

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Saturday, 10 December 2022

As the conference approached its mid-way point, text-based negotiations continued in various groups, while a stocktaking plenary in the afternoon took note of progress and adopted several decisions under the Convention and its Protocols. Delegates acknowledged considerable progress made, while highlighting time limitations and the major building blocks of a successful outcome being the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF); digital sequence information (DSI); resource mobilization; and monitoring and review.

Working Group II continued its deliberations, and contact groups and Friends of the Chair groups addressed draft decisions on: capacity building; planning, monitoring, reporting, and review; invasive alien species; the implementation plan and the capacity-building action plan of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; and technical and scientific cooperation. Informal consultations focused on Goal A (conservation of ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity) and target 1 (spatial planning) of the GBF. Discussions continued in the evening on: the GBF targets; marine and coastal biodiversity; the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); and DSI.

Working Group II

Delegates heard reports from contact groups. CANADA lauded progress made in the contact group on **marine and coastal biodiversity**, with almost all brackets lifted on conservation and sustainable use, but requiring an additional contact group session to address ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). CAMEROON reported that discussions will continue in the contact group on the **implementation plan and capacity-building action plan of the Cartagena Protocol**. On **biodiversity and health**, Chair Brown noted that, following informal consultations, points of divergence remain, and a Friends of the Chair group has been established.

(CBD/CP/NP) Review of Effectiveness: Delegates approved a conference room paper (CRP) (CBD/COP/15/WG2/CRP.3) with amendments resulting from informal discussions. They agreed to clearly differentiate between hybrid and virtual meetings, with the latter being reserved for extraordinary circumstances and for decisions on budgetary and procedural matters. They also approved text on investigating ways to improve the effectiveness of meetings. Corresponding CRPs under the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols were approved accordingly.

(CBD) Nature and Culture: Delegates addressed a CRP (CBD/COP/15/WG2/CRP.4). SOUTH AFRICA suggested including the International Council of Monuments and Sites, and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in a list of organizations promoting the joint programme of work on the links between biological and cultural diversity. On the tasks, delegates agreed that the Secretariat, with relevant organizations, will enable Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) to record, document, and transmit traditional knowledge with their free,

prior, and informed consent. The CRP was approved with these and other, minor amendments.

Contact Groups

Planning, Monitoring, Reporting, and Review: Co-chaired by Gillian Guthrie (Jamaica) and Andrew Stott (UK), delegates continued negotiations focusing on the section on means of implementation. Regarding a request to the Secretariat to support an enhanced multidimensional approach to planning, monitoring, reporting, and review, delegates agreed to add a request to Subsidiary Body on Implementation to develop an open-ended forum for voluntary country-by-country expert review. On providers of means of implementation, delegates agreed not to target developed countries specifically to provide space for South-South and other types of collaboration. They discussed whether to “invite” or “request” the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to make funds available for implementation, and the timeline for such funding. On guidance for revising or updating national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) in the light of the GBF, delegates debated the degree of flexibility to be provided to developing countries given gaps in capacities and funding, agreeing that the requirement to revise and update NBSAPs be “in accordance with their particular conditions and capabilities.” They then addressed the draft guidance and draft template for the seventh and eighth national reports. The draft template for submission of national targets as part of NBSAPs towards GBF implementation was forwarded to a Friends of the Chair group.

Capacity Building: Co-chaired by Laura Bermudez (Colombia) and Haike Jan Haanstra (the Netherlands), the contact group heard a report from informal consultations on providing financial and technical support to biodiversity capacity building and development activities for developing country parties, with particular references to least developed countries, small island developing states, and countries with economies in transition remaining in brackets. A number of countries asked to refer to doing this work in partnership with IPLCs. Delegates could not reach agreement on whether a request to other biodiversity-related conventions should be directed specifically to their governing bodies, with some parties wanting to ensure the process is party- and not Secretariat-driven. Delegates agreed to maintain a specific mention to biotechnology research with a footnote including the CBD definition of biotechnology. The Friends of the Co-Chairs group working on options for institutional mechanisms for enhanced scientific cooperation was mandated to continue its work, while another group will consider knowledge management.

(CP) Implementation and Capacity-Building Action Plan: Co-Chair Rita Andorkó (Hungary) provided an update on the first meeting of the contact group co-led with Rigobert Ntep (Cameroon), noting it was able to finalize deliberations on the implementation plan and initiated discussions on the capacity-building action plan. She noted the group’s conclusion that financial issues that arose during the deliberation would be better addressed under the agenda item on the financial mechanism.

Delegates resumed discussions on the capacity-building action plan addressing a goal on mobilizing adequate resources from all sources to support implementation of the Cartagena Protocol.

They agreed on providing training and raising awareness on the establishment and development of mechanisms to leverage adequate resources from national budgets. They also agreed to address the range of actors involved in capacity building in the main part of the action plan rather than listing them for each goal in the appended table. A few issues remained pending.

