

FIFTH TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

7 May 2020, 7.00 a.m. EST

Participants

Presidency: Mr. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt);

Africa: Mr. Eric Okoree (Ghana); Mr. Melesse Maryo (Ethiopia);

Asia and the Pacific: Mr. Vinod Mathur (India); Ms. Leina El-Awadhi (Kuwait);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez (Costa Rica); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Central and Eastern Europe: Ms. Teona Karchava (Georgia); Ms. Elvana Ramaj (Albania); and Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan, substitute for Georgia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Western Europe and Others: Ms. Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); Ms. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand); and Ms. Marie Haraldstad (Norway, substitute for New Zealand for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Ex-officio: Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation; Mr. Hesiquio Benítez (Mexico), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice; and Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada), Co-chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

Incoming COP 15 Presidency: Mr. Liu Ning (China);

Secretariat: Ms. Elizabeth Maruma-Mrema, Acting Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director of Implementation Support Division; Mr. Alexander Shestakov, Director of Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Ms. Gudrun Fosse, Head of Administration, Finance and Conference Services Division, Mr. Ide Ahmed, Budget and Finance Officer; and Mr. David Ainsworth, Public Information Officer.

Opening of the Meeting

1. The teleconference was opened at 7.00 a.m. (Montreal time) by the Chair, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, representative of the President of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Chair welcomed all the Bureau members, and after wishing everyone well during the global pandemic situation, he proceeded to list the five agenda items that would be covered during the call:
 - 1.) Update on preparations for SBSTTA and SBI, and scenarios for dates of WG2020-3 and COP 15;
 - 2.) Briefing from the Co-Chairs on the post-2020 process;
 - 3.) Briefing on the preparations for the UN Summit on Biodiversity;
 - 4.) Update on the status of trust funds under the Convention (including potential implications from a delayed COP);
 - 5.) Update on communications, including the response to COVID-19.

I.) Update on preparations for SBSTTA and SBI, and scenarios for dates of WG2020-3 and COP 15;

2. The Chair then invited the Active Executive Secretary to provide the briefing to the Bureau on the first agenda item.
3. The Acting Executive Secretary expressed her solidarity with the ongoing health situation and noted appreciation to the Bureau for attending the call. She then indicated that the Secretariat was constantly reviewing the situation and remained on full teleworking mode with measures in place to ensure coordination and communication during this challenging time. She advised this would continue based on the guidance of the Government of Quebec and at least until 26 May.
4. She then proceeded to inform the Bureau that the Secretariat had been carrying out work towards the plan of the current dates for SBSTTA and SBI in August. She indicated that since the last meeting of the Bureau, the Secretariat had been busy with a number of virtual meetings, including: a.) Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment (30 March- 3 April); b.) Seventeenth meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (15-17 April); c.) Third meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Nagoya Protocol on ABS (21-23 April); and d.) Fourteenth meeting of the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (20-23 April). The Acting Executive Secretary highlighted that all these meetings would provide important input to SBSTTA and SBI.
5. She also informed the Bureau that the Secretariat had convened a meeting of the Collaborative Partnership on Wildlife Management on 21 April and co-chaired, with WHO, the second meeting of the Interagency Liaison Group on Biodiversity and Health from 4 to 6 May. She indicated that both these meetings focused, among other things, on developing common messages, in light of COVID-19. She also advised the Bureau that the Secretariat had co-chaired the first meeting of the interagency task force on 29 April, preparing for the UN Summit on Biodiversity, as well as participated in an online briefing session for the Bern II Workshop on 26 and 27 March, with UNEP and the Government of Switzerland.
6. She informed the Bureau that the Secretariat was progressing well on the preparation of documents for SBSTTA and SBI.
7. She noted that a determination as to whether or not to maintain the dates for SBSTTA and SBI would be made by mid-June, at the latest. She indicated that given the current situation, it was unlikely that the meetings could take place in August and therefore the Secretariat had been making contingency plans, including looking for facilities for a possible date in late October or early November, while also taking into consideration the meetings under the climate process. She also indicated that, in the event that SBSTTA and SBI are postponed beyond August, the Secretariat would explore options to have some preparatory meetings online. The Acting Executive Secretary emphasized that while at this stage the Secretariat was not ready to move the entire meetings online, it would be useful to explore some options to keep momentum in the work and to begin testing online options that will also enable Parties' familiarity with them. She advised the Bureau that she would report on the results of these options in the next meeting.
8. Finally, she noted that the dates for the WG2020-3, as well as for COP 15 and the concurrent meetings of the Parties to the Protocols would also need to be adjusted. She advised that the Secretariat had been exploring alternative dates with China and Colombia and would continue to do so in consultation with the COP Presidency and the Co-Chairs of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process, and would provide further updates in due course.
9. The Chair thanked the Acting Executive Secretary for the update and noted the proper arrangements and contingencies for future meetings. He then gave the floor to the SBSTTA Chair to provide an update on SBSTTA preparations.
10. The SBSTTA Chair then proceeded to inform the Bureau that the SBSTTA Bureau had held a meeting earlier in April and reported that the preparation of documents was on track. He advised that with the additional time available due to the postponement of the SBSTTA meeting, there was opportunity to give space for peer review for some documents, which would be valuable to enhance

