



SBSTTA 17 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2013

Delegates met in plenary in the afternoon and evening, to consider a draft recommendation on scientific and technical needs for implementing the Strategic Plan.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL NEEDS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Alexander Shestakov (Russian Federation) reported on Wednesday evening's "small" Friends of the Chair group, which agreed on part of the text of a draft recommendation reflecting key scientific and technical needs in implementing the Convention, as expressed in plenary discussions. Hesiquio Benitez Diaz (Mexico) reported on the "big" Friends of the Chair group, which agreed on two annexes to the draft recommendation, on cross-cutting issues and on a summary of views on the Strategic Goals, respectively. Plenary considered the draft recommendation paragraph by paragraph.

On evaluation and assessment, CHINA proposed underscoring the need for improving methodologies for assessing the status and trends of threatened species and ecosystem hotspots and conservation gaps; with BOLIVIA recommending reference also to "ecosystem functions" and the UK to "ecosystem services and human well-being." CANADA and MEXICO objected to limiting the reference to "threatened" species. Parties eventually agreed to underscoring the need for improving and promoting methodologies for assessing the status and trends of species and ecosystems hotspots, and conservation gaps, as well as ecosystem functions, ecosystem services and human well-being at national, regional and global levels.

On planning and mainstreaming, the AFRICAN GROUP, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and BELGIUM, preferred improving planning tools through "biodiversity safeguards, methods and tools and spatial planning," rather than through "inclusion of biodiversity concerns in spatial planning." On land use and coastal planning, BELGIUM suggested reference to "marine" planning and mainstreaming biodiversity into sustainable development and "other relevant policy sectors." BOLIVIA requested inclusion of "ecosystem functions." Parties agreed to these amendments.

On maintenance, conservation and restoration of ecosystems, MEXICO, opposed by BELGIUM and NORWAY, requested specific reference to marine and coastal ecosystems in relation to better understanding ecosystem processes, functions and their implications and to improved methodologies and indicators for monitoring ecosystem resilience and recovery. The UK, supported by AUSTRIA and SENEGAL, proposed a broader reference to "vulnerable ecosystems," which delegates approved.

On understanding and using economic instruments, EGYPT proposed a reference to "poverty eradication strategies," which delegates agreed to. BELGIUM suggested referring to the need for guidance and tools for reforms of harmful incentives consistent with the Convention and other relevant international "agreements," rather than "obligations." SWEDEN and LIBERIA suggested reference to "developing positive incentives."

On ways to draw on relevant traditional knowledge to complement scientific knowledge, CANADA, supported by FRANCE, but opposed by MEXICO and BOLIVIA, raised concerns about reference to PIC. CANADA also suggested, opposed by PERU, that traditional knowledge "work with," rather than "complement," scientific knowledge. BOLIVIA called for "including," and GUATEMALA for "valuing," traditional knowledge. PERU called for respecting intellectual property rights of indigenous communities. NORWAY and MEXICO suggested referring to CBD language on "the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices," rather than PIC. Delegates eventually agreed on the need for "better ways to draw on relevant traditional knowledge to complement scientific knowledge in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, taking into account the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge."

BOLIVIA proposed new text underlining the need to strengthen other visions, models and tools, including non-market-based approaches for the maintenance of ecosystem functions. CANADA and JAPAN questioned reference to non-market-based approaches. SWITZERLAND, FINLAND and the UK cautioned against creating confusion with the "vision" in the Strategic Plan. Following informal consultations, BOLIVIA proposed, and delegates accepted, new text on the need to strengthen non-monetary evaluation tools and methodologies for the maintenance of ecosystem functions.

On SBSTTA taking note of parties' views on cross-cutting issues in annex I and specific Aichi Targets in annex II, AUSTRIA cautioned against de-emphasizing the annexes. BELGIUM expressed concern that the annexes are not consensual. PORTUGAL proposed, and delegates agreed, to recommend that COP 12 take note of them.

On the Aichi Targets providing readily available elements that could be integrated into the sustainable development goals (SDGs), JAPAN, CANADA, SWITZERLAND, the EU, and FINLAND proposed, and delegates agreed, to clarify that SDGs are "still under development."

On Target 10 (ecosystems impacted by climate change), LIBERIA proposed that SBSTTA also consider the systematic review of documents on the impacts of ocean acidification on



biodiversity and ecosystem functions. The EU emphasized that Target 10 is “the only one for 2015.” The UK suggested, and delegates agreed, that SBSTTA 18 “note that it will consider,” rather than “agree to consider,” the urgent need to implement Target 10 to update the specific work plan on coral bleaching.

Regarding a recommendation that COP 12 invite GEO BON to engage with parties on observing systems and biodiversity monitoring, the IIFB suggested, and delegates agreed, that GEO BON also engage with ILCs and other relevant stakeholders. With regard to a list of requests to the Secretariat, delegates debated whether SBSTTA could request the Secretariat directly or should recommend that the COP does so.

