

SBSTTA 13 HIGHLIGHTS: WEDNESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2008

Delegates met in working group sessions in the morning and convened in the Committee of the Whole in the afternoon. Working Group I addressed biodiversity of inland water ecosystems; Working Group II considered mutually supportive activities addressing climate change under the three Rio conventions; and the Committee of the Whole considered a conference room paper (CRP) on the review of the work programme on agricultural biodiversity. A contact group on agricultural biodiversity met in the evening.

WORKING GROUP I

INLAND WATER BIODIVERSITY: Delegates considered UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/13/5 on biological diversity of inland water ecosystems, including a joint work plan between the CBD and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for 2007-2010. Nick Davidson, Ramsar Convention, highlighted the importance of wetland biodiversity and emphasized cooperation with the CBD. Many countries supported the joint work plan and called for the inclusion of a harmonized reporting format.

Regarding a reference to related conventions, NORWAY and SENEGAL, opposed by BRAZIL and COLOMBIA, suggested “inviting” rather than “urging” parties to ratify the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the UN Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and COLOMBIA requested deleting reference to the latter.

Noting rising water levels in wetlands due to climate change, HAITI proposed taking into account the particular circumstances of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). FAO stated that conservation and sustainable use of inland aquatic waters should be further developed using the ecosystem approach.

A Friends of the Chair group will prepare a CRP for further consideration.

WORKING GROUP II

BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE: Delegates continued responding to UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/13/7 on options for mutually supportive actions addressing climate change under the three Rio conventions. COLOMBIA and QATAR highlighted the principle of shared and differentiated responsibilities when developing synergies.

SWEDEN, GERMANY, SOUTH AFRICA and NORWAY supported collaboration among the three Rio Conventions’ subsidiary bodies, and with the CZECH REPUBLIC, BELGIUM, ICELAND, DENMARK, YEMEN and others, called for the establishment of an *ad hoc* technical expert group (AHTEG) to develop biodiversity guidance relevant to the Bali Action Plan. SWITZERLAND asked for a clear mandate for the AHTEG and, with AUSTRALIA, cautioned against duplicating work. INDIA warned against encroaching upon the mandates of the respective conventions and, with CANADA, noted that they are all distinct. The Latin American and Asian Regions of the INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY (IIFB) called for participation by local and indigenous communities in the AHTEG.

BANGLADESH proposed the establishment of a global centre of excellence to monitor the impacts of climate change on biological diversity. Bahamas, for SIDS, emphasized biodiversity conservation as a low cost solution for adaptation. BRAZIL cautioned against prejudging the outcome of the Bali Action Plan in regard to reducing emissions from deforestation. MAURITANIA and SOUTH AFRICA emphasized desertification and land degradation.

Several countries maintained that synergies are best promoted at the national level, with SOUTH AFRICA calling for innovative means to address limited capacity, and COSTA RICA underlining that synergies should address both mitigation and adaptation. NEW ZEALAND requested that the Joint Liaison Group explore the potential for the Bali Action Plan to support national-level synergies. GREENPEACE said joint implementation of deforestation mechanisms for emission reduction should be discussed by the conventions’ bodies rather than the Joint Liaison Group.

Madagascar, for the AFRICAN GROUP, observed that, many African countries have developed self-assessment capacity for identifying additional capacity building needs for implementation.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY: Delegates considered a CRP on the in-depth review of the work programme on agricultural biodiversity. Noting the large number of countries wishing to intervene, Chair Hesiquio Benitez-Diaz suggested that delegates restrict themselves to making proposals without attempting to negotiate the text.

On noting negative impacts of biological diversity loss on world food security, BRAZIL proposed adding reference to effects on the sustainability of agriculture. NEW ZEALAND suggested specifying that cultivated systems, in providing food, feed, fiber and fuel, can “affect” other ecosystem services, rather than stating that provision is “at the expense of” ecosystem services. On recognizing the role of indigenous and local communities, NORWAY added a specific mention of farmers’ and livestock keepers’ roles.

CANADA proposed an additional paragraph recognizing the contributions of scientists, farmers, livestock keepers and breeders, international agencies, governments and other stakeholders. On means to evaluate the work programme’s contribution to achieving the CBD’s objectives, SWITZERLAND suggested reference to “existing” indicators, opposed by ARGENTINA, who argued that this would be too restrictive. The EC proposed “based on existing indicators.”

