



Convention on Biological Diversity

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

7:00am to 8:45am EST
17 December 2020

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

1. The thirteenth 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 17 December 2020 via GotoMeeting.

2. The teleconference was attended by the following members of the COP Bureau and substitutes:

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); Ms Rita Zaghoul (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);

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; and Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada), Co-chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

Observers: Mr. Liu Ning (China) and Ms. Yueyu Zou (China), COP 15 host representatives.

Regrets: Ms. Elvana Ramaj (Albania), Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan, substitute for Georgia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol); Mr. Francis Ogwal (Uganda), Co-chair of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

3. The Secretariat was represented 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. Worku Yifru, Senior Legal Officer; Ms. Wadzanayi Mandivenyi, Head, Biosafety Protocol Unit; Mr. Taukondjo Shikongo, Head, Nagoya Protocol Unit; and Ms. Catalina Santamaria, Senior Programme Officer.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. The teleconference was opened on 17 December 2020 at 7:00am EST by Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, representative of the President of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Chair began by welcoming the Bureau members and congratulating all for the successful outcomes of the extraordinary meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and its Protocols. He also congratulated the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, as well as the Secretariat, for the very successful virtual sessions that took place in the prior days. He noted that in today's meeting, the Bureau would review the options for the timetable of meetings in the coming year. He then invited the Executive Secretary to say a few words.

4. The Executive Secretary thanked the Bureau for their support for the extraordinary meetings and informed the Bureau that the Secretariat was currently working to issue the necessary invoices to Parties before the end of the year. She also thanked the SBSTTA and SBI Chairs, as well as her team in the Secretariat, for ensuring the recent informal session was a success.

ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

ITEM 3. UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR MEETINGS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES

6. The Chair noted that following the successful convening of the virtual sessions the past two days, the Bureau could confidently move ahead with the preparations for the meetings of the Subsidiary Bodies, as set out in the proposal by COP President H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, and that Parties would be informed of this. Referring to the documents circulated for the meeting, he informed the Bureau that the meeting would address the start dates for the first of those meetings (informal sessions of SBSTTA and SBI), and that they would come back to the details in the New Year. He then invited the Secretariat, on behalf of the SBSTTA Chair, to provide a briefing on the recent meeting of the SBSTTA Bureau.

7. Mr. Alexander Shestakov, on behalf of the SBSTTA Chair, informed the participants that the outcomes of the SBSTTA Bureau meeting, which had met the previous week, decided on several issues related to the preparation of the informal session of SBSTTA. He noted that they agreed the meeting could start in the week commencing 15 February 2020 and depending on funding, it could go on either for six or ten working days. He, however, highlighted that there could be a potential overlap with UNEA (22-23 February) in case the meeting went on for ten days, and a suggestion was thus made not to hold the sessions during those two days and instead reconvene right after, in order to avoid overlap.

8. The Deputy Executive Secretary advised the Bureau that for the Secretariat to make the necessary arrangements, as well as for Parties to make their arrangements for this meeting, he hoped the Bureau could agree at that meeting also the dates for the SBI informal session. He informed the Bureau that the Secretariat had been discussing with interpreters the possibility of resuming three-hour slots, but nothing had been yet finalized. This option remains open as an extra hour of interpretation per day for six days would still be less costly than ten days of interpretation.

9. At the invitation of the Chair for comments or questions, the Bureau congratulated the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI, as well as the Secretariat, for the successful outcomes of the two-day informal virtual session that had just taken place. Some members of the Bureau noted that although the platform had improved, the connectivity issues that many countries face continued to pose a challenge for their effective participation in virtual meetings, although this was not something that could necessarily be solved by the Secretariat or the platform. Therefore, there remained a preference for physical, or possibly, hybrid meetings.

10. In response to these comments from the Bureau, the Secretariat clarified that they would continue to work closely with the Parties to try to overcome issues as far as is possible. The Secretariat noted that in the recent session, all Parties, with one exception, who asked for the floor were able to deliver their statements. In a few cases where Parties experienced technical issues that interrupted their intervention, they were able to come back and complete their intervention. The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it would also be uploading all statements on the meeting website as requested. It noted that the number of

registrations of Parties was low with less than 100 countries registered. In response to a question from a Bureau member, the Secretariat confirmed it would be issuing a survey the following Monday in order to obtain feedback of the experience from the Parties.

