

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Monday, 19 November 2018

On Monday, WG I addressed the global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism, and a series of finance- and capacity-related items under the Convention and its Protocols. WG II considered, among other items, biodiversity mainstreaming, and biodiversity and climate change. Contact groups on synthetic biology and digital sequence information met throughout the day.

Working Group I

Global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism (NP):

The Secretariat introduced the SBI recommendation, noting unresolved issues remain bracketed. Many countries stressed the need to establish the mechanism. South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, reiterated that parties have been given sufficient time to decide on the need for a global mechanism, requesting, with many others, removal of brackets. JAPAN and SWITZERLAND noted insufficient experience on situations that could not be covered by the Protocol's bilateral approach and considered it premature to discuss the mechanism's modalities. The EU asserted that national reports did not indicate any reason for parties to consider such a mechanism, and cautioned against reopening discussions on the Protocol's temporal or geographical scope. The IIFB noted that such a mechanism should respect the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). A contact group was established.

Resource mobilization (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents, including: an updated analysis of information provided through the financial reporting framework (CBD/COP/14/6); a SBSTTA recommendation on resource mobilization; and SBI recommendations on safeguards in biodiversity financing mechanisms, and methodological guidance concerning the contributions of IPLCs.

Many highlighted domestic efforts to mobilize funding and the support of the UNDP Biodiversity Finance (BIOFIN) Initiative. Many developing countries expressed concern about limited progress in implementing past decisions on doubling biodiversity-related financial resource flows. Uganda, for the AFRICAN GROUP, noted that slow progress on resource mobilization jeopardizes achievement of the Aichi targets. Kiribati, for PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (PSIDS), and others called on Global Environment Facility (GEF) contributors to increase their funding commitments for the post-2020 framework. SEYCHELLES highlighted blue bonds as an innovative way of mobilizing financial resources. INDONESIA underscored the need for mobilizing private capital for blended finance schemes. IRAN and PALESTINE cautioned against politicizing environmental funding.

Financial mechanism (CBD): The GEF introduced a GEF report (CBD/COP/14/7) outlining GEF-6 and 7 activities. The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and a report on preparations for GEF-8, including a draft decision (CBD/COP/14/8). CANADA, JAPAN, the EU, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND, and NEW ZEALAND opposed elements of the

decision not discussed at SBI 2, including establishing a standing committee on finance as part of the post-2020 framework. NORWAY and COLOMBIA recommended the Secretariat work closely with GEF. A contact group was established.

Financial mechanism and resources (CP): The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and relevant information (CBD/CP/MOP/9/12). INDIA and SOUTH AFRICA raised concerns about the low number of biosafety projects funded in GEF-7. The EU highlighted that many donors have increased their contribution. A CRP will be prepared.

Financial mechanism and resources (NP): The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and relevant information (CBD/NP/MOP/3/5). A CRP will be prepared.

Capacity-building and technical and scientific cooperation (CBD): The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and relevant information documents. The EU emphasized the need for open source tools. Namibia, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, and others urged additional financial support to allow for adequate capacity building. Many stressed that the long-term strategic framework should be in full alignment with the post-2020 framework. CAMEROON highlighted capacity building that involves: regional dialogues; a wide range of stakeholders; and training in biosafety and biosecurity.

UGANDA supported training in DNA technologies. INDIA called for going beyond traditional approaches to include capacity building at the system-level. NORWAY requested the Secretariat seek synergies with other processes. GUATEMALA prioritized capacity building on taxonomy. The GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION FACILITY proposed recognizing the importance of taxonomy for the post-2020 framework, and requesting a process to review the Global Taxonomy Initiative work programme. IUCN pointed to a survey highlighting three priority areas for capacity building, including: fund-raising; cooperation with stakeholders; and networking and communication. A CRP will be prepared.

Capacity building (CP): The Secretariat introduced relevant documents, including an SBI recommendation and a report, containing, *inter alia*, conclusions by the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety (CBD/CP/MOP/9/3). The EU welcomed the proposed process for developing a long-term strategic framework, and called for aligning its activity schedule with that of the Convention. Many underscored the need for continued sharing of information and experiences between parties. MEXICO highlighted the need for building capacities on participatory processes involving IPLCs. KENYA requested capacity-building support for detecting and identifying LMOs. THIRD WORLD NETWORK stressed capacity building in light of biotechnology developments, as well as for detection and identification, and called for prioritizing liability and redress. A CRP will be prepared.

Capacity building (NP): The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and a progress report (CBD/NP/MOP/3/4). The EU called on parties to use the findings of the first review of the

Nagoya Protocol to address areas where further capacity-building efforts are required. SOUTH AFRICA proposed inviting IPLCs to provide views on the long-term strategic framework. A CRP will be prepared.

Raising awareness of the importance of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge (NP): The Secretariat introduced relevant documents, including a draft decision (CBD/NP/MOP/3/6) and a toolkit on communication, education, and public awareness (CBD/NP/MOP/3/INF/7). Many countries welcomed the toolkit and the EU noted with regret its late release. Several outlined their national experiences, including: working with community protocols; designing specific communication material for each stakeholder group; and developing a website that acts as a voluntary repository for traditional knowledge. A CRP will be prepared.

Knowledge management and communication (CBD, CP, NP): The Secretariat introduced the proposed joint modalities for the clearing houses of the Convention and the Protocols (CBD/COP/14/11, CBD/CP/MOP/9/4 and CBD/NP/MOP/3/8). Delegates welcomed the joint modalities. CANADA suggested specific reference to traditional knowledge. Discussions will resume on Tuesday.

