

Summary Report of the Consultation on Climate-related Geo-engineering relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Side event during the fifteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 15), on 9 November 2011, Montreal, Canada

The side event was organized in order to inform participants of the work of the Secretariat in response to decision X/33 paragraph 9 (l) on climate-related geo-engineering and its impacts on the achievement of the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Presentation

Mr. David Cooper, from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, introduced participants to the requests made to the Executive Secretary in decision X/33. Decision X/33, 9(l) requests the Executive Secretary to compile and synthesize available scientific information, and views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, on the possible impacts of geo-engineering techniques on biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural considerations, and options on definitions and understandings of climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the CBD and make it available for consideration at a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) prior to the eleventh meeting of the COP.

Mr. Cooper presented an overview of the content of the draft study on the impacts of climate related geo-engineering on biological diversity, including:

1. Mandate
2. Scope and features of geo-engineering
3. Climate change and impacts on biodiversity
4. Impacts on biodiversity of SRM techniques
5. Impacts on biodiversity of CDR techniques
6. Associated social, economic and cultural considerations
7. Synthesis

Mr. Cooper informed participants that the draft study will be made available for peer review by the public in November, through a notification and a website, and invited participants to contribute to the review, highlighting that feedback is sought on first draft, including:

- Comments on compilation and synthesis of available scientific information,
- Comments and further inputs to associated social, economic and cultural considerations,
- Additional views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders.

The webpage will also contain key information and resources. A second meeting will take place in January to complete the study.

A second peer review of the revised draft will take place at the end of January, specifically targeted for review by Parties. Upon the completion of the peer review process and further revision, this report will be used in the preparation of a pre-session document to be submitted to SBSTTA-16, with possible recommendations to COP 11.

Comments and suggestions

The following comments and suggestions were made during the discussion following the presentation:

- There is a need to closely consider the use of graphs in the study. Participants generally believe that graphs are useful in summarizing the information contained in the report, but also warned against possible misinterpretation or misuse.
- The context for the study would be important. The potential for geo-engineering technologies to reduce the impacts of climate change on biodiversity is considered in the draft as well as the direct impacts of impacts on biodiversity of the geo-engineering technologies themselves. This sets up the suggestion that geo-engineering should be seen as an alternative to climate change. But there are other alternatives, most obviously emission reductions, but also, perhaps, agro-ecological approaches to land management. In addition, the limitations of technological solutions to complex problems should perhaps be referred to in the report.
- There is a need for clarification regarding the process for the production of the report and next steps. The webpage created for the review of the report will contain information regarding the timeline and process.
- Participants discussed how to better integrate the views of indigenous and local communities (ILCs) and to address social, economic and cultural considerations. Participants suggested extending invitations to ILCs representatives for the next meeting of the liaison group. The Secretariat acknowledged the need to strengthen the section on social, economic and cultural considerations and therefore sought the contribution of participants to that section in particular.
- Participants highlighted the importance of involving people who are likely to be directly affected by climate change and experiments related to geo-engineering. The Secretariat encouraged everyone to actively participate in the peer review process and to forward the invitation to any additional potential reviewers.