the quality of the documents. A series of keynote presentations were also being considered as well as poster sessions, so the preparations were well advanced for August, and for the moment they would wait to see if the meeting would go ahead as planned.

11. The Chair thanked the SBSTTA Chair for the update on the preparations and then invited the SBI Chair to provide an update.
12. The SBI Chair informed the Bureau that further to the second meeting of the WG2020 in Rome, the Secretariat was revising the annotated agenda, which would be posted this month, to reflect the decisions and requests arising from that meeting. She also reminded the Bureau that further to COP decision 14/29, SBI would undertake a trial phase of an open-ended forum on review of implementation. She clarified that the main objectives of the forum would be to undertake country by country review of the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, to increase transparency regarding action undertaken by Parties, to facilitate peer learning among Parties, and to identify strategic actions to overcome obstacles in national implementation. She highlighted that the open-ended forum would consist of a half-day moderated plenary session during SBI-3. She mentioned that if there was a further delay in SBI-3, she would work with the Secretariat to explore the possibility of undertaking parts of the forum online, as a contingency.
13. The SBI Chair was pleased to inform the Bureau that further to her message in March, five Parties, one from each region, had expressed their interest in participating in the trial phase of the open-ended forum: Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Poland, Guyana and Finland. She also reported that the Secretariat had received voluntary review reports from two countries (Ethiopia and Guyana) for which the deadline was 1 May. She indicated that the Secretariat would send reminders to the countries that have not submitted their reports. She requested the Bureau members to encourage the countries in their regions that had not yet done so, to submit the report as soon as possible. She indicated that the Secretariat had prepared a page on the CBD website where the reports would be posted.
14. The Chair of SBI assured the Bureau that the preparation of the documents for SBI-3 were well underway. She advised them that most of the documents would be posted during June. She noted that a few documents, notably documents for Agenda item 5 (Post-2020), 8 (Cooperation) and 10 (Review Mechanisms), would benefit from a longer period for development, but that they would still be posted six weeks prior to the meeting, as per the rules of procedure. She further assured the Bureau that the documents prepared for Agenda item 5 would explain the linkages between the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the other agenda items related to this process.
15. Finally, she informed the Bureau that, in accordance with decision XIII/3, which decided to establish an Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming to advise the Executive Secretary and the Bureau, she would be forwarding to them the document on Mainstreaming shortly for review on a no-objection basis.
16. The Chair thanked the SBI Chair for the update and asked the Bureau if they had any questions or comments. He noted that the issue of arrangements and contingencies for future meetings would be addressed at their next teleconference in early June.
17. The representative of the incoming Presidency for COP 15 reported that they remained in close communication with the Secretariat with regard to the dates for COP 15, which were under review by their Government. He also informed the Bureau that the United Kingdom, as incoming President of UNFCCC's COP 26, had reached out to them with a view to cooperate with regard to the two COPs. He advised that they would keep the Bureau informed of further developments in this regard.
18. The Bureau expressed appreciation to the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, as well as to the Secretariat and the incoming COP 15 Presidency, for the updates provided. He also expressed interest in the United Kingdom's approach for cooperation and looked forward to receiving more details.

