

WGRI 2 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 9 JULY 2007

The second meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI 2) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opened on Monday at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. Delegates met in plenary to hear opening statements, address organizational matters, and consider issues relating to the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and priority areas for capacity-building actions.

PLENARY

WGRI Chair Amb. Antônio José Rezende de Castro (Brazil), on behalf of COP President Marina Silva, called on delegates to reaffirm their commitment to achieving the three objectives of the CBD and the 2010 biodiversity target, and to conclude negotiations on an international regime on access and benefit-sharing (ABS) before COP 10. He invited WGRI 2 to: assess progress in the Convention's implementation; strengthen implementation by all parties; and ensure that developing countries have access to the necessary financial, human and technical resources.

Pointing to the inter-linkages between biodiversity and climate change, CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghla welcomed the renewed political commitment of G8 leaders to implement the 2010 biodiversity target, calling for actions to counteract the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's predictions on biodiversity loss due to climate change. He urged WGRI 2 delegates to institutionalize the CBD's new phase of enhanced implementation, for example by using NBSAPs as vectors for integrating biodiversity considerations into development strategies. Welcoming participation by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), he emphasized the need for additional financial resources for implementation.

Walter Erdelen, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, highlighted three points critical to the implementation of the CBD, namely: communication, education and public awareness in mainstreaming the messages of the Convention; the universal application of the ecosystem approach (EA); and partnerships to strengthen cooperation.

Noting the GEF's intention to revitalize dialogue with the CBD, GEF CEO/Chairperson Monique Barbut called for biodiversity commitments to equal those on climate change. She also reported on the recent reforms approved by the GEF Council, including: a shorter and more effective project cycle; a public-private partnerships programme; and a restructured Secretariat to facilitate integration across focal areas.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates elected Mary Fosi (Cameroon) as the meeting's Rapporteur and adopted the agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/1 and Add.1) with an amendment suggested by CANADA and others regarding the sequence of agenda items.

STATUS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NBSAPs: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the relevant documents on the status of NBSAPs and their implementation, resource provision, and the identification of obstacles (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2, Add.1, and INF/1, 4, 7, and 9).

Portugal, on behalf of the EU, called for enhanced information exchange and outcome-oriented reporting to better understand the impact of NBSAPs, and highlighted regional tools for promoting implementation. He further called for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into development cooperation and integrating the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) findings on ecosystem services when revising NBSAPs. SWITZERLAND identified the lack of mainstreaming of biodiversity into development sectors as a major barrier to implementation, calling for a mechanism for the economic valuation of biodiversity, and economic incentives. Supported by NORWAY, he also proposed a voluntary peer-review mechanism for NBSAPs. INDIA recommended cyclical biodiversity planning and periodical updates of NBSAPs, to include the 2010 biodiversity target and, with THAILAND, the EA.

Many developing countries lamented inadequate financial resources, capacity and technology for NBSAP review and implementation. ARGENTINA emphasized the need to obtain new and additional, domestic and international, resources for implementation, and KIRIBATI proposed a recommendation to COP 9 in this regard. MEXICO called for initiatives to apply the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development. YEMEN suggested that funding decisions should be based on poverty reduction considerations, calling for civil society participation and, with QATAR, the use of local financial and human resources. Noting its dependence on foreign expertise, the MALDIVES prioritized strengthening human capacity in developing countries and SIDS.

ECUADOR noted the importance of strengthening ties with the GEF and other conventions. SAINT LUCIA noted concerns with regard to reduced funding available to SIDS in the GEF's new Resource Allocation Framework, urging greater predictability of funds.

BRAZIL proposed that the CBD Secretariat establish a depositary of NBSAPs, make information available online and establish a consultation mechanism through the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM). Supported by AUSTRALIA and others, he

stressed the need to support parties in developing and reviewing NBSAPs. With COLOMBIA and TANZANIA, he also called for fully incorporating ABS into NBSAPs. HAITI drew attention to armed conflict as a barrier to implementation.

INDONESIA underscored the importance of national targets in the implementation of NBSAPs, and MALAWI the need for regional and subregional cooperation; both stressed communication, education and public awareness for mainstreaming biodiversity concerns and enhancing political will. TUNISIA questioned the need to develop local and subregional action plans. MALAYSIA highlighted the importance of raising awareness among politicians at the local level. CHINA, CANADA, ECUADOR and others supported sharing experiences.

