



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## SUMMARY OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE TO THE UN CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: 2-6 SEPTEMBER 1996

The Second Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA-2) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) met in Montreal, Canada, from 2-6 September, 1996. Many Parties sent scientific and technical experts to the meeting, which was also attended by observers from non-Parties, NGOs, indigenous peoples' organizations, industry groups and scientific organizations. Delegates grappled with a crowded agenda, including such complex technical issues as the monitoring and assessment of biodiversity, practical approaches to taxonomy, economic valuation of biodiversity, access to genetic resources, agricultural biodiversity, terrestrial biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, biosafety and the clearing-house mechanism.

Despite Chair Peter Johan Schei's plea to delegates to maintain "scientific integrity" and avoid turning the SBSTTA into a "mini-Conference of the Parties," the issue of identity and the precise role of the SBSTTA in managing the scientific content continued to occupy many participants as they left for home at the conclusion of the week-long meeting. While a few issues were covered in adequate technical detail, notably economic valuation and taxonomy, the primary outcome of SBSTTA-2 seemed to be a desire to reform the process. Publicly, delegates called for sharp limits to the agenda and greater involvement of scientific organizations. Privately, many thought that the Secretariat should provide more focused background documentation that delineates specific options or proposals, and that delegations should be allowed to present case studies based on national experiences. Another private plea, encouraging governments to send delegations that are more technically oriented, reflected the mood that Parties are hungry for progress on key scientific and technical issues under the Convention.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF TECHNICAL ISSUES UNDER THE CBD

The Convention on Biological Diversity, negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), entered into force on 29 December 1993. To date more than 150 countries have become Parties. Article 25 of the CBD establishes a Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to provide the Conference of the Parties with "timely advice" relating to implementation of the Convention.

**COP-1:** The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP-1) took place in Nassau, the Bahamas, from 28 November - 9 December 1994. Some of the key decisions taken by COP-1 included: adoption of the medium-term work programme; designation of the Permanent Secretariat; establishment of the clearing-house mechanism and the SBSTTA; and designation of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism.

**SBSTTA-1:** The first session of the SBSTTA took place from 4-8 September 1995 in Paris, France. Delegates considered operational matters, as well as substantive issues, particularly with

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regard to coastal and marine biodiversity. Recommendations on the *modus operandi* of the SBSTTA affirmed its subsidiary role to the COP, and requested flexibility to create: two open-ended working groups to meet simultaneously during future SBSTTA meetings; *Ad Hoc* Technical Panels of Experts as needed; and a roster of experts.

Substantive recommendations of SBSTTA-1 included: alternative ways and means for the COP to consider components of biodiversity under threat; ways and means to promote access to and transfer of technology; scientific and technical information to be contained in national reports; preparation of an annual Global Biodiversity Outlook by the Secretariat; contributions to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) meetings on plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA); and technical aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biological diversity. On this last issue, SBSTTA-1 identified three priorities: sustainable use of living coastal and marine resources; mariculture; and the control of alien organisms. Time constraints prevented consideration of education, training and public awareness as key delivery mechanisms for coastal and marine biodiversity conservation, and bio-prospecting of the deep sea bed.

Although the recommendation on coastal and marine biodiversity received a disproportionate share of attention at SBSTTA-1, some States noted that land-based sources of marine pollution had not been sufficiently emphasized. One non-Party to the CBD criticized inclusion of the issue of deep sea bed bio-prospecting as outside the scope of the CBD.

**COP-2:** The second session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-2) to the CBD met in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 6-17 November 1995. Some of the key decisions taken by COP-2 included: designation of the permanent location of the Secretariat in Montreal, Canada; agreement to develop a protocol on biosafety; operation of the clearing-house mechanism; adoption of a programme of work funded by a larger budget; designation of the GEF as the continuing interim institutional structure for the financial mechanism; consideration of its first substantive issue, marine and coastal biodiversity; and agreement to address forests and biodiversity, including the development of a statement from the CBD to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

COP-2 approved SBSTTA's medium term programme of work for 1996-97, and also addressed the issue of PGRFA, adopting a statement for input to the FAO's Fourth International Technical Conference on PGRFA (ITCPGR-4). The statement notes the importance of other conventions to the CBD's three objectives, urges other international fora to help achieve these objectives through the CBD's overarching framework and invites FAO to present the outcome of ITCPGR-4 to COP-3.

**PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:** The FAO established an intergovernmental Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 1983, and adopted a non-binding International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which is intended to promote harmonized international efforts to create incentives to conserve and sustainably use PGRFA. Since the inception of the CBD, the FAO has begun revising the International Undertaking, which originally called PGRFA the "common heritage of mankind." Subsequent revisions have emphasized national sovereignty over PGRFA, in line with Article 15 (sovereignty over genetic resources) of the CBD.

The Fourth International Technical Conference on PGRFA met in Leipzig, Germany, from 17-23 June 1996. Representatives of 148 States adopted the Leipzig Declaration, the Conference's key political statement, and a "delicately balanced" Global Plan of Action (GPA), an international programme for the conservation and utilization of PGRFA. Contentious issues included financing

and implementing the GPA, technology transfer, Farmers' Rights and access and benefit-sharing. Delegates were also presented with the first comprehensive Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources.

The next round of negotiations on revision of the International Undertaking is scheduled for December 1996.

**BIOSAFETY:** Since the early 1970s, modern biotechnology has enabled scientists to genetically modify plants, animals and micro-organisms to create living modified organisms (LMOs). Many countries with biotechnology industries already have domestic legislation in place intended to ensure the safe transfer, handling, use and disposal of LMOs and their products. These precautionary practices are collectively known as "biosafety". However, there are no binding international agreements addressing situations where LMOs cross national borders.

Article 19.4 of the CBD provides for Parties to consider the need for and modalities of a protocol on biosafety. At COP-2, delegates established an Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety (BSWG), which held its first meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, from 22-26 July 1996. It was attended by more than 90 delegations, which included scientific and technical experts, representing both Parties and non-Parties to the CBD, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs and industry representatives.

BSWG-1 marked the first formal meeting to develop a protocol under the CBD and to operationalize one of its key and most contentious components. Governments listed elements for a future protocol, agreed to hold two meetings in 1997 and outlined the information required to guide their future work.

