

SBSTTA 12 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 5 JULY 2007

On Thursday, SBSTTA 12 participants convened in the Committee of the Whole in the morning to continue consideration of the draft recommendations on the in-depth review of the application of the ecosystem approach (EA) and biofuels. In the afternoon, Working Group I (WG-I) addressed draft recommendations on the review of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO). WG-II considered biodiversity and climate change, and dry and sub-humid lands in afternoon and evening sessions.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

APPLICATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH:

Co-Chair Prip proposed preambular language for the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/COW/CRP.2), stating that the document reflects a range of parties' views.

Delegates agreed to specify that the EA can contribute to achieving the MDGs, and to take into account the role of ecosystem goods and services for human wellbeing in EA application. CHINA and BRAZIL, opposed by SWEDEN, the UK and the NETHERLANDS, requested deleting reference to incorporating the EA into national poverty reduction strategies and other policies. Delegates agreed to compromise language proposed by ARGENTINA that the EA "could be of use" for these strategies and policies.

CHINA, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL opposed a request to the WGRI to encourage parties to use the EA more widely in the formulation of NBSAPs, raising procedural concerns. SLOVENIA and COSTA RICA supported retaining the reference, with the NETHERLANDS suggesting to mandate the Executive Secretary, rather than the WGRI, to convey this request to parties. Delegates agreed to language to strengthen and promote the EA as a tool for formulating NBSAPs and other relevant policy mechanisms.

On enhancing the sourcebook, ARGENTINA opposed reference to identifying tools for EA integration into biodiversity planning and monitoring. CANADA suggested referencing relevant guidance instead, with NEW ZEALAND suggesting that the Executive Secretary report to the COP on progress in reviewing guidance. Delegates agreed to retain the reference as amended. UZBEKISTAN supported, while AUSTRALIA and UGANDA opposed, the creation of a joint working group with other organizations, suggesting instead that the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management and other organizations share their perspectives on capacity building for applying the EA and provide information on funding opportunities, reporting

progress to COP 9. SLOVENIA, supported by SWITZERLAND, proposed a new paragraph to address capacity-building needs by inviting initiatives such as WWF's "Mountains to Sea" to develop tools on EA implementation to be made available through the sourcebook.

Delegates agreed to amendments by: AUSTRALIA to "give consideration to the challenges in incorporating land tenure" into the EA; MICRONESIA to also consider marine tenure; BRAZIL to delete reference to undertaking appropriate legal reforms; and ETHIOPIA to consider institutional arrangements for EA implementation, as appropriate. ARGENTINA and BRAZIL suggested, and delegates agreed, to delete the paragraph on incentives.

Regarding EA application by the FAO, delegates agreed to delete references to specific sectors. FINLAND suggested that UNESCO develop global biosphere networks as EA demonstration and research sites. COSTA RICA proposed requesting the GEF to fund EA implementation, while BRAZIL proposed specifying instead that EA implementation is subject to appropriate funding, technical assistance and capacity building.

The revised draft recommendation will be presented on Friday.

NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES: Biofuels: MEXICO, supported by many, recommended clearly defining the procedure for selecting and addressing future emerging issues. He proposed that: broad regional consultations be undertaken prior to consideration of emerging issues at future SBSTTA sessions; criteria for prioritization be defined; and the Bureau advise the Secretariat on sources of information. He also proposed that SBSTTA assess positive and negative impacts, identify gaps in knowledge, explore how the issue can be included in existing programmes, and identify what immediate actions can be taken. Co-Chair Prip established a drafting group to finalize these recommendations.

BRAZIL noted that the Secretariat's note on biofuels does not include ongoing experiences and, with INDONESIA, criticized its limited bibliography. Opposed by the EC, NEW ZEALAND and SWITZERLAND, he also stated that the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/COW/CRP.1) cannot be considered as a basis for negotiations.

Co-Chair Prip referred the matter to informal consultations.

WORKING GROUP I

GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK: On the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/WG.1/CRP.1), CANADA, supported by the UK, favored replacing the proposed summary of GBO 2 key messages with a graphic summary highlighting the headline indicators and actions needed to achieve the 2010 target.

SWEDEN and the CZECH REPUBLIC suggested reflecting SBSTTA 12 deliberations on the lessons learned and their implications for GBO 3. The UK suggested requesting the Executive Secretary to consider lessons learned from providing GBO 2 data into UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO) to benefit production of future GBO and GEO editions. CANADA requested an additional reference to MA follow-up, and noted that relevant scientific bodies should be invited to make available relevant data for GBO 3.

The draft recommendation was adopted as amended.

REVIEW OF THE MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM

ASSESSMENT: Delegates considered the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/WG.1/CRP.2), agreeing, *inter alia*, to reinsert the invitation to parties and others to promote and support integrated national, regional and subglobal ecosystem assessments that build on the MA framework. Delegates also agreed to the proposal by FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, the UK and CANADA to provide information on the MA's use and impact in time for consideration at COP 9.

