

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Tuesday, 20 November 2018

On Tuesday, WG I discussed a series of items on information sharing, national reporting, and assessment and review, under the Convention and its Protocols. WG II considered, among other items, the second work programme of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and marine and coastal biodiversity. In the afternoon and evening, plenary held an interactive dialogue on approaches to living in harmony with nature; and addressed preparations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. A contact group on socio-economic considerations under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety met in the evening.

Working Group I

Knowledge management and communication (CBD): The Secretariat introduced relevant reports, including on the Global Communications Strategy, and presented a preview of the new CBD website, to be launched in 2019. GUATEMALA urged support to optimize countries' national reports. The IIFB urged parties to strengthen communication mechanisms to achieve the full and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). A CRP will be prepared.

Operations and activities of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) (CP): The Secretariat introduced a draft decision and an update on BCH-related activities (CBD/CP/MOP/9/4). Delegates stressed the role of BCH in the Protocol's implementation and requested the Secretariat undertake planned activities that have not been concluded due to lack of resources. Many commended the UNEP-GEF capacity-building project for effective participation in the BCH. ARGENTINA cautioned against sharing information provided by non-parties on other databases. A CRP will be prepared.

ABS Clearing-House and information sharing (NP): The Secretariat introduced a draft decision, including relevant recommendations from the Compliance Committee (CBD/NP/MOP/3/8). Many highlighted the ABS Clearing House as an important source of information. Others expressed concern over the paucity of updated information. SOUTH AFRICA noted increasing numbers of checkpoint communiqués and certificates of compliance. KENYA called for increasing involvement of academia and the private sector. UGANDA underscored awareness raising for IPLCs.

A CRP will be prepared.

Mechanisms for national reporting, assessment and review (CBD): The Secretariat introduced three draft decisions based on SBI and SBSTTA recommendations. CRPs will be prepared on aligning national reporting, and on tools to evaluate the effectiveness of policy instruments for Strategic Plan implementation.

On review mechanisms, the EU supported a voluntary peer review and a periodic open review process. INDIA supported national reports as the primary mechanism for review, and stressed that any review mechanism must be party-led. UN WOMEN proposed explicit inclusion of gender equality and empowerment in both national reporting and consultation processes.

Monitoring and reporting, and assessment and review (CP): The Secretariat introduced SBI recommendations and the relevant document (CBD/CP/MOP/9/5). Delegates noted that a CRP will be prepared on assessment and review; and discussed the revised format for the fourth national report. Delegates welcomed the revised format and alignment of reporting cycles between the Convention and the Protocols; highlighted the usefulness of GEF support and capacity-building needs; and underscored timely submission of reports for monitoring the Protocol's implementation.

Monitoring and reporting (NP): The Secretariat introduced an SBI recommendation and relevant document, including Compliance Committee recommendations (CBD/NP/MOP/3/7). Many supported synchronized national reporting cycles under the Convention and Protocols, as well as revisiting the reporting intervals to facilitate alignment among the biodiversity-related and Rio Conventions.

Working Group II

Sustainable wildlife management (CBD): A CRP will be prepared, following consultations with interested parties.

Conservation and sustainable use of pollinators (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the SBSTTA recommendation, containing bracketed text. Noting ongoing informal consultations, Chair Nina noted that a CRP will be prepared.

Article 8(j) (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the recommendations of the Article 8(j) Working Group, including: the Rutzolijirixaxik voluntary guidelines for repatriation of traditional knowledge, containing no brackets; the voluntary glossary of relevant key terms and concepts, containing bracketed text; and other matters. The IIFB, supported by many, looked forward to the guidelines' adoption; and urged parties to "adopt" rather than "take note" of the glossary, and remove the bracketed reference to the need for accordance with national legislation. CRPs will be prepared.

Enhancing integration under the Convention and its Protocols with respect to provisions related to ABS, biosafety, and Article 8(j): The Secretariat introduced SBI and Article 8(j) Working Group recommendations. Many stressed the importance of effective IPLC participation. On new institutional arrangements for work under Article 8(j), the EU urged: continuity with past work; a focus on implementation; and efficient use of financial resources. The IIFB, with BRAZIL and BOLIVIA, warned that new institutional arrangements for the Article 8(j) Working Group cannot be finalized before agreement on the post-2020 framework, requiring an additional meeting after COP 15. The

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION invited closer cooperation among international organizations working on integrating indigenous rights into the decision-making processes.

Second work programme of IPBES: The Secretariat introduced a SBSTTA recommendation. IPBES Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie noted 80 submissions with requests for future IPBES reports on various topics. Many acknowledged the successful implementation of IPBES' first work programme and supported the SBSTTA recommendation regarding the second work programme. South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, called for national and sub-national assessments, and technical papers in collaboration between IPBES and SBSTTA. The EU, TANZANIA, and CAMBODIA emphasized that the IPBES work programme should be relevant to, and support, the post-2020 framework. NORWAY underscored IPBES capacity-building functions. INDIA requested assessing the usefulness of IPBES assessments for policy-makers. UN WOMEN, with URUGUAY and CANADA, urged a gender panel. WWF, with GHANA and GABON, called for collaboration between IPBES and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A CRP will be prepared.

