

SBSTTA 25 Highlights: Wednesday, 18 October 2023

On the penultimate day of the twenty-fifth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 25), delegates met in contact groups in the morning and plenary sessions in the afternoon and evening, and approved draft recommendations on:

- invasive alien species (IAS);
- biodiversity and climate change;
- approaches to identifying scientific and technical needs to support the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) implementation, including implications for the Convention's work;
- sustainable wildlife management;
- scientific, technical and technological inputs to inform the global review of collective progress GBF implementation; and
- monitoring framework for the GBF.

Invasive Alien Species

Chair Hesiquio Benítez Díaz opened plenary discussions on draft recommendations on IAS, including on the findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) IAS assessment report (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.3/Rev.1).

Delegates considered whether to endorse or welcome the key messages outlined in the Summary for Policymakers (SPM) as well as the chapters of the IPBES IAS assessment. BRAZIL, ARGENTINA and RUSSIAN FEDERATION preferred to welcome the SPM, noting that the chapters of the assessment are yet to be reviewed by SBSTTA. Delegates agreed that the full assessment can be approved at 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 16).

They agreed to ARGENTINA's suggestion to urge developed countries and others to support developing countries in the uptake of the assessments into their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), including through capacity building, financing, and technology transfer. Debates on whether to refer to Article 20 (financial resources) and 21 (financial mechanisms) of the Convention ensued. Reference to both articles remained unresolved.

ARGENTINA opposed welcoming the establishment of a task force under the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) to improve access to data and information on IAS. She noted among others the lack of clarity on its membership. Several delegates including CHILE, SWITZERLAND, EU, GHANA, COLOMBIA, PERU, and others highlighted the key role of GBIF data for GBF implementation. Delegates agreed to take note with appreciation the establishment of the GBIF taskforce.

BRAZIL noted the ongoing discussions by the World Health Organization on the One Health approach, and urged waiting until COP 16 for any agreement on the approach. The NETHERLANDS noted that the recommendation is about

collaborations and thus there was no need to wait for the COP. The issue remained unresolved.

Plenary approved the draft recommendation as amended.

Sustainable Wildlife Management

Delegates discussed a draft recommendation (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.5) in plenary. Parties agreed to the suggestion made by UK, BRAZIL, and others to welcome the key messages along with the IPBES assessment report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species and its SPM.

CANADA and MEXICO called for the inclusion of subnational governments in the mention of all levels of government.

Delegates engaged in lengthy debate how to address increase in demand and technological development that have negative impacts on wild species. BRAZIL argued that this topic goes beyond the mandate of the Convention. On the illegal harvesting and use of and trade in wild species, parties also debated on whether to include unsustainability and traceability of trade to support GBF Target 5 on sustainable, safe and legal use, harvesting and trade of wild species. Both of these matters remained unresolved.

Plenary approved the draft recommendation as amended.

Facilitating the Implementation of the GBF and the Monitoring of its Progress

Approaches to identifying scientific and technical needs to support GBF implementation, including implication for CBD programmes of work: During plenary, delegates discussed the draft recommendation on this issue (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.4). CANADA called for deletion of a paragraph affirming the importance of CBD programmes of work in supporting the achievement of the GBF goals and targets, noting that it was premature to do so before SBSTTA 26.

JAPAN proposed including a reference to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and other relevant organizations as a source of information in the request to the Executive Secretary to undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of existing tools and guidance that can support GBF implementation. He pointed to regional fisheries management organizations as relevant organizations in this regard.

ARGENTINA suggested including other "intergovernmental organizations in a manner consistent with respective mandates."

KENYA proposed including references to updating existing guidance in a bid to address potential gaps and redundancies in the GBF implementation. Chair Benítez noted that this may overburden the Secretariat.

MEXICO, with GERMANY and NETHERLANDS, suggested that the Executive Secretary identify gaps, redundancies, "and potential updates" to the GBF implementation. BRAZIL, with ARGENTINA and DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC), called to delete a reference to the identification of the "the most critical gaps in tools and guidance," noting that this is subjective.

CANADA, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, BRAZIL, MEXICO, and BELGIUM, proposed requesting the Executive Secretary to develop recommendations for adjustments

for the work of the Convention for consideration by SBSTTA 26 and Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) 4, as appropriate.

Delegates approved the draft recommendation as amended.

Monitoring framework for the GBF: The contact group on the monitoring framework, co-chaired by Jan Plesnik (Czechia) and Adams Toussaint (Saint Lucia), met and finalized its deliberations. Delegates discussed prioritization of the work of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG), and deliberated on the AHTEG's tasks on headline indicators. Parties agreed that the AHTEG's tasks should remain within the scope of current mandates.

Delegates agreed to defer completion of binary questions for the global indicators to SBSTTA 26. A CRP was prepared.

During plenary, delegates considered CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.6 and agreed to defer the discussions on the annex on list of binary indicator questions.

Plenary approved the draft recommendation as amended.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

The contact group on biodiversity and climate change, co-chaired by Mariela Cánepa Montalvo (Peru) and Tia Stevens (Australia), met to discuss relevant draft recommendations, basing their discussions on a non-paper which included submissions from discussions held on [Tuesday](#).

