

SBSTTA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 1 MAY 2012

SBSTTA 16 delegates met in two working groups (WGs) throughout the day. WG I discussed: biodiversity and climate change, including REDD+ safeguards and geo-engineering; biofuels; incentive measures and collaborative work on forests, agriculture and health.

WG II considered: marine and coastal biodiversity, including ecologically and biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), human impacts on the marine environment, and marine spatial planning and guidelines for considering biodiversity environmental assessments in marine areas; the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC); and capacity-building for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI).

Informal groups met in the evening on several of these issues to draft revised text.

WORKING GROUP I

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: REDD+ Safeguards for Biodiversity: CANADA supported ensuring that REDD+ activities account for direct and also “indirect” benefits from forest biodiversity. ECUADOR suggested including areas of high relevance for biodiversity. Many suggested that recommending that the COP “approve” advice on biodiversity safeguards was not adequate, with ARGENTINA, suggesting that it “take note.”

NORWAY suggested retaining a request to the Article 8(j) Working Group to consider potential risks of REDD+ to ILCs and explore ways of mitigating these risks. NORWAY also suggested transmitting an annex on indicators for REDD+ contributions to the Aichi Targets to the UNFCCC Secretariat. SOUTH AFRICA highlighted land tenure and national solutions for issues such as land use planning.

FAO highlighted that the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015 will consider the Aichi Targets and REDD+ safeguards. IIFB stressed the need for ILC participation at all levels of planning, design and implementation of REDD+. GLOBAL FORESTRY COALITION called for an effective compliance mechanism at local, national and regional levels.

Integration of Biodiversity Considerations into Climate-Change Related Activities: CANADA suggested referring to prior informed consent as it is agreed language rather than to “free” prior informed consent and requested clarification on reference to “vulnerability” of traditional knowledge. ETHIOPIA proposed widening the scope of data collection and analysis. BURKINA FASO stressed subregional cooperation for monitoring and assessment. SOUTH AFRICA suggested identifying relevant ILC knowledge and practices. INDIA said gaps in knowledge and information should be addressed. ARGENTINA highlighted the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Geo-engineering: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/10 and INF/18, 29 and 30. DENMARK and SWEDEN called for compiling and updating information on the impacts of geo-engineering on biodiversity and, with the UK, FINLAND, FRANCE and SWEDEN, emphasized that the priority should be to reduce GHG emissions at source.

The PHILIPPINES underscored the need to extensively and effectively review geo-engineering technology, noting the limited perspective of ILCs and farmers. CANADA observed that the information document on ILCs focuses on broader human rights and participatory issues that do not relate to geo-engineering.

NORWAY, CHINA, UGANDA and ETHIOPIA noted the absence of a clear geo-engineering definition. NORWAY proposed that parties report on geo-engineering activities in their next national reports and, with SWEDEN, highlighted the precautionary approach. FINLAND proposed further scientific work on geo-engineering impacts.

The UK and FRANCE suggested postponing discussions on geo-engineering until the release of the fifth assessment report of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). INDIA cautioned against prejudging or preempting the work of IPCC or UNFCCC and said available information suggests that geo-engineering does not satisfy minimum criteria of effectiveness, affordability and security.

SOUTH AFRICA pointed to insufficient knowledge on solar radiation management (SRM), noting that tension over SRM could increase environmental insecurity. FRANCE suggested exploring how to fill the regulatory gap on SRM. SWEDEN called for a global regulatory mechanism on geo-engineering. UGANDA highlighted lack of national capacity to address geo-engineering. ARGENTINA stressed possible adverse and transboundary effects.

TEBTEBBA called for strengthening reference to consultation with ILCs. ETC GROUP recommended a transparent effective mechanism to provide a scientific basis and an open and accessible register of activities.

BIOFUELS: The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/14 and INF/32. BRAZIL noted the overemphasis on negative effects of biofuels to biodiversity. MEXICO called for more balanced recommendations. The PHILIPPINES stressed the need to consider impacts on livelihoods of indigenous peoples.

DENMARK, supported by SWITZERLAND and the UK, proposed inviting the Secretariat and other relevant organizations to compile existing definitions of biofuels for consideration before COP 12. INDIA proposed addressing biofuels as a cross-cutting issue under the relevant CBD work programmes. THAILAND called for case studies on assessment of biofuels with regard to energy security. The UK proposed that the Secretariat develop guidance and enable parties to identify and avoid areas of high biodiversity value.

ARGENTINA stressed that the CBD is not the appropriate forum for developing standards and methodologies for biofuels. CANADA noted that SBSTTA and the CBD COP should only address biofuels where there is a clear and direct impact on biodiversity. He also said that tools and approaches should be voluntary.

The PHILIPPINES suggested consideration of socio-economic impacts related to biofuels. BIOFUEL WATCH drew attention to harmful effects of large scale biofuel use and called for addressing taxes and subsidies. GLOBAL FOREST COALITION called for application of the precautionary principle.

INCENTIVE MEASURES: The Secretariat introduced documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/15 and INF/36. DENMARK suggested broadening the scope of the recommendation, relating it to all the Aichi Targets, with the UK highlighting the role of incentive measures in implementing the Aichi Targets and in mobilizing resources.

