

CBD COP-8 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 29 MARCH 2006

Delegates to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP-8) met in a high-level plenary session throughout the day. Contact groups convened on: access and benefit-sharing (ABS); protected areas (PAs); incentive measures; island biodiversity; and the financial mechanism.

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY

Marina Silva, Brazil's Minister of the Environment, opened the high-level plenary session. Luciano Ducci, Deputy Mayor of Curitiba, stressed the local governments' role in conserving biodiversity. In a video message, Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai (Kenya) highlighted the need to raise awareness and reduce poverty to ensure biodiversity conservation. CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlahf announced that a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Secretariat and the Greenbelt Movement of Kenya to offset the Secretariat's carbon emissions.

Many outlined national efforts to achieve the CBD objectives and the 2010 biodiversity target, and called for accelerated implementation of the Convention. Several developing countries called for capacity building, financial support and technology transfer. Developed countries reaffirmed their commitment to fulfill their financial obligations under the Convention. Some countries opposed genetic use restriction technologies. Many underscored the need for an international regime on ABS, noting the slow progress on negotiations.

Antonio Serrano, Spain's Secretary General for Lands and Biodiversity, reaffirmed Spain's commitment to GEF and, with Magnus Johannesson, Iceland's Secretary General of Ministry of Environment, highlighted efforts to assist developing countries in sustainably managing biodiversity. Marthinus van Schalkwyk, South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, on behalf of G-77/China, underlined the importance of benefit-sharing, and expressed concern about the impacts of genetic engineering. Tommy Remengesau, President of Palau, called for GEF to prioritize funding for the island biodiversity work programme.

Rejoice Mabudafhasi, South Africa's Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, on behalf of the Network of Women Ministers, noted the need to promote food security and prevent biopiracy. HRH Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Minister of Environment of Saudi Arabia, highlighted biodiversity conservation measures in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Onkokame Kitso Mokaila, Botswana's Minister for Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, on behalf of Southern African Development Community, and Namo Narain Meena, India's Minister of State for Environment and Forests, expressed concerns over biopiracy and, with Nedson Nzowa,

Zambia's Deputy Minister of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources, highlighted the need for a legally binding international regime on ABS. While supporting an international regime on ABS, Amb. Demetrio Infante (Chile) said that access to genetic resources should be regulated by national legislation. Angelo Reyes, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines, called for institutionalized indigenous participation in the ABS negotiations.

Amb. Dato' Ismail Mustapha (Malaysia) stressed the impacts of genetically modified organisms on biodiversity and human health. Ichinkhorloo Erdenebaatar, Mongolia's Minister of Nature and Environment, noted the national regulatory framework supporting the Convention's implementation, particularly the draft biosafety law. Pieter van Geel, the Netherlands' State Secretary for the Environment, highlighted his country's policies for combating international illegal logging and promoting forest law enforcement. Chris Carter, New Zealand's Minister of Conservation, called for conservation of great whales.

Amb. Viveka Bohn (Sweden) stressed the need to link biodiversity to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and with Jeje Odongo, Uganda's Minister of State for Environment, emphasized the need for actions that simultaneously support biodiversity conservation and poverty eradication. Batt O'Keeffe, Ireland's Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, highlighted the importance of increasing public awareness, transboundary cooperation and reducing poverty for achieving biodiversity goals. Kivutha Kibwana, Kenya's Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, noted the challenge of meeting the MDGs and conserving natural resources.

Tahir Iqbal, Pakistan's Minister of Environment, and Clifford Marica, Suriname's Minister of Labor, Technological Development and Environment, highlighted the importance of maintaining and protecting traditional knowledge. Carlos Loret de Mola, Peru's National Environment Council, stressed national policies to protect traditional knowledge.

Charles Rabotoarison Sylvain, Madagascar's Minister of Environment, Water and Forests, emphasized synergies in implementing the Rio Conventions at national and international levels. Stavros Dimas, Commissioner for the Environment, European Commission, highlighted moving towards implementation and, with Cassie Doyle, Canada's Associate Deputy Minister of Environment, Hideki Minamikawa, Ministry of the Environment of Japan, and Amb. Peter Hayward (Australia) called for mainstreaming biodiversity into development plans. Swoyambhu Man Amatya, Nepal's Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, highlighted the importance of local communities in Convention implementation.

Chérif Rahmani, Spokesperson of the UN Secretary-General on the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, emphasized the importance of biodiversity conservation in

deserts and drylands to ensure livelihoods of millions of people. Hama Arba Diallo, UNCCD Executive Secretary, called for immediate implementation of the work programme on dry and sub-humid lands. The International Seabed Authority outlined their regulations and guidelines for conservation of, and activities in, marine areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Harsha Vardhana Singh, WTO Deputy Director-General, highlighted the discussions on the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the CBD. Abdul Rahman Fadhi Al-Eryani, Yemen's Minister of Water and Environment, emphasized the need to respect the sovereignty of States over their genetic resources. John Vournas, Greece's Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, supported global PA networks. Lufter Xhuvëli, Albania's Minister of Environment, Forestry and Water Management, supported the in-depth review of the work programme on agricultural biodiversity at COP-9.

