

CBD COP-8 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 30 MARCH 2006

Delegates met in working groups throughout the day. Contact groups convened on: high seas protected areas; agricultural biodiversity; the financial mechanism; and the budget. Informal consultations were held on numerous issues.

Editor's Note: ENB coverage of the negotiations ended at 11:30 pm.

WORKING GROUP I

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY: Delegates considered draft decisions on: the soil biodiversity initiative; the initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition; genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs); and the in-depth review of the work programme on agricultural biodiversity.

Soil biodiversity: BRAZIL suggested specific reference to household agriculture in text on promoting entrepreneurship and marketing strategies for agro-production. TURKEY suggested a new goal, on traditional application of local practices. PERU suggested reference to the evaluation of capacity-building needs of stakeholders, among them farmers. Delegates approved the draft decision as amended.

Food and nutrition: AUSTRALIA suggested: opposed by the EU, "endorsing," rather than "adopting," the framework for the initiative and deleting reference to application of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for Sustainable Use; and opposed by BRAZIL, KENYA, PERU and the EU, deleting text on identifying and promoting crop diversification and creation of markets for biodiverse food crops and on integrating benefit-sharing concerns into national and international regulatory frameworks and legislation dealing with biodiversity for food and nutrition. TURKEY requested text on medicinal plants. Following consultations, delegates did not reach agreement on a list of options for crop diversification and creation of markets for biodiverse food crops, which remained bracketed, along with inserted text stating "while avoiding trade distorting measures."

GURTs: On text requesting the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to examine the potential impacts of GURTs, LIBERIA requested reference to impacts on smallholder breeders. CUBA and others suggested that information relating to GURTs be disseminated in the most effective way, using appropriate language and simplified form. The draft decision was approved as amended.

Work programme review: The EU suggested deleting text: stating that the process of the in-depth review shall take into account experience with the review of the forest biodiversity work programme; and, opposed by CANADA, BRAZIL and GABON, requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare a schedule for the review and notify parties. After consultations, delegates agreed to language requesting the Executive Secretary,

in partnership with FAO and relevant organizations, to prepare for the full review of the work programme for consideration at COP-9. The draft decision was approved as amended.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: GHANA suggested that the COP endorse, rather than take note of, the draft guidance on biodiversity-inclusive strategic environmental assessment, and requested including the introduction of invasive alien species (IAS) in the annexed list of processes that influence the composition and structure of biodiversity. The draft decision was approved as amended.

DRY AND SUB-HUMID LANDS: Delegates agreed to a suggestion by Botswana and Namibia to request SBSTTA to prepare proposals for incorporating climate change issues in discussions on the drylands work programme, for COP-9 consideration. They also agreed, *inter alia*, to regional synergy workshops to be organized by the three Rio Conventions. The draft decision was approved as amended.

ISLAND BIODIVERSITY: JAMAICA reported that the contact group finalized the list of suggested supporting actions for parties. Delegates approved the draft decision, with minor amendments.

GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE: An informal group was established to address the issue of financial assistance to "megadiverse" countries.

FOREST BIODIVERSITY: Delegates agreed on inviting parties to strengthen their efforts to promote sustainable forest management to improve forest law enforcement. After informal consultations, delegates agreed on text requesting the Executive Secretary to collect and collate existing information to allow SBSTTA's assessment of the potential environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts of genetically modified trees.

INLAND WATERS: CUBA and the EU proposed that COP-8 invite the Ramsar Convention Secretariat to explore further ways and means for a strategic approach to stakeholder involvement, for SBSTTA consideration. The draft decision was approved as amended.

MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: An informal group was established.

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: After informal consultations, delegates agreed on a heavily amended draft decision, including language inviting parties to consider the needs of the most vulnerable regions and ecosystems and indigenous and local communities for enhancing synergies in the national implementation of the three Rio Conventions.

LIABILITY AND REDRESS: The EU, opposed by BRAZIL, proposed deleting a request to SBSTTA to develop proposals on evaluation, valuation and restoration of damage to biodiversity. Delegates agreed to: request the Executive Secretary to gather relevant information, focusing on the issues identified in the expert group's conclusions, for COP-9

consideration; and invite parties to submit relevant information, including on approaches to valuation and restoration of damage. The draft decision was approved as amended.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES: MEXICO suggested a new paragraph encouraging parties to increase communication and public awareness about IAS' impacts and, opposed by AUSTRALIA and CANADA, text on COP promoting aquaculture of native species. The EU suggested that COP, rather than SBSTTA, conduct the in-depth review of the work programme. These issues were deferred to informal consultations.

INCENTIVE MEASURES: Valuation: ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, requested text stating that the annexed options should not be considered as a closed set of tools and, opposed by the EU, requested inserting a footnote to a table on main valuation techniques stating that some proposed tools may produce trade-distorting effects that would be inconsistent with international obligations. After informal consultations, delegates agreed to include the former of Argentina's proposals within the annex, and the latter in the report of the meeting. The decision was approved as amended.

