

UN Biodiversity Conference Highlights: Friday, 16 December 2022

The high-level segment continued with speakers highlighting the urgency of addressing biodiversity loss. Working Group II addressed conference room papers (CRPs), while text-based negotiations on the global biodiversity framework (GBF) and digital sequence information (DSI) continued in Friends of the Chair and contact groups. Other groups focused on: the financial mechanism; resource mobilization; the monitoring framework of the GBF; and planning, monitoring, reporting, and review.

Working Group II

In the morning, delegates heard reports from contact and Friends of the Chair groups. GERMANY announced that consensus was reached after long but constructive discussions in the contact group on **synthetic biology**. Delegates approved the respective CRP (CBD/COP/15/WG/2/CRP.11) with minor editorial changes.

(CBD) Biodiversity and Climate Change: In the morning, ICELAND reported from Friends of the Chair and contact group meetings, drawing attention to three outstanding issues. Chair Brown introduced a CRP (CBD/COP/15/WG/2/CRP.12), noting that the entire draft decision is bracketed due to divergent opinions on inclusion of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and the notion of nature-based solutions vis-à-vis ecosystem-based approaches.

The EU, NORWAY, CANADA, SWITZERLAND, the UK, AUSTRALIA, and JAPAN supported inclusion of nature-based solutions and opposed reference to CBDR, noting it is not recognized under the Convention. The AFRICAN GROUP, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, HONDURAS, URUGUAY, MEXICO, INDONESIA, IRAN, and the PHILIPPINES strongly supported including language on CBDR, pointing to Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration and CBD Article 20 (financial resources). Some developing countries noted that the UN Environment Assembly is addressing nature-based solutions through an intergovernmental process to guide their future implementation, but indicated their willingness to compromise on nature-based solutions if the CBDR principle was to be included in the draft decision. Others noted that no trade-off can be made between a technical approach, such as nature-based solutions, and an overarching principle, such as CBDR.

Chair Brown noted diverging views on the issue and suggested informal consultations. Following discussions, BRAZIL, ARGENTINA, the AFRICAN GROUP, BOLIVIA, and URUGUAY suggested postponing the item to COP 16, stressing

the need to prioritize GBF deliberations. The EU, NORWAY, and the UK suggested continuing discussions in an effort to find a compromise.

In the evening, delegates agreed to defer consideration of the item to a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) prior to COP 16, requesting parties and inviting others to submit their views and information on biodiversity and climate change. The Secretariat will compile these views and information for SBSTTA consideration. A lengthy discussion took place on a suggested reference to the co-sponsored workshop on biodiversity and climate change of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Delegates decided against its inclusion, and the CRP was approved.

(NP) Specialized International ABS Instruments: In the morning, delegates heard a report from the Friends of the Chair group, which noted a divide between parties on a possible process to consider what constitutes a specialized international ABS instrument under Nagoya Protocol Article 4.4. Chair Brown suggested that an informal group continue deliberations. BRAZIL, NAMIBIA, BOLIVIA, ARGENTINA, MALAWI, and URUGUAY proposed postponing the item to the fifth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 5), emphasizing the need to prioritize the GBF negotiations. In the evening, delegates approved a CRP (CBD/NP/MOP/4/WG/2/CRP.8) noting that the item will be further reviewed at MOP 5 on the basis of Recommendation 3/16 of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI).

(CBD) Biodiversity and Health: The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) lauded collaboration between WHO, the CBD Secretariat, and 27 other entities in the UN Biorisk Working Group, which helps coordinate the response to natural, accidental, and deliberate biological events, taking into account the One Health approach. GERMANY reported from Friends of the Chair and contact group meetings. Following deliberations, the Working Group approved a CRP (CBD/COP/15/WG/2/CRP.10) with one outstanding issue to be resolved in accordance with DSI negotiations. BOLIVIA proposed, and delegates agreed, to add a preambular paragraph recognizing the need for equitable access to tools and technologies including medicines, vaccines, and other health products required to implement the One Health and other holistic approaches. On a proposal by NAMIBIA, it was agreed to also note the ongoing negotiations on potential amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005). The Working Group also agreed that further work on the One Health approach should also take into account “equity and solidarity.”

(CBD) Multi-Year Programme of Work: The Working Group approved a CRP (CBD/COP/15/WG/2/CRP.13) as amended. It was agreed that the development of further guidance for policy development and implementation should support the achievement of the goals and targets set out in the GBF, the outcome of the global analysis of information in national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) including their national targets, and the global review of collective progress in implementation as well as new information that may become available including through scientific assessments.

Working Group II Report: In the evening, parties approved the Working Group's report (CBD/COP/15/WG/2/L.1) with minor editorial amendments.