## REPORT OF SBSTTA-2

The second session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity opened on Monday, 2 September 1996. By the end of the first morning, the Plenary had suspended its work to allow the two working groups to meet. Both Working Groups 1 and 2 met until Wednesday, 4 September, interrupted only by a brief meeting of the Plenary on Tuesday, 3 September, to announce the election of new officers to the Bureau. On Thursday, 5 September, the Plenary convened a morning session to discuss SBSTTA's *modus operandi*, medium term work programme and 1997 agenda. That afternoon both working groups met again, reconvening in the evening to finish drafting recommendations to the COP for consideration by the Plenary. The closing Plenary met on Friday, 6 September, to review and adopt the recommendations put forth by the two working groups.

## OPENING PLENARY

The second session of the SBSTTA was opened on Monday, 2 September, by J. H. Seyani (Malawi), the Chair of SBSTTA-1. He noted that the work of SBSTTA is recognized and valued by the COP. Peter Johan Schei (Norway), SBSTTA-2 Chair, noted that SBSTTA is neither a "mini-COP" nor a "drafting group", and highlighted the importance of scientific integrity. Speaking on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Jorge Illueca, Assistant Executive Director, noted that the CBD can only succeed if it is built on a sound scientific foundation. Caletostus Juma, Executive Secretary of the CBD Secretariat, stated that he looked forward to working closely with the SBSTTA Bureau.

The Secretariat introduced the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/1/Rev.1 and SBSTTA/2/1/Add.1/Rev.2). He noted that the Bureau had agreed to delete Agenda Item 3.12.2 (bio-prospecting of the deep sea bed) because the Secretariat had not had time to consult with the Secretariat of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, as requested by COP-2. The Plenary then adopted the agenda.

The Chair invited Bureau nominations from each regional group. Several names were put forward, although the process was not completed until a brief Plenary session the following day. The SBSTTA Bureau is constituted as follows: the African Group nominated Zeineb Belkhir (Tunisia) and Mr. Vilakati (Swaziland); the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) nominated Francesco Mauro (Italy) and Peter Johan Schei (Norway); the Asian Group nominated Mick Raga (Papua New Guinea) and Setijati Sastrapradja (Indonesia); the Eastern Europe Group nominated Gabor Nechay (Hungary) and Issa Omarovich Baitulin (Kazakhstan); and the Latin American and Caribbean group nominated Braulio Da Souza Dias (Brazil) and Edgar Espeleta-Gutierrez (Costa Rica).

The Plenary then adopted the organization of work. The Chair urged the Working Groups to return to the final Plenary with agreed recommendations to avoid further substantial discussion. He also urged participants to consider ways to consult with the scientific community rather than creating new subsidiary bodies. The Chair then announced the appointments of Rapporteurs: Setijati Sastrapradja (Plenary); Zeineb Belkhir (Working Group 1); and Gabor Nechay (Working Group 2).

### **WORKING GROUP 1**

Working Group 1 was chaired by Braulio Da Souza Dias (Brazil). The topics discussed were: assessment of biodiversity; identification and monitoring of adverse impacts; biodiversity indicators; agrobiodiversity; terrestrial biodiversity; and marine and coastal biodiversity.

The discussion on agrobiodiversity did not result in consensus, and was referred to a contact group on Wednesday evening, 4 September. The contact group met late into the night with, at times, heated debate, finally reaching a "delicate equilibrium" in the words of the Working Group's Chair. The recommendations adopted by SBSTTA-2 are incorporated into a single document, which includes the report of Working Group 1 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/L.3).

**BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENTS, IDENTIFICATION AND MONITORING OF ADVERSE IMPACTS, AND BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS:** Discussions on Agenda Items 3.1 (assessment of biodiversity and methodologies for future assessments), 3.2 (identification, monitoring and assessment of components of biodiversity and of processes that have adverse impacts) and 3.3 (review and promotion of indicators of biodiversity) were initiated individually, however, there was an early consensus that the three were inextricably linked and should be considered together. After general comments, therefore, the three were brought together in the Chair's draft text on recommendations.

Negotiations based on the Chair's draft text centered around prioritization of activities. From a long list of proposed activities, a number of actions received several expressions of support for prioritization, including: critical methodological review; indicator work; information exchange; analysis of activities with negative impact; refinement of guidelines; and cooperation with other international processes. Capacity building was also stressed, particularly by a number of African countries, including ZAIRE and MALAWI.

A third revision of the Chair's text (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/WG.1/CRP.1) included an Annex containing an indicative framework of activities that have a significant adverse impact on biodiversity. Delegates deleted the Annex but added specific amendments on this subject based on previous discussions.

The adopted recommendation summarizes the conclusions of the working group and recommends next steps. The SBSTTA recommends that the COP accord high priority to the following

tasks: enhancement of developing country capacity in identification; monitoring and assessment; development of the clearing-house mechanism; development of national guidelines; a critical review of methodologies; development of core indicators and indicators in thematic areas; development of an indicative framework of processes likely to have significant adverse impacts; and incorporation of biodiversity dimensions into resource assessments. Other "important" recommended tasks include: development of regional/ecosystem-based guidelines; thematic assessments; establishment of costs and benefits of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use; and development of a review of methods for monitoring activities with adverse impacts on biodiversity and options for mitigating those effects.

It is recommended that the COP should request that the next meeting of the SBSTTA consider specific immediate tasks for the Executive Secretary, including: a guideline report to assist Parties in addressing the above issues with information on assessment methodologies; indicators and monitoring techniques and recommendations for harmonization; options for capacity-building in developing countries for applying guidelines and indicators; and information on indicator development and recommendations for a core set of indicators of biodiversity, particularly related to threats. The recommendations also include peer review of the guidelines and other products, initiation of consultation with other regional and global organizations on including biodiversity in resource assessments, and consideration of indicators, assessment and monitoring together as a standing item on the SBSTTA's agenda.

**AGROBIODIVERSITY:** After the initial introduction of the Agenda Item 3.9, agricultural biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/10), many delegations warned against duplicating the work of the FAO, and AUSTRALIA underscored that the FAO is the primary task manager on agricultural biodiversity. The CHAIR reassured delegations that there was no conflict between the policy role of the COP and the role of the FAO as a chief implementation agency.

SWEDEN and DENMARK suggested an approach similar to SBSTTA-1's extensive treatment of marine and coastal biodiversity. NORWAY stressed the need for gap analysis. The US, supported by the EC, highlighted the positive aspects of intensive agriculture.

After the preliminary discussion, a contact group was formed to reach agreement on final recommendations, drawing on extensive written submissions from Sweden (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/Info.20) and Brazil. The contact group was formed after the introduction of a draft summary prepared by the Secretariat. This draft drew criticism for its brevity and failure to fully reflect preliminary discussion in the working group or the written submissions.