Delegates discussed at length a request to organize a meeting of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators, including the focus and timing of the meeting. The UK suggested SBSTTA request COP 12 to convene the AHTEG, while the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and FINLAND preferred convening it before COP 12, highlighting the urgency of developing missing indicators. SWITZERLAND, with MEXICO, CANADA and COLOMBIA, suggested requesting the Secretariat to prepare the AHTEG’s terms of reference (TORs) for consideration by COP 12. Delegates finally agreed that SBSTTA request the Secretariat to report to COP 12 on progress in carrying out its tasks under Decision XI/3 (monitoring progress in implementing the Strategic Plan) and, taking into account the use of indicators in the fifth national reports and GBO-4, prepare TORs for an AHTEG on indicators.

Delegates addressed a request to continue collaborating with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, GEO BON, FAO, IUCN and others to fill gaps in coverage of indicators for all Aichi Targets. SWEDEN supported reference to the IIFB Working Group on Indicators. The UK preferred to facilitate timely collaboration by 2014. The EU preferred that SBSTTA, rather than COP 12, make this request to the Secretariat. Delegates agreed to these amendments. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION recommended that SBSTTA directly request the Secretariat to undertake regional capacity-building activities on biodiversity-related data.

On a request to analyze methodologies used in self-assessments of the Convention’s implementation in fourth national reports, JAPAN recommended also using the fifth national reports, with CANADA suggesting SBSTTA request directly the Secretariat. Eventually, delegates agreed that SBSTTA request the Secretariat to “include in its analysis of the fourth and fifth national reports an analysis of methodologies used in self-assessment on progress towards the Convention’s implementation contained in those reports.” BELGIUM recommended, and parties agreed, to make the information available to the next meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI) and COP 12, as appropriate.

Delegates debated at length, and eventually agreed to delete, text on SBSTTA preparing TORs for a possible voluntary mechanism to review implementation of the Strategic Plan at the national level with a view to providing targeted guidance to countries. On undertaking pilot assessments of the effects of measures taken in specific thematic areas or case studies, NORWAY and the UK suggested that the task be allocated to WGRI. AUSTRALIA and CANADA proposed, and delegates agreed, to delete the text.

The EU, with SENEGAL, proposed deleting text on reviewing national experience in the evaluation of policy effectiveness. CANADA, with JAPAN, proposed reference to fifth national reports. After consultations, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested, and delegates agreed to, specifying to “review

national experience and use of tools to evaluate effectiveness of policy instruments for the delivery of the Strategic Plan using information in fourth and fifth national reports.”

The EU suggested deleting language on reporting on possible ways and means to address challenges. BRAZIL preferred to address “the key scientific and technical needs identified above,” rather than challenges listed in annex I. BELGIUM underlined that the list was not negotiated. ARGENTINA, supported by INDIA, MALI and SENEGAL, called for retaining language on the capacity-building needs of developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing states and economies in transition. Delegates eventually agreed to “prepare a report on possible ways and means to address the key scientific and technical needs and strengthening scientific and technical capacities and new, predictable and adequate funding.” NORWAY suggested, and delegates agreed to, new language requesting the Secretariat to evaluate the experience of SBSTTA 17.

Delegates considered the annexes. On cross-cutting issues, AFRICA proposed referring not only to tools and methodologies for achieving sustainable production, but also consumption; and not only to integrated land-use planning, but also sustainable land management. INDONESIA recommended referring not only to food security, but also to food sovereignty. ARGENTINA, BELGIUM and BOLIVIA proposed to submit minor corrections to the Secretariat, cautioning against negotiating the text of the annexes. CANADA recalled that the mandate for the Friends of the Chair group was to consider ideas already presented in plenary, and urged delegates to refrain from submitting new ideas. NORWAY, supported by the UK, proposed titling annex I “collation of views from parties on cross-cutting issues.” AFRICA opined that the annexes are a summary. Delegates eventually decided to title the annexes “cross-cutting issues identified by parties” and “views identified by parties on the Strategic Goals,” respectively. A revised recommendation will be presented on Friday.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Reportedly, on Wednesday evening, deliberations – not negotiations – were held in the “small” and “big” Friends of the Chair groups. While the “big” group diligently revised the views expressed on each goal of the Strategic Plan and on other cross-cutting issues, the “small” group distilled key messages on the scientific and technical needs for its implementation. According to an insider, this latter exercise was conducted in a harmonious atmosphere, and was useful in identifying, and creating ownership of, an outcome of great practical relevance. When plenary resumed on Thursday afternoon, delegates engaged for the first time in actual negotiations. On the table were not only these key messages, but also a limited number of more traditional draft recommendations, customarily prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the exchanges earlier in the week. As evening negotiations progressed, a seasoned participant noted: “At least we are working on only three recommendations: a record low number for SBSTTA!” Another, however, said disgruntledly: “But we are discussing at length how to word the title of the annexes, even if they are not supposed to be negotiated!”

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of the Working Group on Article 8(j) and SBSTTA 17 will be available on Monday, 21 October 2013, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/biodiv/sbstta17/>.