Spatial planning, protected areas, and other effective area-based conservation measures (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the relevant SBSTTA recommendation. A CRP will be prepared.

Marine and coastal biodiversity (CBD): The Secretariat introduced the relevant SBSTTA recommendation, containing options for modification of descriptions of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs).

Delegates debated bracketed references to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the legal framework for all activities in the sea, with the EU, COSTA RICA, JAMAICA, and Palau, for PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES, supporting, and TURKEY, VENEZUELA, and COLOMBIA, opposing it.

The EU indicated readiness to support modalities for modification of EBSAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction as long as they are in accordance with UNCLOS; while noting, with the MALDIVES, that those within national jurisdiction are subject to the wish of the respective state. BRAZIL called for distinguishing between areas within and beyond national jurisdiction, while SWITZERLAND called for uniform modalities. CANADA stressed that their EBSAs are based on peer-reviewed science and do not require further peer review for inclusion in the repository. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA emphasized that the spirit of EBSAs is "multilateral and collaborative," not unilateral. ARGENTINA and BRAZIL suggested reference that the documents shall not prejudice positions of countries involved in disputed areas.

Delegates further debated options regarding actors than can propose modification of EBSA descriptions, and initiate the description of new areas meeting the EBSA criteria.

Plenary

Dialogue on approaches to living in harmony with nature: David Monacchi, Fragments of Extinction, presented his work on eco-acoustics by sharing soundscapes recorded in primary equatorial forests. Paul Leadley, Université Paris-Sud, presented on current work on nature sustainability, including actions that can help not only stop the decline but "bend the curve" to meet the 2050 vision. Josefa Cariño Tauli, Global Youth Biodiversity Network, highlighted the importance of including youth in decision making on conservation as well as the importance of IPLCs' knowledge, free prior and informed consent, and land rights. Fuwen Wei, Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, highlighted the Chinese plan to move toward an ecological civilization. Halldór Thorgeirsson, formerly UNFCCC Secretariat, presented insights from the climate process. He explained the Paris Agreement sets an upper limit for climate disruption, to which parties then come forward with their nationally-determined contributions. He said the aggregate effect of these contributions are assessed every five

years, unleashing a collective drive for progress among parties and stakeholders. Participants then discussed: development of appropriate indicators; the need for transformational change; and the negotiating process resulting in the Paris Agreement.

Preparation for the post-2020 framework: The Secretariat introduced relevant SBSTTA and SBI recommendations on scenarios for the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, and proposals for a comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of the post-2020 framework.

Many called for focus on process, rather than discussing the substantive elements of the framework. South Africa, for the AFRICAN GROUP, stressed, *inter alia*, that the post-2020 framework should promote country-led actions and synergies. He suggested, supported by BRAZIL and ARGENTINA, that the post-2020 framework "shall contain an agreed solution for fairly and equitably sharing the benefits arising from digital sequence information on genetic resources." With Cuba, on behalf of SIDS, and many others, he urged focus on capacity building, technology transfer, and financial resources for implementation. Many called for a flexible, inclusive, and gender-responsive, party-led process, aligned with the Rio Conventions and the 2030 Agenda; and supported voluntary commitments.

COSTA RICA urged addressing the root causes of environmental degradation, including unsustainable consumption and production patterns, and called for generating 1% of the global Gross Domestic Product for conservation. NEPAL urged a community-based approach. INDIA stressed poverty eradication and transformative change. KENYA called for combating species extinction through the management of key biodiversity areas and awareness on the intrinsic value of species. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA highlighted the need for quality education and partnerships with education institutions and UNESCO.

The EU called for ambitious, realistic, measurable, and time-bound targets. Colombia, for the LMMC, said scientific knowledge is paramount to setting ambitious targets, and CHINA stressed scientific community involvement. PANAMA requested investments on science, technology, and innovation. BURKINA FASO noted the need for innovative financing mechanisms. MALAWI called for incentives for sustainable use.

Plenary then heard from several international, civil society, and IPLC organizations. Many stressed the need for involvement of women and IPLCs throughout the post-2020 process; said the post-2020 framework should incorporate lessons learnt from failures under the current Strategic Plan; and underscored cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions and other international organizations. A contact group was established and a CRP will be prepared.

In the Corridors

While plenary enjoyed informative and inspiring presentations on living in harmony with nature, tensions in the corridors were brewing on digital sequence information (DSI) and its linkages with the entire meeting's agenda. Most developed countries insisted that DSI is outside the scope of the Convention and the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit-sharing, pointing to CBD definitions as proof that the Convention and the Protocol only cover tangible genetic resources. "Legal complexities exist, but how can we deny that use of DSI affects the entire ABS architecture and impacts on fair and equitable benefit-sharing, the Convention's third objective?" one participant exclaimed. Developing countries on the other hand made it increasingly clear that "DSI obviously translates into genetic material" and that "without some sort of benefit-sharing from DSI use, it will be difficult to reach agreement on a post-2020 framework." "We'll relive Nagoya moments in Beijing," one seasoned participant commented, reminiscent of the 2010 "package deal" that comprised of the Strategic Plan 2011-2020, the Nagoya Protocol, and the decision on resource mobilization.