

WGRI 4 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 8 MAY 2012

In the morning, Chair Hosino announced a contact group on the Strategic Plan and related issues had been established and would be co-chaired by Spencer Thomas (Grenada) and Andrew Bignell (New Zealand).

Throughout the day participants discussed: options for sending a technical and/or political message to Rio+20; integrating biodiversity into poverty eradication and development; cooperation with other conventions; engaging with business; and south-south cooperation. When adjourning the plenary mid-afternoon, Hosino announced that the contact group on the Strategic Plan and related issues would convene in the evening. The contact group on resource mobilization and the financial mechanism will convene Wednesday morning.

MESSAGE TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)

The Secretariat introduced documents UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/4 and UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/8, inviting parties to discuss options for sending a technical and/or political message to Rio+20 and to discuss the process for its presentation. Executive Secretary Dias reported that: the Rio+20 process currently has “too much text” and delegates should lower expectations for inserting new text at this stage, noting that there would likely be opportunities after Rio+20 to incorporate biodiversity messages into a list of sustainable development goals. He recommended providing a brief, focused message. Chair Hosino proposed dropping the technical message (Annex I) and retaining the political message (Annex II), and attaching the Strategic Plan to the message.

Argentina, for the GROUP OF LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES (GRULAC), supported by JORDAN, preferred a single message, based on the Strategic Plan, using agreed language reflecting the three objectives of the Convention, to be delivered during the high level segment. LAOS also preferred a single message, with a detailed focus on technical and scientific aspects, especially man-made risks to biodiversity. INDIA supported one message based on Annex II and using agreed language, noting the need to optimize the available time. ETHIOPIA supported sending two messages based on the Strategic Plan.

The EU, on behalf of its 27 member states, preferred sending one political message based on Annex II, and proposed inserting emphasis that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets would help achieve a green economy. AUSTRALIA, VENEZUELA and CHINA favored mentioning the Strategic Plan in a political message, and LEBANON, JAPAN and VENEZUELA stressed the importance of including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

PAKISTAN, SUDAN, UGANDA, VENEZUELA and NIGER said that the political message should reference funding, with TUNISIA adding that the text failed to mention equitable sharing and access to benefits of genetic resources. CHINA proposed a message emphasizing the conservation of biodiversity for livelihoods and the green economy, the three objectives of the Convention, Strategic Plan for 2011-2020, Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Nagoya Protocol, and mainstreaming of biodiversity. EGYPT said that the message to Rio+20 should highlight commitments to respect national sovereignty and common but differentiated responsibility. GHANA urged stressing that biodiversity should be the primary environmental issue for the global community to address.

IUCN supported the proposal to append the Strategic Plan to the message to Rio+20, in order to emphasize the agreed global strategy for biodiversity conservation.

Chair Hosino noted that the majority of parties favored drafting one “short, concise and punchy” political message, and that further discussion should focus on this.

BIODIVERSITY FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In the morning, the Secretariat introduced the item on integrating biodiversity into poverty eradication and development (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/5). M. F. Farooqi, India, provided an overview of the outcomes of the First Expert Meeting on Biodiversity for Poverty Eradication and Development that met in Dehradun, India in December 2011 to further elaborate on the linkages between the three objectives of the CBD and poverty reduction. He noted that the Expert Group discussed ways in which to: build capacity; mainstream payments for ecosystem services; and assign a value to natural resources. He noted the revised outcomes will be submitted for consideration at COP11.

SOUTH AFRICA, supporting the outcomes of the Expert Group, underscored the importance of biodiversity for impoverished communities. MALI stressed the importance of traditional knowledge and lessons learned when integrating biodiversity into poverty eradication and development plans. THAILAND questioned whether a tool could be developed to create linkages between the Ramsar Convention and CBD.

The PHILIPPINES proposed ensuring traditional user rights in policy and project design. GHANA requested the Executive Secretary to report on progress in mainstreaming poverty eradication and development at COP 12. The EU welcomed the report but said the CBD should avoid overlap and duplication with other fora. BRAZIL, supported by URUGUAY, expressed concern about sustainable biotrade, noting that this phrase is not clear and cautioning against trade barriers.

ARGENTINA said the CBD is not the appropriate forum for addressing poverty eradication.

IIFB stressed the role of indigenous peoples, including their rights to free, prior and informed consent (PIC), in the planning, design, and implementation of biodiversity and development programmes.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH BUSINESS

In the morning, the Secretariat introduced documents on cooperation with other conventions: the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/8) and engagement with business (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/9).

