



## SBSTTA-4 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 23 JUNE 1999

SBSTTA-4 delegates continued their deliberations in two working groups. Working Group I discussed the Global Taxonomy Initiative and a Chair's draft recommendation on drylands. Working Group II discussed environmental impact assessment and a Chair's draft recommendation on new plant technology.

### WORKING GROUP

**GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE:** Peter Bridgewater, DIVERSITAS Programme/UNESCO, presented the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI). He stressed the importance of cooperative efforts at national, regional and international levels and called for new partnerships between the CBD and other institutions. He recommended that SBSTTA develop criteria and principles for priority setting processes and provide suggestions for capacity-building. The Secretariat introduced the Executive Secretary's note on the GTI (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/6 and Corr.1).

AUSTRALIA supported identifying framework projects and suggested educating government policymakers and encouraging them to create permanent taxonomist positions. The NETHERLAND prioritized actions that: support the CBD's work; disseminate and increase access to information on taxonomy; train and build capacity for taxonomy experts; and strengthen infrastructure and training programmes. BELGIUM noted the declining number of taxonomist and suggested linking funding to taxonomy projects. COLOMBIA suggested adopting measures to monitor GEF decisions. FINLAND supported national and international initiatives to develop resources for taxonomy activities. INDONESIA suggested developing necessary expertise and curricula for university courses on taxonomy. BRAZIL highlighted the necessary and key role of the GEF in institution building. NORWAY supported global and national efforts, institution building and funding on taxonomy, especially in developing countries. SWEDEN said it launched several projects to support the GTI and is financing a senior staff position on taxonomy in the CBD Secretariat.

INDIA supported findings ways and means to interlink existing databases and initiatives. The UK prioritized: capacity-building, training and job creation; improving dissemination of and access to taxonomic information; and access to genetic materials by taxonomists. Many speakers called for the GEF and UNEP to submit report to COP-5 regarding their support for the GTI. SRI LANKA suggested that donors set aside a percentage of each project for taxonomic

studies. MALI suggested creating incentives to bring the private sector into the GTI. CAMEROON supported compiling framework projects. SPAIN said training, job creation and data compilation are essential. SWITZERLAND said the CBD should work on rehabilitating taxonomy as one of the essential branches of science. BURKINA FASO, supported by the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, suggested that SBSTTA design a global project, with UNEP as coordinator, to help Parties move forward.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA noted the importance of taxonomy to alien species control and biotechnology management. FRANCE recommended that Parties include information on national taxonomy activities in their national reports. The EC discussed several funding opportunities under its programme on taxonomy. The GAMBIA proposed using existing networks and other resources to continue work in this regard. GERMANY stressed the involvement of both public and private sectors in taxonomy initiatives. NEW ZEALAND supported information repatriation as a priority and suggested identifying economic reasons to support taxonomic work. ETHIOPIA said that establishing infrastructure is essential in many African countries. OMAN noted the specific needs of countries that do not have national structures in place. CANADA suggested encouraging countries to develop their national capacity and advising the GEF to give priority to capacity-building. SWAZILAND noted the experience of the Southern African Botanical Network.

**DRYLANDS:** Delegates received and discussed the Chair's draft decision on drylands in the afternoon. ARGENTINA, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA and ZIMBABWE questioned the call for a liaison group to help draft the programme of work. ZIMBABWE also proposed calling on the GEF to support activities under this programme. CANADA said the SBSTTA should avoid presuming what the COP's decision on financial matters might be. On enhancing synergies and joint programmes between the CBD and other relevant processes, ARGENTINA proposed including reference to FAO and UNEP. CAMEROON and ZIMBABWE noted that countries Party to the CBD may not be Parties to other conventions.

