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BRAINSTORMING MEETING OF SBSTTA CHAIRS
ON WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY
Paris, 24-25 July 2006

REPORT OF THE BRAINSTORMING MEETING OF CHAIRS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE (SBSTTA) ON WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY

INTRODUCTION

1. With financial support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Government of Denmark, and in consultation with the Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), a brainstorming meeting of the past, present and future Chairs of SBSTTA was convened to identify ways and means to enhance the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body, as the Convention enters an enhanced phase of implementation and Parties aim to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target. By distilling past experience of SBSTTA, the meeting aimed to strengthen the scientific underpinnings of the Convention and to make concrete proposals on how to operationalize the requests of the Conference of the Parties contained in decision VIII/10 on the Operation of the Convention.
2. The meeting was hosted by the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle in Paris, France on 24 and 25 July 2006.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. The meeting was opened, under the chairmanship of Mr. Bakary Kante, Director of the Division of Environmental Conventions of the United Nations Environment Programme, with welcome addresses by Mr. Galley, Director of the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle, Paris; H.E. Mr. Denys Gauer, Ambassador of France for the Environment; Mr. Bakary Kante, speaking in his capacity as representative of the Executive Director of UNEP; Mr. Christian Prip, current Chair of SBSTTA; and Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
4. In his statement, Mr. Galley briefly recalled the history of the Muséum and described its role for biodiversity in France as a place where various activities are being carried out to discover, understand and contribute to the conservation of Earth's natural and cultural diversity, and to enhance public awareness as a contribution to the 2010 Biodiversity Target. In addition, the Muséum is the French node of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).
5. Recalling President Chirac's concern about the unacceptable current rate of biodiversity loss, and that the Convention is a key instrument for addressing biodiversity loss, H.E. Mr. Denys Gauer noted that a great deal of the weaknesses of the functioning of the CBD are in the limited scientific expertise and data with related scientific messages that could enhance awareness about biodiversity loss and how to

address its continued loss. He then described the relevance and potential of the International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMOSEB) being considered through an international consultation. He reiterated France's support to the mechanism and saluted the efforts undertaken by the Executive Secretary and the Chairs of SBSTTA to identify ways and means to improve the effectiveness of SBSTTA.

6. Mr. Bakary Kante noted at least two reasons for his presence at the meeting: as a pilgrimage to the city that had hosted the first meeting of SBSTTA, and to work with a group of persons completely committed to SBSTTA. Speaking on behalf of the Executive Director of UNEP, he said UNEP would support the process and invited the meeting to consider, among other issues, two challenges: (i) the possible conflict in the participation of the Chairs of SBSTTA in the meetings of the Subsidiary Body in their capacity as scientists/experts and as representatives of their respective regions; and (ii) the type of recommendations to be made to address the first challenge.

7. Before thanking the Executive Secretary, the representative of the Executive Director of UNEP, the Executive Director of UNEP and the Government of France, Mr. Christian Prip drew attention to the fact that, in terms of time, the world was half way to the reaching the deadline for achieving the 2010 target, but the overall picture of biodiversity was still gloomy. There was a need for an urgent evaluation of the functioning of the Convention and its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. Scientific data and information were very important for adequate measures to be taken. He emphasized the timeliness of the current meeting, which could influence the future of SBSTTA. He said that he had great hopes in the outcomes of the meeting and that he did not agree with those who believed that SBSTTA was less important in the implementation phase of the Convention.

8. Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif expressed his gratitude to the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle for hosting the meeting and for joining in the Memorandum of Understanding with scientific partners of the Convention, signed in Curitiba on 27 March 2006. He then recalled how the idea of a meeting with former SBSTTA Chairs had been discussed at the SBSTTA Bureau meeting on the margins of the eleventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body, held in Montreal in November 2005. He thanked UNEP through Mr. Kante, and the Government of Denmark through Mr. Prip, for making the meeting possible by providing financial support for the participation of Chairs and Bureau members. He noted that it was the time in the life of SBSTTA to review its effectiveness and identify ways and means through which its operations could be improved. He thanked all the SBSTTA Chairs for agreeing to participate and invited them to identify innovative ways for improving SBSTTA. He wished to see some continuation of the work of the Chairs, who could serve as an advisory body to the Secretariat and SBSTTA. He therefore invited UNEP to continue its support for similar meetings in the future.

9. Following the introductory statements, Mr. James Seyani (Malawi) and Mr. Peter Schei (Norway), the first and second Chairs of SBSTTA, agreed to moderate the meeting jointly.