19. In response to a concern raised by a Bureau member, the Chair of SBI assured the Bureau that the intention of the open-ended forum was to promote mutual learning, and that all Parties under review were participating on a voluntary basis.
20. The Secretariat reassured the Bureau that given the continuing uncertainties in the timing of meetings, there would be flexibility regarding the deadlines for requests of the financial support subject to the availability of funds.
21. In response to a question from Bureau member regarding the possibility of having parts of SBSTTA and SBI online, the Secretariat's Senior Legal Officer informed the Bureau of a UNEP-wide study regarding the legal implications of holding intergovernmental meetings virtually. From the study, and from what has been reviewed in the rules of procedure of many different bodies, it would appear there is nothing that prevents holding meetings in virtual form. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau that over the last months, some organizations and international bodies such as the UN General Assembly, have introduced silent procedures or no objection procedures where decisions are circulated to member States, and as long as there is no break in silence, the decision was considered adopted. The Secretariat advised the Bureau that they were learning from the smaller virtual meetings that have been held, and thinking on how certain issues would work with larger meetings, for example translation, access to facilities or equipment, etc. The possibility of having some parts of SBSTTA and SBI online was therefore being explored.
22. In response to the questions and comments from the Bureau, the Secretariat noted that a number of issues of ABS and Biosafety would be addressed by both SBSTTA and SBI, for example risk assessment at SBSTTA, and the complementary post-2020 process of the Cartagena Protocol would be considered at SBI. The issue of Digital Sequencing Information would go directly to WG2020-3.
23. The Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, complementing the response from the Secretariat, assured the Bureau that ABS and Biosafety issues were included in the discussions of the meetings.

II.) Briefing from the Co-Chairs on the post-2020 process;

24. The Chair then moved on to agenda item 2 and asked the Co-chair of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework process to provide an update.
25. The Co-chair made reference to the general update provided to them on 18 April and advised that they have had successful consultations on planning and review, and capacity building. As they now moved to an online process, they were happy to participate in the UNEP/Switzerland briefing session for the Bern II Workshop.
26. The Co-chair expressed that there was very good alignment with the preparations for SBSTTA and SBI. He informed the Bureau that they plan on holding a briefing for delegates at the margins of the meetings to keep people informed. He then indicated that a first version of a scenario note had been circulated to the Bureau on 18 April. In light of some comments received from Bureau members, a second version of the note had been circulated recently. He explained that the objective was to try to explain how the various elements fit together. He advised the Bureau that they looked forward to their comments in order to circulate a final document soon.
27. Regarding preparations for the third meeting of the WG2020, the Co-chair advised the Bureau that they are working closely with the Secretariat and the Government of Colombia. He highlighted that the intention was to prepare a "first draft" of the global biodiversity framework after SBSTTA and SBI, which would be the basis of discussions for WG2020-3.
28. The Co-chair invited comments on how health-related issues would be reflected in the global biodiversity framework, noting that as countries are making decisions on recovery and reactivation of economies, they should seize the opportunity to communicate the importance of having biodiversity considerations. (These issues are reported under agenda item 5, below)

