

## UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Wednesday, 7 December 2022

Following Tuesday's ceremony, opening and regional statements marked the beginning of the official proceedings of the UN Biodiversity Conference, including the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CP MOP 10), and the fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol (NP MOP 4) on access and benefit-sharing (ABS). Two Working Groups met in the afternoon, to review draft decisions, and establish multiple contact and informal groups on the most contentious items. Three contact groups met in the evening to address draft decisions on: mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting, and review; resource mobilization; and risk assessment and risk management under the Cartagena Protocol.

### Opening Plenary

COP 15 President Huang Runqiu, Minister of Ecology and Environment of China, opened the conference stressing that biodiversity loss shakes the foundations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and noting that "we must now conclude a peace pact with nature" through a renewed global biodiversity framework (GBF).

Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), highlighted the "death by a million cuts" that nature is enduring. "The world is watching you," she reminded participants, expecting them to put their differences aside to face down the "apocalypse," given that humanity is threatened by a triple planetary crisis.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary, said that success of COP 15 is pegged on an ambitious and achievable GBF, imploring parties to put the planet back on the road to recovery.

**Statements:** Senegal, for the AFRICAN GROUP, affirmed commitment to achieving a transformative GBF, noting that ambitious action requires adequate financial resources, the creation of a global fund for biodiversity of at least USD 100 million per year, and the creation of a multilateral system on benefit-sharing from digital sequence information (DSI).

Palau, for ASIA-PACIFIC, highlighted the GBF as an important instrument that will shape the future of biodiversity and ensure

human survival, emphasizing the need for adequate resource mobilization, technology transfer, capacity building, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits.

Costa Rica, for LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (GRULAC), highlighted the need for: strong implementation means, including easily accessible financial resources, technology transfer, and technical and scientific cooperation; robust arrangements for monitoring, reporting, and review; a solution for DSI-related benefit-sharing; and a human rights-based approach.

Czech Republic for the EU stressed that the current GBF draft offers a good basis for the final stage of negotiations, emphasizing the need for ambitious, measurable, and time-bound goals and targets, accompanied by a monitoring, reporting, and review framework as well as resource mobilization from all sources.

New Zealand, for JUSSCANNZ, stressed the need for a GBF that will drive change and halt biodiversity loss, accompanied by planning, reporting, and review mechanisms, and a clear set of indicators tracking progress. She highlighted the need for synergies between different processes, nature-based solutions, and collective cross-sectoral work.

The EU and JUSSCANNZ condemned the Russian aggression in Ukraine pointing to related environmental degradation. The RUSSIAN FEDERATION urged keeping the CBD a depoliticized platform.

Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (SIDS), urged the special circumstances of SIDS be recognized in the GBF, noting they are disproportionately affected by biodiversity decline and their ways of life and survival are at stake. MEXICO, on behalf of 45 parties from all regions and the US, tabled a statement calling for the adoption of an ambitious GBF.

Ethiopia, on behalf of the LIKE-MINDED MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES, underlined their key role in achieving the conservation-related GBF targets, and the need for adequate financial and technical support for implementation.

Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change of Canada, advocated for designating at least 30% of Earth's land and oceans as protected areas by 2030, and announced Canada's commitment of CAD 800 million to support indigenous-led conservation projects.

The LIAISON GROUP OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS highlighted the potential for coordination among its eight treaties in delivering, implementing, and monitoring the GBF, stressing the role of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in ensuring synergies in implementation. The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UN stated that any solution to halt and reverse biodiversity loss will require agrifood system transformation. The HIGH AMBITION COALITION FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE emphasized support for the GBF target to conserve at least 30% of the global land and oceans while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs). The CBD WOMEN'S CAUCUS called for ensuring a human rights-based approach, including the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, and gender justice, further calling for gender-responsive monitoring and review processes. LOCAL AND SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS urged recognition of their role in the GBF, and finalization and adoption of the new action plan on subnational governments, cities, and other local authorities. The CBD ALLIANCE said the GBF must recognize IPLC rights and sovereignty over their territories, urging rights-based indicators on gender and IPLCs. He further called for ending perverse incentives and current agribusiness models causing harm to biodiversity. The GLOBAL YOUTH BIODIVERSITY NETWORK said the biodiversity crisis is rooted in injustice and inequality, stressing that quick fixes, false solutions, and empty slogans have served the interests of those who have brought destruction to our world, at the expense of those who have nurtured and protected it.