ITEM 2. REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF SBSTTA

ITEM 3. WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SBSTTA

10. The discussion of items 2 and 3 was not entirely separate as the proposals were derived from the assessment of the current situation. The report and annex therefore present these together.

11. After the adoption of the agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/BRAINSTORMING/1/1), the Secretariat of the Convention introduced a note by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/BRAINSTORMING/1/2) on the guidance of the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting, on ways and means for improving the effectiveness of SBSTTA, together with a note (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/BRAINSTORMING/1/3) on the operations of a few other scientific bodies and processes. Each Chair of SBSTTA was then invited to present his views on ways and means to strengthen the role of SBSTTA. Subsequently, the moderators organized the discussions around a questionnaire. The conclusions are contained in annex I.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

12. No other matters were discussed.

ITEM 5. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

13. On behalf of the co-moderators of the meeting, Mr. Schei presented the draft recommendations of the brainstorming session to the members of the current SBSTTA Bureau under the chairmanship of Mr. Prip. The recommendations were debated and the current Bureau members offered their views. The SBSTTA Chairs then reviewed their report and requested the Secretariat to integrate the proposed changes.

14. A presentation was then made by the Director of the Muséum, Mr. Galley, on the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle (objectives, statistics, programmes, national and international role etc), and a presentation by Mr. Philippe Bouchet on some challenges regarding access to genetic resources. These presentations were followed by a guided tour of the Muséum's herbarium, one of the 3 most important herbaria in the world. The Muséum offered a number of publications to all the participants including in particular: (i) Proceedings of the International Conference 'Biodiversity: Science and Governance', (ii) 'Le Muséum', and (iii) 'Collections du Muséum'.

15. The Executive Secretary closed the meeting by thanking all the past, present and future SBSTTA Chairs for their participation. He singled out the co-moderators, Mr. James Seyani and Mr. Peter Schei, as well as the current SBSTTA Chair, Mr. Christian Prip, for their leadership in facilitating the meeting. He expressed the view that the meeting was a historic one, not only because it was the first time that past, current and future SBSTTA Chairs had met with the SBSTTA Bureau to reflect on the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body, but also due to the nature and depth of the recommendations that emerged from the meeting. The Executive Secretary also expressed the hope that the Secretariat will continue to benefit from the wise advice of this useful forum. He finally thanked the UNEP representative for considering providing financial support for future meetings, and the Muséum for making the meeting a historic one.

*Annex I***DRAFT PROPOSALS OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CHAIRS OF THE
SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE*****Background***

1. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) was established by Article 25 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to carry out assessments of status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity and provide the Conference of the Parties (COP) with scientifically, technically and technologically sound advice on the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components. SBSTTA fulfils its mandate under the authority of, and in accordance with, guidance laid down by the Conference of the Parties, and upon its request.
2. SBSTTA considered its *modus operandi* at its first meeting. Since that time, the Conference of the Parties has requested the Subsidiary Body to keep its *modus operandi* under review with a view to improving its functioning on the basis of the experience gained. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Article 25 of the Convention, the functions, terms of reference, organizations and operation of the Subsidiary Body may further be elaborated, for approval by the Conference of the Parties.
3. SBSTTA has undergone operational and strategic changes over time. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties adopted a revised *modus operandi* of SBSTTA (decision IV/16, annex I). At its fifth meeting, in 2000, the Conference of the Parties decided in paragraph 23 of decision V/20 to make an assessment of the recommendations made to it by SBSTTA at its sixth meeting with a view to providing guidance to the Subsidiary Body on ways to improve its inputs. Examples of strategic changes made between the fourth and sixth meetings of SBSTTA, held in 1999 and 2001, include, *inter alia*: staggering the terms of Bureau members; focusing agenda items on truly scientific and technical issues, moving others to other working groups; reducing the number of agenda items per meeting; selecting a main focus per meeting and having a truly in-depth review; introducing poster sessions; and increasing the number of presentations by experts in the sessions.
4. Subsequently, in decision VI/27 B, adopted in 2002, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to undertake, in consultation with the Bureaus of SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties, a review of the recommendations of the Subsidiary Body. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties also requested SBSTTA to prepare proposals for the improvement of the quality of its advice on the basis of the review, and submit a report thereon to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting. At its eighth meeting, SBSTTA considered an evaluation of its performance contained in a note by the Executive Secretary on review of SBSTTA recommendations made to the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/13). SBSTTA developed an operational plan in an attempt to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, and considered it at its tenth meeting. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Implementation, which met in September 2005, considered SBSTTA assessment and its operational plan, and issued recommendations on the operations of SBSTTA which are reflected in decision VIII/10 of the Conference of the Parties, in particular its annex III (“Consolidated *modus operandi* of the Subsidiary Body”) and related appendices A and B, which describe *inter alia* strategic ways and means of improving the quality of scientific, technical and technological advice of SBSTTA.
5. The review of the SBSTTA *modus operandi* coincided with a time when the role of science in supporting or guiding initiatives and actions towards the implementation of the objectives of the Convention and, more specifically, the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target was being stressed in many forums, particularly in the light of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. At the same time, many find that SBSTTA operations should be improved so that this body can provide the

