

SBSTTA-11 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2005

The eleventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-11) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) convened in a morning plenary session to hear opening statements, address organizational matters, and consider the progress report on the implementation of the work programmes, and the second Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-2). In the afternoon, delegates met in two working groups (WGs) to consider the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, and review of the implementation of the CBD's work programmes on dry and sub-humid lands, forests and mountain biodiversity.

OPENING PLENARY

SBSTTA Chair Christian Prip (Denmark) opened the meeting, stressing the need for: parties to contribute quality information for a proper assessment of implementation; sectoral integration of biodiversity concerns; and promoting synergies at the national level. He reminded delegates of the possibility of providing options, rather than bracketing text, whenever consensus is elusive.

CBD Executive Secretary Hamdallah Zedan outlined key agenda items and highlighted SBSTTA's role in strengthening the scientific basis of the Convention. He said SBSTTA-11 is his final meeting as CBD Executive Secretary, and emphasized the Convention's major achievements, including: rapid progress in operationalizing access and benefit-sharing (ABS) provisions; adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; and recognition of the role of biodiversity for human well-being and poverty alleviation.

Bakary Kante, speaking for UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, stressed the 2010 target to significantly reduce biodiversity loss, UNEP's work in supporting the CBD, and the importance of ecosystem services.

STATEMENTS: The FAO outlined its contribution to the Convention's implementation, underscoring its role in fisheries, forestry and agricultural sectors. The UN UNIVERSITY highlighted its work on the MA and deep seabed genetic resources.

Iran, speaking for the ASIA AND THE PACIFIC GROUP, noted two priorities for SBSTTA-11: adopting clear recommendations on invasive alien species; and emphasizing the role of biodiversity in disaster mitigation and adaptation, and other climate change related issues.

Tanzania, speaking for the AFRICAN GROUP, stressed: training fund for the GTI; incentives for biodiversity conservation outside protected areas (PAs); community management of coastal and marine PAs; and capacity building for implementing the dry and sub-humid lands work programme.

Poland for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, El Salvador on behalf of LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, and the UK for the EU, welcomed the organization of the informal joint meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies of the CBD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) scheduled for Wednesday evening.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Chaweewan Hutacharem (Thailand) as Rapporteur of the meeting. The election of new regional representatives to the Bureau was postponed pending regional consultations.

Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/1), with the understanding that the review and further refinement of goals and sub-targets to facilitate coherence among work programmes, as mandated by Decision VII/30 (future evaluation of progress on the Strategic Plan), would be addressed under other items. Chair Prip proposed convening informal consultations specifically on Goal 10 of the provisional framework for goals and targets (benefit-sharing), and urged delegates not to reopen the entire framework. MEXICO, JAMAICA and PERU preferred establishing a contact group on the issue.

Delegates agreed to establish two working groups, and elected Annemarie Watt (Australia) as WG-I Chair and Claudine Ramiarison (Madagascar) as WG-II Chair. Delegates decided to: address synergy among desertification, land degradation and climate change activities in WG-I; hear keynote presentations in WG-II; and discuss the visions, missions, and specific goals and sub-targets of the work programmes on dry and sub-humid lands, mountain, and forest biodiversity in WG-II, together with the review and further refinement of the goals and targets contained in the provisional framework. The organization of work (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/1/Add.1) was approved as amended.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD WORK PROGRAMMES:

Delegates took note of the progress reports on the implementation of the thematic and cross-cutting work programmes (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/2 and 3, and INF/9 and 10). COLOMBIA stressed the need to develop indicators to measure progress for consideration by SBSTTA-12.

SECOND GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK: The Secretariat introduced the draft GBO-2, including an executive summary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/6 and INF/14). NORWAY stressed the need to refine work on indicators, and SOUTH AFRICA called for greater inclusion of indicators relating to benefit-sharing. SWEDEN and the UK highlighted the importance of evaluating indicators' performance. NORWAY, ICELAND and SPAIN expressed concern with some indicators' calculation. CANADA drew the distinction between reporting on status and trends, and national reporting under the CBD. MALAYSIA suggested identifying ecosystem restoration needs,

and PAKISTAN underscored threats to biodiversity from natural disasters. Several parties called for making the GBO accessible to a non-technical audience and local communities.

WORKING GROUP I

GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE: The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/5 and Add.1). The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY and NORWAY noted that the documents are not a full in-depth review. Many stressed the need for financial resources to support taxonomic research in developing countries. BELGIUM, supported by many, suggested that the Global Environment Facility fund national GTI focal points through its enabling activity projects. JAPAN proposed minimizing the timeframe between application and funding of GTI projects for areas where urgent implementation is needed. SWEDEN and FINLAND highlighted that a number of pilot projects are currently awaiting funding. PERU stressed the need for the Secretariat to dedicate a full-time staff member to the GTI.

Many emphasized the importance of capacity building, with CHINA and EGYPT deploring the decline of human resources in taxonomy. ARGENTINA highlighted the need to preserve existing taxonomy capacities, and KENYA with ZAMBIA underscored the challenge of retaining locally trained personnel. THAILAND called for long-term political support for taxonomic research. GERMANY proposed developing specific outcome-oriented deliverables for each of the programme activities.

