



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

Distr.
FINAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/Bur/9/2
20 October 2020

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Ninth Teleconference

7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. EST

1, 8 and 15 October 2020

**MINUTES OF THE NINTH TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD**

1. The ninth inter-sessional teleconference of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties since the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and concurrent meetings of the Parties to the Protocols in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 2018, took place on 1, 8 and 15 October 2020 via GotoMeeting.

2. The teleconferences were attended by the following members of the COP Bureau and substitutes. (In the case that a person did not attend all three sessions, attendance on is indicated by a, b or c, respectively):

Presidency: Mr. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt);

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

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

Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Ms Eugenia Montezuma (Costa Rica, representing H.E. Minister Andrea Meza Murillo); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

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

Western Europe and Others: Ms. Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); Ms. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand) (a,b); 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; Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada) and Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda), Co-chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

Observers: Mr. Liu Ning (China) and Ms. Yueyu Zou (China)(c), COP 15 host representatives; Mr. Ayman Amin (Egypt)(a,b);

3. The meeting was attended by the following members of the SBSTTA Bureau and substitutes for discussions on agenda items 4, 5 and 6:

Africa: Ms. Marie-May Muzungaile (Seychelles)(a,b); Mr. Moustafa M. A. Fouda (Egypt, substitute for Morocco for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Asia and the Pacific: Ms. Gwen Sisior (Palau)(c);

Central and Eastern Europe: Ms. Senka Barudanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mr. Volodymyr Domashlinets (Ukraine); Mr. Dzmitry Lukashanets (Belarus, substitute for Ukraine and Bosnia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol)(b);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Mr. Adams Toussaint (Saint Lucia) (a,c); Ms. Helena Brown (Antigua and Barbuda, substitute for Saint Lucia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Western Europe and Others: Mrs. Marina von Weissenberg (Finland), Ms. Tia Stevens (Australia)(a,c), Mr. Gaute Voigt-Hanssen (Norway, substitute for Australia for matters related to the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols);

Regrets were provided by Mr. Larbi Sbai (Morocco) and Ms. Kongchay Phimmakong (Lao PDR);

4. The Secretariat was represented by: Ms. Elizabeth Maruma-Mrema, Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director of Implementation Support Division; Mr. Alexander Shestakov, Director, Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Mr. Wataru Suzuki, Global Coordinator of the Japan Biodiversity Fund; Mr. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer; Ms. Gudrun Fosse, Head of Administration, Finance and Conference Services Division; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety Protocol Unit; Mr. Taukondjo Shikongo, Head, Nagoya Protocol Unit; Mr. Ide Ahmed, Finance Officer; and Ms. Catalina Santamaria, Senior Programme Officer, were also present in all three teleconferences.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. The teleconference was opened on 1 October 2020 at 7.00 am Montreal time, by the Chair, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, representative of the President of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Chair began by expressing his condolences to the Bureau member from Kuwait on the passing of the Emir. He acknowledged the difficult time of the meeting for some regions and expressed appreciation to the Bureau members for their understanding. Before inviting the Executive Secretary to make opening remarks, he noted with encouragement the high-level of attention that biodiversity had received in the lead-up to the UN Summit for Biodiversity.

6. The Executive Secretary made brief opening remarks, congratulating and thanking the Bureau members for the active engagement of their countries in the Summit. She also noted that the successful launch of the 5th Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-5) had been a key moment that brought a lot of attention to biodiversity. She also noted that the virtual sessions held last month had been a new experience for all with a lot of lessons learned, and despite some challenges, she expressed confidence that the experience would help plan future meetings.

7. Brief opening remarks were also made at the resumed sessions on 8 and 15 October.

ITEM 2. THE AGENDA

8. The Chair introduced the provisional agenda, and after no objection from the Bureau, the provisional agenda was adopted.

ITEM 3. INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON THE BUDGET FOR 2021

9. The Chair thanked the Bureau for submitting the names of representatives for the informal budget group and referred to the list that had been circulated. He also thanked the Secretariat for providing a short note on scenarios that clarified what would happen should the silence be broken. Finally, he proposed Ambassador Spencer Thomas from Grenada to chair the informal group, considering his vast experience in previous COPs.

10. The Bureau supported the nomination of Ambassador Spencer Thomas from Grenada as chair of the informal budget group and welcomed the list of nominations of members of the group, noting that it was

an open process. The Bureau agreed that it would be important to circulate with Parties the note on scenarios if the silence was broken so that there is a clear understanding with all Parties on how to proceed, should the need arise.