Parties to the Convention with authoritative assessments of the status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity, and with policy-relevant advice that could facilitate linking scientific assessments to the mobilization of solutions, particularly at the national level.

6. It is in this context that the Executive Secretary convened this brainstorming meeting of the past, present and future Chairs of SBSTTA to identify ways and means to enhance the scientific underpinning of the Convention by the Subsidiary Body and improve its effectiveness in the light of the Convention's Strategic Plan and the 2010 target, and to make concrete proposals on how to operationalize the requests of the Conference of the Parties contained in decision VIII/10 on the Operation of the Convention. The Chairs of SBSTTA decided to make their proposals by responding to a set of 13 questions developed to address various areas where previous reviews identified opportunities for improvement, with regard to the SBSTTA mandate; the documentation, the agendas, timing, output and reports of SBSTTA meetings.

Mandate

Question 1. Does SBSTTA fulfil its mandate (Article 25)? If not, what should be done?

7. Scientific, technical and technological credibility, saliency and acceptance is the cornerstone of the Convention process and the measures taken to implement its objectives. SBSTTA was established to carry out assessments of status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity and provide scientifically, technically and technologically sound advice to the Conference of the Parties (COP).

8. To date, SBSTTA has met 11 times between 1995 and 2005 and adopted a total of 121 sets of recommendations (or 1,220 individual ones) in response to requests from the Conference of the Parties and pursuant to its mandate stated in Article 25 of the Convention. At the eighth meeting of SBSTTA, an analysis of SBSTTA outputs revealed that approximately 90 per cent of its recommendations were endorsed by the Conference of the Parties fully or with relatively minor modifications. Recommendations that were not endorsed dealt mainly with financial matters and actions concerning Article 8(j) of the Convention, access and benefit sharing (ABS) and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, all of which are now being addressed in different subsidiary bodies.

9. On the basis of the high proportion of SBSTTA recommendations accepted by the Conference of the Parties, one can consider that SBSTTA has a good record of responding to requests. In particular:

(a) SBSTTA was instrumental in developing and reviewing/revising most of the programmes of work under the Convention;

(b) SBSTTA has also conducted a few pilot assessments (Article 25, paragraph 2(a)) i.e. on status and trends of forest biodiversity; socioeconomic and ecological impacts of invasive alien species on island and inland water ecosystems; and interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change;

(c) In the process of developing and reviewing each programme of work, SBSTTA produced an assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity pertinent to the programme area;

(d) To help with those assessments, 11 ad hoc technical expert groups (AHTEGs) were established by the Conference of the Parties and SBSTTA between 2000 and 2006 covering most of the programmes of work under the Convention. Some of the AHTEGs met more than once. SBSTTA further provided advice on contents of both editions of the Global Biodiversity Outlook;

(e) Implementation of Article 25, paragraph 2 (b)—assessment of the impact of measures taken—is becoming very important as the Convention is moving into the phase of enhanced implementation. Assessments of implementation need to include human well-being aspects and not to restrict considerations to natural sciences because socio-economic and other political factors are required for assessing the drivers of change and identifying the needed responses/solutions;

(f) In response to paragraph 2 (c) of Article 25, SBSTTA has identified and developed know-how and technologies as well as technical advice only relating to the conservation and sustainable

use of mountain biodiversity, sustainable mariculture, and sustainable management of non-timber forest resources;

(g) Complying with paragraph 2 (d) of Article 25, SBSTTA has developed fruitful relationships with other international bodies and international experts and has advised the Conference of the Parties on developing further cooperation with other bodies.

10. However, acceptance of SBSTTA recommendations by the Conference of the Parties does not necessarily imply that the recommendations are scientifically credible. SBSTTA recommendations need to be accepted as well as credible. The target is to reach full acceptance of SBSTTA recommendations, bearing in mind that some recommendations can include options. SBSTTA's advice should be policy-relevant and not prescriptive.

11. Despite the general fulfilment of its mandate, concerns have been raised regarding SBSTTA's effectiveness. The major overarching problem is that, chiefly, SBSTTA is often perceived as a mini-Conference of the Parties.