FINLAND suggested further inclusion of the private sector. THAILAND supported compiling a synthesis document on obstacles and options. AUSTRALIA stressed that consideration of incentive measures should be consistent and in harmony with other international agreements, such as the World Trade Organization. FRANCE highlighted perverse incentives and SOUTH AFRICA noted synergies with IPBES. MEXICO and ECUADOR highlighted the relevance of capacity building and exchange of lessons learned on ecosystem services.

COLLABORATIVE WORK ON FORESTS, AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH: The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/16. Several parties welcomed collaboration with various partners.

Discussions will continue on Wednesday.

WORKING GROUP II

MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY: EBSAs: SOUTH AFRICA opposed endorsing conclusions from EBSA workshops, noting workshops in some regions had not been held. AUSTRALIA preferred submitting completed workshop reports for COP consideration. NORWAY expressed concern about endorsing preliminary work. The EU suggested indicating the report is a work in progress.

SOUTH AFRICA and others recommended expanding capacity building beyond training manuals and workshops. NEW ZEALAND added that lack of scientific data should not limit identification of EBSAs. GERMANY called for accelerated efforts to establish biologically representative MPA networks.

On legal structure, CHINA said the UNGA and UNCLOS are responsible for conservation in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJs). The NETHERLANDS recognized the role of UNGA on ABNJs. Noting that many states have not ratified UNCLOS, the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC said a CBD amendment may be needed to address marine biodiversity in ABNJs. ARGENTINA cautioned against contradicting UNGA resolutions. FRANCE opposed re-opening the agreement reached at COP 10. CANADA said the CBD has the mandate to delineate areas that meet EBSA criteria but not to identify EBSAs and, with NORWAY, said EBSAs and MPAs are not interchangeable. The UN Office of Legal Affairs, Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UNDOALOS) said the fifth session of the UNGA working group on marine biodiversity in ABNJs would consider creating a legal instrument under UNCLOS.

Delegates also discussed the need to continuously update the repository for scientific and technical information; and including traditional knowledge in EBSA identification.

Adverse Impacts of Human Activities: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/6 and INF/11-15. On coral bleaching, delegates emphasized updating the specific work programme with regard to impacts of climate change and cumulative effects.

On ocean acidification, CANADA suggested identifying biodiversity elements most likely to be affected. On fisheries, many called for enhanced collaboration with regional fisheries

management organizations (RFMOs) and regional seas conventions. JAPAN noted that many RFMOs already have a mandate to address biodiversity management. UNDOALOS highlighted a UNGA resolution addressing illegal unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) and destructive fishing practices. FAO stressed the ecosystem approach to fisheries. A group of NGOs said that genetically-modified fish are not covered under the Cartagena Protocol and must be addressed under human impacts.

On marine debris, delegates supported strengthening integration with instruments addressing land-based sources of debris including the Honolulu Strategy for Prevention and Management of Marine Debris and the Manila Declaration on Furthering the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and its global partnership on marine litter.

On underwater noise, many called for further scientific work on noise measurement, registration, terminology and acoustic mapping. SPAIN suggested developing practical guidelines, whereas JAPAN considered this premature. The US suggested the International Maritime Organization could provide additional guidance.

Marine Spatial Planning and Environmental Assessments: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/7 and INF/16 and 17. On marine spatial planning, TIMOR-LESTE and THAILAND called for capacity building and resources for the management of marine national parks. NORWAY proposed cross-sectoral collaboration.

Most delegates welcomed the voluntary guidelines on the consideration of biodiversity environmental assessments in marine and coastal areas, but cautioned against applying them in ABNJs, suggesting that the COP "take note," rather than "endorse" them. Delegates also called for an international agreement for ABNJs, noting that the guidelines must be revised in line with such an agreement.

GSPC: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/SBSTTA/16/11 and INF/38. Participants expressed strong support for the GSPC's work, with a number of delegates calling for greater linkages to the Aichi Targets. Delegates also welcomed an online toolkit on implementation and urged parties to designate national focal points and integrate the Strategy into NBSAPs.

MEXICO and SWITZERLAND welcomed a CITES resolution on collaboration between CITES and CBD. BRAZIL called for addressing means of implementation. ARGENTINA recommended including both common and scientific species names in the annex. INDIA and THAILAND said monitoring of the GSPC should be linked to monitoring, review and evaluation of the Strategic Plan.

TAXONOMY: The Secretariat introduced UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/12 and INF/31 on the draft capacity building strategy for taxonomy. Delegates welcomed the document, noting the need for additional efforts in training and education for taxonomists.

Discussions will continue on Wednesday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Despite waking up to a gloomy, rainy morning in Montreal, delegates tackled agenda items with enthusiasm, leaving both working groups ahead of their schedules. With several informal groups meeting in the evening to draft revised text, some saw the specter of late night sessions diminishing, noting commitment "to get it done in time." Others saw the real challenges looming, predicting "rough seas ahead" as the difficult issues will reveal themselves only once contact groups have been established.

EBSAs figured high on the list of thorny issues potentially delaying discussions, as different views of how to deal with the divided roles between CBD, UNCLOS and the plethora of regional conventions and agreements emerged. Besides, it seems that discussions on scientific issues are less advanced than many thought. "EBSAs are a mess" said one delegate, pointing to remaining disagreement between several regional bodies on the science backing the criteria for identifying EBSAs.