COLOMBIA and CANADA submitted a joint redraft of the operative section, requesting the Executive Secretary to prepare a draft programme of work on drylands to be presented to SBSTTA-5 and recommending that the COP consider providing guidance to the financial mechanism regarding the financing of such a programme of work. The NETHERLANDS suggested preparing a joint programme of work with the CCD. The UK suggested that the Executive Secretary could consult with the CCD prior to preparing the draft programme of work. On the areas that should be considered under the programme of

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Changbo Bai <changbo@sprint.ca>, Ian Fry <ifry@pegasus.com.au>, Nabih Megateli <nmegateli@igc.apc.org>, Mark Schulman <markschulman@hotmail.com>, and Lynn Wagner, Ph.D. <lynn@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree <kimo@iisd.org>. Digital engineering by Andrei Henry <ahenry@iisd.ca>. French translation by Mongi Gadhoum <mongi.gadhoum@enb.intl.tn>. The Sustaining Donors of the *Bulletin* are The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Canada (through CIDA), the United States (through USAID), the Swiss Agency for Environment, Forests and Landscape, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). General Support for the *Bulletin* during 1999 is provided by the German Federal Ministry of Environment (BMU) and the German Federal Ministry of Development Cooperation (BMZ), the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Community (DG- XI), the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment of Norway, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Finland, the Government of Sweden, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Ministry for the Environment in Iceland. The *Bulletin* can be contacted by e-mail at <enb@iisd.org> and at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted by e-mail at <info@iisd.ca> and at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and only with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken above New York ©1999 The Living Earth, Inc., <http://livingearth.com>. For more information, please send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



work, MEXICO said capacity-building should be for the purposes of inventory and monitoring. BURKINA FASO proposed timber use. MALI, SWEDEN, CANADA and BRAZIL suggested traditional knowledge and indigenous activities. BRAZIL also suggested including benefit sharing and eco-tourism.

## WORKING GROUP II

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:** The Secretariat introduced the Executive Secretary's note (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/4/10) on the incorporation of biodiversity considerations into EIA. Many countries stressed the importance of capacity-building. CAMEROON with CÔTE D'IVOIRE called upon the World Bank to assist developing countries to finance EIA workshops. MEXICO focused on the need for data and information exchange. CANADA, BURUNDI and CÔTE D'IVOIRE underscored the importance of incorporating traditional indigenous knowledge into EIAs.

COLOMBIA supported, and CANADA with AUSTRALIA, NE ZEALAND and ALGERIA were disinclined, to include full details of EIA experiences in national reports. WGII could not agree whether to have an EIA and biodiversity expert working group, a roster of experts or rely on the work of other institutions, notably the International Association for Impact Assessment. The US stressed the importance of public participation and the exchange of lessons and experience. On global guidelines for biodiversity assessment, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA with NORWAY and ALGERIA supported their development. NEPAL stressed the need to develop guidelines for mountain ecosystems. CANADA suggested that guidelines should supplement rather than reinvent existing EIA processes.

The NETHERLANDS with SWITZERLAND, BURUNDI, the REPUBLIC OF KOREA, CUBA and COLOMBIA supported, and ECUADOR opposed, Strategic Environmental Assessments. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA with COLOMBIA and BURUNDI underscored the importance of the precautionary approach. Concerning transboundary impact assessments, FRANCE, NORWAY and CÔTE D'IVOIRE emphasized such work. The NETHERLANDS with MEXICO stressed the need for environmentally-friendly alternatives as an important EIA step, and also emphasized the need to consider compensation for lost biodiversity (e.g. green funds). The NETHERLANDS with INDIA supported further development of indicator-based monitoring.

GERMANY stressed the importance of national legislation and regulation to protect biodiversity and the need to better define biodiversity EIA. GERMANY with the UK and the NETHERLANDS emphasized that biodiversity should be integrated into EIAs rather than separate biodiversity impact assessments. FRANCE said it was essential that assessments be carried out on policies, plans and strategies. BANGLADESH stressed the need to update baseline data. CUBA emphasized the importance of including the economic value of biodiversity in EIA. Ramsar highlighted its development of a toolbox for EIA and offered its expertise. SWITZERLAND recommended linking EIA advice to CBD thematic topics such as drylands. INDIA, supported by SWITZERLAND and the UK, asked the CBD Secretariat to prepare a synthesis report based on further submissions.