12. Operational issues identified include:

(a) The background/profile of participants (more often government representatives rather than scientific experts): an overwhelming majority of delegates (between 56 and 60 % in the last 3 SBSTTA meetings) come from national ministries of environment, 8.3 to 18.4 from the ministries of fisheries, agriculture and forestry, and between 4 and 8.5 % from the foreign affairs departments, and an average of 7.1% from academic and research institutions. There is a perception that participants in SBSTTA meetings are rarely selected based upon scientific and technical credentials related to subjects under discussion. For example only a few government representatives were from national parks (an average of 3.2%) at the ninth meeting of SBSTTA, which that considered the programme of work on protected areas as a main theme. In addition, most SBSTTA focal points are from the ministries of environment and agriculture, and more than a third of all SBSTTA focal points are also the national focal points for the Convention. That is probably influencing the selection of participants in SBSTTA meetings and inter-sessional work initiated by SBSTTA;

(b) The large number of agenda items in limited meeting time is another hurdle to SBSTTA's effectiveness (on average 20 items and sub-items for 5-day meetings). The large number of documents produced for each meeting has also been cited as a burden on participants. The average number of official documents for each meeting is currently 20 and the average of information documents is 19;

(c) Despite its relatively clear mandate and *modus operandi*, SBSTTA is influenced by politically based interventions. Eventually science will be entirely squeezed out of the discussions, leading to sleepless nights striving to reach 'delicate' consensus.

13. Whatever the solutions to improving SBSTTA, they have to have the support of the Conference of the Parties and its backing to implement them.

14. It should be noted that SBSTTA is not the only scientific body among multilateral environmental agreements that has been requested to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in providing scientific, technical and technological advice. Similar concerns have been voiced for scientific bodies of many other agreements. There is an opportunity to learn from others' experiences.

2. More specifically regarding the provisions of Article 25,

(a) *Provide scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity;*

What should be the role of SBSTTA in conducting assessments of status and trends of biodiversity and threats to biodiversity, in considering assessments prepared by expert groups? Should SBSTTA limit its assessment function to endorsing other organizations' assessments, e.g. the

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the Forest Resource Assessment? Should it conduct its own assessments? If so, how?

Bearing in mind that SBSTTA did not implement much of these provisions in Article 25 of the Convention, how can SBSTTA:

(b) Prepare scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of this Convention;

(c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies;

(d) Provide advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

15. With regard to assessments of status and trends of biodiversity, SBSTTA should:

(a) Conduct or commission some assessments. It has some experience from the pilot assessments carried out earlier. However, SBSTTA needs to allocate more time in considering its own assessments or assessments prepared by other bodies. More time may be needed as well as funds;

(b) Carry out objective and authoritative assessments. These assessments need to be carried out by credible experts and have to be peer-reviewed. Now that the roster of experts has been closed, there is a need to find other acceptable ways to maintain a database of 'credible' experts. Countries could be invited to set up their own committees of national and international experts. Each SBSTTA Bureau member should be involved as a 'champion' in one or two assessments, with support from the Secretariat and task forces that can be established;

(c) Take into account ongoing assessments carried out by other organizations and use them as a basis for its own work. SBSTTA cannot work in isolation but has to collaborate with a mix of governmental organizations and NGOs for credibility;

(d) Carry out an assessment of assessments, to validate their relevance and assess their implications for biodiversity. In this context, there should be a follow-up to the MA in SBSTTA in particular on how to carry out assessments of the trade-offs for optimizing ecosystem services;

(e) Promote capacity building in developing countries to enable participation of local/national organizations;

(f) Link with the scientific community (DIVERSITAS, TWAS, ICSU, Inter Academy Panel (IAP), SCOPE, etc.) and promote cooperation and linkages with scientific organizations in developing countries. There are suggestions within the framework of the Convention to have a mechanism similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) is one such mechanism. If established, it could provide authoritative and credible up-to-date information on biodiversity and raise awareness on biodiversity issues for the benefit of all the stakeholders. SBSTTA should explore ways and means for being involved in the consultation process;

(g) Consider new and emerging issues as indicated in the consolidated *modus operandi* of SBSTTA in decision VIII/10. In this respect, SBSTTA must be proactive and pre-emptive and collaborate with organizations dealing with the initiatives under consideration. Examples of new and emerging issues include: decline of amphibians, vultures and albatrosses; biofuel; genetic resources beyond the limits of national jurisdiction; Antarctic biodiversity; biodiversity and health; role of the private sector etc.