Delegates agreed to reorder the paragraphs to give preeminence to biodiversity-related work and its intersections with climate change. They debated on how best to reflect the CBD decision 15/2 welcoming the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services issued by IPBES and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) sixth Assessment Report (AR6).

In their discussions on the negative impacts of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services, delegates agreed to refer to impacts on the most vulnerable people including Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), rural women, and youth. They also discussed whether to delete a call to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to consider IPBES assessments, with many noting that this is not within SBSTTA's mandate.

They also considered reinforcing a request to the Executive Secretary for a comprehensive review and analysis of existing tools to support the implementation of among others, GBF Target 8 on minimizing climate change impacts on biodiversity and Target 11 on restoring, maintaining, and enhancing nature's contributions to people. They noted that IPBES and IPCC assessment reports and guidance developed under other international processes are existing tools for this purpose. After further discussions, a CRP was prepared.

In plenary, delegates considered draft recommendation (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.8), discussing contentious text relating to work by IPBES and the IPCC related to nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem-based approaches. The text remained unresolved. Chair Benítez tasked Canada, Portugal, DRC, Colombia, Germany, Malawi, and Brazil to work on compromise text, and requested the Secretariat to prepare an L.doc for consideration on Thursday.

Mechanisms for Planning, Monitoring, Reporting and Review

Scientific, technical and technological inputs that should inform the global review of collective progress in GBF implementation: The contact group, co-chaired by Bilal Qtishat (Jordan) and Gaute Voigt-Hanssen (Norway), held its second meeting and finalized discussions on the elements to be included in assessing the progress of the GBF implementation. Parties debated at length on the scientific and technical synthesis of the state of, and trends in, biodiversity. They discussed whether to qualify it as "concise," with some arguing that it is already implied in the term synthesis. Some others disagreed, pointing out that both terms are different, as concise meaning brief, and synthesis has an element of an analysis. Parties agreed on "concise synthesis."

Delegates also agreed to include in the elements the interlinkages and contributions of MEAs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the implementation of GBF, while being mindful of not encroaching upon the mandates of other conventions. Parties further agreed to have a brief compilation of the successful case studies and best practices in the implementation of the GBF, in order to inspire others.

In plenary, Co-Chair Voigt-Hanssen presented the CRP on the scientific, technical and technological inputs that should inform the global review of collective progress in the implementation of the GBF (CBD/SBSTTA/25/CRP.7), reporting that it contained a number of brackets.

On elements to be included in the report of the global review, some delegates expressed concern that the draft did not reflect the contact group discussions. In this regard, BRAZIL called to bracket two elements related to: a compilation of the interlinkages and contributions of other MEAs and progress towards the SDGs; and a brief compilation of successful cases and best practices in GBF implementation that provide co-benefits for multiple goals. He then proposed a compilation of successful cases in GBF implementation that provide co-benefits for multiple goals, including MEAs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, taking into account different national circumstances and in line with respective mandates. JAMAICA, AUSTRALIA, CAMEROON and SWITZERLAND noted that the latter suggestion reflects an alternative to the original text, supporting the original text. Delegates were unable to converge on these paragraphs.

In their discussion of an element related to a conclusion exploring options for addressing identified gaps and challenges in implementation, ARGENTINA noted that this was not discussed in the contact group and preferred retaining it in brackets. FINLAND and BELGIUM supported the original formulation. BRAZIL called to qualify that the conclusion should be "in a non-prescriptive manner" and ARGENTINA proposed adding "in a non-punitive manner." This was opposed by some delegations. Chair Benítez called on interested parties to work on a compromise.

DRC supported language proposing recognizing the specific challenges for implementation "of the GBF" for developing countries, with JAMAICA calling for a specific reference to small island developing states and least developed countries.

Chair Benítez requested the Secretariat to prepare an L.doc for consideration on Thursday.

In the Breezeways

As the meeting's conclusion loomed with just half a day remaining, delegates felt the mounting pressure to complete their work. An evening plenary session drove them closer to the finish line. The pace of contact groups and plenary discussions varied significantly with some groups swiftly reaching agreement, while others faced a more arduous journey. Long-standing concerns regarding the mandates of different conventions became contentious topics in numerous contact group discussions.

For anyone working at grassroots level, the inextricable links between biodiversity and climate change is readily apparent. However, at the international policy-making level, the mandates of different MEAs become a constant hindrance to synergy. As one delegate noted, "for over three decades, since the inception of the Rio Conventions, we have worked more or less in silos, but with the GBF, an opportunity has arisen to enhance collaborative efforts." In addition, faced with the mounting evidence from both the IPCC and IPBES on these linkages, some noted that, "we should no longer be concerned about encroaching into the mandates of other MEAs."

Despite these differences, parties gradually found common ground on various issues. Acknowledging the hard work and spirit of cooperation in a contact group, one co-chair concluded, "we often start from optimism, and frequently end with pessimism. Today, however, we end on a positive note." This feeling did not carry over to the plenary session, where delegates labored late into the night.