Working Group II

Socio-economic considerations (CP): Delegates continued debating whether to “take note” or “welcome” the guidance on the assessment of socio-economic considerations. ECUADOR and ARGENTINA proposed “considering” rather than “making use of” the guidance.

INDIA, MOROCCO, CHINA, ECUADOR, and ARGENTINA noted that any guidance should be in line with existing national regulations. Many underscored the voluntary character of the guidance. JAPAN and CHINA emphasized that assessments of socio-economic considerations should be science- and evidence-based. The IIFB said that the guidance should be mandatory for all parties.

Many supported the continuation of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG). NAMIBIA, MALAYSIA, and BOLIVIA proposed it meet face to face, calling for funding. PARAGUAY, PANAMA, and ARGENTINA opposed extending the AHTEG’s mandate. A contact group was established.

Liability and redress (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the relevant document (CBD/COP/14/10). Morocco, for the AFRICAN GROUP, encouraged parties to take into account issues related to restoration and compensation.

The EU highlighted entry into force of the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress, noting it should be taken into account along with national environmental liability legislation. Maldives, for SIDS, said that liability and redress, especially in regard to transboundary movements, is integral to biodiversity conservation. Many called for capacity building for implementation. A CRP will be prepared.

Mainstreaming (CBD): The Secretariat introduced relevant SBSTTA and SBI recommendations. Via video, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization Director General, warned that successes in protecting human health could be in vain if environmental degradation continues, pointing to “undeniable links” between health and biodiversity. Chair Nina noted a CRP on health and biodiversity will be prepared.

EGYPT presented key conclusions of the High-level Segment round tables. Many supported the draft decision on mainstreaming in the energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, and processing sectors, and the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration, and outlined efforts for biodiversity mainstreaming within and across sectors. The EU, MEXICO, NORWAY, and GUATEMALA supported the establishment of a long-term strategic approach for mainstreaming biodiversity. Many supported the establishment of an informal advisory group on biodiversity mainstreaming. MEXICO and MALAWI called for a Secretariat post on mainstreaming.

NORWAY stressed the importance of capitalizing on the momentum of the SDGs, and ARGENTINA highlighted biodiversity mainstreaming as a key tool to meet the SDGs. The EU said that biodiversity mainstreaming is closely linked to Aichi Target 3 (incentives). Togo, for the AFRICAN GROUP, and others, called for capacity building and technology transfer, including to support updating regulation and policies for the respective sectors. Papua New Guinea, for PSIDS, stressed the challenge of plastic waste, and underscored the need for mandatory environmental impact assessments and environmental management plans.

JAPAN suggested developing biodiversity and natural capital indices for investors’ use. CANADA noted that IPLCs are most impacted by the activities of the economic sectors under discussion, with the GLOBAL FOREST COALITION calling for IPLCs’ inclusion in decision making. KENYA called for international guidance on mainstreaming and harmonization of biodiversity safeguards. The GLOBAL YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK (GYBN) and FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, on behalf of many NGOs, lamented lack of firm regulations and underscored the need to also mainstream human rights, including those of IPLCs, women, and youth. A CRP will be prepared.

Biodiversity and climate change (CBD): The Secretariat introduced a SBSTTA recommendation, including bracketed language. Via video, Hans-Otto Pörtner, Co-Chair of WG II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), presented on specific differences in impacts between the 1.5 and 2°C warming scenarios. Delegates supported removing brackets around a request to the Secretariat to review relevant new scientific and technical information, including the special IPCC 1.5°C report. COLOMBIA asked that this work be done in collaboration with IPCC, IIFB, with GYBN, BOLIVIA, and MEXICO, proposed also considering indigenous knowledge.

Many supported retaining a bracketed reference on considering the linkages between biodiversity and climate change in the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. COLOMBIA and MALAYSIA requested reference to synergies between IPBES and IPCC. BRAZIL called for deleting the paragraph since it prejudices the outcome of the post-2020 framework.

Many welcomed the proposed voluntary guidelines. eSwatini, for the AFRICAN GROUP, supported applying ecosystem approaches to climate change and disaster risk reduction, urging their prioritization in the post-2020 framework. MEXICO, ECUADOR, the PHILIPPINES, and PERU requested strengthening language on protected areas and their role in mitigating climate change impacts.

In the Corridors

Discussions on synthetic biology have so far been, according to many delegates, less contentious than in the past. Following the establishment of the online forum and the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group, which developed an operational definition on synbio, relevant work under the CBD, the only international forum tackling this issue, has intensified. The draft decision under consideration continues CBD work on synbio, although different opinions remain, mainly on genome editing. Genome editing, the deliberate alteration of a selected DNA sequence in a living cell, is considered by some delegations to fall well within the definition of synbio as a “further development and new dimension of modern biotechnology that combines science, technology and engineering to facilitate and accelerate the understanding, design, redesign, manufacture and/or modification of genetic materials, living organisms and biological systems.” Others disagree, noting that gene editing involves a variety of techniques and should be examined on a case-by-case basis. Addressing this divergence in opinions, as well as whether parties should “refrain from” the release of organisms containing engineered gene drives, has so far dominated negotiations in the contact group. As participants noted, following two meetings of the contact group, compromise solutions are being tabled and “a middle-ground solution seems within reach.”