

WGRI 2 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 11 JULY 2007

On Wednesday, WGRI 2 participants convened in plenary throughout the day and addressed options for streamlining guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and operations of the Convention. They also considered the draft recommendation on the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan.

PLENARY

OPTIONS FOR STREAMLINING GUIDANCE TO THE GEF: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the agenda item (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/5 and INF/8).

ALGERIA commended efforts to shorten the GEF project cycle, and noted the need to take into account the ecosystem approach, the 2010 target and the MDGs. AUSTRALIA welcomed the ongoing GEF reforms and, supporting concerns expressed by SIDS, noted that all funding applications should be treated with equity and fairness.

Noting delays in project implementation, MEXICO called for indicators on how guidance has been implemented. Malawi, for the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested that the COP adopt a mechanism to monitor GEF's interpretation of COP guidance. NORWAY, ALGERIA, INDIA and others underscored the importance of collaboration at the national level, specifically between the GEF and CBD focal points. NIGERIA suggested inviting GEF Council members to attend future CBD COPs. The EU and MALAYSIA encouraged the Executive Secretary to further the dialogue with the GEF CEO/Chairperson.

BRAZIL noted the need to develop a four-year framework for programme priorities coinciding with the fifth GEF replenishment cycle, and proposed requesting the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau, to submit to COP 9 a proposal for programme priorities. CANADA and NORWAY questioned the mandate of the Bureau to develop a four-year framework for programme priorities, and welcomed discussions on how the COP could best provide advice. SWITZERLAND, COLOMBIA and others supported organizing an open-ended meeting to discuss the framework immediately prior to COP 9, with NEW ZEALAND proposing that future COPs negotiate a stand-alone decision on guidance to the GEF, separating guidance from thematic decisions.

THAILAND noted the need to explore co-funding options involving the GEF and other funding bodies, with NIGERIA pointing to the UNFCCC's Least Developed Countries Fund and the Adaptation Fund, to leverage funding for biodiversity activities. ARGENTINA requested reference to "funding schemes" rather than "sustainable financing."

Drawing attention to the GEF's draft biodiversity strategy, TANZANIA prioritized capacity building on biosafety and ABS issues. ETHIOPIA and UGANDA advocated consideration of local communities in GEF funding. MALAYSIA questioned why some COP priorities, such as traditional knowledge, are not prioritized by the GEF. INDIA noted that it is time to reassess, streamline and consolidate guidance to the GEF, in a transparent and participatory manner.

The FOREST PEOPLES PROGRAMME, on behalf of several NGOs, advocated: entrusting GEF project management to national focal points; expanding and simplifying the procedures of the Small Grants Programme; and allocating funding to priority areas identified in the revised NBSAPs. He also raised concerns regarding the GEF's Public-Private Partnerships Initiative.

In the afternoon, NEW ZEALAND introduced text on streamlining guidance to the GEF calling for, *inter alia*, parties to submit their views on priorities before COP 9, and for the COP to: include in its MYPOW a stand-alone item on guidance; and align new guidance with the GEF replenishment cycle, thereby replacing previous guidance.

OPERATIONS OF THE CONVENTION: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the agenda item (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/7, INF/12, and Adds.1 and 2). Delegates discussed draft recommendations on the review and retirement of COP decisions, and admission of observers.

Retirement of decisions: The EU, COLOMBIA, ARGENTINA, ALGERIA and others supported the recommended eight-year period for the review and retirement of COP decisions. THAILAND noted that some decisions, such as those relating to the 2010 target, could become irrelevant in the future. BRAZIL expressed concern that in withdrawing decisions, guidance on policy and programme matters, of particular importance to developing countries, could be lost.

MEXICO urged that the review and retirement of COP decisions not follow a timeframe, and suggested using the CITES model in identifying decisions that are still relevant or that may need amendment. He further proposed a mechanism for consolidating decisions that relate to the same theme.

CANADA said retirement of decisions is a low priority and, with the AFRICAN GROUP and others, noted that retired decisions should be made available online. NIGERIA cautioned against retiring decisions that have not been implemented, and ECOROPA decisions that might contain principles central to the future work of the CBD. GREENPEACE, supported by WWF, called for CBD decisions to be adopted by qualified majority, to allow for focused decisions that set clear objectives and facilitate implementation of the CBD.

Admission of observers: COLOMBIA called for the strict application of qualification criteria in the admission of NGOs to CBD meetings, and for the Secretariat and parties to be able to check applications. The EU called for open access for all qualified organizations, and for interpreting "qualified" in the broadest possible sense. BRAZIL supported participation by civil society, especially from developing countries. ARGENTINA called for new applicants to undergo the procedure for admission on an *ad hoc* basis, and be granted admission only for the meeting in question. He also favored access of associations, such as chambers of commerce, rather than individual private sector entities. NIGERIA and QATAR called for clearly defining private sector participation, with QATAR suggesting excluding private sector representatives from informal consultations.