11. The SBI Chair thanked the Bureau for their valuable comments and feedback. She noted that there was still room for improvement and hoped that all would actively participate in the survey. She then highlighted that the Bureau needed to make a decision on the start date of the informal session of SBI next year. In that regard, she proposed that since the dates of the informal session of SBSTTA had already been decided, and in keeping with the same practice to avoid confusion, she proposed to start the informal session of SBI in the week commencing 8 March 2021. The Bureau had no objection regarding this date. The SBI Chair reiterated some elements of the session but indicated these would be discussed in more detail at the next Bureau meeting. She drew attention to the information note circulated to the Bureau members in order to prepare for the discussion at the next meeting and noted that further elaboration of the organization of work was dependent on other issues, including the number of hours for interpretation each day.

12. The Bureau emphasized once again the importance of making the most efficient use of time in these sessions. It also noted that the different time zones continue to be an issue of concern for many regions and could have been a reason for the low number of registered Parties. The Bureau highlighted the importance of having SBSTTA and SBI proceed with the preparation and organization of their meetings in the same way and reminded the Secretariat that documents need to be ready and posted six weeks before the sessions, in order to ensure effective participation from the Parties.

13. In response to the comments made by the Bureau, the Secretariat confirmed no keynote speeches would be made during the informal sessions in order to allow more time for interventions. Regarding the time zones, it noted that it had performed a detailed analysis, which could be circulated, on the time that was least inconvenient for all Parties but invited the Bureau to explore if there were better alternatives. Furthermore, the Bureau was advised that most documents for SBI were already posted, with the exception of four documents which would be posted in January before the six-week mark.

14. With respect to the calendar of meetings beyond the informal sessions of SBSTTA and SBI, the Deputy Executive Secretary referred to the two tables with timelines that had been circulated to the Bureau members. He noted that next year would be very busy for everyone with a number of meetings taking place. He highlighted, as had been already acknowledged by the Bureau, that it would be improbable that SBSTTA 24, SBI 3 and WG2020 3 could be completed in time to hold COP 15 in May, and as it had been previously reported to the Bureau, discussions were ongoing with the host government in this regard.

15. The representative of the COP 15 host noted that the dates for COP 15 were very important to the Government of China. He highlighted the fact that the current global situation was not improving, and that careful thought needs to be given when it comes to considering COP dates to ensure all Parties will be ready to join the meeting. In this regard, China and the Secretariat will stay in close contact to finalize the discussions on alternative dates and then bring the provisional dates to the Bureau for further consideration.

16. To ensure clarity, the Chair recapitulated the discussions and decisions of the Bureau, firstly indicating that the informal session of SBI would take place on the week commencing 8 March, and that the intention would be to allow Parties and observers to make statements on each of the items of the SBSTTA and SBI agenda. He noted that the length of the meeting and the timing of the daily sessions would be fixed once they had more information from the Secretariat on the options available for interpretation. He also noted that the rest of the timetable remained provisional but would allow the Secretariat to plan ahead, taking into account the discussions held. Finally, he indicated that extrabudgetary resources would be needed and asked the Bureau to consult with their regions and assist with raising these additional funds that would be required for SBSTTA and SBI.

ITEM 8. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

17. At the invitation of the Chair, the Executive Secretary made closing remarks. She noted that despite the many challenges faced in this exceptional year, the Secretariat had been able to fulfill its mandate and implement most programmes of work. She noted the benefits of the extended time in order to prepare and consult, and the efforts in keeping momentum and awareness for the biodiversity agenda. She thanked the

SBSTTA Chair and its Bureau, the SBI Chair and the COP Bureau, and the Co-chairs of the global biodiversity framework for their continued support and thanked her team at the Secretariat for their dedication and hard work despite the challenges. She wished all participants a restful and happy holiday season.

18. The Chair also thanked the Bureau and all participants for their efforts and support during this challenging year, noting that it was perhaps the first time the Bureau had met over ten times in one year. He wishes all participants a safe, restful and peaceful holiday season and looked forward to their continued support in 2021. The Chair closed the meeting at 8:45am EST.