**Organizational Matters:** President Runqiu reminded delegates that the agendas of COP 15, CP COP/MOP 10, and NP COP/MOP 4 were adopted during the first part of the meeting. Delegates approved the organization of work (CBD/COP/15/1/Add.4/Rev.1, CBD/CP/MOP/10/1/Add.4/Rev.1, and CBD/NP/MOP/4/1/Add.4/Rev.1); elected Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand) and Helena Brown (Antigua and Barbuda) as Working Group Chairs; and noted that Elvana Ramaj (Albania) and Eric Okoree (Ghana) will continue to serve as Rapporteur and Chair of the credentials committee respectively, following their election at the first part of the meeting.

**Reports:** Hesiquio Benítez Díaz (Mexico), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), presented the SBSTTA 24 report (CBD/SBSTTA/24/12), noting that SBSTTA 23 and 24 delivered 17 draft recommendations, many of which still contain unresolved matters. Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), presented the SBI 3 report (CBD/SBI/3/21), noting recommendations to support the GBF, including on monitoring and resource mobilization. Basile van Havre (Canada) and Francis Ogwal (Uganda), Co-Chairs of the Working Group on the GBF, reported on the Working Group's third, fourth, and fifth meetings (CBD/WG2020/3/7, CBD/WG2020/4/4, and CBD/WG2020/5/L1). They highlighted that the Working Group's progress on the draft GBF is insufficient and appealed to parties' flexibility and spirit of compromise.

CP Compliance Committee Chair Rigobert Ntep (Cameroon) presented the Committee's report focusing on its 16th and 17th meetings (CBD/CP/MOP/10/2). NP Compliance Committee Chair Betty Kauna Schroder (Namibia) presented the Committee's report (CBD/NP/MOP/4/2).

**Budget:** CBD Executive Secretary Mrema presented the proposed budget (CBD/COP/15/7 and 7/Add.1). Plenary established a contact group.

### *Working Group I*

The Secretariat introduced the compilation of draft decisions for consideration by COP 15 and NP MOP 4 (CBD/COP/15/2 and CBD/NP/MOP/4/1/Add.5). Chair Paterson proposed, and delegates agreed, that conference room papers (CRPs) be developed on:

- informing the scientific and technical evidence base for the GBF;
- review of progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan;
- communication;
- the post-2020 gender plan of action;
- decisions related to Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge); and
- engagement with subnational governments, cities, and other local authorities.

A contact group was established on the GBF and the headline indicators, co-chaired by Francis Ogwal (Uganda) and Basile van Havre (Canada), to work alongside a Friends of the Chair group on the monitoring framework, led by Hesiquio Benítez Díaz. Additional contact groups were established to finalize draft decisions on:

- DSI;
- resource mobilization;
- the financial mechanism;
- capacity-building and technical and scientific cooperation;
- knowledge management;
- mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting, and review; and
- biodiversity mainstreaming.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION and IRAN expressed concern about the number of groups established, noting difficulties for small delegations, with MOROCCO adding that non-anglophone parties are at a disadvantage in contact groups.

### *Working Group II*

Contact groups were established on:

- risk assessment and risk management under the Cartagena Protocol, and synthetic biology under the Convention;
- marine and coastal biodiversity; and
- the implementation plan and capacity-building plan for the Cartagena Protocol.

**(CP) Monitoring and Reporting:** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/CP/MOP/10/5). The EU, supported by INDIA and SOUTH AFRICA, stressed the need for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to provide timely funding to eligible parties for preparation of their fifth national reports, expressing

concerns over delays in the previous reporting cycle. COLOMBIA suggested a reference to the capacity-building action plan.

MALAYSIA highlighted the importance of guidance documents developed by the Secretariat. A CRP will be prepared.

**(NP) Monitoring and Reporting:** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/NP/MOP/4/7). The UK, the EU, the AFRICAN GROUP, and INDIA supported the guidelines and format for submissions of the first national reports for the Nagoya Protocol, noting the format should be kept under review. The UK and the EU supported the synchronized reporting cycle, including postponing the submission deadline to 2025, with the AFRICAN GROUP suggesting further postponing it to 2026. JAPAN proposed specifying in the format of the reports that, if a party to the Protocol decides not to prepare national ABS legislation, Article 13.2 on assigning competent national authorities is not applicable. The AFRICAN GROUP highlighted the invitation to the GEF to make resources available to eligible parties in a timely manner for preparation of the national reports. A CRP will be prepared.

