

CBD COP 9 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 19 MAY 2008

The ninth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 9) opened on Monday, 19 May 2008, in Bonn, Germany. The morning plenary heard opening remarks and addressed organizational issues. In the afternoon, Working Group I (WG I) considered the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, island biodiversity and the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI). WG II addressed progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan and towards the 2010 target and relevant Millennium Development Goals, and scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism (CHM).

OPENING PLENARY

Amb. Raymundo Santos Rocha Magno (Brazil), on behalf of the outgoing presidency of COP 8, underscored the need to achieve a balance among the three CBD objectives, not least by completing the elaboration of an international regime for access and benefit-sharing (ABS) before COP 10, in 2010. He then handed over the presidency to Germany.

COP 9 President Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's Environment Minister, called for a clear mandate for concluding negotiations on the international ABS regime and for improved financing for global biodiversity conservation.

Bärbel Dieckmann, Mayor of Bonn, outlined the city's initiatives focusing on biodiversity. Eckhard Uhlenberg, Minister for the Environment and Conservation, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, noted that biodiversity underpins human well-being.

KIDS FOR EARTH – GREENPEACE INTERNATIONAL highlighted Amazon rainforest destruction and warned that biofuel plantations are replacing forests and areas used for food production. Representatives of the International Youth Conference "Biodiversity on the Edge" demanded: the integration of sustainable development education into school curricula; no patents on living organisms; and the prohibition of genetically modified organisms.

In a video message, Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, noted that existing international environmental governance arrangements have not been effective in addressing the biodiversity crisis. He called on delegates to give new direction and priorities to the CBD, exploring connections to related issues such as climate change and food security.

Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, noted the urgency of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions to avoid dramatic species loss. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, requested that parties support implementation of joint action under the Rio Conventions, highlighting links between drought, land degradation and

biodiversity loss. CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlahf underscored the decline of pollinators and its potential devastating impacts on mankind, noting that the current food crisis should be a wake up call to maintain diversity.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES: Delegates permitted Brunei Darussalam to act as a party in anticipation of its official accession to the CBD in July.

COP 9 President Gabriel reminded delegates that nine members of the COP 9 Bureau were elected at COP 8. Delegates then elected Fernando Pérez Egert (Chile), whose nomination was pending, as the tenth Bureau member.

Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/1 and Add.1/Rev.1/Corr.1); and elected Mary Fosi (Cameroon) as Rapporteur for the meeting, and Maria Mbengashe (South Africa) and Chaweewan Hutacharern (Thailand) as Chairs of WG I and WG II, respectively.

REPORTS: ABS Working Group Co-Chairs Timothy Hodges (Canada) and Fernando Casas (Colombia) highlighted that the sixth meeting of the Working Group established a firm and sound basis for further negotiations on an international ABS regime and, calling for sufficient resources, political support and agreement on a roadmap, said a meaningful agreement can be reached by 2010. COP 9 President Gabriel announced that the Co-Chairs will initiate informal consultations on Tuesday, while a contact group will be established on Wednesday.

ADMINISTRATION AND BUDGET: CBD Executive Secretary Djoghlahf presented the report on the administration of the Convention and the budget for its trust fund (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/10) and the proposed budget for the programme of work for the biennium 2009-2010 (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/27, Add.1 and Add.2). He requested a modest increase, noting the impact of the US dollar devaluation. Delegates then established a budget group, chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria).

STATEMENTS: The INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) affirmed that decisions and implementation of the Convention must be in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, noting current and potential indigenous rights violations due to the establishment of protected areas, market-based mechanisms for addressing climate change, proposed provisions for a future ABS regime, and biofuel production.

The CBD ALLIANCE asked for COP 9 to avoid promoting "false solutions": agrofuels, genetically engineered trees, and climate technology "fixes," such as ocean fertilization; and expanded on "genuine solutions" for the likes of agriculture, ABS, protected areas and marine biodiversity. LA VIA CAMPESINA drew attention to the causes underpinning the current food crisis and called for the COP to recognize farmers' rights to seeds and to prohibit transgenic crops and industrial agrofuels.

The INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE noted that unnecessarily restricting access to genetic resources may curtail the flow of benefits.

WORKING GROUP I

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION:

Delegates reviewed the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation in light of SBSTTA recommendation XII/2 (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/2). Many delegates welcomed the draft decision and the draft plant conservation report (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/25).

Malawi for the AFRICAN GROUP, with MEXICO and PERU, supported extending the Strategy beyond 2010. Slovenia, for the EU, with SWITZERLAND, suggested that any further development of the Strategy, including a review of targets, be consistent with the Strategic Plan beyond 2010. CANADA recommended that all targets should be reviewed before COP 10, whereas BRAZIL considered a review unnecessary, proposing to focus instead on supporting implementation in developing countries. CHINA, MALAYSIA, ECUADOR and the PHILIPPINES called for technical and financial support. COSTA RICA suggested harmonizing the Strategy with forest and agricultural policies, while EGYPT asked for more emphasis on the impacts of climate change.