Many small island developing States (SIDS) highlighted the impacts of climate change on their biodiversity and livelihoods. UNDP stressed the need to increase investment on local and national capacity and improve availability of information for decision makers. Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Women's Caucus said that any regime on ABS should respect women's rights on their traditional medicine, and highlighted the need for compensation schemes for large-scale monoculture plantations creating unemployment for local communities.

CONTACT GROUP ON THE FINANCIAL MECHANISM

Delegates reached consensus on paragraphs to: request the Executive Secretary to explore all options and develop a draft strategy to resource mobilization; and invite the third GEF Assembly to hold high-level political discussions on the challenges and opportunities of the GEF in its role as financial mechanism for the Convention. Delegates debated, but did not reach consensus on several paragraphs, including on: mandating an in-depth review of the availability of financial resources, including the examination of the Resource Allocation Framework; urging the GEF to simplify its procedures and develop special modalities that take into account the special conditions of developing countries, with an additional reference to SIDS, least developed countries and countries with economies in transition; collaboration between the CBD and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; environmental funds; and a biodiversity finance survey.

CONTACT GROUP ON ABS

Delegates initiated consideration of a revised draft decision. On the document to form the basis of the ABS Working Group negotiations, two proposals were tabled, to transmit to ABS-5: the ABS-4 outcome, the outcomes of the group of technical experts on the certificate of origin/source/legal provenance, and other national, regional and international ABS-related instruments, together with a compilation of information on an analysis of ABS-related instruments; or the ABS-4 outcome, along with other inputs, including the final version of the gap analysis and the matrix, a progress report on the work on genetic resources in national property legislation and other inputs as submitted by parties.

A debate followed on whether more information gathering would delay the negotiation process, and whether the ABS-4 outcome would be annexed or only referred to in the operative paragraphs of the decision. A small group was tasked with reaching agreement on the issue. Delegates finally agreed to annex the ABS-4 outcome to the decision and transmit it to ABS-5, together with the outcome of the group of technical experts on the certificate, a progress report on the gap analysis and the matrix, and other inputs submitted by parties, noting that the annex reflects parties' range of views. They also agreed on information gathering on existing instruments for ABS-5 consideration.

Regarding a paragraph requesting a study on the legal status of genetic resources in national property laws, delegates agreed to request parties to provide information on the issue.

On the international certificate, delegates agreed to refer to "an internationally recognized certificate." They agreed that a group of technical experts on the certificate considers and establishes the possible rationale, objectives and need for certificates, and debated whether it should also address derivatives of genetic resources. They finally retained the reference to derivatives in brackets, but decided not to refer to products. Delegates also agreed that the group would be composed of 25 experts and seven observers. Negotiations continued into the night.

CONTACT GROUP ON PROTECTED AREAS

High seas PAs: In the morning, delegates agreed to base negotiations on a new nine-paragraph Chair's text. A developed country group prioritized also including text on: bringing the outcome of the Montecatini meeting to the attention of the UN General Assembly (UNGA); inviting UNGA to establish a mechanism to follow up on the UNGA Working Group; and discussing progress and necessary further work on marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction at COP-9. Delegates discussed: a developing country's proposal to include text on a possible UNCLOS implementation agreement; and whether to refer to the "key" or "key complementary" role of the CBD, with one developed country calling for the CBD to provide both scientific and technical advice, and for collaboration between UNCLOS and CBD. Developed country delegates also debated whether to invite UNGA to develop a formal, or informal, process to follow up on the UNGA Working Group. Consideration of this item was postponed pending bilateral consultations.

Review of implementation: Delegates discussed the tasks for the second meeting of the PA Working Group, with one developed country questioning its convening because of budget constraints and one developing country proposing to devote only a limited amount of time to high seas PAs.

Delegates also debated a developing country's proposal to have organizations and indigenous and local communities channel relevant information on progress, challenges and capacity-building needs through parties, with several NGOs objecting.

Financial resources: Delegates debated: whether to use "financial sustainability," "sustainable" or "long-term" financing; text on exploring options for linking PA funding to the Clean Development Mechanism, or to refer to exploring existing and potential new regulatory and voluntary mechanisms for enhancing PA funding; and language on guidance to the GEF. Delegates also discussed whether to focus a future meeting of the PA Working Group on financial resources, or to hold a meeting on long-term financing back-to-back with the PA Working Group meeting or COP-9. Negotiations continued into the night.

CONTACT GROUP ON INCENTIVE MEASURES

During a brief morning meeting, delegates agreed to delete the appendices on proposals for the application of positive incentive measures, and ways and means to remove or mitigate perverse incentives. A number of amendments were tabled on preparation for the in-depth review of the work programme. A Friends of the Chair group was established.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The rumor on an initiative by the UN Secretary-General to incorporate the 2010 biodiversity target into the MDGs at UNGA-61 buzzed its way from New York to Curitiba, with some hoping that integration of biodiversity into the MDGs may lead to UN-wide back-up – and possibly to mainstream funding – for achieving the 2010 target.