Plenary

Observer Statements: The BUSINESS FOR NATURE COALITION emphasized that an ambitious GBF must ensure that the business community is rewarded or penalized for actions for or against nature conservation. ACADEMIA AND RESEARCH highlighted the role of education, research, and science in guiding equitable governance of natural resources, and called for urgent transformative actions to address the biodiversity crisis. IUCN urged for a true spirit of compromise and inclusiveness to overcome the current impasse in the GBF, and provide a clear path to halt species loss. BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, for a number of conservation organizations, called for curbing economic drivers of biodiversity loss, a comprehensive resource mobilization package, and strong implementation mechanisms. The INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, representing small-scale farmers, urged including a reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants in the GBF. The FINANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY FOUNDATION called for aligning public and private financial flows with the goals and targets of the GBF as a turning point for the financial sector. Noting observance of the Human Rights Day, the OFFICE OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS called for a GBF with human rights at its core, reflecting the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, recently recognized by the UN General Assembly.

Reports: Eric Okoree (Ghana), Chair of the Credentials Committee, presented an interim report on credentials. TÜRKIYE confirmed their intent to host COP 16 in the last quarter of 2024. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand) and Helena Brown (Antigua and Barbuda), Chairs of Working Group I and II respectively, reported on progress achieved as well as on ongoing work in contact and Friends of the Chair groups. Budget Committee Chair Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt) reported that the committee considered a list of staffing requirements of the Secretariat alongside other major budget items, adding that deliberations will continue.

Adoption of Decisions: CBD COP then adopted the following decisions:

- review of progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan (CBD/COP/15/L.4);
- sustainable wildlife management (CBD/COP/15/L.5);
- in-depth dialogue under Article 8(j) (traditional knowledge) (CBD/COP/15/L.6);
- the recommendations from the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (CBD/COP/15/L.7);
- development of a new work programme on Article 8(j) (CBD/COP/15/L.8);
- review of the effectiveness of processes under the Convention and its Protocols (CBD/COP/15/L.9);
- nature and culture (CBD/COP/15/L.10); and
- informing the GBF scientific and technical evidence base (CBD/COP/15/L.3).

On the latter decision, INDONESIA requested that the meeting's report reflects that the second Local Biodiversity Outlooks misrepresented a case study about criminalization of a Dayak community in East Kalimantan. On developing a new work programme on Article 8(j), the INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FORUM ON BIODIVERSITY advocated for financial resources for the work of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group and for broad participation of IPLCs.

The Cartagena Protocol Meeting of the Parties then adopted the following decisions with no or minor amendments:

- compliance (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.3);
- monitoring and reporting (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.4);
- Nagoya – Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.5);

- socio-economic considerations (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.6);
- operation and activities of the Biosafety Clearing-House (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.7);
- risk assessment and risk management (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.8);
- assessment and review of the Protocol's effectiveness and final evaluation of its Strategic Plan (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.9);
- detection and identification of living modified organisms (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.10); and
- review of effectiveness (CBD/CP/MOP/10/L.11).

The Nagoya Protocol Meeting of the Parties adopted decisions on:

- Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and information sharing (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.3);
- compliance (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.4);
- capacity-building and awareness raising (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.5), with an additional paragraph on integrating gender concerns as proposed by the Philippines;
- monitoring and reporting (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.6), with an amendment relating to the review of the format for national reporting as proposed by the EU;
- financial mechanism and resources (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.7); and
- review of effectiveness (CBD/NP/MOP/4/L.8).

COP 15 President Huang Runqiu urged participants to show courage, political will, and flexibility towards the adoption of a strong and performing GBF.

Statements: Argentina, for GRULAC, stressed that clear advances on resource mobilization and on a global solution on DSI are required to move forward with the GBF, suggesting focusing on these elements prior to the high-level segment. BRAZIL, for a coalition of like-minded developing countries, including the African Group and parties from Latin America and Asia, underscored that an ambitious GBF must be accompanied by a robust package on resource mobilization, and stressed the need to ensure that GEF responds to implementation-related GBF needs, further calling for a numerical target on resource mobilization in the GBF and a new funding mechanism dedicated to biodiversity to be concluded by COP 16. COLOMBIA, also for Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Peru, focused on the need for resource mobilization, biodiversity mainstreaming in all relevant sectors, elimination of subsidies that have adverse impacts on biodiversity, and a process reforming GEF biodiversity-related activities, maximizing its utility. The EU expressed satisfaction for the constructive discussions, stressing the need to focus on all elements on the same level of priority to finish work on time. New Zealand for JUSSCANNZ welcomed progress in the GBF, noting that this should remain the focus of delegates' efforts, while agreeing that resources are critical and have to be increased and be accessible to those most in need.

In The Corridors

As the conference approached a halfway mark, several interventions celebrated International Human Rights Day, this year under the theme, "Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All!" Delegates, while acknowledging the day's significance, were called to self-reflect on the need to ensure protection of the rights of the most vulnerable and those most affected by biodiversity loss. One participant observed that focusing on human rights in the GBF could serve as a "crystalizing point for including society as a whole, including women, children, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and even businesses in regard to their responsibility to respect human rights."

The day featured Working Group, contact group, and informal meetings, as well as a stocktaking plenary. While many seemed tired enough from the vast material the negotiations have already covered, others were quick to note that some topics have not even been touched yet. One of them is EBSAs. One delegate vented her frustration that already at SBSTTA 24 there was not enough time for discussion: "With our oceans covering over 70% of the Earth's surface, shouldn't we prioritize strong guidance on how to protect them?" There is yet time, but "the risk is high that some key topics will not get the attention they deserve in the hectic showdown at the end," another concluded.