Contact Groups

Financial Mechanism: Negotiations proceeded based on a revised non-paper. On the paragraph on enhancing programmatic synergies among biodiversity-related processes for strategic guidance for the ninth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF 9), parties debated whether to include other instruments such as the International Tropical Timber Organization. On the importance of application of CBD Article 21 (financial mechanism) and access to the financial mechanism, some developing countries called for referring to the GEF as the financial mechanism "on an interim basis." Following discussion, delegates agreed to refer to the GEF as the CBD financial mechanism "on an interim and ongoing basis."

In a paragraph "welcoming" the GEF Council report to COP 15, some parties preferred "taking note of" the report. Delegates then discussed a group's proposal to call for all GEF member countries to ratify and adhere to the CBD, without reaching agreement. Debate ensued regarding a request to the Secretariat to collaborate with the GEF to promote synergies and complementarities of biodiversity-related conventions for GBF implementation in GEF 8. Some developing countries reiterated the need for a commitment by the GEF to fast track access to GEF 8 for GBF implementation immediately after its adoption, "in particular for the first phase of the resource mobilization strategy." Parties agreed to await completion of ongoing consultations on resource mobilization.

Planning, Monitoring, Reporting, and Review:

Delegates discussed the first paragraph of a revised non-paper listing elements to be taken into account in the enhanced multidimensional approach to planning, monitoring, reporting, and review, and agreed to include: NBSAPs revised or updated to be aligned with the GBF and its goals and targets as the main vehicle for implementation; national targets communicated in a standardized format; national reports to be submitted in 2026 and 2029, including the headline and, as appropriate, other indicators; and a global analysis of information in NBSAPs to assess their contribution towards the GBF. Delegates debated at length whether the provision should only include a list or also comprise instructions on how this information should be addressed at future COP meetings, along with encouragements to parties to improve actions and efforts. Discussion resulted in a call for financial resources, and in ensuring that the approach will be undertaken in a facilitative and non-intrusive, non-punitive manner. The respective formulations remained bracketed. Parties then agreed to submit their seventh national reports by 28 February 2026, recognizing the specific challenges faced by developing countries to prepare and submit their national reports in a timely manner, and the need for enhanced international cooperation to support them accordingly.

GBF: Deliberations continued on the GBF's Sections. Delegates noted prior agreement to include text from **Section I**

(enabling conditions) in Section B bis (considerations for GBF implementation). With regard to **Section K** (communication, education, awareness and uptake), delegates addressed language on increasing awareness, understanding, and appreciation of knowledge systems, and agreed to refer to diverse values of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services. They also agreed to streamline the section to retain focus on awareness, by moving references to the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to the relevant paragraphs in Section B bis.

On **Section J** (responsibility and transparency), delegates agreed to a chapeau that GBF's successful implementation requires responsibility and transparency, which will be supported by effective mechanisms for planning, monitoring, reporting, and review through synchronized and cyclical systems. They then considered the list of elements agreed in the contact group on planning, monitoring, reporting, and review. Delegates debated whether to keep all elements of the list or narrow them down to the responsibility-related ones. Reference to voluntary peer reviews was bracketed, alongside a proposal on improving parties' actions and efforts.

Delegates agreed that the mechanisms: shall provide flexibility for developing countries to progressively implement the GBF in accordance with their national circumstances; recognize the specific challenges faced by developing countries and the need for international cooperation to support them through means of implementation; and will be facilitative, non-intrusive, and non-punitive, respecting national sovereignty, and avoiding undue burden on developing countries.

DSI: Delegates were presented with an updated non-paper based on discussions held in a Friends of the Chair group, including two options: the first one establishing a process on the way forward, and the second one establishing a global benefit-sharing mechanism and a process for its operationalization. Delegates were invited to flag corrections needed to properly reflect discussions but to refrain from making additional text proposals. It was agreed that the non-paper be forwarded to Working Group I Chair Paterson for her consideration and proposal of next steps.

In The Corridors

The fresh snow embellishing the start of the day saw some delegates wondering whether there was some truth to the Asian proverb, "snowfall is a windfall of luck." However, as negotiations in multiple formats continued, it became starkly clear to all delegates that the success of this conference was not down to luck. The negotiation temperature at the meeting venue reached new heights with smaller delegations deploring the parallel convening of various meetings, preventing them from effectively participating in the negotiation process. Alluding to the challenge of connecting the pieces of the GBF scattered among these groups, one delegate noted, "we are not equipped to follow everything, even with a clone it would have been difficult."

The second day of the high-level segment progressed unabated with a marathon of speeches at odds with the state of the negotiations. Many wondered how the ministerial-level consultations announced by the COP President were progressing. "How should ministers be able to resolve in hours what expert delegates have been trying to complete in years?" one delegate offered. With the final moments of the conference approaching, some participants wondered if in the end a cleaned up "take-it-or-leave-it" GBF would be unveiled, as if drawn from under a blanket of snow.