11. In response to the questions and comments from the Bureau, the Secretariat clarified that the role of the Bureau during the ExCOP would be to step in should a problem arise and to ensure that communication between the informal budget group and their broader regional constituency is smooth. The Secretariat also noted that the chair of the informal group would be regularly reporting to the Bureau, just as would happen during physical meetings.

12. The Secretariat also agreed to clarify the status of credentials of representatives in the case the meeting needs to be extended, in light of past practices.¹

13. At its session of 8 October 2020, the Chair informed the Bureaux that he had reached out to Ambassador Spencer Thomas, Chair of the informal budget group and that the Secretariat had issued a notification on 6 October announcing the establishment of the group. He advised that Ambassador Thomas would have his first discussion with the Group on Monday, 12 October 2020 and would update the Bureau thereafter.

14. At its session on 15 October, the Bureau heard a report from Ambassador Thomas, the Chair of the informal group, to facilitate preparation of the interim budget.

15. Ambassador Thomas began by noting that the informal group had met on 12 October and would meet again on 19 and 26 October with the expectation to finish the work in those additional meetings. Attempting to replicate the modalities that would take place in physical meetings, the Chair of the informal group advised that the first meeting allowed a presentation from the Secretariat followed by request for more information from the group. He noted that three main areas of interest were identified in the meeting, which included: a) clarity on travel costs and drivers of costs, staff costs, general operating costs and the cost of official meetings and unspent balances; b) he noted emerging consensus on the roll-over of the funds from 2019 to 2020 for uncompleted tasks, and a general acceptance of the need for an interim budget for 2021. He also noted there was general agreement that COP 14 decisions were to be respected, as well as acceptance of the shared ratios for the Convention and its Protocols; and c) he noted that there was one concern regarding premature discussions on the budget without first knowing the modalities and when the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies would take place, as they would need to be adequately reflected in the budget.

16. On behalf of the Bureau, the Chair thanked Ambassador Thomas for accepting the challenge of steering the discussions on the budget, and expressed full confidence that, under his guidance, the group would arrive to a successful conclusion.

17. The Executive Secretary also expressed her appreciation to Ambassador Thomas and all members of the informal budget group. In preparation for the ExCOP, she also thanked those Parties that had already submitted their credentials and asked Bureau members to remind their respective regions about this important requirement.

ITEM 4. UPDATE ON POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK PROCESS

18. The Chair invited the SBSTTA Bureau members to join the discussion of this and the following agenda item (Consideration for convening of online meetings). He then invited the Co-chairs of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework process to provide a brief update.

19. Mr. Basile van Havre and Mr. Francis Ogwal, Co-chairs of the Working Group began by presenting the Bureaux with a proposal on a new set of monthly “deep dives” on specific issues in lieu of the stakeholder forums. They explained that these monthly webinars would focus on an idea or concept and would be an opportunity for Parties and stakeholders to exchange views. They clearly emphasized these webinars would not be negotiations. They also discussed the idea of a multiple pass online review process

¹ the Secretariat advises that, in the event that the extraordinary meeting is extended, the Bureau would extend the validity of the credentials (except in the event that they are withdrawn by the Party concerned).

to accomplish the work done by breakout groups during physical meetings. Finally, they informed the Bureaux that they held regular briefings with the SBSTTA and SBI Chairs, as well as the Secretariat, to ensure there was ongoing intersessional coordination.

20. The Bureaux welcomed the forward thinking of the Co-chairs on how to move the work along under the difficult circumstances. They requested more detailed information on how these proposals would work to ensure everyone would participate, what would be the outcomes, estimates of the additional cost, among others. The Co-chairs agreed to further work on the concept note for the proposed “deep dive” sessions in light of the comments and questions raised by members of the Bureau.

ITEM 5 & 6. CONSIDERATION OF CONVENING MEETINGS ONLINE AND PREPARATIONS FOR SBI 3

21. The Chair began by noting the SBSTTA Bureau had already held a discussion on this issue at their meeting on 23 September and invited the Chair of the SBSTTA to provide an update focused on the general approach.

22. The Chair of SBSTTA noted that the members of the SBSTTA Bureau were of the idea of doing a first reading of as many agenda items as possible through virtual meetings, in order to make progress on this matter. He suggested the possibility of an additional day to address difficult issues but acknowledged there could be budgetary implications.

23. Before opening the floor for comments and questions on this matter, the Chair asked the SBI Chair to provide a brief update on the preparations for SBI 3.

