

## **SBSTTA 15 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2011**

The fifteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) opened today in Montreal, Canada. In the morning, plenary heard opening statements and a keynote presentation; and started consideration of the draft capacity-building strategy for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI). In the afternoon, plenary discussed the updated technical rationale and indicators for the new Strategic Plan.

### **OPENING PLENARY**

SBSTTA Chair Senka Barudanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) welcomed delegates, noting that SBSTTA 15 constitutes the first meeting after adopting the new Strategic Plan, and stressing the need to strengthen the scientific basis for using biodiversity to green the economy. She emphasized ecosystem restoration as a strategy to maintain the delivery of essential goods and services and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters. Carlos Martin-Novella, UNEP, outlined UNEP's contributions to CBD implementation, including on monitoring and indicators, ecosystem management and the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity, also noting efforts to enhance synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In a video message, Germany's Minister of Environment, Norbert Röttgen, called on delegates to advance work on ecosystem restoration, outlining the Bonn Challenge on forests, climate change and biodiversity, a commitment to restore 150 million hectares of forests by 2020.

CBD Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlaif announced his intention to apply for the advertised post of CBD Executive Secretary. He also underlined the need for progress on implementation of the Aichi Targets and the revision and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), in light of the new Strategic Plan. In a keynote presentation, Kalemani Jo Mulongoy, CBD principal officer of scientific, technical and technological matters, highlighted ways forward to mobilize the scientific community to contribute to the work of the Convention and improve the interface between scientists and policy makers.

**ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS:** Delegates adopted the meeting's agenda and organization of work (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/1/Rev.1 and Add.1/Rev.1) and elected Thomas Peters (Grenada) and Ignatius Makumba (Zambia) as Working Group I Co-Chairs and Alexander Shestakov (Russia) and Gabriele Obermayr (Austria) as Working Group II Co-Chairs. Nabil Hamada (Tunisia) was elected as rapporteur.

### **GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE**

The Secretariat introduced documentation on the draft comprehensive capacity-building strategy for the GTI (UNEP/

CBD/SBSTTA/15/5 and Inf.4-6). Canada reported on a meeting of the GTI Coordination Mechanism, underlining the importance of taxonomy capacity for decision making.

SWITZERLAND proposed organizing regional capacity-building workshops in conjunction with related activities of other biodiversity-related conventions and relevant international organizations. MEXICO proposed active participation of scientific organizations such as the CBD Consortium of Scientific Partners for Biodiversity. JAPAN suggested "inviting" rather than "urging" parties to provide adequate financial and technical support.

SWITZERLAND, supported by JORDAN, requested replacing reference on the involvement of "every citizen" with "all biodiversity stakeholders." MALAYSIA and BRAZIL proposed adding language on providing financial and technical assistance to developing country parties prioritizing capacity building relevant to the implementation of the Aichi Targets.

Malawi, for the AFRICAN GROUP, considered it premature to call the strategy "comprehensive" and requested: more emphasis on national activities, including involvement of national authorities and scientific organizations; financial support for academic training; and listing required taxonomic skills. INDONESIA opposed reference to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), pending clarification on IPBES' membership and work programme. FINLAND recommended increased attention to scientific research and training. FRANCE underscored the need for taxonomic work to be interoperable between countries. ARGENTINA called for the integration of the GTI capacity-building strategy into NBSAPs to be in line with national priorities and circumstances. THAILAND proposed that the review of guidance to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) reflect the GTI capacity-building strategy priorities.

POLAND pointed to the proposals of the European Expert Meeting, held in Vilm, Germany, from 26-28 September 2011. POLAND and INDIA stressed the need for adequate financial and technical support. BELGIUM and SWAZILAND suggested that the capacity-building strategy should have a longer-term perspective.

BELGIUM suggested that the COP welcome the strategy as useful guidance, instead of endorsing it. PERU underscored the importance of taxonomy for other issues, including climate change. INDIA highlighted emerging issues such as intellectual property questions around genetic barcoding. ETHIOPIA emphasized the need to respect sovereign rights over genetic material in cross-boundary movement related to taxonomic capacity-building, expressing concern that proposed elements on sharing taxonomic information and improving access to taxonomic knowledge are beyond the capacity-building mandate of the GTI and requesting reference to the Nagoya Protocol.

SOUTH AFRICA emphasized the need for memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with academia and other institutions to address identified taxonomic gaps, inform research agendas, and facilitate cooperation with other conventions, citing the MOU between the CBD Secretariat and the UN University as an example; and proposed prioritizing understudied taxa. COLOMBIA proposed, *inter alia*: linking the strategy with vernacular and scientific terminology under the Aichi Targets and integrating the strategy into NBSAPs. NIGER stressed funding for the integration of priority issues into NBSAPs within capacity-development initiatives. SYRIA supported GTI capacity-building workshops, with a focus on enhancing implementation, and proposed “providing” rather than “generating” taxonomic information for sharing and use.

CUBA emphasized that workshops are not sufficient for ensuring capacity building, and recommended that parties identify national taxonomic priorities, including at the institutional and infrastructure level. Saint Lucia, for the SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), called for further promoting South-South cooperation and the development of networks among relevant taxonomic institutions.