SBSTTA Bureau should develop a strategy on how to handle emerging issues, and in a selective, proactive and pre-emptive manner.

16. The SBSTTA Bureau has to play an important role and become a think tank for SBSTTA and the Secretariat.

17. Little has been achieved to date regarding the implementation of paragraph 2 (b) of Article 25, which requires information on measures taken for the conservation of biodiversity, information usually provided in national reports. This activity has to be undertaken carefully to avoid concern that countries could be judged. A balanced participation of national organizations is required.

18. Regarding paragraphs 2(c)-(d) of Article 25, SBSTTA has already started doing some activities, but more is needed in particular for the identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; and on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies. A database should be established and the clearing-house mechanism used more actively, with better involvement at the national level. SBSTTA needs to make more use of the clearing-house mechanism. The listserv of SBSTTA Bureau and regional focal points, currently coordinated by the respective Bureau members from the regions, should be encouraged as a way to facilitate scientific information exchange at the regional level.

3. Is SBSTTA's mandate restricted to biological and natural sciences or does it allow for discussions of political and socio-economic nature? If it does, to what extent should the latter be addressed in the context of SBSTTA meetings?

19. SBSTTA's mandate is not restricted to natural sciences. Assessment of drivers of change, in particular underlying factors, and identification of measures to be taken to address these factors require consideration of cultural, socioeconomic and political aspects. Although considerations of these dimensions might be difficult to handle they need to be addressed if the issue of biodiversity is to become mainstreamed, cross-sectoral, and interdisciplinary. SBSTTA is expected to find scientific arguments on political issues.

4. Does SBSTTA's mandate need to be adjusted to changing contexts now that emphasis is on implementation of the Convention provisions and the Programmes of Work, and achieving the 2010 targets?

20. There is no need to change SBSTTA's mandate because the current mandate contains provisions relating to SBSTTA contributions to implementation of the CBD and the 2010 targets. As provided in paragraph 3 of Article 25 of the Convention, the terms of reference and programme of work of SBSTTA can be adapted. With the establishment of the Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI), there is a need to clarify SBSTTA terms of reference. WGRI is expected to assess the processes, while SBSTTA will assess the status and trends of biodiversity. In revising the terms of reference and the programme of work of SBSTTA, attention should be paid to the role of SBSTTA focal points and need to establish AHTEGs or other working groups. There may be financial implications to consider.

21. SBSTTA should also be involved in assessing the implementation of NBSAPs and in considering national reports.

22. Assessments of implementation and establishment of mechanisms to carry out these assessments is an issue that will have to be considered in CBD. The issue should be on a next meeting of the Chairs of SBSTTA (assuming that UNEP/DEC will fund it).

23. Considering the importance of developing or strengthening the capacity in science and technical issues needed in the enhanced implementation phase started at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, SBSTTA should consider shifting the balance away from drafting recommendations for the Conference of the Parties and have a stronger element of technical and scientific cooperation and capacity

building at its meetings themselves. SBSTTA meetings should become more and more as part of established in Article 18 of the Convention to promote technical and scientific cooperation. SBSTTA meetings should become forums where experts can come together to discuss issues and learn from each other, exchange information and come up with collaborative projects. This implies having a larger proportion of the meetings in non-United Nations format, like discussion groups, training sessions, posters, etc. By itself, this would attract a better mix of participants and have a larger impact on the implementation of the Convention in the longer term.

5. Some consider SBSTTA as a mini- or prep-COP. What should be done to enhance the scientific and technical nature and depth of SBSTTA (i.e. profile of participants, inter-sessional and in-session work, SBSTTA output, etc...)?

24. **Inter-sessional work:** Inter-sessional work should be strengthened by involving real experts through technical expert groups, involve the scientific community and establish working groups or task forces. National consultative processes and subregional (e.g. regional economic integration meetings), and regional preparatory meetings might be organized, UNEP requested to promote and support regional preparatory meetings. It is important to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders, relevant thematic focal points and other biodiversity-related focal points.

25. **In-session:** There is a need to consider the profile of participants, encourage that Governments send *bona fide* scientists and members of academia; participants should be informed to avoid political statements; elevate the level of technical debates by having more scientific and technical presentations, panel discussions, and related side-events, and much less drafting of recommendations; pay attention to number of items on agenda that should be reduced.

26. **Outputs:** It is not necessary for SBSTTA to develop and negotiate draft decisions; SBSTTA should stop at conclusions and give options or request the Secretariat to package conclusions as draft decisions. Advice must be policy-relevant and not prescriptive.