Delegates discussed language on inviting the FAO and other organizations to disseminate information relevant to the work programme. BRAZIL proposed deleting a reference to the impact of unsustainable agricultural policies and practices on the biodiversity of other countries. On promoting sustainable agriculture, GERMANY, NORWAY and GHANA, opposed by CANADA and BRAZIL, suggested making reference to agriculture’s ecological footprint.

BRAZIL called for wording inviting the FAO to promote socio-economic oriented studies to evaluate constraints for the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices, with the UK preferring to promote “multi-disciplinary” studies. SLOVENIA emphasized that national sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and strategies should contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity, and discourage policies that cause biodiversity loss.

On inviting organizations to carry out further work on soil biodiversity, CANADA suggested adding African Insect Science for Food and Health (ICIPE), while BRAZIL called for deletion of the list of institutions. GERMANY called for the promotion of “underutilized crops.”

Regarding on-farm conservation: BRAZIL called for reference to participatory decision-making processes; POLAND suggested reference to other components of agro-ecosystems, with GERMANY adding “and associated biodiversity;” and NEPAL requested reference to regional organizations. SWITZERLAND stated its support for on-farm conservation, but argued that the issue is better dealt with by more specialized bodies. The International Federation of Agricultural Producers called for “farmers” to be added where “indigenous and local communities” are mentioned throughout the document. The COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMME proposed new text on providing safe mechanisms for on-farm conservation, and PRACTICAL ACTION underscored the need to reference “associated ecosystem functions.”

With respect to agricultural biodiversity and climate change, AUSTRALIA requested removing all references to mitigation. SLOVENIA noted that certain response measures taken by the agricultural sector can also impact biodiversity. ARGENTINA proposed deleting a request to the Executive Secretary to gather and disseminate information on, for instance, links between climate change, agriculture and biodiversity, while the EC, MEXICO and INDONESIA favored keeping the proposal with minor modifications.

BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA, asked for deletion of a section on biofuels. The EC suggested new text, including urging parties and others “to establish and apply sound policy frameworks which ensure the sustainable production and

consumption of bioenergy.” GREENPEACE requested parties to strengthen efforts to develop criteria, standards and verification schemes for sustainable biofuels and to adopt a precautionary approach. SWAZILAND endorsed GREENPEACE’s proposal. CANADA, supported by SWITZERLAND, requested “further elaboration of operational guidelines” for the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity, rather than their “dissemination.” AUSTRALIA asked to delete an invitation for parties and others to integrate the Addis Ababa principles into their policies.

NEW ZEALAND requested bracketing a section entitled “research issues,” noting that it required further consideration. ARGENTINA proposed deletion of certain research issues from the list, including defining harmonized farming and landscape classification systems, studying farmer and landowner attitudes, and identifying criteria for the sustainable production and consumption of bioenergy. TURKEY proposed collecting missions, particularly in dry and sub-humid areas, to recover genetic material of marginal crops that may be useful for adaptation programmes. AUSTRALIA proposed deleting research issues referring to improving the design of agri-environmental, monitoring and evaluation instruments.

Regarding the work programme’s vision and mission statements, delegates debated whether these should be retained and, if so, whether they should be moved to the beginning of the document. Chair Benitez-Diaz reminded delegates that the vision and mission statements were requested by the COP.

CONTACT GROUP

AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY: Delegates continued to address a CRP on the review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity in an evening contact group. Delegates considered text on *inter alia*: welcoming progress made by the FAO in preparing the *State of the World’s Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*; noting the significant contribution of agriculture to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and recognizing the important contributions of indigenous and local communities, and others.

Debate centered on language relating to identifying provisional goals and targets, and methods based on indicators, in relation to a request to the Executive Secretary to collaborate with the FAO and others on identifying methods to evaluate work programme implementation.

Discussions continued into the night.

IN THE CORRIDORS

“SBSTTA is running out of time and losing its war on brackets” is how one delegate summed up the day as the Secretariat and delegates redoubled their efforts and worked late into the night. On the afternoon’s review of the programme of work on agricultural biodiversity, some delegates were disappointed by the decision to step back from negotiating to making general comments, while others felt that it was all that was reasonably possible in the time remaining. The evening session was welcomed as a “focused reconsideration” of the earlier “skim reading” of the review.

Meanwhile some headway was made in the Friends of the Chair group on marine and coastal biodiversity, with delegates reporting a “substantive dialogue” and “a sense of progress.” Discussions on biodiversity and climate change continued in Working Group II, with increasing supporting for the establishment of an AHTEG on climate change and biodiversity. One seasoned delegate said this might be the most practical way of diffusing a potential “turf war” over mandates, and consequently the best approach for addressing forestry-related climate change issues.