

2018 UN Biodiversity Conference 13-29 November 2018

The UN Biodiversity Conference opened Tuesday, 13 November 2018, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and will continue until 29 November under the theme “Investing in biodiversity for people and planet.” It includes:

- the African Ministerial Summit on Biodiversity, on 13 November;
- the High-level Segment of the Conference, on 14-15 November;
- the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), from 17-29 November;
- the ninth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP COP/MOP 9), from 17-29 November;
- the third meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilization (ABS) (NP COP/MOP 3), from 17-29 November 2018; and
- parallel meetings, side-events, and the Rio Conventions Pavilion.

Expectations for this Meeting

The High-level Segment will focus on ways and means to mainstream biodiversity into the sectors of energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, and health, within the broader context of sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Ministers and other high-level officials will also explore ways to engage the international community in the transformational path needed for the new global biodiversity framework to be adopted in 2020.

The 2018 UN Biodiversity Conference is expected to launch the negotiations for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which will replace the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The Conference will further address a series of strategic, administrative, financial, and ecosystem-related issues of relevance to the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. Among several items, the Conference will consider:

- spatial planning, protected areas (PAs), and area-based conservation, including: voluntary guidance on the integration of PAs and other effective area-based conservation measures into wider land- and seascapes; voluntary guidance on effective governance models for management of PAs, including equity; and scientific and technical advice on other effective area-based conservation measures;
- voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction;

- supplementary voluntary guidance for avoiding unintentional introductions of invasive alien species associated with trade in live organisms;
- an updated plan of action 2018-2020 for the International Initiative on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators;
- voluntary guidance for a sustainable wild meat sector;
- procedures for avoiding or managing conflicts of interest in expert groups;
- a proposal for a long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming biodiversity; and
- the Rutzolijirisaxik guidelines for the repatriation of traditional knowledge relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Marine conservation issues are high on the agenda, including ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), as well as items related to new technologies, such as risk assessment and management of synthetic biology, and benefit-sharing arising from the use of digital sequence information (DSI) derived from genetic resources. The Conference will consider terms of reference for technical expert groups on both risk assessment and DSI.

A Brief History of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The CBD was adopted on 22 May 1992 and opened for signature on 5 June 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio “Earth Summit”). The CBD entered into force on 29 December 1993. There are currently 196 parties to the Convention, which aims to promote the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

The COP is the governing body of the Convention, and there are currently three bodies meeting intersessionally: the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA); the Working Group on Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge) and related provisions; and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI).

Key Turning Points

Three protocols have been adopted under the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (January 2000, Montreal, Canada) addresses the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) that may have adverse effects on biodiversity, taking into account human health, with a specific focus on transboundary movements. It entered into force on 11 September 2003 and currently has 171 parties.

The Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (October 2010, Nagoya, Japan) provides for international rules and procedures on liability and redress for damage to biodiversity resulting from LMOs. It entered into force on 5 March 2018 and currently has 42 parties.

The Nagoya Protocol on ABS (October 2010, Nagoya) sets out an international framework for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and technologies, and by appropriate funding, thereby contributing to the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components. It entered into force on 12 October 2014 and currently has 114 parties.

Other major decisions have included:

- the Jakarta Mandate on marine and coastal biodiversity (COP 2, November 1995, Jakarta, Indonesia);
- work programmes on agricultural and forest biodiversity (COP 3, November 1996, Buenos Aires, Argentina);
- the Global Taxonomy Initiative (COP 4, May 1998, Bratislava, Slovakia);
- work programmes on Article 8(j), dry and sub-humid lands, and incentive measures (COP 5, May 2000, Nairobi, Kenya);
- the Bonn Guidelines on ABS and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (COP 6, April 2002, The Hague, the Netherlands);
- work programmes on mountain biodiversity, PAs, and technology transfer, the Akwé: Kon Guidelines for cultural, environmental, and social impact assessments, and the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for sustainable use (COP 7, February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia);
- a work programme on island biodiversity (COP 8, March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil);
- a resource mobilization strategy, and scientific criteria and guidance for marine areas in need of protection (COP 9, May 2008, Bonn, Germany);
- the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the Aichi Targets, and a decision on activities and indicators for the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy (COP 10, October 2010, Nagoya, Japan); and
- an interim target of doubling biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015, and at least maintaining this level until 2020, coupled with targets aiming to improve the robustness of baseline information (COP 11, October 2012, Hyderabad, India).