Following the introduction of a new draft based on deliberations in the contact group, SWEDEN and GERMANY objected to a paragraph on the benefits to biodiversity that have accrued from sustainable intensification of agriculture, and entered reservations. SWEDEN said the paragraph failed to reflect the current state of knowledge. The AFRICAN GROUP, supported by MALAWI and COSTA RICA, amended an addition by SWITZERLAND on the important role of science, to signal recognition of the status and role of indigenous science.

The adopted recommendations on agrobiodiversity address the challenge for agriculture to achieve stability and productivity on a sustainable basis, using technologies and practices to reconcile environmental protection, stable production, economic efficiency and equitable sharing of benefits.

The SBSTTA recommends that the COP: adopt as a key focal area the contribution of the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity to sustainable agriculture and develop a

programme of work, noting the FAO's offer to contribute in the area of genetic resources; integrate social, economic and environmental considerations; encourage Parties to implement the Leipzig Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; and encourage research and development.

It also recommends that the COP: encourage the transformation of unsustainable agricultural technological approaches and the development, maintenance and mobilization of local knowledge, with special reference to gender; study the positive and negative impacts of agricultural intensification or extensification; conduct a gap analysis (pollinator decline, soil micro-organisms, biocontrol organisms, wild sources of food, biodiversity friendly agriculture and market forces, integrated land and resource management, traditional knowledge, degraded landscape restoration, and use of botanical gardens) of activities and instruments in cooperation with the FAO and other organizations with the objective of developing a multi-year work plan at the SBSTTA; and invite the GEF and other international agencies to report on funding.

The SBSTTA also recommended that the COP: encourage case study sharing, using the clearing-house mechanism; strengthen indigenous *in situ* conservation; conduct collaborative work on criteria and indicators; promote technology transfer using the clearing-house mechanism; promote integrated resource management; encourage farming systems that increase productivity and enhance biodiversity; appraise and disseminate traditional knowledge; encourage ex ante and/or ex post evaluation of impacts; develop assessment methods; and identify the key maintenance components of biodiversity in agricultural production systems.

**TERRESTRIAL BIODIVERSITY:** The adopted recommendations on terrestrial biodiversity resulted from discussion of document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/11 on the links between forests and biological diversity, produced at the request of the COP (decision II/9) to help the Parties determine whether further input to the Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) is required.

SBSTTA delegates advocated that the CDB develop links with other conventions, including the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, to avoid duplication and enhance synergism. GERMANY wanted to prioritize coordination with the CSD and financing for combating desertification. They acknowledged the need to address the direct and underlying causes of forest loss and degradation at all levels. CÔTE D'IVOIRE highlighted concern among Francophone countries about over-exploitation of forest resources, sometimes involving governments.

While some delegations recommended that the SBSTTA await the outcome of the IPF's deliberations before deciding on a work programme on forests and biodiversity, NORWAY pointed out that knowledge gaps already identified by the IPF would exist whatever the outcome. BURKINA FASO warned against delaying CBD implementation. The BIODIVERSITY ACTION NETWORK suggested that some Parties may be attempting to delay the process, and CAMEROON called for an immediate programme of work. DENMARK and AUSTRIA suggested a work programme adaptable to IPF decisions. The PHILIPPINES recommended a focus on *in situ* conservation and encouraging the participation of indigenous communities. The INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE TROPICAL FOREST called for a standing forum for indigenous peoples.

The SBSTTA recommended that the COP ask the Secretariat to explore ways and means to cooperate with the IPF with a view to developing common priorities for further consideration at SBSTTA-3. In addition, it recommended sending the following suggestions to the IPF: full integration of biodiversity considerations into IPF recommendations and proposals and

consider ways to deal with gaps in forest biodiversity knowledge; use of an ecosystem approach in the IPF programme element on national forest and land use plans, to integrate conservation measures and sustainable use of biodiversity; and inclusion of biodiversity conservation and maintenance of forest quality in the IPF programme on criteria and indicators.

The SBSTTA also recommended that the COP explore ways to cooperate with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification on matters relating to biodiversity and drylands to identify common priorities. It identified the following research and technological priorities: building the scientific foundation necessary to advance elaboration and implementation of criteria and indicators for forest quality and biodiversity conservation; analysis of the role of biodiversity in forest ecosystems; analysis of measures to mitigate underlying causes of biodiversity loss; advancement of approaches to rehabilitate deforested ecosystems and enrich forest biodiversity; identification of knowledge gaps in areas of fragmentation; assessment of ecological landscape models; integration of protected areas into the ecosystem approach to sustainable forest management; scientific analysis of the ways in which human activities influence biodiversity, in particular forest management practices, and assessment of methods to minimize impact; and development of assessment and valuation methodologies to measure the multiple benefits derived from forest biodiversity.

**COASTAL AND MARINE BIODIVERSITY:** At its second session, the Conference of the Parties' decision II/10 and the Jakarta Mandate called for an expert meeting on marine and coastal biodiversity, with a view to a SBSTTA-2 review of the results. Little progress has been made on this issue in 1996, with only agreement on a roster of experts.

The SBSTTA-2 debate on Agenda Item 3.12 was based on a report by the Executive Secretary on marine and biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/140) and eventual recommendations focused on the need for the Secretariat to take a number of actions to implement COP decision II/10.

Delegates were generally supportive of a draft text introduced by the Chair, urging implementation of decision II/10. The MARSHALL ISLANDS called for equitable geographic representation at the Meeting of Experts, and SAMOA, MAURITIUS, and the MALDIVES called for representation from small island States. JAPAN favored an open-ended Meeting for the sake of transparency. CANADA supported a Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF) recommendation for a global state of knowledge assessment. UNEP announced that it was preparing documentation to assist the implementation of the Jakarta Mandate. NEW ZEALAND objected to a proposal by SWEDEN to postpone work until SBSTTA-4.

The recommendation notes that little substantial action on marine and coastal biodiversity has occurred during 1996, and that decision II/10 should be implemented as quickly and efficiently as possible. It calls on the COP to direct the Secretariat to provide an interim report at SBSTTA-3 on recommendations from the Meeting of Experts on the following topics: availability of resources; identification of the issue area in which the CBD can be most effective; identification of related work by non-CBD entities; and how other planned or on-going activities outside the CBD can contribute to the Convention's proposed actions.