MEXICO underscored the importance of participation by indigenous groups and the private sector. CANADA called for a flexible process to ensure the widest possible participation. AUSTRALIA, supported by NIGERIA, suggested that admission be limited to plenary and working group meetings, and access to informal meetings be at the discretion of those convening the meetings. The AFRICAN GROUP requested that NGOs, IGOs and indigenous groups be notified of their eligibility to attend CBD meetings.

Highlighting the contribution of indigenous peoples and NGOs to the CBD, the TEBTEBBA FOUNDATION, supported by several NGOs, called for removing barriers to their full and effective participation, and suggested that observers be requested to submit either their statutes or relevant information brochures. WWF reminded delegates that open and flexible participation procedures have allowed civil society and indigenous peoples to take ownership of the Convention.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS 2 AND 3 OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN: Chair Rezende de Castro introduced the draft recommendation (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/CRP.1), noting that it consolidates discussions on the agenda items on: status and implementation of NBSAPs; priority areas for capacity building; and guidance for the development, evaluation and implementation of NBSAPs.

EL SALVADOR and AUSTRALIA suggested clarifying that NBSAPs are essential to the Convention's implementation and therefore are important for achieving the 2010 target. TANZANIA proposed changing the order of the paragraphs so as to further emphasize points on support and guidance, before urging action on developing NBSAPs.

On a list of actions to be undertaken by parties in developing, implementing and revising NBSAPs, AUSTRALIA, supported by many, suggested consolidating these actions under four subheadings, namely: content of the plans; support for implementation; meeting the objectives of the Convention; and monitoring progress.

The MALDIVES asked to note inadequate financial, human and technical capacity as one of the main obstacles to implementation, with BRAZIL asking that this be identified as the most widespread constraint. The AFRICAN GROUP proposed a new paragraph requesting the financial mechanism, developed countries and donor agencies to provide adequate funding for developing countries for the implementation and revision of NBSAPs at national and regional levels. The EU proposed text on reviewing financing from existing instruments, exploring new funding sources, and developing a funding plan for the implementation of NBSAP priority actions.

AUSTRALIA, supported by CANADA and the EU, suggested simplifying the paragraph referencing Article 20 (financial resources) by urging donors to provide stronger support to developing countries to overcome their constraints on financial, human and technical resources and, opposed by BRAZIL, deleting text on possible tasks that could be undertaken in this regard.

Bhutan, for the ASIAN GROUP, suggested making best practices and lessons learned available through the CHM. ALGERIA proposed including a reference to regional cooperation and synergies. GABON proposed wording on strengthening cooperation between the Rio Conventions and other MEAs. UGANDA called for promoting and supporting local action for implementation, and integrating biodiversity considerations into local development action plans. ZAMBIA requested reference to considering the use of the WWF/Ramsar Convention "Mountains to the Sea" approach in developing and implementing NBSAPs. The EU, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY and others, opposed by BRAZIL, BURKINA FASO and NIGERIA, requested deleting text on ensuring that NBSAPs effectively reflect the Rio Declaration principles. CANADA suggested that NBSAPs should "take into account" rather than "be based on" the Rio Declaration principles.

ARGENTINA and BRAZIL requested removing references to ecosystem services, while many supported their retention. SWITZERLAND requested references to access to genetic resources as well as benefit-sharing. Following opposition by several developing countries, he supported suggestions by CANADA and the EU to instead refer to the three objectives of the Convention.

KIRIBATI called for the inclusion of social and cultural values of biodiversity, and proposed a new paragraph on improving the participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in NBSAPs. YEMEN and ARGENTINA requested references to the involvement of relevant stakeholders from all major groups. BURKINA FASO suggested specifying that activities for stakeholder involvement include strengthening the contribution of traditional knowledge. THAILAND suggested specifying that NBSAPs should mainstream gender issues.

Chair Rezende de Castro referred discussions on actions by parties in developing, implementing and revising NBSAPs to informal consultations.

On capacity building, and access to and transfer of technology, the EU, opposed by many developing countries, suggested deleting the paragraph on the *ad hoc* technical expert group, while AUSTRALIA sought compromise by focusing on the potential deliverables of the group. BRAZIL, supported by the AFRICAN GROUP, suggested clarifying that relevant implementation agencies be encouraged to address nationally identified capacity needs. MALAYSIA supported subnational coordination and consultative mechanisms in preparing national capacity development plans.

Discussions will continue on Thursday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

As WGRI 2 reached its half-point mark, several delegates were commenting on the smooth sailing of the meeting, with one joking that it might be "a worrying sign." Another noted that the relatively non-confrontational and low-key discussions at WGRI 2, such as on resource mobilization, may mean "extra heat" at COP 9 when considering these vital issues. Some regretted the missed opportunity to have in-depth discussions on some of these issues at WGRI 2, while others pointed out that without such debates, intersessional efforts to produce substantive proposals for the COP might not be seen as fully participatory and transparent.

Similarly, the issue of admission of observers to future CBD meetings, which initially created some apprehension among the NGOs, came and went without major debate. Only the proposal to establish a universal rule for observer participation in informal consultations led some to have qualms that a few countries might insist on a general exclusion despite the majority of parties being open to broad stakeholder participation in all negotiation settings.