29. The Chair then invited the Bureau for comments and questions, noting himself that indeed many countries were enquiring how the pandemic issue would be integrated to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and how to avoid them in the future.
30. The Bureau thanked the Co-chair for the update and the scenario note that had been circulated. Bureau members firstly emphasized that it was important to remember that SBSTTA would not negotiate updated targets and goals, that the work would focus on the scientific and technical elements of the indicators, to identify gaps, etc.
31. The Bureau was reminded that SBSTTA had an agenda item on biodiversity and health; the document would be prepared in collaboration with WHO, and that a keynote presentation would be held to address this important aspect.
32. The Bureau also noted that in line with the outcome of the Rome meeting, all the elements of the draft post 2020 global biodiversity framework that had been discussed in Rome should be updated and made available for SBI as well as SBSTTA. The Co-chair of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework agreed to proceed accordingly.
33. A Bureau member drew attention to the proposed text for Target 17 on biosafety, provided by the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol.

III.) Briefing on the preparations for the UN Summit on Biodiversity;

34. Moving on to agenda item 3, the Chair then invited the Secretariat to provide an update on the preparations for the UN Summit on Biodiversity.
35. The Deputy Executive Secretary reminded the Bureau of notification 2020-034 issued on 14 April where it informed Parties of the UN General Assembly's resolution to hold a Summit on Biodiversity at the level of Heads of State and Government, to be convened by the President of the General Assembly and held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on the first day of the general debate of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session. The Secretariat reminded the Bureau that the theme of the Summit would be "Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development" and would consist of an opening segment, a plenary segment for general discussion, two Leaders' Dialogues and a closing segment. The dialogues would be held under the following themes: "Addressing biodiversity loss and mainstreaming biodiversity for sustainable development" (Dialogue 1) and "Harnessing science, technology and innovation, capacity-building, access and benefit-sharing, financing and partnerships for biodiversity" (Dialogue 2).
36. He advised the Bureau that, at the request of the President of the General Assembly, the Secretariat is working closely with UNEP to assist with the preparations and to co-chair an interagency task force comprised of DESA, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, FAO, IPBES, IUCN, WWF and the Office of the President of the General Assembly, with the objective to develop a concept note and detailed programme identifying key speakers. The Secretariat further indicated that there would be a joint communications effort, involving the Communication team of UN headquarters and others, including that of the Secretariat, to develop key messages, mainly on how biodiversity supports sustainable development and the importance of mainstreaming in all sectors, among others. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that from the discussions held in New York, there was a determination to go ahead with the General Assembly in September of this year, even if through virtual means. The Secretariat indicated it would provide more details on the modality of the Summit and potential modality of side-events in the next meeting.
37. The Chair thanked the Deputy Executive Secretary for that update. There were no further questions or comments from Bureau members.

VI.) Update on the status of trust funds under the Convention (including potential implications from a delayed COP);

38. The Chair requested the Secretariat to provide an update on the status of trust funds under the Convention.

39. The Budget and Finance Officer then proceeded to explain to the Bureau that the payments for 2019 had been on track with a collection of 13 million USD, which represented 80% of the funding, while the contributions for 2020 were slower than usual with a collection of 6 million USD, which represented 36% of the total contribution for 2020, most likely due to the current situation governments are going through. The updated tables would be available in the CBD website in the coming days. He indicated that with the funds collected and the reserves accumulated from previous years, it is expected to have enough liquidity to operate until the end of 2020.
40. He informed the Bureau that with the postponement of COP to 2021, there were two main issues: 1.) Liquidity: with the projection that the Secretariat would not be receiving additional cash flows during the rest of the year, it would not have enough liquidity to operate until May 2021, and 2.) Budget validity: the current budget approved by COP 14 runs from January 2019 to December 2020, and as per the financial rules, the Secretariat does not have authorization to continue spending on this budget beyond 2020. He indicated that the Secretariat was exploring options, including extending the validity of the 2019-2020 budget if the delay was a short period. A second option would be approving an interim or short-term budget, which was being explored in consultation with Nairobi and New York and would entail holding a virtual COP or silent procedure to address this matter. The Secretariat clarified that both these options would require the accreditation of participants, as it does not have permanent missions like UNEA or UNGA. A third option would be a note verbale issued by the Executive Director of UNEP. The Secretariat advised it would need more time to look into these options and once it had a clear view of when COP would take place, it would provide the Bureau with recommendations.
41. The Bureau thanked the Secretariat for the explanation of the financial picture and asked that any savings that have been incurred due to holding virtual meetings in the past weeks, be included in the tables and information to be provided. The Bureau also reminded the Secretariat to provide information related to work done in regard to the modalities of participation of least developing countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDs) to the CBD meetings, in order to have more predictable funding.
42. The Secretariat responded that it would be including in the financial statements the actual expenditure and any unspent amounts due to the lockdown and slowing down of operations. It also informed the Bureau that regarding the participation of LDCs and SIDs to CBD official meetings, agenda item 4 of SBI would be holding a discussion on this issue.
43. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for these updates. There were no questions or comments from Bureau members.

