

CBD COP-8 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 20 MARCH 2006

The eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-8) opened in Curitiba, Brazil, on Monday, 20 March. Delegates met in plenary throughout the day to hear opening statements and reports from regional and intersessional meetings, and address organizational matters, administration and budget, and the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO).

OPENING PLENARY

The Conference began with the screening of a video on the global biodiversity mission, highlighting the 2010 target to reduce significantly the rate of biodiversity loss as "Action for life on the Earth." Delegates then observed an indigenous ceremony led by spiritual leaders blessing Mother Earth.

Carlos Alberto Richa, Mayor of Curitiba (Brazil), welcomed delegates, stressing that in addition to governments' responsibilities, the commitment of local and indigenous communities, civil society and each citizen is crucial to effectively preserving biodiversity.

Roberto Requião, Governor of the State of Paraná (Brazil), emphasized Paraná's environmental commitments and achievements, including biodiversity conservation measures, such as the establishment of biodiversity corridors, private protected areas (PAs) and agro-ecological farms. He also highlighted that Paraná will become the first State in Brazil to adopt a regulation on labeling of living modified organisms (LMOs) to avoid potential threats from transgenic soybeans and seeds.

COP-7 President Ramantha Letchumanan (Malaysia) highlighted accomplishments since COP-7, including: progress towards an international regime on access and benefit-sharing (ABS); continued development of a global network of PAs; and a new work programme on island biodiversity for adoption at this meeting.

CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlaif stressed the importance of preserving biodiversity, highlighting newly-discovered medicinal and nutritional uses of plants. Bakary Kante, on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, emphasized UNEP's commitment to support the Convention in meeting the 2010 biodiversity target.

Marina Silva, Brazil's Minister of the Environment, referred to COP-8 as an opportunity to gather political and moral commitment to forge a pact for implementing the CBD across all sectors of society. She prioritized ABS, noting that national legislation is insufficient to protect the rights of States and

indigenous communities, and that an international regime could become the most effective means to address the three objectives of the Convention in an integrated manner.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Marina Silva as COP-8 President. The nomination of regional representatives for the Bureau was suspended to allow for regional consultations. Delegates elected Oyundari Navaan-Yunden (Mongolia) as Rapporteur for the meeting and Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Iran) as Chair for the 13th and 14th meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA).

Delegates then adopted the agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/1 and Add.1/Rev.1). Plenary established two working groups and elected Matthew Jebb (Ireland) and Sem Shikongo (Namibia) as Chairs of Working Group I and Working Group II, respectively.

STATEMENTS: Ethiopia for AFRICA, Mongolia for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, and Venezuela for LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC) reported on their regional meetings (18-19 March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil), with GRULAC prioritizing, *inter alia*, discussions on ABS, participation of indigenous and local communities, PAs and genetic resources in the deep sea.

CROATIA reported on the pan-European conference on biodiversity and outlined the meeting's recommendations, including the establishment of a network of priority pan-European islands (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/18). Tuvalu for the ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES supported the proposed work programme on island biodiversity. He expressed concerns regarding the resource allocation framework (RAF) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which discriminates against countries with low terrestrial but high marine biodiversity, and disadvantages countries with limited capacity to develop funding proposals.

BRAZIL hoped the decision on documentation requirements for LMOs for food, feed or processing (LMO-FFPs) adopted during the Biosafety Protocol third Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP-3) will provide inspiration for constructive deliberations. CHINA urged focus on implementation rather than development of new processes.

India, on behalf of the LIKE-MINDED MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES (LMMC), prioritized speedy development of an international regime on ABS and expressed concerns on the slow negotiation process. He identified other issues of importance, including: technology transfer; financial mechanisms to meet specific requirements of developing countries; and communication, education and public awareness.

Austria, on behalf of the European Union, and Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia and Montenegro (EU), prioritized: national implementation; PA work programme implementation; development of an international regime on ABS; and progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target.

AFRICA, and Kiribati for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC urged developed countries to further contribute to the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in CBD meetings. ASIA AND THE PACIFIC supported the work programmes on island biodiversity and PAs, the draft decision on dry and sub-humid lands, and an international regime on ABS, and encouraged capacity building for the local documentation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge. Canada for JUSCANZ said the aim of COP-8 should be to achieve the Convention's three objectives. AFRICA called for collaboration between the CBD Secretariat and the environmental component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The Russian Federation, on behalf of CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, encouraged delegates to work in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.

