contentious financial and political implications. While the UK suggested deleting references to specific activities, the EC proposed developing a SBSTTA recommendation on activities.

On the process for scientific assessments, the UK proposed taking into account the expertise of other conventions and processes, and BANGLADESH requested a specific reference to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. CANADA highlighted the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment as an example of a study on the mitigation of impacts on indigenous and local communities and, with SWITZERLAND, suggested that one working group at each future SBSTTA meeting be dedicated to reviewing assessments of the status of, and trends in, biodiversity.

MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT: The Secretariat introduced a synthesis report on the draft MA reports (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/10/6 and INF/5), noting that SBSTTA-11 will consider the final reports. Shahid Naeem, MA, presented the synthesis report, highlighting the following key findings: human actions are changing biodiversity; the rate of change will continue and accelerate in the future; human well-being and the status of biodiversity are linked; the costs and risks of biodiversity loss exceed the benefits of ecosystem services; there are many drivers to biodiversity loss, which are changing in intensity; actions regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable use have been successful in limiting biodiversity loss; and achieving the 2010 target will require substantial efforts.

Most delegates welcomed the MA reports as an important tool for decision makers. CANADA and the UK called for a concise and forceful summary. JAPAN said the MA can help identify duplication and gaps between various relevant international processes, and should be useful in implementing biodiversity-

related conventions. CHINA noted the need to reinforce interactions between the CBD and the MA, with a focus on considerations other than utilitarian ones.

JAMAICA requested clarification regarding references to the elimination of subsidies, and the EC urged recognizing that some subsidies promote environment-friendly activities. BRAZIL said more attention is needed regarding unsustainable consumption and the market potential for products derived from the sustainable use of biodiversity. He proposed references to research gaps and the special needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to achieve biodiversity-related goals and targets, including the need for new, additional financial resources, technology transfer, capacity building and enhanced international cooperation.

GERMANY and the EC cautioned against possible misinterpretations of the reports' findings, including those related to intensification of agriculture and trade-offs between achieving the MDGs and reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. They also stressed the need to better reflect the interdependence between human well-being and biodiversity conservation. Emphasizing the importance of findings on necessary actions, CANADA expressed concern regarding the failure to address the ecosystem approach and the sustainable use of biodiversity, and said it is inappropriate to distinguish between old and new responses to biodiversity loss.

BURKINA FASO suggested including references to natural factors of biodiversity loss. The UK said the message of the report should be strengthened by adding, *inter alia*, information on the value of ecosystem goods and services and statistical evidence on the impacts of biodiversity loss.

The CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH suggested adding information on the benefits of biodiversity uses, such as those relating to food, health and nutrition.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Randolph Thalman, University of the South Pacific, gave a keynote presentation on island biodiversity, entitled "Sinking Island Arks – Island Biodiversity and Island Living under Threat." He pointed to the dependence of island peoples on the self-contained and unique biodiversity of islands, which he characterized as "arks." He stressed the vulnerability of islands, noting the impacts of rising sea levels, exploitation of natural resources, IAS, natural and human-induced disasters, and the loss of traditional knowledge. Thalman highlighted the importance of ethnobiodiversity, based on the knowledge, resource-use systems, conservation practices and languages of island societies. Stressing the need to understand that biodiversity loss on islands affects the entire planet, he concluded by calling on delegates to keep island arks afloat, through holistic and adaptive approaches that conserve wild and cultural ecosystems, as well as through capacity building and awareness raising.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Convening at a time and location where the human and environmental casualties of the Asian tsunami are still on many a mind, SBSTTA-10 delegates used the occasion to highlight the interdependence between biodiversity and human well-being.

The outcomes of the Paris Conference on Biodiversity and discussions on the long-awaited draft reports of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which generated both praise and criticism, provided a golden opportunity for many to point at the need for a stronger involvement of the scientific community in the CBD process, particularly the SBSTTA's work.

While several favored reinvigorating and refocusing the SBSTTA's mandate, some delegations were busy trying to garner support for the creation of an intergovernmental process for scientific assessment of changes in biodiversity. Noting that this initiative has strong G8 undercurrents, one delegate expressed a concern that this might be an attempt to sideline the CBD.