

SBSTTA 16 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 3 MAY 2012

On Thursday, delegates met in WG sessions in the morning and evening and in plenary in the afternoon. WG I continued discussing: integration of biodiversity considerations into climate-change related activities; incentive measures; and collaborative work on forests, agriculture and health in the morning and evening. WG II addressed: the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC); capacity building for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI); and new and emerging issues.

Plenary considered: ways and means to increase SBSTTA's effectiveness and collaboration with IPBES, and adopted recommendations on the in-depth review of the work programme on island biodiversity and the preparations for the fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO 4).

WORKING GROUP I

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: Integration of Biodiversity Considerations into Climate-Change Related Activities:

Delegates continued addressing revised draft text. They discussed language on building knowledge and information on the linkages between biodiversity and climate change. On a reference to respecting, preserving and maintaining knowledge innovations and practices of ILCs related to biodiversity-climate change links with prior informed consent (PIC) or approval of involvement of ILCs, CANADA suggested retaining reference to benefit-sharing but deleting "in compliance with the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol." AUSTRALIA suggested referring to PIC "of the holders of such knowledge." The PHILIPPINES suggested deleting reference to the "approval of ILCs." Delegates eventually agreed to "subject to national legislation; respect, preserve and maintain knowledge innovations and practices of ILCs related to biodiversity-climate change links with PIC of the holders of such knowledge or approval and involvement of ILCs and including the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge innovation and practices."

COLOMBIA suggested, and delegates agreed, to "investing in the consolidation and strengthening of national institutional capacities to monitor climate change impacts on biodiversity."

Delegates then addressed language on encouraging parties, governments and organizations to explore options for further financing, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (Rio Principle 7), to fill biodiversity and ecosystem services data gaps critical for climate change planning and modeling. SWITZERLAND, supported by the EU and CANADA, suggested options "from all sources" be considered. BRAZIL highlighted the relevance of the Rio Principles and, supported by ARGENTINA, CHINA,

INDIA and MALAYSIA, suggested retaining reference to the principle in the text. AUSTRALIA, NORWAY and others said the reference should be deleted, with AUSTRALIA stressing it falls out of SBSTTA's mandate, and NORWAY suggesting the issue be addressed by the CBD Working Group on Review of Implementation. The UK suggested "in accordance with the Rio Principles, including Principle 7." Parties agreed to retain this language in brackets for consideration by plenary.

On encouraging the establishment of policies integrating biodiversity and climate change issues, INDIA said the provision is too prescriptive and falls out of SBSTTA's mandate as a scientific body. Delegates eventually agreed to encourage parties to "mainstream biodiversity and climate change issues," as proposed by India. BRAZIL, JAPAN, ETHIOPIA and INDIA requested deleting language on protected areas (PAs) and other conservation measures in climate change strategies to ensure concrete action of ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation and/or mitigation. Delegates eventually agreed to include reference to CBD COP Decision X/33 (Biodiversity and Climate Change), which addresses such measures and to "recognize the role PAs and conservation measures can play in climate-change related activities," as suggested by MEXICO.

On a request to the Executive Secretary to share information regarding such approaches from relevant workshops and explore options to enhance cooperation between the CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats, delegates debated at length whether to retain reference to ecosystem-based approaches for mitigation and adaptation. BRAZIL, INDIA and ETHIOPIA requested deleting the reference, whereas BELGIUM, the EU, UGANDA, JAPAN, NORWAY and the PHILIPPINES insisted on its retention. Delegates eventually agreed to reference Decision X/33 and delete reference to mitigation and adaptation.

On raising awareness of ongoing biodiversity data and modeling initiatives through the clearing house mechanism, delegates agreed to COLOMBIA's proposal to include a list of specific initiatives.

INCENTIVE MEASURES: Delegates considered a revised draft recommendation. On text noting the analytical work undertaken on harmful incentives, ARGENTINA, opposed by NORWAY, SWITZERLAND and SWEDEN, proposed language on the necessity of complying with the WTO Doha Mandate in reducing and eliminating environmentally harmful subsidies. DENMARK proposed alternative language on work consistent and in harmony with the Convention and other relevant international obligations. Both alternatives remain in brackets.

On a reference noting the support of international organizations and initiatives, ARGENTINA requested deletion of reference to the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development, while NORWAY, FRANCE, the NETHERLANDS, GERMANY and others, supported retaining the reference. The reference remained in brackets.

On a request to the Secretariat to explore options for technical support and capacity building on valuation methodologies and the integration of biodiversity values into relevant policies, RWANDA suggested the Secretariat “develop proposals,” and MEXICO, supported parties and organizations to do so.

Informal consultations continued to address outstanding issues.

COLLABORATIVE WORK ON FORESTS,

AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH: BELGIUM proposed a new paragraph inviting FAO to examine how the indicative list of indicators for the Strategic Plan can be taken into account when carrying out future global forest resources assessments (FRA), and requesting the Secretariat to collaborate with FAO to help ensure that the FRA continues to provide useful data and analysis for assessing progress in implementation of the Convention.

