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CBD COP-4 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY 6 MAY, 1998

On the third day of the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-4) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Plenary convened in a morning session to hear the conclusions of the Ministerial Roundtable, continue discussion on biosafety and address administrative and budgetary matters. In the afternoon, delegates met in two Working Groups. Working Group I considered status and trends of inland water ecosystems and options for conservation and sustainable use. Working Group II discussed synthesis of information contained in national reports.

PLENARY

CONCLUSIONS FROM MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE:

Jozef Zlocha, President of COP-4, presented a summary of the discussions of the Ministerial Roundtable held on 4 and 5 May, 1998. The summary is based on the results of two working groups: a working group on aspects of integrating biodiversity concerns into tourism, chaired by Angela Merkel (Germany) and the involvement and role of the private sector in implementation of the CBD, chaired by Shri Suresh Prahu (India).

BIOSAFETY: The Plenary continued to discuss issues surrounding the finalization of the protocol on biosafety, including the schedule of meetings, means of finance for meetings and participation of delegates from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

HAITI, IRAQ, the PHILIPPINES, SLOVENIA, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), CHINA, BURKINA FASO, KOREA, MADAGASCAR, UGANDA, MAURITANIA, ZIMBABWE, EGYPT and SOUTH AFRICA supported the BSWG-4 recommendation for two more meetings and an extraordinary COP to adopt the protocol. However, opinions varied as to whether the final meeting and extraordinary COP should be held in December 1998 or February 1999. CHINA, SENEGAL, IRAQ, the PHILIPPINES, UGANDA and SOUTH AFRICA requested that Veit Koester (Denmark) continue to chair the BSWG.

UGANDA stressed that implementation of the protocol be accompanied by capacity building in developing countries. MALAWI called for both North-South and South-South partnerships to facilitate implementation of the protocol. The EU acknowledged the need to support the costs of meetings as well as delegate participation, and pledged to contribute funding.

INDONESIA recommended that SBSTTA formulate a plan for implementing the protocol and called for strengthening national capacity and development of appropriate national mechanisms to implement the protocol.

The International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) highlighted its: biosafety network to monitor regulatory issues in biotechnology; harmonization of biosafety procedures; and annual workshops.

INDONESIA made a general statement on behalf of the G77/CHINA, noting the: growing challenges in reaching the Convention's goals; difficulties in reaching consensus; and lack of attention on the CBD's objective of equitable sharing of resources.

The INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' BIODIVERSITY NETWORK called on the COP to provide, *inter alia*, the inclusion of indigenous peoples in GEF-funded information management programs.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS:

The CBD Executive Secretary introduced documents: UNEP/CBD/COP/4/INF/12, UNEP/CBD/COP/4/24, UNEP/CBD/COP/4/25, UNEP/CBD/COP/4/25/Add.1. They highlight, *inter alia*, activities carried out by the Secretariat, and personnel and financial issues. He noted that the CBD budget is different in structure and content than in the past, and that it includes provisions for travel for Parties to attend meetings.

SWITZERLAND noted that the budget is ambitious and "audacious," and that the relationship between and roles of the Secretariat and UNEP should be clarified and redefined, and that in light of this analysis, a consolidated budget decision should be reserved for COP-5.

The EU, with AUSTRALIA and MONACO, noted the sizable budget increase. The EU, supported by PERU, said the increase must be closely tied to agreed upon activities.

The MARSHALL ISLANDS, on behalf of the Pacific Island Countries, pointed to: problems obtaining visas and booking reservations for the COP; the high costs of arranging travel through UNEP; and high hotel costs. He hoped that "price gauging" could be avoided in the future.

KENYA stressed that the Convention would benefit from cooperation with the GEF and said that UNEP, if in a partnership with the CBD, should make a statement on the proposed budget. Noting the downward trend of ODA, he advocated new measures to provide incentives for private sector investment in biodiversity management.

TUNISIA, with MONACO, FRANCE, HAITI, MOROCCO, and SUDAN, all complained that many important documents were not available in all languages and asked the Secretariat to provide them as soon as possible.

WORKING GROUP I

On Wednesday afternoon Working Group I, chaired by Marcel Vernooij (the Netherlands) began consideration of the status and trends of the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems and options for conservation and sustainable use (UNEP/CBD/COP/4/4). In accordance with COP decision III/13, SBSTTA-3 considered this topic, as well as the related

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topics, arising out of COP decision III/10, national elaboration of Annex I of the Convention and review of methodology for assessment of biodiversity.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) highlighted the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the two Secretariats and COP decision III/21, inviting RAMSAR to cooperate in the implementation of CBD activities related to wetlands. RAMSAR urged that cooperation not be restricted to inland freshwater ecosystems.

WG-I overwhelmingly supported SBSTTA recommendation III/1 as a work programme. In particular, WG-I supported the continued cooperation of the CBD with RAMSAR and the CSD, and endorsed the results of CSD-6.