BRAZIL and ARGENTINA, opposed by COSTA RICA, FRANCE and SLOVENIA, requested deleting references to ecosystem services, while the NETHERLANDS suggested acknowledging their contribution to the MDGs. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed to take into account the MA framework and its principles, including the services provided by ecosystems, as a contribution to the MDGs.

Delegates debated access to research results, agreeing to COLOMBIA's request to delete the reference to "publicly funded" research results and ARGENTINA's amendment making access subject to national and international law.

On the development of a multi-agency strategy on MA follow-up, delegates debated language relating to: the role of the financial mechanism; the provision of scientific advice on biodiversity and ecosystem services; and consideration of another global assessment. Delegates agreed to the EC's suggestions that UNEP convene a global workshop of practitioners to share experiences on assessments based on the MA framework.

On the MA findings' implications to the work of the CBD, CANADA, ARGENTINA and others noted the inadequacy of the information contained in the annex on the options for improving the availability of biodiversity information. Delegates agreed to delete the annex and invite parties and others to: take note of the improvement in the availability of biodiversity data; and promote synergies with ongoing efforts to make data and analytical tools available for policymakers and managers.

On taking into account the MA framework in preparing the in-depth reviews of the CBD work programmes and revising the Strategic Plan beyond 2010, delegates agreed to recommend these tasks to the COP with an addition by SWEDEN to invite parties to make full use of the MA framework and findings during the review and implementation of NBSAPs.

Delegates debated the need for another global assessment, with FRANCE, SWEDEN, CANADA and others stressing its importance, while AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA, NEW ZEALAND, BRAZIL and others favored deletion of all references to another assessment. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed to consider another possible assessment, taking into account the experiences of the MA and other processes aiming at improving scientific expertise on biodiversity.

The draft recommendation was adopted as amended.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT: WG-I report (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/WG.1/L.1) was adopted without amendment.

WORKING GROUP II

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: WG-II Chair Annemarie Watt (Australia) introduced the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/WG.2/CRP.2). Delegates debated

its structure and agreed to: list elements to be considered when integrating climate change concerns into the CBD's work programmes; and request SBSTTA 13 to test these elements when reviewing the work programmes on agricultural and forest biodiversity. On the list of elements: CANADA requested references to the EA principles; MEXICO to relevant CBD technical series and the global peatland assessment; DENMARK to the precautionary approach; and NEW ZEALAND to appropriate measurements and technology.

AUSTRALIA, the UK and BRAZIL opposed references to mitigation activities, noting jurisdictional overlaps with the UNFCCC. MEXICO preferred retaining the references, and delegates agreed to BRAZIL's proposal to instead refer to threats and likely impacts of climate change and response activities on biodiversity. The IIFB proposed requesting the Article 8(j) Working Group to discuss climate change.

AUSTRALIA, ARGENTINA and BRAZIL questioned the need for paragraphs on enhancing cooperation with other conventions and on reduced deforestation, saying this falls outside SBSTTA's mandate, while several countries preferred retaining these paragraphs. WG-II Chair Watt proposed, and MEXICO and the Bahamas, on behalf of SIDS, agreed, with a chapeau setting out that SBSTTA bring these issues to the attention of COP 9.

Noting the late submission of the information document on cooperation with other conventions on climate change, WG-II Chair Watt proposed referring the issue to SBSTTA 13. Warning that SBSTTA 13's agenda is already heavy, BELGIUM suggested bracketing sections on cooperation in the draft recommendation and referring it to COP 9. GERMANY and others inquired about the procedure for referring text to future SBSTTA sessions, to ensure that procedural concerns will not resurface if the discussion continues at SBSTTA 13, and WG-II Chair Watt said she will consult with the Secretariat.

Discussions will continue on Friday.

DRY AND SUB-HUMID LANDS: On the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/WG.2/CRP.1), ALGERIA called for reference to the precautionary principle, technology transfer and, with MALI, FRANCE and the NETHERLANDS, the EA. AUSTRALIA requested reference to the UNEP-WCMC definition of arid lands based on rainfall and climate criteria.

Discussions will continue on Friday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Thursday's side event on the IMoSEB triggered discussions on the possible institutional structure of a scientific body for expertise on biodiversity, with ideas ranging from a mechanism to provide targeted advice at regional and local levels to a global meta-network of existing bodies that can hardly fit under a single institutional structure. One delegate speculated that the problem was less one of finding a structure capable of delivering scientific expertise, but rather one that is more attuned to the political realities, which may hinder its operation. Another delegate saw a "narrow window of opportunity" before COP 9 to move the debate forward.

Meanwhile, some delegates were caught unawares by the halt in the discussions on biodiversity and climate change, when some parties requested a legal opinion on whether addressing recommendations on collaboration with the UNFCCC and other relevant bodies followed SBSTTA's rules. Wondering why cooperation turned out to be such a contentious subject, one delegate commented on the irony of a scientific body being blocked by procedure, while others speculated about political undercurrents and the potential consequences of "stepping on other conventions' toes."