The Secretariat is urged to: convene the first Meeting of Experts, which is to take place in Indonesia early in 1997, and refer available information (including document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/14 considered at SBSTTA-2) and comments from Parties to that meeting; request the Meeting of Experts to assist the Executive Secretary in identifying priorities and pragmatic options for implementing COP decision II/10; and strengthen and develop special partnership arrangements with competent international

organizations and institutions including regional bodies. The SBSTTA also recommended that the COP ensure that resources are available to implement the work of the Secretariat under the Jakarta Mandate, and to fill the related Secretariat posts.

## WORKING GROUP 2

Chair Francesco Mauro (Italy) opened Working Group 2, emphasizing the need for solid and scientifically-based contributions. The topics discussed were: capacity building for taxonomy; technology transfer including biotechnology; indigenous knowledge and practices; capacity building for biosafety; the clearing-house mechanism; and economic valuation of biodiversity. Discussion over specific agenda items was aided by a series of lunch-time seminars organized by delegations and observers, some of which were characterized as positive contributions to the technical appraisal of issues. The order of the agenda was rearranged to allow seminars to precede discussion of key items. The recommendations adopted by SBSTTA-2 are incorporated into a single document that includes the report of Working Group 2 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/L.2).

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR TAXONOMY:** Working Group 2's discussions on Agenda Item 3.4, practical approaches for capacity-building for taxonomy, were based on document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/5. There was a general consensus that there is a need to overcome the current lack of taxonomists, who are essential for national implementation of the Convention. Many countries called for urgent capacity building, "including" training of taxonomists.

The debate focused on establishing alternatives for increasing taxonomic capacity and making recommendations for developing SBSTTA's work programme. Parties agreed on the need to adopt a more practical direction in taxonomy, linked to bio-prospecting and ecological research on the conservation and sustainable use of the components of biodiversity.

GERMANY, supported by SWEDEN, called for priority setting in capacity building for taxonomy. The establishment of regional centers of excellence was favored by NIGERIA and INDIA while opposed by the US, COLOMBIA and NEW ZEALAND. Numerous countries called for regional training programmes and GEF support. CANADA amended the draft recommendation by including recognition that biological collections are the basis of taxonomy and are sources of genetic resources.

The final recommendations to the COP recognize the scarcity of taxonomists, taxonomic collections and institutional facilities and the need to alleviate this situation to further the implementation of the Convention. It recommends that national institutions and regional and subregional networks be established or strengthened and consideration be given to information needs for bio-prospecting, habitat conservation, sustainable agriculture and the sustainable utilization of biological resources. It also reflects the widely expressed concern that capacity building for taxonomy should be linked to the effective implementation of the CBD. The recommendation called for guidelines for funding programmes, including for the financial mechanism under the Convention. This should serve areas such as bio-prospecting, habitat conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity.

The recommendations also stress the need for employment opportunities for trained taxonomists, and emphasize national priority setting. The SBSTTA also recognizes the importance of establishing regional and subregional training programmes. The inclusion of taxonomic information in the clearing-house mechanism is recommended and greater international collaboration in sharing information is called for. The adoption of mutually agreed instruments for exchange of biological specimens is encouraged. The SBSTTA furthermore requests the COP to

consider instructing the GEF to support capacity building in taxonomy through: national, regional and subregional training programmes; collecting and disseminating data and information through the clearing-house mechanism; and strengthening infrastructure for biological collections in countries of origin.

**TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, INCLUDING BIOTECHNOLOGY:** The Secretariat's document on technology transfer, including biotechnology (UNEP/SBSTTA/2/6), outlined technology transfer issues and recommended establishment of a liaison group to encourage private sector participation. During subsequent discussion of the issue, delegates generally agreed with the Secretariat's document on the role of the private sector in the CBD process.

MALAYSIA called for elaboration of the linkage between biotechnology and biodiversity conservation, particularly in bio-prospecting. GERMANY, CANADA, NORWAY, COLOMBIA, the UK, FRANCE and the US questioned the need for an additional subsidiary body on technology transfer, as proposed in the Secretariat's document.

INDIA emphasized the need to make use of genetic resources to achieve the CBD's objective of equitable sharing of benefits. SWITZERLAND called for incentive measures, such as concessional terms, risk sharing and financial mechanisms. ZIMBABWE emphasized that transferred technology can sometimes contribute to environmental degradation. Supported by THAILAND, he stressed the need for investment in capacity building. NORWAY drew attention to the importance of control and management mechanisms for biotechnology.

JAPAN suggested that the proposed liaison group distinguish needs for public versus private sector technology. COLOMBIA called on governments of developed countries to create incentives for private sector technology transfer. FRANCE said individual States should decide whether to provide incentives for technology transfer and called for safeguards for patented technology.

The PHILIPPINES called for: an inventory of needed technologies; incentives for private sector technology transfer; linking technology transfer to biosafety issues; and intellectual property protection without monopoly control. MALAWI recommended developing terms of reference for a liaison group. AUSTRALIA stressed the role of multilateral development banks and intellectual property rights to facilitate technology transfer.

After the CHAIR introduced draft recommendations, ANTIGUA and BARBUDA asked for a reference to the GEF. Supported by CANADA, INDIA, the US, COLOMBIA and the UK, he also queried the SBSTTA's competence to institute a liaison group. The paragraph on liaison groups was deleted. MALAYSIA, COLOMBIA and ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA objected to the proposal by JAPAN and AUSTRALIA to delete the paragraph on identification of appropriate technologies for genetic resource utilization.

In the paragraph on private sector involvement, JAPAN, supported by NEW ZEALAND, the UK and the EC, proposed deleting the sentence urging all Parties to encourage private sector technology transfer. INDIA, INDONESIA, COLOMBIA, MALAWI and CAMEROON objected. NEW ZEALAND proposed compromise text: "encourage all Parties to facilitate the transfer of technologies from the private sector". In the paragraph calling on the clearing-house mechanism to facilitate information sharing, COLOMBIA, supported by INDIA and the US, deleted specific references to putting "brokers" into contact with each other.

The adopted recommendations call for integrating work on access to and transfer of technology into sectoral themes related to the SBSTTA's priority issues. The recommendations state that future SBSTTA work should focus on technologies relevant to conservation and sustainable use and those that make use of genetic

resources, and that the role of the financial mechanism in facilitating this should be explored. It emphasizes technologies in the context of fair and equitable benefit sharing from genetic resources utilization and those based on a needs assessment focusing on the means of gaining economic and commercial value from genetic resources. The decision recommends that the SBSTTA consider ways to involve the private sector through incentive measures in facilitating technology transfer, and states that the clearing-house mechanism should facilitate information sharing on technological innovation.

**INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE:** Working Group 2 examined the note produced by the Secretariat on Agenda Item 3.6, knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/7), in the context of the three elements of Article 8(j) in the Convention: preserving the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous communities; promoting their wider application; and encouraging the equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use.

As proposed by many delegations, representatives of groups of indigenous people addressed the working group. They emphasized the role of indigenous people in sustainable development, called for a recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples within their territories and participatory approaches on project development and, supported by numerous countries, called for working groups on indigenous people and biodiversity. One representative reported on the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, concluded in Canada in 1984, on indigenous participation in environmental management.

During the debate the need for elaboration of basic terms and terminology used by various stakeholders became apparent. These terms include: indigenous and local communities; farmers; indigenous knowledge; innovation and practices; and traditional knowledge and modern science. It was widely recognized that the links between indigenous knowledge and intellectual property rights, access legislation, human rights and other legal issues need to be explored. The need to adapt existing intellectual property rights or to develop *sui generis* regimes to protect and promote knowledge, innovations and practices was also discussed. The PHILIPPINES proposed a study on the impact of the current intellectual property rights system on biodiversity. Several countries called on the clearing-house mechanism to contribute to the dissemination of information on these issues.

Many countries supported the development of global and local indigenous networks. INDONESIA recognized the role of indigenous knowledge and practices in advancing science and technology. Numerous countries called for support from the financial mechanism for projects linking knowledge and practices of indigenous and local communities and biodiversity. The US suggested market and non-market mechanisms to conserve traditional knowledge. Some countries suggested that the SBSTTA or the COP should facilitate dialogue between the formal and informal sciences. ARGENTINA emphasized that SBSTTA should avoid political issues.

In its recommendations to the COP, the SBSTTA recognizes the importance of addressing the issue of knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities for the implementation of the Convention. In a late-night session, Working Group 2, however, could not agree on substantive recommendations. The Chair of Working Group 2, therefore, agreed to prepare a non-paper reflecting the diverse views and suggestions expressed during the SBSTTA meeting, in time for COP-3. The SBSTTA encourages representatives of indigenous communities to prepare and distribute information on their views and recommendations on the implementation of Article 8(j). The SBSTTA furthermore recommends that the COP request advice

from the SBSTTA on technical and scientific issues, and urges that the indigenous knowledge post within the Secretariat be filled as soon as possible.

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BIOSAFETY:** The document on capacity building in biosafety (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/8) recognizes the work of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety and outlines overall capacity building needs. The NETHERLANDS, supported by CANADA, NEW ZEALAND, SWITZERLAND, the UK and INDIA, called for a twin-track approach to continue discussions on an international legal instrument on biosafety while implementing the UNEP International Technical Guidelines on Biosafety (UNEP Guidelines). Supported by most delegations, he cautioned against duplicating the work of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety.

SWITZERLAND suggested funding capacity building through the GEF. INDONESIA emphasized the link between biosafety and technology transfer. The UK, supported by INDIA, suggested that COP-3 develop funding recommendations on capacity building. ARGENTINA recommended regional training programmes on biosafety. AUSTRIA joined GERMANY and the UK in stating that capacity building for biosafety could not be separated from other capacity building programmes. COLOMBIA stressed consideration of biotechnology products, risk assessment and management, and social and economic impacts.

After the Chair introduced draft recommendations, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, supported by NIGERIA, rearranged the paragraph on funding, emphasizing guidance to the GEF on capacity building. NEW ZEALAND proposed deleting reference to the biosafety protocol. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA and MALAYSIA objected. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA and INDIA stated that GEF funding for biosafety should only be requested in the context of support for capacity building.

The adopted recommendation advocates: avoiding duplication between SBSTTA and the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Biosafety, with the latter having priority; using the UNEP International Technical Guidelines for Biosafety as an interim measure in view of the on-going development of a biosafety protocol; developing guidelines for funding of capacity building in biosafety by the GEF; discussing capacity building within the COP in conjunction with technology transfer and risk assessment and management; and incorporating information on biosafety capacity building into the clearing-house mechanism.

**CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM:** The Secretariat introduced the document on the clearing-house mechanism (CHM) (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/9). The GEF outlined its contribution to CHM implementation. Several countries emphasized that the CHM should be based on the CBD, demand-driven and synergy-based. Numerous delegations suggested regional workshops on the CHM. SWEDEN and CANADA suggested establishing an advisory committee. The WORLD CONSERVATION MONITORING CENTRE proposed testing the prototype. MALAYSIA agreed with SWEDEN in advocating a pro-active role for the CHM in brokering bio-prospecting contracts.

THAILAND endorsed the publication of a CHM newsletter, and GERMANY stressed that it should not be limited to electronic information. PERU noted the need for more interactive work with national thematic and regional focal points. INDONESIA said the pilot phase evaluation should focus on organization, visualization and decision support functions. CHINA suggested that the SBSTTA organize a training course for developing countries. SPAIN proposed drawing on national patent office databases. CAMEROON and SWITZERLAND called for information exchanges for countries with existing Internet competence.

MALAWI called for funds from developed countries, and for the GEF and other donors to assist capacity building in developing

countries. INDIA noted varying levels of capacity to operationalize National Focal Points. The NETHERLANDS announced cooperation with Germany on developing a World Wide Web site. JAPAN cautioned against an over-ambitious pilot phase. ZIMBABWE urged integrating local knowledge and classification systems.

To the draft Chair's recommendations, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA added language on the financial mechanism, thematic foci and pilot projects to enable implementation of the CHM. GERMANY emphasized decentralization and training. CANADA added that information should be controlled by the providers. The US deleted a needs survey of Parties. MALAWI and INDONESIA proposed GEF support. CANADA suggested replacing "guidance from experts" with an advisory committee coordinated by the Secretariat. INDIA added guidance in a "transparent manner" and the UK called for an "informal" committee. The paragraph linking the CHM to National Focal Points, including national patent offices, was amended by AUSTRALIA to read "for example, patent offices" at the suggestion of the PHILIPPINES. SWEDEN proposed that the CHM review case studies of scientific cooperation, and this was incorporated, as modified by INDIA and the US, to be a possible topic of regional CHM workshops.

The adopted recommendation calls on the COP to: request GEF support for capacity building in information technologies including the Internet and for pilot projects; request the Secretariat to facilitate regional workshops for defining information needs; and guide the CHM by setting up an informal advisory committee constituted and coordinated by the Secretariat. The CHM should: be needs-driven and decentralized; support decision making and involve the private sector; recognize that ownership and control of information remains with the providers and respect the rights of countries of origin and indigenous communities; provide information linkages to National Focal Points; and focus on providing thematic focal points for linking activities at the national and regional levels.

