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Summary of the Central American Regional Workshop on Biodiversity and Finance in Support of the Nagoya Outcomes

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SUMMARY OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON BIODIVERSITY AND FINANCE IN SUPPORT OF THE NAGOYA OUTCOMES: 4 MAY 2011

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held a Regional Workshop on Biodiversity and Finance in Support of the Nagoya Outcomes for Central America in Panama City, Panama on Wednesday, 4 May. Organized by the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Country Support Programme in collaboration with the CBD Secretariat, it is part of a series of regional workshops on biodiversity and finance convened as follow-up to the Tenth Session of the CBD's governing body, the Conference of Parties (COP), held October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.

The Central American workshop included 18 participants from Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela and Panama representing governments, NGOs, and indigenous peoples. In the morning participants addressed the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), including their financial implications. In the afternoon the workshop discussed the implementation of the Convention's Strategy for Resource Mobilization, including funding needs, gaps, priorities, planning and innovative financing.

BRIEF HISTORY

The CBD was adopted on 22 May 1992, and entered into force on 29 December 1993. There are currently 193 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.

At its ninth meeting (May 2008) the COP adopted a Strategy for Resource Mobilization for the Convention and suggested that national implementation should include a country-specific Resource Mobilization Strategy.

At its tenth meeting (COP10) held October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan the COP adopted the Nagoya Protocol. The COP also requested the Executive Secretary to provide technical assistance to parties to support early ratification of the Protocol and invited developing countries to identify capacity needs for implementation.

COP 10 further adopted the "Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020" that includes 20 headline targets and requested parties to: implement the Strategic Plan; review and update as appropriate their NBSAPs; and develop national and regional targets.

In this vein, the CBD Secretariat has organized a series of regional and subregional workshops on biodiversity and finance to discuss the financial challenges involved in implementing the Nagoya Biodiversity Outcomes and to exchange information and experiences on: the Nagoya Protocol; the Strategic Plan;

and implementation of the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, including goal 4 on innovative financing. Within Latin America and the Caribbean, a workshop for South America was held on 30 April 2011 in Cartagena, Colombia.

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN WORKSHOP

OPENING SESSION

Facilitated by Hesiquio Benítez, National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, Mexico, the workshop opened on Wednesday morning in Panama City. Edgar Chacón, National Environment Authority, Panama, welcomed participants. He underscored protected areas cover around 38 percent of Panama's territory and ongoing national efforts to increase the budget allocation for the national system of protected areas.

Alex Pires, Programme Officer, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), discussed biodiversity achievements in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), such as more marine and land protected areas, and challenges, such as lowering deforestation rates.

He underscored Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) national focal points have a key role to contribute to the strategic use of GEF resources for the Convention implementation at the national level.

Yibin Xiang, Programme Officer, CBD Secretariat, delivered a statement from Ahmed Djoghlaif, CBD Executive Secretary. He said that "never in the history before has the international community become so ready to address global biodiversity challenges with a strategic, institutional and financial framework for biodiversity." He noted nine countries have already signed the Nagoya Protocol and an "impressive number" have indicated their intention to sign.

NAGOYA PROTOCOL

Pires presented on the Protocol addressing its economic significance, signing and ratification process, benefits and obligations, and capacity and financial needs. He underscored ongoing regional experiences, including linking protected areas management with traditional knowledge.

A participant drew attention to the Environmental Declaration of Caracas, discussed in April 2011 in Caracas, Venezuela in the context of the Latin American and the Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development (CALC), which includes provisions on access and benefit sharing issues.

On national ratification procedures, one participant said his country had signed the Protocol but national ratification would take time. He explained his country's two internal processes for ratification: an open and participatory national debate, and a legal assessment considering the need to amend existing laws



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Edgar Chacón, National Environment Authority, Panama

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or adopt new legislation. He underscored the need to include in discussions actors and sectors beyond the biodiversity sector, such as indigenous peoples, industry and fishermen. Another participant emphasized the relevance for countries that are providers of genetic resources of developing a national policy framework to implement the Protocol. Xiang noted the availability of funds for this purpose. He urged an expedited ratification process, underscoring the Protocol is a positive starting point but work remains to be done including on access and benefit sharing *vis-à-vis* international companies.

A participant underscored the need for capacity building in negotiating skills in countries that are providers of genetic resources so that governments can be on a level playing field with international companies. Another emphasized that access to genetic resources cannot be addressed in isolation, but should be integrated into national strategies to ensure it is considered a national priority. To foster the continuous integration of access and benefit sharing issues into the NBSAPs and other biodiversity-related activities, a participant suggested that the COP keep receiving updates on their progress.