The UK supported the completion of national taxonomic need assessments but questioned the need for and scope of a global assessment. ECUADOR and CAMEROON suggested accelerating such assessments. BIONET INTERNATIONAL proposed that the assessments consider the taxonomic needs of the Convention's thematic areas.

Several parties questioned a reference to access to genetic resources in a recommendation to develop procedures and requirements for taxonomic collections. ECUADOR emphasized the need to protect traditional taxonomic knowledge. NEPAL and ZAMBIA underscored the role of indigenous communities in carrying out taxonomic inventories. AUSTRIA called for maximizing synergies between assessment processes, and PERU for strengthening the digitization of collections. CANADA and NEW ZEALAND opposed establishing international procedures for taxonomic collections and, with AUSTRALIA and NORWAY, cautioned against duplication of work regarding a taxonomic web portal.

The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY outlined its efforts to make taxonomic data freely available over the Internet and its contribution to capacity building in taxonomy-related fields. SPECIES 2000 announced its Catalogue of Life now included half a million species.

MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT: The Secretariat introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/7 and Add.1, and INF/22). Neville Ash, MA Secretariat, outlined the MA, the largest-ever international assessment of the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. He highlighted: unprecedented rates of biodiversity loss leading to a decline in ecosystem services, especially for the poorest; and the need for additional efforts to achieve the 2010 target.

POLAND called for addressing pollution of marine and coastal ecosystems and the UK underscored destructive fishing practices. JAMAICA and GRANADA said land-use change is due not only to agriculture but also to commercial and industrial developments. The UK requested reference to the GBO and emphasis on the impacts of climate change. Discussions will resume on Tuesday.

WORKING GROUP II

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS: Nick Davidson, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, briefed participants on the CBD-related outcomes of Ramsar COP9. He noted resolutions on, *inter alia*: wetlands and poverty reduction; prevention and mitigation of natural disasters; further scientific and technical guidance for the Convention's implementation; and rapid assessment of

biodiversity of inland, coastal and near-shore marine wetlands. He highlighted the role of the Ramsar Convention as the lead implementation partner for the CBD's work on inland and coastal wetlands.

Jan Valkoun, International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, presented on biodiversity, land degradation and poverty alleviation in dry and sub-humid lands. He noted widespread poverty in dryland areas and the importance of dryland biodiversity for nutrition, health, and livelihoods. He highlighted overgrazing, land reclamation, and urbanization as major factors of biodiversity degradation, and outlined solutions for dryland biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, including: access to technological, policy and institutional options, local community involvement and capacity building.

DRY AND SUB-HUMID LANDS BIODIVERSITY: WG-II Chair Ramiarison introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/4, Add.1 and Add.2). The Secretariat outlined the elements and priority actions of the joint work programme between the CBD and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands.

Many speakers called for greater synergies between CBD and UNCCD. GERMANY, supported by CANADA, proposed references to the MA recommendations. The AFRICAN GROUP called for support for national, local and community activities in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and 2010 target. THAILAND suggested a new programme activity on capacity building. MALAYSIA stressed the importance of supporting sustainable livelihoods. BRAZIL, supported by PERU, suggested adding a reference to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and to national legislation on ABS. SOUTH AFRICA emphasized mainstreaming biodiversity into national programmes and further development of indicators.

COLOMBIA called for addressing ABS issues in conservation and sustainable use of dry and sub-humid ecosystems. CANADA, supported by JORDAN and AUSTRALIA, questioned the usefulness of revisiting classification of dry and sub-humid lands. AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND stressed the need to be mindful of the CBD's mandate on climate change, while TURKEY highlighted the relevance of climate change issues to dryland biodiversity. NORWAY called for strengthening cooperation among the scientific bodies of various biodiversity-related conventions. NAMIBIA urged focusing on recommendations on dryland biodiversity use options that benefit local communities.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CBD WORK PROGRAMMES: The Secretariat recalled the plenary decision to consider three sets of targets for the programmes of work on forest, mountain and dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, without reopening discussion on goals and targets contained in the provisional framework. COLOMBIA clarified its concerns regarding the target on transfers of genetic resources, which he said does not fit within Goal 10's overall rationale of benefit-sharing, and proposed alternate language. MEXICO suggested dividing discussion into two phases: first, on targets, and second, on indicators. Chair Ramiarison said WG-II will resume discussions on Tuesday to review the work programmes goal by goal.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Having just arrived in Montreal, the nearly 600 participants had a hunch that their deliberations may be overshadowed by the eagerly anticipated climate talks taking place just a few blocks away from the SBSTTA venue. Nonetheless, familiar faces from the recently held Ramsar and CMS meetings at SBSTTA were "walking proof" of synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, and one participant noted that such synergies will be explored even further during the informal joint meeting of the CBD and the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies scheduled for Wednesday. However, despite the venue's proximity to the UNFCCC COP-11, it appears that disagreements on the extent to which CBD should acknowledge climate issues are likely to carry on through the week.