

SBSTTA 25 Highlights: Tuesday, 17 October 2023

The third day of SBSTTA 25 kicked off with two contact group meetings. The contact group on the mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review focused on scientific and technical inputs that would inform the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). The contact group on invasive alien species (IAS) discussed advice and voluntary guidance for parties and stakeholders to support the GBF implementation. During the afternoon plenary session, delegates discussed linkages between biodiversity and climate change, and approved two draft recommendations.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

Delegates addressed the proposed draft recommendation contained in CBD/SBSTTA/25/12. SUDAN, with others, welcomed suggestions for synergistic actions that address climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and other disasters. Several delegations also called for a balanced approach to representing the reports and assessments from Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

VENEZUELA, with CHINA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, and others proposed deleting reference to nature-based solutions (NbS) noting the lack of concrete outcomes from the recently concluded intergovernmental consultations on NbS. BRAZIL underscored that NbS are not a panacea for climate change mitigation, noting that the concept shifts the burden of implementation to developing countries. SAUDIA ARABIA also noted that there has yet to be a suitable definition of NbS and suggested that IPBES be requested to summarize, review, and make recommendations. MEXICO drew attention to ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) and the need to take into account local and cultural contexts.

Emphasizing the need to use EbA as part of NbS to address biodiversity loss and climate change, GERMANY called on delegates to refrain from discussions on terminology. NEW ZEALAND, CANADA, BELGIUM, ITALY and others pointed to the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolution 5/5 on NbS definitions are clear and agreed.

EU, CANADA, and others underlined the importance of embedding both NbS and EbA into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and national adaptation plans and strategies. KUWAIT highlighted her countries efforts to integrate NbS in their NBSAP. CHILE stated that NbS are an important tool to achieve carbon neutrality.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA, with the UK, called for the development of guidelines to scale up NbS implementation. The

UK, NORWAY and others, suggested updating the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design and Effective Implementation of EbA to Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction to include more information on mitigation.

BRAZIL, supported by CHAD, MEXICO, COOK ISLANDS, FINLAND, and others, supported the full participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) in biodiversity and climate change policies and actions.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES pointed to a joint initiative with Indonesia to expand protected areas for carbon sequestration, with co-benefits for food security and farmer protection. COLOMBIA, with NETHERLANDS, INDIA, and LEBANON, proposed joint action plans to address biodiversity loss and climate change. CHINA called for alignment with GBF Target 8 on minimizing the impact of climate change and ocean acidification on biodiversity.

CANADA and AUSTRALIA commented on investments for biodiversity, noting that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) financing should focus on biodiversity conservation. SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES and PERU also proposed scaling up of investments for biodiversity. FINLAND and COOK ISLANDS called for aligning financial flows to address both climate change and biodiversity loss.

The AFRICAN GROUP reiterated that EbA was adopted by the Convention and supported through the Voluntary Guidelines, calling for deferring adoption of paragraphs related to NbS due to the divergence around the interpretation and implementation.

BELGIUM called for the development of a report on climate change impacts on biodiversity to be discussed by the Joint Liaison Group between the three Rio Conventions. FINLAND called attention to climate change threats to Arctic biodiversity, and FRANCE requested addressing impacts to forest ecosystems and migratory species.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION noted that NbS should not be considered narrowly, and called for it to be recognized in its applicability in addressing social challenges among others.

Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz established a contact group, co-chaired by Mariela Cánepa Montalvo (Peru), and Tia Stevens (Australia), informing delegates that it would meet on Wednesday morning.

Mechanisms for Planning, Monitoring, Reporting and Review

The contact group, co-chaired by Bilal Qtishat (Jordan) and Gaute Voigt-Hanssen (Norway), considered the Co-Chair's non-paper on scientific and technical inputs that should inform the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the GBF. The non-paper incorporated delegates' comments from the first reading on [Sunday](#), including textual amendments incorporated into the draft recommendations and the annex on terms of reference (TOR) for an *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG).

Some cautioned delegates to be mindful of the SBSTTA mandate and not interfere with the mandate of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI). Others considered that while the mandate of SBSTTA is primarily scientific, technical, and technological advice, they must, out of necessity, also include legal and financial aspects.

In the preambular text, some countries preferred recognizing the contributions of IPBES and the IPCC on improving global biodiversity knowledge and information, while expressing reservations on the contributions from Global Biodiversity Outlook and other major international scientific assessments.

Regarding the elements of the global review of collective progress, delegates called for streamlining the text by listing scientific, technical, and technological inputs. Some called referencing means of implementation to developing countries, including financial resources, scientific and technical capacity building, technological transfer, and a description of any data and knowledge gaps.