V.) Update on communications including the response to COVID-19.

44. Under agenda item 3, various members of the Bureau emphasized the importance of preparing timely and strong messages, even before SBSTTA and SBI, on the connections between biodiversity loss and the current pandemic, and to highlight it as a crucial issue. They emphasized the need to address wildlife management, and also sustainable use and livelihoods. The Bureau acknowledged the social media efforts of the Secretariat and other partners, such as IPBES and other Biodiversity-related Conventions, and asked the Secretariat to continue with the good work in this regard.
45. The Deputy Executive Secretary advised the Bureau that many efforts around communication and messaging had been done regarding the links between biodiversity loss, human health and the current pandemic, including continued collaboration with WHO. He reported that the Secretariat had recently co-chaired with WHO a meeting of the Interagency Liaison Group on Biodiversity and Health, including a session devoted to this issue. Further, he indicated that the Acting Executive Secretary had developed a strong message for World Health Day, as well as offered several interviews with notable media sources. He also informed the Bureau of the Secretary General's request to develop a UN wide socio-economic response to post-COVID-19, to which the Secretariat made a significant contribution on the UNEP response, highlighting that a chapter was dedicated to

acknowledging the importance of taking into consideration biodiversity and nature in post-pandemic responses. SBSTTA would further discuss biodiversity-health linkages the issue at its upcoming meeting.

46. Under this agenda item, the Public Information Officer provided an update on the communications work of the Secretariat. He began by indicating that the world was in a dynamic and evolving situation, therefore the opportunities for communications and specific themes have also been evolving. At first, the emphasis was on working together, solidarity and having societies come together to fight the pandemic. Then it moved on to the role of biodiversity and wildlife interactions, and the links between the loss of biodiversity and the emergence of pandemics. Then messages looked at the role of biodiversity and human health, and now in the context of recovery, the messages have been around the importance of a green economy and green employment. The Secretariat mentioned the several interviews it has held with important media outlets, as well as collaboration within the UN system. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it has done strong work on social media, including on how to build back better. It noted that the current situation was an opportunity but when trying to take over the media space, the right moment had to be found as there was a lot of discussion happening. The Secretariat informed the Bureau of an open editorial piece it is preparing along with UNCCD and UNFCCC on the importance of these environmental agendas. It also informed the Bureau of work on a communication piece with the Executive Secretary of IPBES, and of an important interview with Reuters.
47. The Public Information Officer also shared the status of the preparations for the International Day for Biological Diversity and reminded the Bureau that it would be important to mobilize Parties for strong messages on this day. Although the Secretariat does not expect physical celebrations to take place, it expressed hope for strong online messaging. The Secretariat then reminded the Bureau of some content it had received and looked forward to feedback from them on ways to keep pushing the messages out. Lastly, the Secretariat emphasized that it would ensure the messages established linkages with food security, poverty and unemployment, which were the main global concerns for the moment.
48. The Chair thanked the Secretariat. There were no further questions or comments from the Bureau members.

Closing of the meeting

49. No other issues were raised.
50. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and advised the Bureau that the next meeting would take place on the week of 8 June.
51. The call was adjourned at 9.40 a.m.