A participant whose country had organized a discussion group on national legal and institutional needs to adapt to the Protocol highlighted identified needs, including: capacity building in negotiations on benefit contracts and developing models; workshops with indigenous and local communities (ILCs) to reach agreement on developing models for mutually agreed terms; development of a user manual and related procedures; establishment of access rates; and public awareness raising. Several participants suggested further regional workshops to exchange national experiences.

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY 2011-2020 AND NBSAPs

Xiang discussed the Strategic Plan, addressing its goals and each “Aichi target,” including related funding and needs. On target 17 on NBSAPs, he highlighted: the existence of COP guidance to develop and update NBSAPs; GEF funding available for that purpose; and ongoing work on developing guidance for national targets to contribute to the global targets.

Some participants described national efforts to identify indicators to implement the 20 targets. One said funding should focus on structural causes of biodiversity loss, providing examples with local communities. He drew attention to Venezuela’s recently adopted National Strategy for Biological Diversity 2010-2020 involving the participation of more than 1,600 stakeholders.

On achieving Target 6 on fisheries, one participant emphasized awareness rising, while another suggested national efforts to address alien species and fishery practices could be strengthened through regional collaboration, including the development of guidelines and models. A third supported exploring opportunities at the regional level, drawing attention to the Mesoamerican Strategy on Environmental Sustainability (EMSA) prepared by the Central American Commission for Environmental Development (CCAD).

An indigenous people representative said national implementation of the Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for indigenous groups to work with governments and provide proposals taking into account their traditional knowledge.

A participant noted the Strategic Plan is a flexible framework and suggested countries could select targets to focus on based on national priorities. Another added that focusing on some targets might help focus funding efforts. A participant suggested, and many agreed, to strengthen UNEP’s regional offices so useful material and exchange of experiences can be brought “closer” to countries in the region.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION’S STRATEGY FOR RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Xiang summarized the Strategy for Resource Mobilization, highlighting that COP 10 adopted 15 indicators for monitoring Strategy implementation. He recalled the Strategy calls for each

party to consider appointing a “resource mobilization focal point” and developing a country-specific resource mobilization strategy.

Many participants highlighted the need for further and more simplified information on funding issues, including on available procedures and currently available funds.

One participant cautioned against “considering nature as merchandise” and using market mechanisms. Xiang said the value of the ecosystem services that biodiversity provides should be better recognized.

One participant underscored the need for good communication between those in charge of biodiversity and protected area issues and policy makers to get more funding for biodiversity and protected areas. Another said incorporating economic valuation language is key to persuading other governmental stakeholders about the need to allocate adequate funding. A third proposed showing the costs of inaction as a way to persuade economic decision-makers.

INNOVATIVE FINANCING FOR BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Xiang explained goal 4 of the Strategy for Resource Mobilization seeks to “explore new and innovative financial mechanisms at all levels with a view to increasing funding to support the three objectives of the Convention.” He discussed innovative financial mechanisms in different countries, including: payment for ecosystem services (PES), biodiversity offsets, environmental fiscal reforms, markets for green products, and business-biodiversity partnerships. Among regional experiences he highlighted Costa Rica’s PES scheme and Ecuador’s Yasuni Initiative.

One participant underscored the need to ensure communities’ well-being in the implementation of any innovative mechanism. Many highlighted national experiences regarding PES, green markets, and community forest management under certified schemes. One participant highlighted how the protected areas concept has evolved to now incorporate human populations that live in the areas. He noted that many protected areas in the region have ILCs living within their boundaries that need to be engaged in the area’s protection and management.

One participant cautioned debt-for-nature swaps and green markets do not necessarily lead to nature conservation, citing examples and warning against approaches that could affect national sovereignty over resources. Another participant responded putting a value on biodiversity helps evaluate the harm a project may entail and may contribute to assessing company projects and countering with more biodiversity-friendly options. A third supported the need for valuing biodiversity, while urging that new solutions should be based on current national legal frameworks, avoiding major changes in legislation. A fourth said the private sector could be involved in better decision-making without resorting to valuing natural resources’ “economic” and “social” values and questioned making major political and economic changes to incorporate market mechanisms in environmental protection. A fifth participant suggested regional activities to foster ongoing exchange on national initiatives and strengthening the role of UNEP’s regional offices in fostering intra-regional information flow.

CLOSING SESSION

Facilitator Benítez and Xiang highlighted the workshop’s positive and valuable exchange of ideas and national experiences. Pires drew attention to the regional Forum of Environmental Ministers to be held in November 2011, hoping this exchange of ideas will provide a clear message on these critical issues from the region.

The meeting closed at 4:27 PM.



Facilitator Hesiquio Benítez, National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity, Mexico