24. The SBI Chair began by informing the Bureau on the status of documents, indicating that most documents had been prepared and were in the process of being uploaded to the SBI 3 webpage. She then offered reflections on the trial phase of an open-ended forum on review of implementation that took place during the special virtual sessions in September. After highlighting that overall it had been a positive experience, she advised that the Secretariat would be preparing a report on the results of an online survey of the virtual sessions and requested the Bureau to decide if there is still a need to convene a physical meeting or if the online forum was enough. Finally, the SBI Chair noted that based on the learning experience from the September special sessions, she thought an online SBI meeting would be possible, emphasizing it would be done in a step by step process.

25. Members of the Bureaux engaged in an active discussion where some members expressed the need to advance with the work and keep the momentum going, especially when there was no clarity as to when a physical meeting would take place given the ongoing global pandemic. Others expressed the critical importance of leaving no one behind and ensuring all Parties can fully participate in an online format. Some members expressed concern regarding technical issues, the short time to accommodate statements and the lack of confidence of some Parties to formally open the meetings and conduct negotiations online, as they consider more familiarity with the process and platform is needed.

26. The Secretariat assured the Bureaux that all the rules would be respected, emphasizing that all Parties would be able to speak on all agenda items, including continuing the list in the following session if needed. The Secretariat stressed that no negotiations would take place to give confidence to the Parties that if a problem arises, they can resume discussions at the physical meetings.

27. As a possible solution, it was proposed that the online meetings accommodate only the first reading of the agenda items with no consideration of CRPs or L-documents. However, as the Bureaux could not reach a consensus, they agreed to reconvene their meeting on 8 October 2020 at the same time in order to allow members to continue to consult with their regions on this new proposal. They requested the Secretariat, in the meantime, to look into practices in other UN processes to see how they have proceeded.

28. **The meeting of the SBSTTA and COP Bureaux reconvened on 8 October 2020 at 7:00 a.m. EST to further consider this item.** The Chair began by making reference to the updated explanatory note by the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, and the Secretariat and invited the Deputy Executive Secretary to offer a brief explanation on the updates made on the note.

29. The Deputy Executive Secretary highlighted the main changes reflected in the document and noted that two main options had now been provided for the consideration of the Bureaux:

- Option A: virtual meetings of SBI at the end of November (30 November - 5 December 2020) and SBSTTA in December (10 - 17 December (with break on December 12-13)).
- Option B: a two-day informal virtual pre-session meeting in November 24-25, SBSTTA in December (same dates as above), with SBI postponed to the end of January.

30. The Chair opened the floor for comments. Members of the Bureaux thanked the Secretariat for updating the note and engaged in an exchange of views and positions regarding the two options provided in the note. As some members expressed the same concerns mentioned before, there was no consensus on option A. However, many members expressed support for option B and the Bureaux agreed to explore this option in more depth, including a two-day informal virtual pre-session meeting in November. To this end, the Bureaux agreed to reconvene their meeting on 15 October 2020, to further discuss the details. Noting that the SBSTTA Bureau was to meet shortly, the Chair invited the SBSTTA Bureau to consider this matter and develop ideas for the informal meeting.

31. The meeting of the SBSTTA and COP Bureaux once again reconvened to discuss this matter on 15 October 2020 at 7:20 a.m. EST.

32. The Chair recalled the discussions at the earlier joint session of the Bureaux on 8 October 2020. He noted that SBSTTA Bureau had met on Tuesday, 13 October and invited its chair, Mr. Hesiquio Benitez to update the joint session on their deliberations.

33. The SBSTTA Chair began by noting that there was preference in the SBSTTA Bureau for option B, including a formal online meeting of SBSTTA in December 2020. Reiterating their sentiment for the need for progress in the spirit following the UN Summit on Biodiversity, he informed the participants that the SBSTTA Bureau decided, after careful consideration of the concerns of all Parties, to go forward with a formal virtual meeting of SBSTTA 24 in December and in accordance to the conditions set in the note provided by the Secretariat. He noted that the decision to organize a formal meeting of SBSTTA 24 in an online format was by consensus, with no objections from any SBSTTA Bureau member, and indicating clearly that it was without prejudice for the modalities for the subsequent session of the meeting in 2021. The modalities for the resumed and any subsequent sessions would be decided through an explicit decision, case by case, by the SBSTTA Bureau, in light of the experience of the first session. This language is included in the minutes of the SBSTTA Bureau meeting to address concerns previously expressed by some Parties through some Bureau members. He noted that the SBSTTA Bureau would meet again shortly to determine the organization of work.