Many international organizations welcomed the plant conservation report, shared their experiences in implementing the Strategy, and called for its development beyond 2010. A Chair's text will be prepared.

ISLAND BIODIVERSITY: WG I Chair Mbengashe introduced relevant documents (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/19 and INF/6). Grenada for SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), Vanuatu for the PACIFIC ISLANDS, Kiribati for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, HAITI, CUBA and others called for further funding for implementation, including through the Global Environment Facility. SIDS asked for an in-depth review of the island biodiversity work programme by COP 11. NEW ZEALAND announced a technical workshop on the control of invasive alien species in Pacific islands. The EU and AUSTRALIA drew attention to initiatives pertaining to island biodiversity conservation. Liberia on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP underscored that island biodiversity loss is linked to climate change. A Chair's text will be prepared.

GTI: Delegates addressed a draft decision (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/20/Add.2). Many countries highlighted the need to enhance developing countries' capacity to implement scheduled activities, and welcomed the development of a checklist for known species and progress towards the establishment of a special fund for the GTI. The EU and the AFRICAN GROUP highlighted the lack of new taxonomists. BRAZIL emphasized the need to identify indigenous taxonomic knowledge in compliance with national laws and prior informed consent. A number of international organizations highlighted their contribution to the development of the checklist and other activities relating to GTI. A Chair's text will be prepared.

WORKING GROUP II

STRATEGIC PLAN: Delegates considered the review of the CBD Strategic Plan (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/14/Rev.1 and Add.1 and 2) and the third Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 3) (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/15). Many called for a concrete Strategic Plan focusing on national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), biodiversity mainstreaming, and indicators, with several supporting the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership. NEW ZEALAND suggested retaining the current package of indicators. The IIFB Working Group on Indicators proposed indicators on indigenous participation and protection of traditional knowledge.

Japan for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC called for basing the review on sound science, while NORWAY emphasized a strong science-policy interface. The EU, with others, suggested improving incentives and instruments for CBD implementation. INDONESIA, supported by GHANA and FAUNA AND FLORA INTERNATIONAL, suggested that conservation activities affecting local peoples should contribute to poverty alleviation.

THAILAND proposed developing a procedure for including emerging issues in NBSAPs. COLOMBIA and MEXICO supported the establishment of an *ad hoc* technical expert group to review the Strategic Plan, opposed by CANADA and NEW ZEALAND, who preferred the review to be conducted by the Working Group on Review of Implementation.

On GBO 3, NEW ZEALAND asked for cost estimates, and many called for an effective communication strategy.

The UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES proposed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for including indigenous concerns in the Strategic Plan beyond 2010. The UN UNIVERSITY, FAO and the GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY reported on their work supporting implementation of the 2010 target. WWF called for the examination of indirect and direct drivers of biodiversity loss.

A Chair's text will be prepared.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

AND THE CHM: Delegates considered a draft decision (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/23). The AFRICAN GROUP stressed that scientific and technical cooperation should enable developing countries to sustainably use their biodiversity for socioeconomic development. MOROCCO called for bolstering North-South and South-South scientific cooperation.

NORWAY suggested elaborating the CHM's role in technology transfer and communication, education and public awareness, and as a tool for dialogue with civil society. On a list of proposed priority focus areas for the CHM, COLOMBIA and UGANDA called for strengthening institutional capacity for national CHMs and common formats and vocabulary, and the EU said a proposed planning and reporting facility needs further consideration.

The AFRICAN GROUP called for strengthening the Secretariat's information technology and management capacity, and underlined translation needs to share information with indigenous and local communities. CHINA requested translation of the CBD website into Chinese. ECUADOR and IRAN called for funding for national CHMs.

Thailand for ASIA AND THE PACIFIC suggested taking into account the strategy for preparing the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity when integrating national CHMs into existing networks.

Some delegations supported extending the mandate of the CHM Informal Advisory Committee. A Chair's text will be prepared.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Access and benefit-sharing (ABS) managed to take center-stage, even before COP 9 officially opened. During informal consultations on Sunday afternoon, the ABS Working Group Co-Chairs tabled a draft roadmap for the negotiations on ABS, proposing three intersessional meetings of the Working Group in addition to three expert meetings on compliance, concepts/tools and traditional knowledge. In light of the 2010 deadline for completing negotiations on an international regime, and in anticipation of contact group discussions, the draft was well received by most delegates, who nonetheless highlighted the difficulty of securing the required funding.

With 2010 further marking the target to significantly reduce biodiversity loss, many participants are hoping this meeting will adopt specific decisions, needed to live up to the challenge. One noted that it was "a bit ironic" that WG II kicked off its discussions with the review of the CBD Strategic Plan beyond 2010, when the CBD's most urgent challenge is to achieve progress before 2010.

Looking ahead, some observed that the adoption of criteria for marine areas in need of protection is within reach, recalling that bracketed text in the recommendation forwarded by SBSTTA was due to procedural rather than substantive disagreement. If so, one delegate added, this issue could turn out to be one of the few "low hanging fruits" harvested at this COP.