Delegates stressed environmental impact assessments, monitoring mechanisms, alien species and taxonomy. Many delegates, including the IVORY COAST, ARGENTINA, and BURKINA FASO, stressed the need for methodological frameworks to bring about synergies between the CBD and other Conventions.

CANADA suggested Parties include information on implementation of the programme of work in their national reports. The EU and other delegations highlighted the importance of the ecosystem approach to the management of inland waters, and said it is necessary to extend this approach to river catchments and watersheds, land use planning, and integrated management of natural resources, taking social and economic uses into account. The EU underlined the need to integrate biodiversity concerns into all relevant aspects of water management through use of incentive measures and economic valuation.

INDIA said that means other than the Trust Fund should be explored for implementing the work programme in developing countries, and INDIA and ETHIOPIA endorsed provision of adequate support from the GEF to developing country Parties.

AUSTRALIA said the recommendations and work programme should be amended to provide a more focused and integrated approach.

FUJI, the SEYCHELLES and the BAHAMAS, speaking for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) called for linkages between inland waters and marine and coastal issues. SIDS are particularly concerned with sea water infiltrating freshwater due to rising sea levels from climate change. They called for action to address SIDS concerns, which were absent from the document.

The US highlighted its work in domestic watershed management as well as its bilateral assistance. IRAN stressed guidance for shared wetlands management. SPAIN noted that his country was preparing strategic plans to integrate wetlands.

KENYA stressed, *inter alia*: the importance of capacity building in developing countries; methodologies to assess threats and assist restoration; local community participation; planning and management of shared inland water ecosystems; and invasive waste in the region.

ECUADOR emphasized the pressing need on taxonomy, particularly in the Amazon basin. BURKINA FASO highlighted: the sociocultural value of biodiversity; the importance of internal water areas to local communities; and threats from drought.

ICELAND stressed the importance of work being carried out at the regional level. COLOMBIA stressed that recommendations should include information on fish and that the CBD should set aside funds for workshops on regional matters.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, speaking for the four NGO "Ramsar Partners," stressed that active and formal partnership between Conventions, governments and NGOs will enhance effectiveness of measures taken under the CBD. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) detailed its activities and called for increased public awareness and education and *in situ* conservation of aquatic genetic resources.

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II (WG-II), chaired by Bernaditas Miller (Philippines), addressed national reports on the implementation of the Convention. To date, 103 countries have submitted national reports to the Secretariat. The Secretariat presented highlights from document UNEP/CBD/COP/4/11/Rev.1, which provides a synthesis of information included in national reports, lessons learned from the reporting process, challenges and priorities ahead and recommendations for future reports.

The EU listed lessons learned, including: the importance of wide consultation with all stakeholders; heightened awareness within departments responsible for implementation of the CBD; and the value of the national report as a basis for further action. The MARSHALL ISLANDS, on behalf of the Pacific Island Countries, stressed the need to take into account the difficulties some Parties face in preparing their reports, and stressed the importance of ensuring that resources be made available for development and implementation of national programmes. FINLAND, GERMANY and FRANCE underlined the importance of transparency in producing national reports.

MALI, on behalf of the African Group, said national capacity to conduct reports must be increased and noted that tight deadlines may compromise the quality of reports. AUSTRALIA, CHINA, COMORES, GERMANY and INDONESIA preferred lengthening the interval of time between report cycles.

SYRIA, KENYA, SENEGAL, HAITI and the CONGO stressed the importance of funding to assist developing countries produce reports and implement the results. The MARSHALL ISLANDS, the CZECH REPUBLIC and SLOVENIA called for regional synthesis of national reports.

The EU, BELGIUM and PERU agreed that the focus of the next cycle of national reports should be on Article 7 (Identification and Monitoring). INDIA, HAITI, COLOMBIA, KENYA and AUSTRALIA recommended that SBSTTA elaborate guidelines for future national reports.

FINLAND, the EU and SOUTH AFRICA recommended that national reports be more quantifiable through the use of indicators. NORWAY underlined the importance of standard formats and parameters to facilitate synthesis of reports. FINLAND, NORWAY, FRANCE and SLOVENIA supported harmonization of collection and management of information for biodiversity-related conventions to avoid duplicated reporting.

SWEDEN and GERMANY said reporting should be related to the programme of work of the COP. The CONGO supported a UNEP proposal for a biodiversity data management project.

ITALY opposed producing a new report for each COP and recommended submission of a progress report instead.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Fallout continued regarding Klaus Topfer's speech on Tuesday. While some delegates lauded his vision of rejuvenating UNEP, most lamented his approach. Delegates expressed concern over the burgeoning budget, as well as how it might be effected in light of Topfer's speech. Some delegates grumbled about the accounting method used, while others admitted that, given the multitude of programme areas the budget must fund, the format demonstrates a need to identify priorities. A related controversy is whether internal suspicion over who will chair the budget group will force the establishment of a splinter budget group.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WG-I: WG-I will reconvene in Hall C at 10:00 am and begin its review of the Jakarta Mandate on marine and coastal biological diversity.

WG-II: WG-II will meet in Hall A at 10:00 am to complete discussion on national reports and address results of the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21.