**BIODIVERSITY ECONOMIC VALUATION:** Discussion on economic valuation of biodiversity (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/13) underscored that the issue of economic valuation was particularly relevant to the implementation of Articles 11 and 15 of the Convention dealing with Incentive Measures and Access to Genetic Resources. Highlighting the strong value placed on genetic resources in agriculture and the pharmaceutical industry, the document was criticized by several delegations for its narrow focus. CHILE reported on a regional workshop on Economic Valuation of Biodiversity in May 1996 as a contribution to the regional implementation of the Convention. Most delegations, excluding the US and JAPAN, agreed that the issue should be a standing item.

MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, NIGERIA and NORWAY stressed that economic valuation should not be a prerequisite for policy action. INDIA emphasized the commercial value of biodiversity. FRANCE, SOUTH AFRICA and CAMEROON cautioned that economic valuation might preclude symbolic and cultural values. NEW ZEALAND and FRANCE thought that the clearing-house mechanism should be used as a mechanism to disseminate empirical data on economic valuation of biodiversity. The AFRICAN GROUP called for participatory approaches. The NETHERLANDS and COLOMBIA proposed focusing on economic valuation of genetic resources.

Parties recognized that a better understanding of the full value of biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels will greatly assist the implementation of the Convention. Recognizing the deficiency of information on the economic value of biodiversity, they called for further development of methods for providing information on economic value, including non-use

values. As future work areas they specified case studies of economic value, research into methodologies and facilitation of access to such information.

The SBSTTA agreed to recommend to the COP that economic valuation should be integrated into the sectoral and thematic items under its work programme and should be reflected in the relevant agenda items, including incentive measures, agricultural biodiversity, genetic resources, environmental impact assessments, inland water ecosystems, and marine and coastal biodiversity. The SBSTTA recommended that the COP encourage Parties to draw upon research carried out by regional and economic groupings. With regard to incentive measures, it recommended that the COP support the development of local-level incentives, participatory approaches in designing new measures, and capacity building.

### OTHER PLENARY MEETINGS

The Plenary convened a meeting on Thursday morning, 5 September, to discuss agenda items relating to organization and procedure.

**MODUS OPERANDI:** The CHAIR introduced Agenda Item 4, *modus operandi* (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/16). With regard to the frequency and timing of meetings, CANADA and SWITZERLAND called for more time between COP meetings; and a large number of countries called for earlier SBSTTA meetings, but cautioned against setting dates that conflict with other meetings. Most countries favored the five-day schedule for SBSTTA meetings, but EQUATORIAL GUINEA and the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF LAOS called for extensions. Numerous countries urged the Secretariat to distribute the documents earlier. COLOMBIA, FRANCE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, MONACO, MEXICO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA and COSTA RICA called for documents in Spanish and/or French. CHINA suggested on-line dissemination of documents.

GERMANY, the UK and MALAYSIA called for thematic approaches to future meetings. FRANCE spoke against permanent agenda items, and several countries called for priority setting. GERMANY, INDIA, the UK and SAMOA recommended the Secretariat's attendance at meetings of other processes. The UK and COLOMBIA recommended increasing the scientific content of the SBSTTA and leaving the political issues to the COP. GERMANY, MALAYSIA, SAMOA, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA and SOUTH KOREA favored Bureau elections at the end of SBSTTA meetings. SAMOA, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA, JAPAN, CÔTE D'IVOIRE and NEW ZEALAND supported two-year terms.

CANADA and NEW ZEALAND called for Bureau meetings with the Executive Secretary after COP meetings. Many countries favored intersessional work, although INDIA did not. MALAYSIA objected to the concept of a SBSTTA "seal of approval" for research initiatives. NEW ZEALAND and the US supported holding scientific and technical panels at SBSTTA meetings. Several countries called for careful selection of experts and COLOMBIA stressed the need for transparency. With regard to expert work, GERMANY proposed informal electronic networks and clearing-house mechanism collaboration with other organizations.

MALAYSIA, SAMOA, COLOMBIA, the MARSHALL ISLANDS, the UK and SWITZERLAND opposed proliferation of *ad hoc* panels. COLOMBIA, NORWAY, CÔTE D'IVOIRE and JAPAN supported informal, open-ended liaison groups. Guidelines and terms of reference for liaison groups were requested. SAMOA asked for financial assistance for attendance, and balanced representation. The MARSHALL ISLANDS suggested that nominations of experts by Parties include NGO experts. Several

delegations opposed the NETHERLANDS' proposals to limit expert panels to 10 members and to rule out regional meetings.

COLOMBIA, the MARSHALL ISLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, and SAMOA supported regional workshops. COLOMBIA opposed recommendations to create "centres of excellence". FRANCE expressed concern about the expense involved in the proliferation of new groups and ruled out a special committee to liaise with other institutions. NEW ZEALAND cautioned that a requirement for early translation and circulation of documentation could interfere with the quality of the preparation of documents and called for representation from indigenous peoples on expert groups.

The US suggested involving scientific societies in a peer review of documents. MALAWI drew attention to difficulties created by the recent relocation of the Secretariat in Montreal. AUSTRALIA and SWITZERLAND proposed the creation of a global calendar of relevant institutional meetings. NGOs invited the SBSTTA to draw on the expertise of IGOs, NGOs, related international institutional processes and social scientists, and to focus attention on the social, political and cultural dimensions of the ultimate causes of biodiversity loss. PERU suggested technical panels to augment SBSTTA's capacity. The CHAIR invited the Secretariat to prepare a revised text on the *modus operandi* and convened a Friends of the Chair group to resolve conflicting proposals.

**MEDIUM-TERM WORK PROGRAMME:** The Plenary then considered the medium term work programme (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/17). Many delegations called for a focused programme driven by the COP. CANADA, MALAWI and COLOMBIA suggested inland water ecosystems as the issue to highlight under next year's thematic focus on terrestrial biodiversity. INDONESIA and SWEDEN suggested forests. AUSTRIA asked for clarification on priorities. It was proposed that the SBSTTA and COP Bureaus communicate closely to prioritize work. The UK requested flexibility in responding to the COP's decisions.

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR SBSTTA-3:** The Plenary also considered the draft provisional agenda for SBSTTA-3 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/18). INDIA suggested setting priorities and COLOMBIA asked for balance on the SBSTTA-3 agenda to include all CBD objectives. The Chair agreed to attend the upcoming COP Bureau meeting.