Delegates also considered a specific list of elements to be addressed within the global review. Some favored the inclusion of a scientific and technical “synthesis” as opposed to an “assessment” of the state of, and trends in, biodiversity. Others considered that the synthesis should be based on existing assessments and reports, cautioning against duplicating IPBES assessment reports.

On the sources of information to be considered in the preparation of the global report, some underscored national reports as primary sources. Many expressed a willingness to also consider reports that have already been reviewed by other conventions, the assessment reports of IPBES and IPCC, the Global and Local Biodiversity Outlooks, and global analysis of information in NBSAPs, among others. Some requested qualifying that the report should only consider peer-reviewed scientific assessments previously reviewed by SBSTTA. Dissenting, others highlighted that SBSTTA does not have the capacity to review all relevant scientific information, urging delegates to, “keep the door open to science.”

On the annex containing the AHTEG’s TOR, delegates discussed, among others, mandates and modalities of work. They agreed that the AHTEG should first prepare an outline, followed by more detailed scientific and technical guidance to the Executive Secretary towards the preparation of the report on global collective progress in GBF implementation. The contact group will continue deliberations on Wednesday.

Invasive Alien Species

The contact group, co-chaired by Senka Barudanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Jean Bruno Mikissa (Gabon) based their discussion on a non-paper on IAS. The non-paper, which incorporates written comments and textual amendments from the first reading on [Sunday](#) addresses the annexes on voluntary guidance and advice on various matters related to IAS.

Delegates debated whether to maintain the term “voluntary” to qualify the advice and guidance presented in the annexes. Some parties noted that the term adds clarity to the nature of the document’s use while other delegates expressed that IAS is a major threat to biodiversity, and thus the application of such guidance should not be voluntary. Delegates also deliberated on the reference to “global changes” in several instances, with some suggesting that “drivers of biodiversity loss” was more in line with agreed language in the Convention. Some delegates said global changes may refer to changes beyond the environment or biodiversity. Delegates eventually agreed to retain the reference to global changes.

Some delegates proposed adding a human-rights based approach to the risk analysis of the potential consequences of the introduction of IAS on socioeconomic and cultural values. Others pointed out that risk analysis has a specific meaning and understanding under the Convention and stated that including a human-rights based approach is misplaced. Parties agreed to no further additions to risk analysis guidance as proposed.

Regarding marine biofouling, parties deliberated on whether there is need to inform and train a broader range of maritime stakeholders, beyond recreational boating stakeholders. Some argued against it saying it would amount to expanding the scope of the Convention, while others pointed out that such restrictions would not apply due to the voluntary nature of the guidance and advice. They also noted that the addition would provide capacity building opportunities and information to better address IAS.

Reporting to plenary in the afternoon, Co-Chair Barudanovic noted that the group had finalized its work.

Facilitating the Implementation of the GBF and the Monitoring of its Progress

Plant conservation: In the evening, delegates considered a draft recommendation on Plant Conservation (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.1). Upon the suggestion of BRAZIL, and recognizing that the voluntary complementary actions related to plant conservation have been sufficiently peer-reviewed, delegates approved the recommendation as presented.

Findings from the IPBES and IPCC Assessments and their Implications for the CBD

Delegates approved a draft recommendation on findings from the IPBES assessments and their implications for the work undertaken under the Convention (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.2), with textual amendments reflecting, among others, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to address the diverse values of nature, and a call to parties to consider undertaking the assessment of diverse values when developing measures to support the implementation of Target 14 (integrating multiple values of biodiversity into decision-making) at all levels of the Framework.

In the Breezeways

IAS and climate change have been identified as significant drivers of biodiversity loss. During the day’s discussions, delegates conducted in depth review on how to mitigate the impacts of these critical factors to ensure alignment of actions align with the broader objectives of the GBF. Debates around whether guidance and advice regarding IAS should be voluntary stirred contrasting opinions, with concerns raised about whether the term “voluntary” implies a lower level of commitment. The spirit of cooperation won the day as delegates agreed that the term was not a hindrance to application of the guidance and advice.

Meanwhile, old contentions between NbS and EbA rose to the surface during debates on links between climate change and biodiversity. Some parties maintained their stance that EbA was their chosen mode to tackle both crises. Some also indicated that even though NbS is being promoted as part of the solution to both crises, it is not a panacea.

The scientific and technical character of SBSTTA was put to test in the contact group on mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting and review, as delegates debated the sources of information which will inform the global review of collective progress in GBF implementation. Reluctance was noted on using a broad range of international scientific sources, as some delegates noted that SBSTTA has, “neither the time nor the capacity to review every single relevant scientific source available.” Those supporting casting the net wider, urged others to “trust the scientific process - do not lock out new scientific sources.”