Documentation

6. What is the ideal length of pre-session documents? Should they be available in all six United Nations languages? Or could they be made entirely available in English, French and Spanish with a brief summary available in Arabic, Russian and Chinese bearing in mind the savings made in reducing the translation work could be used to fund activities in support of SBSTTA?

27. A number of points were raised with regard to documentation, in particular:

- (a) The ideal length is 10-15 pages (preference for 12 pages);
- (b) The document should be short concise and technical with references;
- (c) The proposal on language is interesting bearing in mind that CITES and Ramsar use it. The savings made in reducing the translation work could be used to fund activities in support of SBSTTA;
- (d) Ask the informal advisory committee for the clearing-house mechanism to explore ways for SBSTTA to make better use of the clearing-house mechanism, including the controlled vocabulary.

Meetings and agenda

7. Similarly, could SBSTTA meetings be held in English, French and Spanish only bearing in mind that most "scientists" are familiar with at least one of these languages and that the savings can be used to support expert groups that could be established to prepare in-depth some items on SBSTTA agenda?

28. The proposal on language is interesting bearing in mind that CITES and Ramsar use it. The savings made in reducing the translation work could be used to fund activities in support of SBSTTA

8. What is the ideal periodicity and length of SBSTTA meetings? Would holding SBSTTA meetings back to back with, or during meetings of the Conference of the Parties be useful (as in the case with the UNCCD CST and UNFCCC SBSTA)?

29. Various options were considered regarding periodicity of SBSTTA meetings:

(a) *Option 1:* Two 5-day inter-sessional meetings, with a proactive Bureau that should be given an opportunity to meet during this period and feed into SBSTTA, bearing in mind the importance of intersessional works. The meetings can be held as usual from Mondays to Fridays. Advantages for holding meetings from Wednesdays to Tuesdays should be explored. In the latter case, Saturday could be devoted to informal meetings, but cost implications should be assessed.

The major concerns raised for SBSTTA meetings held between two meetings of the COP have been reviewed in previous paragraphs.

(b) *Option 2:* Hold one meeting of SBSTTA between two meetings of the Conference of the Parties, with a second meeting back to back to, or in parallel with, the meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Back-to-back or parallel meetings can facilitate that Parties send one delegate to SBSTTA and one to the COP meeting, clearly chosen on the basis of relevant expertise, and thus enhance the scientific profile of participants in SBSTTA meetings. There may be a need for clear guidelines, if not rules, regarding delegates participating at COP and SBSTTA events. Their functions should be clearly specified as different, and thus delegates should be different. After the opening session, as currently being practiced by UNFCCC and UNCCD, the COP will forward all scientific matters to SBSTTA – but not for matters discussed under that session of COP. Such an organization will facilitate interactions between participants in COP meetings (more politically oriented) and participants in SBSTTA (more scientific experts);

The role of the sessional meeting of SBSTTA (back-to-back with or in parallel with the Conference of the Parties) would be more at an “executive” level, for example:

- Setting priorities for inter-sessional work (like the Scientific and Technical Review Panel under the Ramsar Convention);
- Determining what to do about emerging issues;
- Monitoring the overall SBSTTA process (particularly quality control, representation in technical work and capacity building);
- Nominating regional representatives for inter-sessional processes (if necessary);
- Considering financial and administrative implications of suggested inter-sessional work;
- Being a forum for scientific debate (but *not* on issues going to the Conference of the Parties at that session) – including improved involvement of “delegates” in side-events etc.;
- Advising the Conference of the Parties on general strategies.

However, experience from other multilateral environmental agreements indicates that SBSTTA may still remain politically influenced as it will have to prepare final decisions for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties. This task will easily call for negotiations;

(c) *Option 3:* Hold only one meeting of SBSTTA between meetings of the Conference of the Parties and redirect the resources of the other meeting to inter-sessional activities in preparation for the SBSTTA meeting or to produce information/documentation for the Conference of the Parties. SBSTTA will develop, with guidance from the Conference of the Parties, the terms of reference of the groups that will meet inter-sessionally to address scientific, technical and technological matters. Under this option:

