

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: 28 NOVEMBER - 2 DECEMBER 2005

The eleventh session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opens today at the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal, Canada, and will continue until 2 December.

SBSTTA-11's topic for in-depth discussion will be dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, and the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI). The meeting will also address strategic issues for evaluating progress or supporting implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the 2010 biodiversity target to significantly reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss, and contributions to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Other scientific and technical issues to be discussed include: marine and coastal biodiversity; inland water ecosystems; forest biodiversity; further consideration of gaps and inconsistencies in the international regulatory frameworks on invasive alien species; further consolidation of the work on the use of terms and on associated instruments regarding sustainable use; and guidance for promoting synergy among activities addressing biodiversity, desertification, land degradation and climate change.

The SBSTTA-11's recommendations will be forwarded to the eighth Conference of the Parties (COP-8) to the Convention, to be held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CBD

The CBD, negotiated under the auspices of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), was opened for signature on 5 June 1992, and entered into force on 29 December 1993. There are currently 188 Parties to the Convention, which aims 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 COP is the governing body of the Convention. It is assisted by SBSTTA, which is mandated, under CBD Article 25 to provide the COP with advice relating to the Convention's implementation. To date, the COP has held seven meetings, and convened one extraordinary meeting (ExCOP).

COP 1-4: Prior to the ExCOP, the COP held four meetings (November – December 1994, Nassau, the Bahamas; November 1995, Jakarta, Indonesia; November 1996, Buenos Aires, Argentina; and May 1998, Bratislava, Slovakia), and adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: the establishment of the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM); the designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the interim financial mechanism; the designation of Montreal, Canada, as the permanent location for the Secretariat; and cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions. The COP also established open-ended *ad hoc* working groups on biosafety and on CBD Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge), as well as an expert panel on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). Thematic programmes of work were adopted on: inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; agricultural biodiversity; and forest biodiversity.

ExCOP: The ExCOP (February 1999, Cartagena, Colombia) convened to adopt the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Agreement was not reached, and the meeting was suspended. Following three sets of informal consultations to resolve outstanding issues, the ExCOP resumed in January 2000 in Montreal, Canada, and adopted the Protocol. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity, with a specific focus on transboundary movements. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003, and has been ratified by 129 Parties to date.

COP-5: At its fifth meeting (May 2000, Nairobi, Kenya), the COP adopted a programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands, and decisions on: the ecosystem approach; ABS, including the establishment of the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group (ABS-WG); invasive alien species; sustainable use; biodiversity and tourism; incentive measures; the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC); the Convention's operations; the GTI; the CHM; financial resources and mechanism; identification, monitoring and assessment, and indicators; CBD Article 8(j); education and public awareness; and impact assessment, liability and redress.

SBSTTA-7: The SBSTTA's seventh meeting (November 2001, Montreal, Canada) reconsidered and expanded the programme of work on forest biodiversity, and adopted 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 (April 2002, The Hague, the Netherlands) adopted the revised programme of work on forest biodiversity, as well as 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; CBD Article 8(j); and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

SBSTTA-8: On its major theme for discussion, mountain biodiversity, the eighth meeting of SBSTTA (March 2003, Montreal, Canada) adopted the structure of a proposed programme of work. It also adopted recommendations on: inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; dry and sub-humid lands; biodiversity and tourism; and the SBSTTA's operations.

SBSTTA-9: The ninth meeting of SBSTTA (November 2003, Montreal, Canada) considered elements of work programmes on protected areas, and on technology transfer and cooperation. Delegates also adopted recommendations on, *inter alia*: biodiversity and climate change; monitoring and indicators; and incentive measures.

COP-7: The seventh meeting of the COP (February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) adopted three work programmes on: mountain biodiversity; protected areas; and technology transfer and cooperation. Decisions were also adopted on: biodiversity and tourism; monitoring and indicators; the ecosystem approach; biodiversity and climate change; sustainable use; invasive alien species; the Strategic Plan; inland water ecosystems; marine and coastal biodiversity; ABS; Article 8(j), including the Akwé: Kon Guidelines on impact assessments; incentive measures; communication, education and public awareness; scientific and technical cooperation and the CHM; financial resources and mechanism; and national reporting.

COP/MOP-1: The first meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP-1) (February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) adopted decisions on, *inter alia*: decision making by parties of import; capacity building and the roster of experts; handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs; information sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House; liability and redress; compliance; and the medium-term programme of work for the COP/MOP.

SBSTTA-10: The tenth meeting of SBSTTA (February 2005, Bangkok, Thailand) developed a work programme on island biodiversity, and confirmed the suitability of various indicators for an assessment of progress towards the 2010 target. It also, *inter alia*: provided advice on the integration of global outcome-oriented targets into the Convention's work programmes; recommended steps for the review of implementation of the GTI programme of work; proposed options for a cross-cutting initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition; and refined proposals for the application of ways and means to remove or mitigate perverse incentives.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

CBD ABS-WG3: Held in February 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand, the meeting focused on negotiations on an international ABS regime. Some options were identified under the scope and potential objectives of the regime, while its potential elements were grouped according to their subject matter to set

the groundwork for more structured deliberations in the future. A matrix was developed to identify and analyze the gaps in international instruments and indicate ways to address them. The meeting also made specific calls for government submissions on the matrix and broader ABS regime, which many see as crucial to further clarify positions and set the baseline for the Working Group's fourth meeting to be held prior to COP-8.

FIRST MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON LIABILITY AND REDRESS UNDER THE BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL: Held in May 2005 in Montreal, Canada, the meeting reviewed information relating to liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of LMOs; analyzed general issues relating to the potential and/or actual damage scenarios of concern, and application of international rules and procedures on liability and redress to the damage scenarios; and elaborated options for elements of rules and procedures on liability and redress, with a view to completing its work in 2007.

COP/MOP-2: Held from 30 May-3 June 2005 in Montreal, Canada, this meeting considered: handling, transport, packaging and identification, including documentation for LMOs for food, feed or processing (LMO-FFPs); options for implementing notification requirements; risk assessment and risk management; socioeconomic considerations; public awareness and participation; liability and redress; and other scientific and technical issues. The meeting achieved a number of successful steps towards the Protocol's implementation, but did not succeed in adopting a decision on the detailed requirements of documentation of LMO-FFPs "no later than two years after the date of entry into force of this Protocol" (Protocol Article 18.2(a)).

FIRST MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON PROTECTED AREAS: Held in June 2005 in Montecatini, Italy, the first meeting of the Working Group reviewed the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas (PAs), and adopted recommendations on: options for cooperation for establishing marine protected areas beyond national jurisdiction; further development of toolkits for the identification, designation, management, monitoring and evaluation of national and regional PA systems; options for mobilizing adequate and timely financial resources for the implementation of the work programme by developing countries and countries with economies in transition; and a process for the review of implementation of the work programme.

FIRST MEETING OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD: Held in September 2005, in Montreal, Canada, the Working Group adopted recommendations on: progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan; achievements leading up to the 2010 target; impacts and effectiveness of Convention processes and bodies; cooperation with other conventions, organizations and initiatives; stakeholder engagement; monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes; and means of identifying and overcoming obstacles to the effective implementation of the Convention.

GEF REPLENISHMENT: The final scheduled meeting for the fourth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund took place on 21 and 22 November in Tokyo, Japan. The contributing participants were unable to reach agreement on funding pledges. It is expected that they will meet again in mid-December 2005.