REPORTS: DENMARK reported on the brainstorming meeting on avian flu (19 March 2006, Curitiba), highlighting threats to migratory species and wetlands, knowledge gaps and the need for capacity building. He reported that participants welcomed the participation of the CBD in the Scientific Task Force on Avian Flu, and suggested that SBSTTA further assess the interlinkages between ecosystems and health on matters, including climate change and avian flu.

BRAZIL reported on the expert workshop on PAs (17-18 March 2006, Curitiba) and presented its recommendations (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/INF/28), noting that the group reviewed a matrix for the evaluation of progress in implementation and considered ways to identify priority areas for implementation of the work programme on PAs.

SPAIN reported on the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) (January 2006, Granada, Spain) and presented its recommendations (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/6), including on taking into account Article 8(j) considerations in the negotiation of an international regime on ABS. SPAIN further reported on the fourth meeting of the ABS Working Group (January 2006, Granada) highlighting its recommendations on: the international regime on ABS, containing an annexed draft, which although bracketed almost in its entirety, provides a basis for negotiations; and an international certificate of origin/source/legal provenance. She also pointed to the proposals of an informal group on future participation of indigenous and local communities.

MALAYSIA reported on the three meetings of the Biosafety Protocol COP/MOP, stressing important achievements, such as the full operability of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the agreement on documentation requirements for LMO-FFPs.

Gonzalo Castro, on behalf of the GEF President, presented the GEF report (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/10), describing GEF activities in response to guidance received from the CBD COP. He highlighted the recently adopted RAF and the fourth GEF replenishment as priority issues for consideration.

The UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) highlighted the role of biodiversity in poverty alleviation and provision of ecosystem services, and reported on UNDP's support to countries to meet their commitments to the PA work programme.

KIDS FOR FORESTS stressed the importance of PAs for the protection of forests and marine biodiversity, called for urgent action to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target and prioritized the commitment of financial resources to biodiversity conservation. A LOCAL COMMUNITIES representative requested formal

recognition of the role of indigenous and local communities in the Convention's implementation, and financial support for their full participation in all CBD processes.

An NGO representative called upon parties to: respect indigenous rights and traditional knowledge in the implementation of the PA work programme; maintain the COP-5 *de facto* moratorium on genetic use restriction technologies; protect marine biodiversity through a General Assembly moratorium on high seas bottom trawling and a COP decision to support the creation of marine PAs on 40% of the world oceans by 2012; and promote social justice through ABS.

The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY stressed the indigenous right to self-determination, sovereignty over their territories and property rights over their resources, including genetic resources and traditional knowledge. He cautioned against allowing privatization and commercialization of biodiversity, and retiring decisions on Article 8(j) that have not yet been implemented. The INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE reported on its CBD task force to increase business engagement in the Convention and prioritized technology transfer, ABS, PAs and incentive measures.

ADMINISTRATION AND BUDGET: Executive Secretary Djoghlaflaf presented the report on the administration of the Convention and the budget for its Trust Fund (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/11/Rev.1) and the proposed budget for the programme of work for the biennium 2007-2008 (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/28 and Add.1). Noting that the proposed budget contains three possible options, he said that the Secretariat recommends the budget option reflecting an increase of 18.5% over the amount for the biennium 2005-2006 for the enhanced implementation phase of the Convention.

COP-8 President Silva then established a contact group on the budget, chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria). The BAHAMAS cautioned against having the budget contact group dictate decision making of the working groups.

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK: Executive Secretary Djoghlaflaf introduced the second edition of the GBO (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/12). The EU urged the Executive Secretary to implement a wide and effective outreach strategy to communicate the results of the GBO to relevant stakeholders. He highlighted, *inter alia*: the need to investigate the role of PA networks in the broader landscape and their efficiency in biodiversity preservation; and the need to improve our understanding of progress on the sustainable use of biodiversity, ABS and the status of traditional knowledge.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Still basking in the success by COP/MOP-3 to reach a compromise on the documentation requirements for LMO-FFPs, COP-8 participants arrived at the conference site hopeful that the same constructive spirit would pervade COP deliberations. Others, however, were more skeptical, indicating that the COP agenda includes not one, but a number of complex issues, which may likely lead to protracted negotiations. Some stressed that ABS will have the lion's share of delegates' attention, although most were quick to observe that setting up a formalized process for negotiating an international regime on ABS was the most this meeting could achieve. Others prioritized agreement on a new work programme for island biodiversity and streamlining the Convention's work, but appreciated that budget discussions may also take a substantive part of the meeting's time and delegates' resources. As the day wore on, many delegates started to feel restless in the lengthy plenary session, eager to break into the working groups to "get down to business."