THE INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) pointed to the need to adequately incorporate indigenous peoples’ knowledge and holistic views of ecosystem management, including their prior informed consent. The CBD ALLIANCE expressed concern over the use of market mechanisms and the commodification of nature.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN

**SUGGESTED INDICATORS:** Delegates considered suggested indicators, including a proposed indicator framework for assessing progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/2). Andrew Stott (UK), Co-Chair of the *ad hoc* technical expert group (AHTEG) on indicators for the new Strategic Plan, presented the AHTEG report (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/INF/6), underscoring, *inter alia*: the development of a priority list of indicators; the Strategic Plan as a flexible framework for national implementation; and the need to explore opportunities for coherent systems of indicators, including through improved connections with other conventions. The Secretariat presented an online database composed of data relevant to the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets, accessible through the CBD website.

JAPAN highlighted the opportunity to link biodiversity data collection with existing data collection, citing the Asia-Pacific Biodiversity Observation Network (APBON) and Global Biodiversity Information Facility as examples. EGYPT and MEXICO pointed to the gap between data collection and implementation, with MEXICO suggesting methodological improvements to narrow that gap. BELGIUM, supported by POLAND, FINLAND and NORWAY, stressed the need for technical guidance on using and further developing indicators at the international and national levels.

VENEZUELA cautioned against incompatibility with local indicators, and noted that not all parties support indicators based on the commodification of nature. POLAND stressed that further developing the indicator framework should be a GEF priority. PERU suggested including indicators on wild relatives of cultivated plants. FINLAND recommended adding a reference to cooperation with the Biodiversity Liaison Group and Joint Liaison Group.

NEW ZEALAND supported the establishment of a small set of simple indicators that are easily transferable to parties with limited national capacities and enable comparability. THE NETHERLANDS recommended the adoption of operational indicators by COP 11, suggesting developing additional indicators at a later stage. CHINA stated that: indicators should provide guidance to countries and be implemented considering national circumstances; and technical and financial support should be provided to developing countries.

#### PROVISIONAL TECHNICAL RATIONALE, POSSIBLE INDICATORS AND SUGGESTED MILESTONES:

Delegates considered possible indicators and milestones as a resource that countries and stakeholders may draw upon when setting national targets and milestones (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/3). NORWAY underscored that the Aichi Targets are the product of careful negotiation and any further development of technical guidance must reflect their formulation. BRAZIL suggested reorganizing the framework according to the Aichi Targets, and establishing a contact group for further work on the framework. SWITZERLAND called for baselines, realistic milestones and guidelines for reaching targets at the national level and, with CANADA, suggested inviting the Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) to continue its work, and proposed clarifying the status of a table on possible means, milestones and indicators. MALAYSIA and TIMOR LESTE highlighted capacity building and financial support for developing national targets and indicators. MALAYSIA proposed to allow using relevant national criteria in the indicator framework. ECUADOR underscored that the indicators represent guidelines and that national-level support is critical to their implementation.

CANADA recommended, *inter alia*: quantitative metrics to accompany the Aichi Targets, where possible; considering indicators on human needs for clean water, food, energy and medicinal plants to reflect expansions from biodiversity to ecosystem services outcomes; prioritizing the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan; and welcoming efforts of other biodiversity-related conventions to develop indicators, while cautioning that such indicators should not change the CBD indicator framework.

On linkages between eliminating harmful incentives and the Doha trade negotiations, THE PHILIPPINES proposed that countries take national action to rehabilitate fisheries and ensure ecological balance rather than wait for negotiation outcomes. With regard to invasive alien species, he suggested using environmental impact assessment rules in situations where parties lack an agency responsible for biosafety; and on protected areas, recognition of indigenous peoples and community conserved areas and territories. On a target on the sustainable management and harvest of fish, invertebrate stocks and aquatic plants, NORWAY recommended providing scientific advice related to marine resources.

#### ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Eric Chivian, Director, Center for Health and the Global Environment, presented on the contribution of ecosystem restoration to the objectives of the CBD and a healthy planet for all people. Noting that global environmental changes can be difficult to understand and perceive, he underscored the need to provide a clear message to people on the value of nature for human well-being and the stakes related to species extinction. He then described animal species with potential value for research in fighting against human diseases; and called for early action on climate change and biodiversity conservation-related issues relying on an accumulated body of knowledge rather than waiting for scientific proof.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

At the first SBSTTA session after the adoption of the Strategic Plan in Nagoya, delegates quickly warmed up with a dense exchange on defining indicators for the implementation of the Aichi Targets. Some expressed concern with the ballooning number of suggested indicators and the lack of a harmonized approach towards their use, leading one participant to suggest that “we may be creating future confusion” and another worrying that the Aichi Targets are at risk of dominating the biodiversity agenda. As the day closed with a convivial reception, many looked forward to the first discussion on ecosystem restoration on Tuesday, with some wondering whether the debate will focus on potentially divisive issues such as high-tech restoration or offsets.