**(CP) Assessment and Review:** The Secretariat introduced the draft decision based on SBI recommendation 3/2. A CRP will be prepared.

**(CP) Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH):** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/CP/MOP/10/7). Many welcomed the successful migration of the central BCH portal to its new and improved platform. The AFRICAN GROUP and others called for continued financial and technical support to make use of the new platform. The EU, INDIA, and MALAYSIA urged parties to add their records to the BCH and keep them updated. Several groups and parties submitted amendments to the draft decision in writing. A CRP will be prepared.

**(NP) ABS Clearing-House:** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/NP/MOP/4/6). Many welcomed the steady increase of national records available on the ABS Clearing-House, highlighting the need for continued capacity building. The EU and SWITZERLAND reiterated a call to publish and update all relevant information. The UK highlighted its recent publication of checkpoint communiqués. The AFRICAN GROUP highlighted the importance of electronic ABS systems for making effective use of the interoperability mechanism. A CRP will be prepared.

**(CBD) Marine and Coastal Biodiversity: Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs):** The Secretariat introduced the item, drawing attention to SBSTTA Recommendations 23/4 and non-finalized 24/10, and the results of the online discussion forum (CBD/EBSA/OM/2022/2/1). The Working Group agreed that the clean text from SBSTTA recommendation 23/4 be converted into a CRP, and a contact group be established to address SBSTTA Recommendation 24/10.

**Conservation and Sustainable Use:** The Secretariat introduced documents, including the non-finalized SBSTTA Recommendation 24/9 and the outcomes of the online discussion forum (CBD/MCB/OM/2022/1/1). The item will be addressed by the contact group on EBSAs.

**(CP) Detection and Identification of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs):** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/CP/MOP/10/10/Rev.1). The AFRICAN GROUP welcomed the draft decision, stressing the need to keep pace with developments in synthetic biology and for appropriate capacity building. NEW ZEALAND supported capacity-building efforts, noting that they should be consistent with the capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol.

The EU and NEW ZEALAND suggested welcoming the finalization of the training manual. BRAZIL stressed that the decision should focus on LMOs that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, suggesting deleting references to synthetic biology and recognizing the need for relevant capacity building. SOUTH AFRICA highlighted the need to address transboundary movements of LMOs and called for GEF support for regional projects. The REPUBLIC OF KOREA underscored the importance of information sharing and cooperation. A CRP will be prepared.

**(CP) Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol:** The Secretariat introduced the document (CBD/CP/MOP/10/9). The EU lauded the entry into force of the Supplementary Protocol as a big step forward, and called for further ratifications. BRAZIL requested that the draft decision highlight that capacity building is available for parties to the Supplementary Protocol. A CRP will be prepared.

**(NP) Capacity development and awareness raising:** The Secretariat introduced the documents (SBI Recommendation 3/9 and CBD/NP/MOP/4/5). The EU supported incorporating the elements of the awareness-raising strategy into the revision of the strategic framework for capacity-building and development. The UK held that capacity building and development should be based on expressed needs. INDIA underlined the usefulness of e-learning modules. A CRP will be prepared.

### *In The Corridors*

“This conference is our chance to stop this orgy of destruction!” The words spoken by the UN Secretary General António Guterres at the opening ceremony, a day prior to the official opening of the UN Biodiversity Conference, had their impact on participants arriving at the meeting. Some were heard quoting sentiments, reflecting on the onus of the COP to address the root causes of biodiversity loss and generate substantial financial support.

As opening plenary statements echoed the need for a sense of urgency to achieve a successful outcome, and with no time to linger, parties were hurdling to reorganize their strategy in working and contact groups. “The pressure is on like never before,” an observer said as she made her way to an evening contact group. Stark warnings from scientists and UN organizations, unprecedented media presence from all over the world, and protesters surrounding the conference center, she said, are “hopefully the missing elements needed to raise ambition and crystallize the required political will, as our entire agenda is summarized into a single purpose of saving life on Earth.”



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