COOPERATION WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS: MEXICO highlighted the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora's (CITES) approach to cooperation with other conventions and expressed support for strengthening coordination and cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). He also proposed adding reference to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) also supported engagement with business.

SWITZERLAND underscored the crucial importance of cooperation, recognizing the role of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions in facilitating the implementation of MEAs. He requested the Secretariat to compile recommendations on future synergies and contributions of biodiversity and Rio-related conventions to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets for COP 11. The EU underscored that coherent implementation of the Convention is critical. He emphasized, supported by NORWAY, that it is timely to focus on cooperation at the national level, with NBSAPs being a key tool for providing national frameworks. NORWAY stated she could not endorse the *modus operandi* of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions.

The PHILIPPINES and INDIA stressed NBSAPs as central tools for collaboration on the implementation of the Strategic Plan. SOUTH AFRICA proposed “urging,” rather than “inviting,” parties to strengthen cooperation and synergy among convention focal points and other partners to enhance capacity and “to avoid duplication of activities and further enhance the effective use of resources in utilizing NBSAP as central tool for such collaboration.”

ENGAGEMENT WITH BUSINESS: IUCN, with JAPAN, highlighted the first meeting of the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity held in Tokyo in December 2011. JORDAN suggested encouraging businesses to adopt core principles for biodiversity conservation. CANADA proposed language emphasizing the role of business in pursuing sustainable development and biodiversity conservation goals. Noting that voluntary standards are not a substitute for binding rules and regulations, the PHILIPPINES proposed to “adopt policies that halt biodiversity loss.” ARGENTINA expressed concern that certification and standard schemes might present barriers to trade. MOROCCO invited international organizations and donors to increase cooperation on resource mobilization. On inviting parties to adopt biodiversity-friendly policies to leverage market forces, VENEZUELA proposed “to take into account” rather than “adopt.” The EU welcomed progress, highlighted useful information on incentive measures and suggested summarizing best practices on business engagement for COP 11.

GHANA offered text calling on business to adopt the revised International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standard 6 on biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources, and inviting parties to enforce biodiversity-friendly policies. BURKINA FASO suggested that biodiversity-friendly policies include the use of sustainable

products. GHANA, ETHIOPIA and EcoNexus said the document should recognize the negative impacts of business on biodiversity.

ETHIOPIA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) urged further collaboration between national focal points of the biodiversity-related conventions.

MULTI-YEAR PLAN OF ACTION FOR SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION ON BIODIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Secretariat introduced the relevant document on the updated Multi-Year Plan of Action for South-South Cooperation (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/4/10) and invited delegates to consider linkages between this item and the review of progress in providing support to parties in the context of the Strategic Plan and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

REPUBLIC of KOREA underscored the findings of the Third Expert Meeting on South-South Cooperation, and noted value of the CHM; efficient technology transfer; collaboration among scientific and technical partners; and building capacity for the review of NBSAPs and other commitments of the Convention.

JORDAN said that south-south and tripartite cooperation are crucial for linking the sustainable use of biodiversity with poverty reduction and economic and social development, and called on funders to provide material support for the Steering Committee on South-South Cooperation. The EU supported south-south cooperation for achieving the Strategic Plan and cross-thematic work of the Convention but said that a Multi-Year Plan of Action is not ready for adoption at COP 11. JAPAN said that cooperation could be enhanced through voluntary activities.

CONTACT GROUP ON STRATEGIC PLAN AND RELATED MATTERS

Delegates reconvened in a contact group on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and related matters. The session proceeded slowly, as delegates debated whether to “emphasize” or “bear in mind” challenges to setting implementation targets. Eventually delegates agreed “to take challenges into account.” Delegates also debated whether to request parties and others to provide continued or additional support for NBSAPs and stakeholder consultations on targets and indicators.

IN THE CORRIDORS

It was not just the rain in Montreal that set the tone of the meeting as delegates reconvened in plenary to discuss a message to bring to Rio. With as many as 400 paragraphs that the “informal informal” consultations on the Rio+20 process did not succeed in agreeing to, participants wondered whether there was room for a message from the CBD and what kind of attention it would get. That said, most of the delegates expressed the view that biodiversity conservation is key to sustainable development and thus a “punchy” political message is of utmost importance. Returning to the WGRI agenda, delegates have plenty to do here to make progress on implementation. But at least one insider was left wondering, based on the lethargic mood, if “we have already decided we are not going to accomplish anything” in terms of resource mobilization. “This week’s contact groups will be telling,” said another, “there’s a lot to bear in mind.” Delegates had plenty of time to ponder their level of ambition, as Tuesday’s meeting adjourned one and a half hour after the beginning of the session.