34. Regarding the informal online session in November, the SBSTTA Chair informed the participants that the SBSTTA Bureau also agreed that it would be useful to hold such as session prior to the formal online meeting of SBSTTA in December to test all modalities, with the understanding that it would be a mock session with no real negotiations or outcomes. He proposed the modalities of the meetings and noted that the topic should be of interest to both SBI and SBSTTA and therefore proposed a topic on the interlinkages between COVID-19, biodiversity and the One Health approach. The full statement of the SBSTTA Chair is provided in the Annex.

35. The Chair congratulated the SBSTTA Chair and the SBSTTA Bureau on their very productive meeting and addressed the two main conclusions in turn.

36. Concerning the decision of the SBSTTA Bureau to move forward with a virtual meeting in December, **the Joint meeting of the COP and SBSTTA Bureaux took note of the decision of the SBSTTA Bureau to convene a first session of SBSTTA 24 virtually, during the period 10-17 December 2020.** This would be a formal meeting and it would consist only of a first reading. It was understood that the SBSTTA Bureau would meet again shortly to determine the organization of work.

37. The Chair noted that the SBSTTA Bureau had carefully considered the concerns of all Parties and he welcomed its decision and the care taken to accommodate the concerns. He noted that no CRPs would be addressed at this first meeting. Rather, the first reading would provide the basis for the development of CRPs or non-papers, at the discretion of the SBSTTA Chair, as per usual practice. He noted that the

SBSTTA Bureau proposed to move forward step by step; this first session would be without prejudice to the modalities of the resumed session which would be determined later in another meeting of the SBSTTA Bureau.

38. Concerning the proposal of the SBSTTA Bureau for a topic for the informal meeting in November, the Chair noted the SBSTTA Bureau's proposed topic for the discussions to be on the interlinkages between COVID-19, biodiversity and the One Health approach. This topic would be relevant to both SBSTTA and SBI. The SBI Chair supported this proposal. Other members of the Bureau also supported the proposal, noting that other holistic approaches, alongside One Health, should be considered in line with previous COP decisions on this matter. The Chair requested the Secretariat, in consultation with the SBI and SBSTTA Chairs, to finalize the topic and to prepare a very short concept note, taking into account the comments made, and to make the necessary logistical arrangements for the informal meeting.

39. Turning to the way forward for SBI, the Chair recalled that in option B, that was initially considered at the previous joint session, it was envisaged that SBI would be held early next year. However, no final decision was made on this item. He invited the SBI Chair to provide any further views on the matter.

40. The SBI Chair expressed her appreciation to all Bureau members for all the views expressed on this matter in earlier meetings of the Bureau. She noted that views were useful in order to find solutions. She also noted the very useful report from the SBSTTA Bureau. She emphasized that it was important to proceed in a very careful manner, but at the same time she noted the need to move forward. She further noted that the informal virtual meeting ahead of the formal SBSTTA meeting would allow all participants to become more familiar with both the virtual platform and with the procedure that will be followed in the formal meetings and help build confidence in the platform and the process.

41. The SBI Chair proposed for SBI to move forward as per option B in the updated note presented to both Bureaux prior to their meeting held on 8 October 2020. In that regard she proposed the holding of a formal session of SBI-3 virtually in early 2021, for first readings of the agenda items only and with all the safeguards listed in the updated note. She noted the need to hold another Bureau meeting in the near future to determine the agenda items and the organization of work of this first session, as well as the exact dates of the session.

42. The SBI Chair then invited comments from Bureau members. During the discussion, Bureau members generally concurred with the need to move forward along the lines proposed by the SBI Chair. They also noted that it would be desirable for SBI and SBSTTA to proceed in a similar manner. However, some Bureau members noted that a small number of Parties in their respective region still had strong concerns about holding formal meetings virtually.

43. Following the discussion, the Chair noted that there had been many discussions on this matter at several sessions of the COP Bureau and of the Joint Bureaux. While underlining the need to move in a very careful and cautious manner, he also stressed the need to implement the programme of work as decided by the COP. He also noted that some Parties still have some concerns about proceeding with virtual meetings. To ensure that we continue to listen to these concerns, and respond to them, he announced that, together with the Chair of SBSTTA and the Chair of SBI, he would convene a series of regional briefings, with the support of the Secretariat. He requested the Secretariat to set-up a schedule for these briefings taking into account the time differences, which will then be shared with the COP and SBSTTA bureau members for further distribution to their respective regions. He reiterated the imperative of ensuring that no one is left behind and the need to implement all the safeguards that have already been set out in the note prepared by the Secretariat with the SBI and SBSTTA Chairs. A member of the Bureau noted that it would be preferable that these regional briefings take place before any final decision is made to proceed with the meetings.