Many parties reported on the development and implementation of NBSAPs, highlighting the need to update them to reflect, among others, the EA, the 2010 target, and climate change considerations. ZAMBIA and others noted inadequate national capacity to develop an ABS legal framework. ETHIOPIA pointed to a lack of awareness at the local level, gaps in knowledge, and weak institutional arrangements as obstacles to mainstreaming biodiversity concerns. UGANDA supported strengthening such arrangements, including through national stakeholder advisory committees. CHAD proposed taking into consideration access to and sharing of benefits related to traditional knowledge in NBSAPs.

Underscoring the "One UN" approach, NORWAY encouraged the FAO and UNDP to contribute to the implementation of NBSAPs. The FAO suggested cooperating on the implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as a contribution to meeting the CBD objectives. The CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES reported on efforts to assist parties in integrating migratory species provisions into NBSAPs.

Noting that indigenous peoples know much about biodiversity and little about the CBD, the TEBTEBBA FOUNDATION encouraged regional workshops on CBD implementation for indigenous peoples. The FOREST PEOPLES PROGRAMME noted that a realistic evaluation of NBSAPs requires the participation of indigenous peoples and civil society.

GUIDANCE FOR NBSAP DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the document on guidance for the development, implementation and evaluation of NBSAPs (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/3).

Expressing broad support for the draft recommendations contained in the document, MEXICO and others noted overlaps with those on overcoming obstacles to implementation of NBSAPs (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2/Add.1) and suggested consolidating these recommendations. The EU noted the importance of, *inter alia*: providing guidance on how to overcome gaps in implementation; including a communication plan in the NBSAPs; reaching out to all sectors of society; and developing biodiversity indicators. BRAZIL stated that NBSAPs should be based on the Rio Declaration principles. THAILAND noted existing gaps in guidance on implementation. ARGENTINA asked not to list specific stakeholders or threats to biodiversity in the draft recommendation. UGANDA requested including activities on restoration of degraded ecosystems in NBSAPs. MADAGASCAR emphasized the economic contributions of biodiversity and the need for synergies in national implementation efforts. SOUTH AFRICA identified as challenges in NBSAP implementation: developing standards for measuring progress in regional and subregional implementation; providing tangible benefits for communities; and undertaking economic valuation of biodiversity. CANADA prioritized performance assessments in reviewing progress in implementation.

MALAYSIA requested that the annex reviewing COP decisions on providing guidance to parties on NBSAPs be attached to the recommendation, and called for text on aligning NBSAPs with other biodiversity-related strategies.

WWF promoted the use of the "Mountains to the Sea" implementation planning framework in developing and revising NBSAPs. ECOROPA called for identifying indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. IUCN urged taking into account gender issues in further developing NBSAPs.

A revised text will be discussed on Wednesday.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced documents on priority areas for action for capacity building, access to and transfer of technology and technology cooperation (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2/Add.1 and INF/2, 3 and 11).

NEW ZEALAND suggested that awareness-raising and mainstreaming activities should be consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and that the Secretariat work closely with UNEP and UNDP. GABON called for greater cooperation among research institutes and assistance in establishing administrative and legal frameworks for NBSAP implementation.

CANADA emphasized transferring technologies that create synergies in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), advocating better coordination and enhanced involvement of existing implementing agencies. Noting that scientific and technical cooperation under the CBD has failed to build adequate implementation capacity in developing countries, BRAZIL suggested indicators for technology transfer. MEXICO requested further consideration before making a recommendation to the COP. The EU noted analysis of local needs and priorities, integrated national strategies, and consideration of stakeholder concerns as prerequisites to enhanced capacity building and technology transfer.

Stressing the private sector's critical role in technology transfer and cooperation, the INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE called for: facilitated access to technology; stable legal frameworks; government support programmes and investment; and incentives for industry involvement.

IN THE CORRIDORS

A series of weekend gatherings started off the second meeting of the CBD Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI 2) on a productive note, as several participants expressed appreciation of the stimulating ideas exchanged at the NBSAP workshop and the informal session on ABS, although the absence of delegates from some megadiverse countries at the latter did not go unnoticed. Others expressed hope that ABS being a priority issue for the GEF in the current replenishment period will result in positive developments to meet the 2010 deadline for negotiations.

In the spotlight this week, many predict, will be the resource mobilization strategy and streamlining guidance to the GEF. With guidance to the GEF presently coming from every direction, it has been difficult to prioritize where limited funds for biodiversity should be spent. A reform of this process has been welcomed by many, as has a review of how to turn decisions into practice – what many see as the true impediment to achieving the 2010 target. Several delegates noted that WGRI and other CBD bodies offer little opportunity to consider ways in which information received through the review of NBSAPs can be turned to concrete action in those countries that are experiencing difficulties with implementation. One delegate suggested that merely articulating implementation problems in recommendations will not achieve the WGRI's foremost objective of making the Convention "work smarter."