WORKING GROUP II

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: Venezuela, for GRULAC, called for a decision to establish a Working Group on technology transfer, with the EU, NORWAY and JAPAN favoring reconvening the expert group. Following informal discussions, delegates agreed to set up an *ad hoc* technical expert group (AHTEG), subject to availability of resources, and the provision was bracketed awaiting the outcome of budget negotiations. Further references were introduced for parties to make submissions to the Executive Secretary on the proposals and options, to be compiled for the AHTEG's consideration.

JAPAN, supported by AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND and opposed by the PHILIPPINES, requested removing language on paying due attention to barriers erected by intellectual property rights to technology transfer. Delegates agreed to "increase synergy and overcome barriers" to technology transfer and cooperation.

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CEPA): Indonesia, for the G-77/CHINA, JAPAN and the EU opposed text on exploring the possibility of creating a new financing mechanism. G-77/CHINA proposed language on establishing a professional post on CEPA from the core budget, while the EU requested ensuring the Secretariat's adequate support to the CEPA work programme. Delegates agreed to the latter option, but kept both bracketed pending budget negotiations. Delegates also agreed that: the CEPA short-list of priority activities and plan of implementation are to be implemented by parties and the Executive Secretary; the Secretariat will develop and promote the conduct of training programmes at the international level; and indigenous representatives will be part of the CEPA informal advisory committee.

IMPLEMENTATION: Delegates agreed that the FAO, UNEP and other organizations take the lead, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary, in developing activities on enhanced technical assistance. Delegates took note of Egypt's concern regarding the revision to the report of the Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI), contrary to the rules of procedure, and approved the draft decision as amended.

OPERATIONS OF THE CONVENTION: ARGENTINA, with NEW ZEALAND and BRAZIL, stressed that AHTEGs are established by the COP only, and that SBSTTA ensures that their terms of reference are respected. JAPAN, the EU and CANADA, opposed by GEORGIA and BRAZIL, requested deleting a paragraph stating that AHTEG meetings be financed by the core budget, noting this should be decided by each COP. CANADA supported, and the EU opposed, reference to the possible need for an intersessional body on implementation.

Retirement of decisions: The NETHERLANDS reported on the informal group's deliberations and the draft decision was approved.

NGO accreditation: Delegates debated a draft decision prepared on the basis of closed informal deliberations, with the EU noting an accreditation policy is unnecessary, and CANADA calling for further consideration at COP-9. Following consultations based on a revised draft and a new EU proposal focusing on easing the administrative burden, delegates agreed to request the WGRI to consider procedures for admission of bodies and agencies, governmental or non-governmental, at its next meeting.

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION: Delegates agreed to carry out the in-depth review of the provisional framework on goals and targets, as part of the process for revising the Strategic Plan. JAMAICA requested references to island biodiversity in a number of targets. The draft decision was approved as amended.

COOPERATION: Notwithstanding a new EU proposal, delegates agreed to delete text on the global biodiversity partnership. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION proposed to reference cooperation with UNCLOS. NIGERIA, supported by GABON and opposed by many developed countries, proposed a new paragraph on securing more resources to fund convention activities, including joint liaison arrangements between the UNCCD and CBD, at the UN Headquarters in New York. The text was bracketed and delegates approved the document.

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT: Delegates approved the draft decision, deleting a request to the Executive Secretary to "explore enforcement activities" in collaboration with other organizations.

ARTICLE 8(J): Delegates agreed on a number of elements of the draft decision, but continued to discuss into the night contentious issues, such as indigenous prior informed consent for the establishment of national and regional *sui generis* frameworks, and the relationship between the Article 8(j) and ABS Working Groups.

CONTACT GROUP ON HIGH SEAS PROTECTED AREAS

Delegates discussed the need to define criteria for the identification of marine protected areas (MPAs), with some opposing language on criteria for MPA establishment and management. Delegates agreed on inviting UNGA to establish a "timely" follow-up to the UNGA Working Group and encouraging parties and the Executive Secretary to provide CBD input. They also agreed on urging action to implement the UNGA resolution on destructive fishing practices, and to fully cooperate in the UNGA-61 review of the resolution implementation, taking into account the precautionary approach provisions in the Fish Stocks Agreement, FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and developments under the CBD. Delegates also debated whether CBD should provide not only scientific but also technical information and advice, and which specific activities should be undertaken by the Executive Secretary.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With controversies over ABS, MPAs, incentives and the financial mechanism keeping delegates entangled in late-night consultations, and both working groups sorting out numerous other outstanding items, several participants began to show signs of alarm at the snail's pace of COP-8 concluding negotiations. Others pointed the finger to the "vicious circle" of the budget group awaiting the final word on future intersessional meetings from the working groups, which in turn kept bracketing text pending the outcome of the budget negotiations. The perpetual optimists still expect Friday's plenary to tie it all together.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of COP-8 will be available on Monday, 3 April 2006 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/cop8/>