44. At the request of a Bureau member, the Senior Legal Officer clarified that according to the rules of procedure and established practice, the Secretariat has the responsibility to organize meetings mandated by the COP, in consultation with the President, or the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, as appropriate. In each case, the President or Chair will take into account the advice of the respective Bureau.

ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS

45. Under this agenda item, the representative of China reminded Parties that COP 15 was currently scheduled for 17 – 30 May 2021. It was noted that the COP Bureau would have to address, at a later meeting, the dates of COP 15, in light of the changes to the dates of the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies.

ITEM 8. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

46. The Chair indicated that he would consult with the Chairs of SBI and SBSTTA and the Secretariat to determine the timing and agenda of the next meetings.

47. The Chair thanked the participants for the valuable discussions and closed the meeting on 15 October 2020 at 8:56 a.m.

Annex 1

Report of the SBSTTA Chair to the Joint meeting of the COP and SBSTTA Bureau

15 October 2020.

Mr. Hesiquio Benitez, SBSTTA Chair, provided a briefing on the deliberations of the meeting of the SBSTTA Bureau on Tuesday, 13 October.:

With regard to the convening of SBSTTA-24,

The SBSTTA Chair noted that the SBSTTA Bureau had:

- a) reiterated the need for a progress including in line with the spirit of the UN Biodiversity Summit and decided to organise online a formal SBSTTA-24 meeting in the period 10-17 December 2020
- b) agreed with the updated note distributed to both Bureaux prior the last meeting and decided that
- c) the meeting would include **only the first reading** on pre-session documents for identified agenda items,
- d) no CRPs would be considered at the meeting,
- e) all Parties would have an opportunity to speak on each agenda item,
- f) all statements would be recorded (and available online) and all written submissions will be made available online
- g) The SBSTTA rules of procedure would be followed.
- h) The Bureau agreed by consensus, with no objections of any bureau member to proceed with the formal online meeting under the following condition to be clearly expressed in the decision of both Bureaux: “the Decision to organise a formal session of the twenty-fourth meeting of the SBSTTA in an online format is without prejudice for the modalities for the subsequent sessions of the meeting in 2021. The modalities for the resumed and any subsequent sessions would be decided through an explicit decision, case by case, by the Bureau, in light of the experience of the first session.” This condition was included as an intent hoping to address concerns expressed previously by some parties through some bureau members.
- i) The SBSTTA Bureau would decide on the organisation of work and items to be considered at this online meeting at the next Bureau meeting

With regard to Preparatory online informal meeting,

The SBSTTA Chair reported that the SBSTTA Bureau had agreed on the importance to have informal online session prior to the formal meeting to test all modalities which are planned for the formal meeting and suggested a two-day meeting. He outlined the suggested modalities for the meeting.

The SBSTTA bureau had proposed that:

- a) The session would be informal, with no negotiations, no outcomes or any type of conclusions coming out of the meeting. A procedural report may be prepared;
- b) The meeting would fully replicate the modalities and elements of the formal meeting as per the Updated proposal on Online Meetings of the CBD Subsidiary Bodies presented to and discussed by COP and SBSTTA Bureaux;
- c) One specific topic, as agreed by both Bureaux, would be discussed at the meeting with this topic being not exactly as an agenda items of SBSTTA or SBI but of interest for everyone and related to the agendas of both bodies;
- d) All Parties would be provided with an opportunity to speak with the priority given first to the regions and groups, then individual delegations. Good number of observers will also be accommodated;

- e) The SBI or SBSTTA Chair would open the meeting followed by sort (5 min) introduction of the agenda item (any topic as selected for the informal session from agenda items of a subsidiary body(ies)) by the SCBD similar to the ordinary session of the physical meeting;
- f) As appropriate, the Chair would invite an identified expert to deliver a keynote statement (7-15 min) similar to the ordinary session of the physical meeting. The statement would be pre-recorded and played during the meeting with translation into all 6 UN languages. The pre-recorded statement will also be available 5 days ahead of the session;
- g) The Chair would first call for Party representatives of regional and other groups to speak for 6 min each (in alphabetical order) followed by other participants following the usual sequence: Parties, other governments, IGOs, IPLC, women's organizations, youth, NGOs. Every speaker will have 3 min for an intervention;
- h) If there were still Parties in the queue at the end of the two hours on the first day, they would be carried over to the second day (as per usual practice during physical meetings);
- i) The meeting would be closed on the first day if there would be no more requests for the floor.