**NEW PLANT TECHNOLOGY:** Chair Vokhiwa (Malawi) introduced Rapporteur Tevita Savae Latu (Tonga) and invited general comments on his draft recommendations on consequences of the use of new technology for the control of plant gene expression on biodiversity. NORWAY, supported by SOUTH AFRICA, PORTUGAL, KENYA, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, the PHILIPPINES, TOGO, ECUADOR, PERU, SRI LANKA, CUBA, DJIBOUTI and CAMEROON, and opposed by the UK and the EC, proposed adding an international-level recommendation for a moratorium on commercial use and field-testing of GURTs until sufficient knowledge is provided. ECUADOR suggested adding text on the eventual negative effects on human beings. The DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, with TOGO,

INDIA, SRI LANKA, CUBA and DJIBOUTI, stressed the need for a precautionary approach. CANADA called for a more careful, detailed discussion of the draft recommendations and emphasized the need to further explore IPR and institutional aspects. The US called for further study of the issue and said that the need for a moratorium should be considered by the COP. ICGB emphasized that the hybrid model should not be considered in the same context as GURTs.

On specific amendments to the preambular paragraph noting that GURTs will not be developed for five years, GERMANY proposed replacing the specific time reference to "the near future." He also suggested, and CAMEROON opposed, deleting the comment that there are no examples where GURTs have been released in field-trials. Delegates accepted the German formulation. CANADA proposed a new paragraph recognizing that many countries already have regulatory frameworks in place. INDIA suggested an alternative to recognize that many countries do not have regulatory frameworks. Both proposals were bracketed. On text to undertake research and to put into place procedures to prevent potential negative effects of GURTs, CANADA proposed deleting reference to the precautionary approach in preference for a subsequent formulation referring to CBD language. NORWAY with ECUADOR, INDIA, TOGO and COLOMBIA opposed deletion of the precautionary approach. The Canadian formulation was accepted. INDIA's proposal to delete the paragraph on recognizing the wide potential application of GURTs was accepted. ECUADOR and INDIA proposed, and SWITZERLAND and CAMEROON opposed, inserting a preambular recognition of the Biosafety Protocol process.

On recommendations at the international level, COLOMBIA suggested deleting a paragraph on IPR implications of GURTs and replacing it with language on Farmers' Rights. INDIA called for adding reference to the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. SURINAME asked for reference to indigenous rights and traditional knowledge. CANADA proposed inviting countries to study the impacts of GURTs on intellectual property. NORWAY proposed a moratorium on the commercial use and field testing of GURTs until sufficient knowledge was available. GERMANY proposed alternative text on not approving GURT technologies until scientific assessment have been carried out. CANADA sought deletion, in the German text, of the precautionary principle and the non-approval of GURTs before they are brought to the field. All three proposals are bracketed.

## IN THE CORRIDORS

Following a review of the numerous draft SBSTTA recommendations, participants noted the efficiency with which the meeting is running, but also commented that none of the draft texts propose anything too exciting. Some indicated that since SBSTTA-5 will revisit the drylands issue, the recommendation sent to COP-5 should be more comprehensive than the "superficial" treatment it has received thus far. The proposal to add a call for a moratorium on field-trials of GURTs added some excitement to the discussion of the draft text on plant technologies, although some have questioned whether SBSTTA or even the COP has the authority to implement such a moratorium.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**WGI:** WGI will resume consideration of the draft text on drylands at 10:00 am and then consider the draft text on alien species. A draft text on taxonomy is also expected.

**WGII:** WGII is expected to continue discussing the Chair's draft text on new plant technology, followed by draft texts on sustainable use/tourism and EIA.

**PLENARY:** An afternoon Plenary is scheduled to consider matters related to SBSTTA-5 and draft decisions on progress on thematic areas, the SBSTTA programme of work and other matters.