### **CLOSING PLENARY**

The closing Plenary commenced on Friday, 6 September, with substantial debate over organizational and procedural matters, including the draft recommendation on the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA, before proceeding to adopt draft recommendations developed in the working groups.

**ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS:** Delegates first discussed the Chair's draft recommendation on the *modus operandi* of SBSTTA (UNEP/CPD/SBSTTA/2/CRP.1). Several amendments were accepted without discussion, such as INDIA's amendment in Annex 2 that only "some" delegates felt intersessional work would be necessary. There was also agreement on Secretariat representation at meetings of other bodies. With regard to regional meetings in preparation for SBSTTA work, the NETHERLANDS' proposal for specifying meetings "for specific items" in combination with other "scientific" regional meetings was accepted.

On the paragraph dealing with working languages, numerous countries requested that Spanish be included. CHINA and HUNGARY, on behalf of the Eastern European Group, also expressed views advocating working languages. A new paragraph initiated by NEW ZEALAND was added, suggesting that the Secretariat should prepare a document analyzing the implications,

particularly financial, "of adding to the working languages of the SBSTTA", and on the preferred languages of the Parties. The final version of the paragraph noted that concern was expressed by "several" delegations, and that "these delegations" felt that the other official languages of the UN "should be included as working languages of the SBSTTA". MONACO also mentioned problems with French translations.

On election of officers, CANADA proposed new language specifying that the Chair's term of office will begin at the beginning of one ordinary SBSTTA meeting and continue until the beginning of the following one. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, supported by DOMINICA and JAMAICA, expressed concern about the transitional arrangements. The need for satisfactory transitional arrangements was put into a new paragraph.

The US proposed "peer review" and the inclusion of "scientific societies" in a paragraph on liaison groups. After much discussion of scientific societies and the concept of peer review, and an additional proposal on NGOs with "competence in the field" by ARGENTINA, a proposal by SWEDEN was accepted. As a result, a reference to "scientific peer review processes" was placed in a paragraph on the use of a roster of experts, along with a suggestion that the Secretariat, along with other bodies, would make full use of the roster.

In the paragraph on liaison groups, SWEDEN, supported by NEW ZEALAND and ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, proposed that liaison groups should be responsible to the Executive Secretary alone. Following a proposal by SWEDEN, JAMAICA insisted that regional as well as global scientific organizations be specified. ARGENTINA noted the need to ensure competence in the field. A contact group met to formulate compromise language. The paragraph ultimately stated that in the preparation of documentation, and to ensure the use of available competence available within international "and regional" organizations, including non-governmental organizations "and scientific unions and societies, qualified in fields relating to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity", the Executive Secretary may establish, in consultation with the Chair and the other members of the Bureau of the SBSTTA, liaison groups, as appropriate.

In a paragraph on development of the roster of experts, the NETHERLANDS and INDIA added a reference to accessibility of the roster through the clearing-house mechanism. The CHAIR invited the SBSTTA Executive Secretary to read decision II/10 of the COP on compiling the roster of experts. This was used to replace part of the draft paragraph under discussion. SWEDEN said the issue of governmental legitimization of the roster may have to be taken up by the COP.

The CHAIR next introduced the **Draft Provisional Agenda of SBSTTA-3 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/CRP.2)** and suggested that this item be discussed along with the **Medium-term programme of work for the period 1995-1997 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/17)**. He invited consideration of the views expressed at the Plenary, the COP's view that its agenda should be reflected in the SBSTTA's work programme, and the issues identified at SBSTTA-2 for further consideration. He suggested that SBSTTA-3 look at freshwater ecosystems since this was on the COP agenda. He also noted the long list of issues in the draft programme and the need for a discussion with the COP. It would be difficult for the SBSTTA to provide in-depth analyses on all the issues.

The NETHERLANDS, supported by AUSTRIA, AUSTRALIA and INDIA, listed the items on the agenda, including water ecosystems, marine and coastal biodiversity, forests, and agricultural biodiversity, and said a technical discussion would be difficult. He did not know which experts he should bring to the next SBSTTA. He suggested seeking further guidance from the COP on prioritization of the items on the provisional agenda

because it was far too ambitious. AUSTRIA asked that a reference to environmental impact assessments be consistent with that of the CBD. AUSTRALIA recalled that his delegation suggested codifying agenda items to indicate levels of priority. INDIA added that the COP should provide guidance on SBSTTA's advisory role on the issue of identifying and protecting the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities. ARGENTINA made a reservation on the paragraph on indigenous and local communities and said it was not consistent with Article 8(j) of the CBD. The CHAIR agreed that there is a need for some indication of the issues requiring in-depth work.

The draft provisional agenda for SBSTTA-3 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/CRP.2) was adopted. Delegates agreed that the third meeting of the SBSTTA will be held in Montreal from 14-18 July 1997 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/19). The adoption of the dates of SBSTTA-3 took into consideration CANADA's appeal for the dates to be tentative depending on the dates of COP-4. ZIMBABWE, on behalf of the African Group, stressed the need for financial support for developing countries for implementation of the Convention.

**SUBSTANTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Chair of Working Group 1 presented the draft report of the working group (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/L.3 and Corr.1), which contained the draft recommendations as an Annex. The Plenary adopted the document. The Chair of Working Group 2 then presented his draft report (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/L.2), which also contained draft recommendations as an Annex. On Agenda Item 3.4 (Practical Approaches for Capacity Building), CANADA added to the preamble the recognition that biological collections are the basis of taxonomy and are also sources of genetic resources. He also suggested deleting the reference to access to genetic resources in the paragraph calling for adoption of mutually agreed instruments for exchange of biological specimens. The UK proposed that this paragraph refer to "those concerned" rather than "Parties."

Disagreeing with CANADA's further suggestion, MALAWI and INDIA insisted on retaining the call for "material transfer agreements" in addition to "equivalent instruments" for exchange of biological specimens. CANADA accepted this compromise and COLOMBIA expressed approval. The UK proposed deleting the reference to exchange of "information" in the same sentence on exchange of biological specimens, arguing that transfer of information is already mentioned in the decisions on the clearing-house mechanism. In spite of MOROCCO's strong opposition, the term "information" was deleted.

The recommendation on Agenda Item 3.5 (Technology transfer), was amended by SWITZERLAND so that the involvement of the private sector particularly refers to examining options for incentive mechanisms. The draft report, with other changes mentioned by the Secretariat, was then adopted. The Plenary then adopted the draft report of SBSTTA-2 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/2/L.1 and Add.1).