- Long agendas could be divided into specialist areas with an allocation of items to Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups (AHTEGs) or other expert groups. The groups could be organized with group leaders.
- Inter-sessional work could be organized in a way that improves interaction with governments and other stakeholders (including indigenous and local communities, the private sector, and the scientific community) so that national perspectives can be incorporated along the way. SBSTTA national focal points could play an important role pursuant to the terms of reference described in decision VIII/10.
- Interactions with, and contribution of, the scientific community could also be greatly enhanced by ensuring their participation in the expert groups, with geographical representation as far as possible;
- Such organized inter-sessional work would lead to:
 - More in-depth and comprehensive work by having more focussed groups (e.g. AHTEG), which can be established for longer periods;
 - Improved participation/ownership of the outputs at national level through longer-term involvement in the process, in areas of national expertise;
 - Significantly increased capacity building through more exposure of national experts and their increased participation in the work
 - More credible scientific process , more limited opportunity for political debate ;
 - Increased likelihood of participation of experts from indigenous and local communities, because of more overall opportunities for participation
- However, the Conference of the Parties may have difficulty studying and assessing the implications of the findings and recommendations of expert groups. Currently, SBSTTA reviews AHTEGs recommendations before they are submitted to the Conference of the Parties. There may also be concerns over “regional representation” in small (15 members) expert groups, the single language (English) used in such expert group meetings, and concerns over recommendations affecting national interests. These could be overcome respectively during the selection of experts and by adopting alternative recommendations (as in the current SBSTTA *modus operandi*) rather than trying to reach consensus.

9. What is the ideal number of items we should have on the agendas of SBSTTA meetings?

30. There is no ideal number. The number will also depend on whether the issues will all be considered in plenary or whether also in working groups. Consideration of all items in plenary will yield some savings that should be taken into account while deciding on the number of agenda items.

31. Not all issues will be debated the same way. Issues considered by AHTEG and other inter-sessional meetings will require relatively short consideration time.

10. How can SBSTTA consider all the requests made by the Conference of the Parties if their number exceeds the ideal number of agenda items for the meetings of SBSTTA?

And

How to reduce the number of items on SBSTTA agenda as recommended by COP in decision VIII/10?

32. In order to reduce the number of items on SBSTTA agendas, it is important to continue to keep non scientific and technical matters off the agenda and giving the Bureau flexibility of when and how to arrange them. One way to achieve this is by having the SBSTTA Bureau meet daily during meetings of the Conference of the Parties to monitor draft decisions and request changes where needed. The agenda

should also be structured, as it was done for a few meetings, to have one main item, to which a number of sessions will be devoted, and to limit the substantive discussion to no more than a few (e.g. four) other topics at any one meeting.

33. SBSTTA Bureau should decide to defer all requests for which COP did not provide a timeframe to the time when the Conference of the Parties needs its advice;

34. Issues should be prioritized. Issues that cannot benefit from inter-sessional work should be listed on SBSTTA agenda, while the other issues should be considered through bodies established to work inter-sessionally.

35. Other criteria can be used to make the selection e.g. urgency

11. How can scientific discussions be facilitated or promoted during SBSTTA meetings (statements; discussions; keynote and other presentations; side events; poster sessions; contact groups; etc)?

36. **Statements:** Prepared political statements to be read must be discouraged and avoided.

37. **Scientific debates/discussions:** Each SBSTTA Bureau member should be involved and be responsible for one or two topics

38. **Keynote and other presentations:** should be encouraged; speakers must be selected carefully. Nobel Prize winners should be considered, as well as speakers from sister conventions to talk on topics that will promote synergy (e.g. role of forests in CDM, how forest cover can help control land degradation, in UNCCD). Another interesting topic: Impact of land degradation on human well-being.

39. **Side-events** should be encouraged. The Bureau could organize some side events. Rather than having too many, it is necessary for the Bureau to select the ones that are very relevant to the topics under consideration. Consideration of ecosystem services is an important topic for consideration in side events

40. **Poster sessions** can attract scientific community. Some follow-up analysis should be carried out to find out progress on stories reported in the poster papers and number of poster papers issued in scientific journals etc.

41. Convene pre-SBSTTA capacity-building workshops, in particular for developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

42. All these initiatives will contribute to reducing the gaps in knowledge among participants. It is also important to bring to the meeting the main results of/from side-events, poster sessions etc.

Outputs and reports

13. How should SBSTTA present its advice to COP (as draft decisions or differently)?

43. SBSTTA currently produces scientific assessments of status and trends of, and threats to, biodiversity, guidelines and methods (e.g. rapid assessment methods, or indicators) and advice on specific issues.

44. Scientific assessments and methods should have conclusions and be accompanied, as appropriate, with socioeconomic, financial, and political implications and political implications. SBSTTA should avoid developing draft decisions, but invite the Executive Secretary to develop some on the basis of the conclusions, as to avoid that negotiations taking place to reach consensus drift toward political discussions.