COP 12 (October 2014, Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea) adopted a package of decisions on resource mobilization, capacity building, scientific and technical cooperation linking biodiversity and poverty eradication, and monitoring implementation of the Strategic Plan, named the “Pyeongchang Roadmap.” The meeting further adopted a plan of action on customary sustainable use of biodiversity; decided to use the terminology “indigenous peoples and local communities”; and agreed on ways to integrate the work under the Convention and its Protocols, including holding concurrent meetings of the Convention and its Protocols.

COP 13 (December 2016, Cancún, Mexico) considered: issues related to operations of the Convention, including integration among the Convention and its Protocols; progress towards implementation of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of the Aichi Targets, and related means of implementation; strategic actions to enhance the implementation of the Strategic Plan and achievement of the Aichi Targets, including with respect to mainstreaming biodiversity within and across sectors, particularly in agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and forestry; and biodiversity and human health interlinkages. It also launched consideration of a series of items on emerging technologies, including synthetic biology, gene drives, and DSI.

Intersessional Highlights

IPBES: The fifth Plenary session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (7-10 March 2017, Bonn, Germany) adopted decisions

on, *inter alia*: development of a second work programme; indigenous and local knowledge; and the scoping report for a thematic assessment on the sustainable use of wild species. The sixth session of the IPBES Plenary (18-23 March 2018, Medellín, Colombia) approved the summaries for policy makers and the report chapters of a thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration, and of four regional assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia.

ITPGRFA GB 7: The seventh session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) (30 October - 3 November 2017, Kigali, Rwanda) extended the mandate of the intersessional Working Group on Enhancing the Multilateral System of ABS and established an *ad hoc* technical expert group on farmers’ rights.

UNEA 3: The third session of the UN Environment Assembly (4-6 December 2017, Nairobi, Kenya) adopted resolutions on, *inter alia*: environment and health; marine litter and microplastics; and pollution mitigation by mainstreaming biodiversity into key sectors.

SBSTTA: SBSTTA 21 (11-14 December 2017, Montreal, Canada) adopted recommendations, including on: scenarios for the 2050 vision for biodiversity and links between the Aichi Targets and the SDGs; guidance for achieving a more sustainable wild meat sector; biodiversity and human health; and biodiversity mainstreaming in the health sector, and the energy, mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, and processing industries. SBSTTA 22 (2-7 July 2018, Montreal) considered EBSAs, DSI, synthetic biology, voluntary guidance on PAs and other effective area-based conservation measures, and guidance for avoiding unintentional introduction of invasive alien species.

Working Group on Article 8(j): The tenth meeting of the Working Group on Article 8(j) (13-16 December 2017, Montreal) adopted recommendations on: voluntary guidelines for the repatriation of traditional knowledge; a glossary of relevant key terms and concepts; and future work for integrating Article 8(j) into CBD work.

BBNJ: The organizational meeting for the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) (16-18 April 2018, New York) discussed the process towards the preparation of a zero draft of the instrument.

The first session of the IGC (4-17 September 2018, New York) considered a document prepared by the IGC President, which identified areas for further discussion not containing treaty text, aimed at leading to substantive discussions based on the elements of a package agreed in 2011 on: marine genetic resources, including questions on benefit-sharing; environmental impact assessments; area-based management tools, including marine PAs; and capacity building and marine technology transfer.

SBI: SBI 2 (9-13 July 2018, Montreal) addressed biodiversity mainstreaming, progress in the integration of processes under the Convention and its Protocols, and several items related to the Nagoya Protocol on ABS.

African Ministerial Summit: The African Ministerial Summit (13 November 2018, Sharm El-Sheikh) was held under the theme “Land and ecosystem degradation and restoration: Priorities for increased resilience in Africa.” The Summit addressed Africa’s biodiversity-related priorities, a pan-African action agenda on ecosystem restoration for increased resilience, and an African Ministerial declaration on biodiversity. Participants further deliberated on a synergetic, coordinated approach to address biodiversity loss, climate change, and land degradation.