Discussion will continue on Friday.

WORKING GROUP II

GSPC: Delegates considered a revised draft decision. On reviewing revised technical rationales and proposed indicators, CANADA proposed, and delegates agreed, to recognize “their current draft nature.”

On providing support to implement the Strategy, PERU proposed emphasizing support to countries that are centers of origin of biodiversity in addition to developing countries, least developed countries and SIDS. On emphasizing the GSPC implementation in accordance with the Nagoya Protocol, CANADA preferred, and delegates agreed to, placing “where applicable” before the Nagoya Protocol. On the GSPC toolkit, delegates agreed to Belgium’s suggestion to refer “to measures that can be taken to manage and conserve plant species impacted by climate change,” rather than listing specific measures.

TAXONOMY: Delegates considered a revised draft decision. On strategic actions, delegates agreed to: an insertion proposed by the REPUBLIC OF KOREA stating that taxonomic reviews and informational workshops also be conducted at the “sub-regional” level; an addition by ARGENTINA and PERU regarding awareness raising as a complement to the dissemination and popularization of taxonomic knowledge in a reference to improving taxonomic skills and knowledge; and the UK’s amendment to include as part of building capacity for national and thematic facilities, text on building and maintaining information systems and infrastructure for collating, curating and tracking use of biological specimens and providing free and open access to relevant biodiversity information to the public.

NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES: Delegates discussed a revised draft decision. Delegates agreed to note the effects of tropospheric ozone as a greenhouse gas, with impacts on human health and biodiversity. BRAZIL proposed deleting language on the region specific Gothenburg Protocol to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone. The UK suggested, and delegates agreed, to replace the text with a general reference to regional processes.

Delegates also considered two options: not adding additional issues to SBSTTA’s agenda (option 1); and requesting the Secretariat to synthesize scientific information on synthetic biology, including identification of possible gaps and overlaps with the Cartagena Protocol and noting the precautionary approach (option 2). MEXICO, supported by CANADA, BRAZIL, UK, ARGENTINA and others, preferred option 1 but proposed retaining option 2 text on the Cartagena Protocol and inviting information on possible impacts. On possible impacts of synthetic biology techniques and products, GHANA, supported by GRENADA, NORWAY and others, proposed adding “organisms.”

During lunchtime, a drafting group discussed an alternative option 3, based on the Mexican proposal. This option, *inter alia*, does not add issues to SBSTTA’s agenda, notes a need to refine the process for identifying new and emerging issues, and asks the Secretariat to compile and synthesize information on synthetic biology, including on gaps and overlaps with the Cartagena Protocol.

PLENARY

SBSTTA’s EFFECTIVENESS: Delegates considered a revised draft recommendation. ETHIOPIA called for “recognizing” rather than “emphasizing” IPBES. On SBSTTA’s mandate, the Secretariat clarified that there is no legal impediment to the COP requesting SBSTTA to convey scientific and technical needs in relation to the Strategic Plan to IPBES, and that the COP could establish modalities for SBSTTA’s engagement with IPBES. Responding to a question from China, the Secretariat noted that the COP would need to determine how the Convention relates to other bodies, such as IPBES.

FRANCE expressed concern with the potential time lag between the initiation of a request by SBSTTA to IPBES through the COP and IPBES’ response. CHINA suggested requesting SBSTTA to prepare proposals on how to submit requests to IPBES between now and COP 11. Following informal consultations, parties agreed to request SBSTTA to identify the scientific and technical needs relating to the implementation of the Strategic Plan that could be considered by IPBES. Parties also inserted additional paragraphs: inviting parties and others to submit views on the process under the CBD on how CBD requests would be conveyed to IPBES; and requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare proposals for consideration by COP 11 based on these submissions.

ISLAND BIODIVERSITY: Delegates adopted the revised draft recommendation without amendments.

GBO 4: Delegates adopted the revised draft recommendation with minor amendments.

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the end of SBSTTA 16 approaching, delegates had mixed assessments of the meeting’s prospects for success. Representatives from civil society seemed pleased that the recommendation on the review of the work programme on islands “grasps” essential needs. Similarly, those who attended Wednesday night’s contact group on marine and coastal biodiversity simply said “we’re happy with the progress.” Several mega-diverse countries also openly praised the utility of the online toolkit for the GSPC.

But those who focused on synthetic biology, while recognizing that agreement on the next steps on understanding its impacts “showed a nearly unanimous effort,” underscored the deficiencies of the procedure for identifying new and emerging issues, which some see as a major impediment to initiating quick responses to fast moving potential new threats to biodiversity.

Those following the discussion on SBSTTA’s effectiveness were even more concerned about timing, albeit on a more abstract level. One delegate stressed that proposals on the table regarding the procedure for making requests to IPBES could lead to a five-year delay before the commencement of actual scientific activities. This led another jaded insider to worry that the “decade on biodiversity could turn into a decade of delay between issue conception and conservation action.”

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of SBSTTA 16 will be available on Monday, 7 May 2012 online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/sbstta16/>