45. It should be made clear that, as recommended in para 8 of Annex III in decision VIII/10 on SBSTTA consolidated modus operandi, SBSTTA may make recommendations that include options or

alternatives, and does not have to operate on consensus. It is partly this drive for “consensus” at SBSTTA that forces political perspectives to enter debate. Participants regard themselves as Party “delegates” – having to represent national interests through negotiation. This perception needs to be changed.

46. In addition, the Chairs of SBSTTA made the following recommendations:

(a) Ways and means should be sought and implemented to promote interaction between SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties including by organizing joint meetings of the bureaux of SBSTTA and the Conference of the Parties, inviting the Chair of SBSTTA to take a seat at the podium in meetings of the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Interactions between SBSTTA and other bodies should be encouraged including by ensuring that the Chair of SBSTTA participates in important meetings of these bodies. UNEP should be approached for financial support;

(c) The Chairs of SBSTTA encouraged the Executive Secretary to continue exploring ways and means for recognizing work done by officials and rewarding outstanding work carried out by, among others, SBSTTA Chairs and the Bureau;

(d) The Chair of SBSTTA should be included as members of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and encourage them to interact with the scientific community at large;

(e) The Chairs of SBSTTA request the Executive Secretary to identify financial resources and the continued support by UNEP for future meetings of past, present and future SBSTTA Chairs;

(f) The Chair of SBSTTA and of the different working groups should be assisted to familiarize themselves with the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA;

(g) There is a need to pay attention to the gender balance in the selection of future SBSTTA Chairs;

(h) UNEP recommends that this body becomes an advisory body to the Executive Secretary and SBSTTA for giving strategic vision.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Past, Present and Future SBSTTA Chairs

1. James Seyani

Chair of SBSTTA-1
Director General
National herbarium and Botanical Gardens of
Malawi

2. Peter Schei

Chair of SBSTTA-2
Executive Director of the Fridtjof Nansen
Institute
Norway

3. A.H. Zakri

Chair SBSTTA-3 and 4
Director of Institute for Advance Studies
United Nations University
Tokyo, Japan

4. Jan Plesnik

Chair of SBSTTA-7 and 8
Deputy Director
Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape
Protection
Prague, Czech Republic

5. Alfred A. Oteng Yeboah

Chair of SBSTTA-9 and 10
Deputy Director-General
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
(CSIR)
Accra, Ghana

6. Christian Prip

Chair of SBSTTA-11 and 12
Danish Ministry of Environment and Energy
Environmental Protection Agency

7. Asghar Mohammadi Fazel

Chair of SBSTTA-13 and 14
Dean of the College of Environment
Tehran - Islamic Republic of Iran

SBSTTA-12 Bureau members

8. Claudine Ramiarison

Directeur exécutif
Service d'appui à la Gestion de l'Environnement
– Programme PNUD
Ministère de l'Environnement et des Eaux et
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Antananarivo – Madagascar

9. Jorge Ernesto Quezada Diaz

Gerente de Recursos Biologicos
Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales
San Salvador – El Salvador

10. Rawson Piniel Yonazi

Assistant Director-Environmental Planning and Policy
Division of Environment, Vice-President's Office
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11. Linus Spencer Thomas

National Biodiversity Coordinator
c/o Ministry of Finance and Planning
St. George's - GRENADA

12. Chaweewan Hutacharern

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Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant
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13. Angheluta Vadineanu

Head of Department
Department of Systems Ecology and Natural
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University of Bucharest
Bucharest - Romania

14. Shirin Karryeva

Biodiversity Expert
Ministry of Nature Protection
Ashgabat - Turkmenistan

15. Joel E. Miles
Chief, Terrestrial Unit
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Koror, PW - Republic of Palau

16. Annemarie Watt
Director
Land Water and Coasts Division
Department of the Environment and Heritage
Canberra, Australia

United Nations Environment Programme

21. Bakary Kante
Director
Division of Environmental Conventions
United Nations Environment Programme

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

22. Ahmed Djoghla
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

23. Kalemani Jo Mulongoy
Principal Officer, Scientific, Technical and
Technological Matters Division
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological
Diversity

24. Thomas Koetz
Intern,
European Commission
DG Environment
Researcher on 'Science-policy interfaces for
international biodiversity governance'

Observers and logistics
Muséum national d'histoire naturelle

17. H.E. Mr. Denys Gauer
Ambassador of France for the Environment
Paris, France

18. Bertrand-Pierre Galley
Director
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
Paris, France

19. Jean-Patrick Leduc
Service de la Conservation de la Nature
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
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20. Philippe Bouchet
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NB : Cristian Samper, Chair of the fifth and
sixth meetings of SBSTTA contributed
suggestions in writing.