**CLOSING STATEMENTS:** In a brief closing statement, SBSTTA Chair Peter Johan Schei (Norway) remarked on the need to be "very focused" on scientific and technical matters, characterizing the SBSTTA as a "political advisory body." He added that the SBSTTA needs to improve its cooperation with the scientific community and to make sure that the agenda is not overloaded. He closed the meeting on a positive note, praising delegates for achieving "solid" recommendations incorporating, in particular, improvements to the *modus operandi*. Finally, he acknowledged the "enormous task" that had been faced by the new Secretariat in preparing documents for SBSTTA-2, achieved while simultaneously preparing for the first session of the Biosafety Working Group as well as COP-3. He adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SBSTTA-2

The second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was punctuated by reminders from Chair Peter Johan Schei (Norway) that the subsidiary body is neither a "mini-Conference of the Parties" nor a "drafting group." Indeed he tied the scientific and technical credibility of the body to its ability to maintain a knowledge-based approach consistent with its policy advisory role. By the end of the week, however, it appeared as though he was not entirely satisfied that the SBSTTA had kept to its scientific and technical policy advisory mandate.

**SBSTTA'S IDENTITY CRISIS:** The divergence between the SBSTTA's mandate and its practice has also preoccupied the SBSTTA Bureau where the dilemma has been characterized as an "identity crisis." Explanations include the intergovernmental nature of the meetings, where delegates inevitably arrive with national priorities in mind and are often the same personnel who attend the Conference of the Parties (COP), thus contributing to the blurring of the "gray zone" between science, policy advice and politics. An observer suggested that there is a mismatch between the nature of SBSTTA and its mandate. He suggested establishment of a standing body to deal with scientific input, perhaps attached to the Secretariat and drawing on the clearing-house mechanism (CHM) to facilitate communication and exchange.

The latest thinking on the subject at the Bureau level, according to some delegates, is that the problem lies with the COP because it has not provided sufficiently clear or specific instructions on what exactly the SBSTTA should be covering in its work programme. Only the COP has the authority to rationalize the SBSTTA's work. This is expected to be the subject of further discussion at COP-3, and there is hope that the extent of the institutional gridlock facing SBSTTA has been driven home by the experience at this session.

Asked whether the Bureau of the COP may have to consider a mechanism for scientific input that is closer to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which feeds into the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change process, the SBSTTA Chair suggested that it was too early to judge. More experience with the current CBD arrangements is required. A final decision will depend on how successfully SBSTTA can develop intersectoral mechanisms to produce papers and integrate scientific inputs, and to relieve the Secretariat of much of this onerous burden.

**THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN THE SBSTTA PROCESS:** A common theme heard throughout the week was the relatively small percentage of scientists on delegations participating in the work of the SBSTTA. Privately, several delegates admitted that they were not familiar with many of the technical issues discussed at SBSTTA-2. For many, ironically, the SBSTTA, which is supposed to be a body of scientific and technological experts, serves as a learning forum on the very issues these experts have come to give advice.

COP-3's treatment of the SBSTTA's recommendations will provide an opportunity to evaluate the influence of scientists who have already been involved in the process. Again, by analogy to the Climate Change Convention, the function of the IPCC, an internationally accepted body of scientific experts, is to provide authoritative and peer-reviewed information to back up political decisions taken by the Climate Change Convention's COP. The SBSTTA does not have input from a scientific mechanism that enjoys similar status to that of the IPCC. As observers have pointed out, the CBD process is in need of such scientific authority.

Look for a peer-review mechanism to be developed under the CBD.

**CONCLUSION:** Despite the criticism, some delegates expressed their satisfaction that progress has been made on technical issues in several areas, including the clearing-house mechanism, capacity building on biosafety and taxonomy. The development of clearer guidelines on the clearing-house mechanism as the infrastructure for information storage and dissemination was considered particularly important. Additionally, certain recommendations regarding practical approaches for capacity building in taxonomy actually reached the level of specifics. For example, the long-debated and finally accepted paragraph advocates material transfer agreements (a specialized kind of contract defining the use to which biological samples can be put) for transfer of biological specimens for taxonomic research.

Nevertheless, the process continues to advance slowly. Referring to "over-sensitivity" to language, one delegate expressed his frustration with the slow progress by calling these negotiations a "battle over semicolons". The crowded agenda at this year's meeting did not help matters. Many delegates at SBSTTA-2 expressed frustration with their inability to get down to specific technical details in the working groups. Increased use of working groups and liaison groups were suggested to speed up the process. In addition to the call for more focused background papers prepared by the Secretariat, a number of delegates suggested privately that a series of case studies presented by Parties during future SBSTTA meetings might help ground the discussion in real world examples. If COP-3 exercises restraint in setting the SBSTTA's 1997 agenda, as recommended at SBSTTA-2, Parties may gain the focus needed to get down to the real business of implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON MEDITERRANEAN BIODIVERSITY:** This symposium, organized by the Agency for New Technology, Energy and Environment of Italy (ENEA), is scheduled for 14-15 October 1996 in Rome. The symposium plans to produce an informal technical report for COP-3. For more information contact: Dr. Paolo Carrabba, ENEA, fax: +39 6 3048 4630, e-mail: demurtas@casaccia.enea.it.

**WORLD CONSERVATION CONGRESS:** The meeting of IUCN members, partners and other conservationists will take place at the Palais de Congress, Montreal, Canada, from 12-24 October 1996. The three-and-a-half day workshop programme aims to find new and innovative ways to tackle the challenges that face the Earth, to harmonize views and action plans and to formulate tangible ways to move ahead and make a difference. Contact Ricardo Bayon, Special Assistant to the Director General, 28 Rue de Mauverney, CH-1196, Gland, Switzerland; tel: +41 22 999-0001, fax: +41 22 999-0002; e-mail: rib@hq.IUCN.ch. Also try <http://w3.iprolink.ch/iucnlib> or <http://www.IUCN.org>.

**FIFTH GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FORUM:** GBF-5 is scheduled for the weekend before COP-3, from 2-3 November 1996 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. For information on submitting abstracts or attending the forum contact: Jeffrey McNeely, Chief Scientist, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, 28 Rue Mauverney, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland; tel: +41 22 999-0001; fax: +41 22 999-0025; e-mail: m@hq.iucn.org.

**THIRD CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES:** COP-3 is scheduled for 4-15 November 1996 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with a Ministerial Segment from 13-14 November 1996. For more information contact: the CBD Secretariat, World Trade Centre, 413 St. Jacques Street, Office 630, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y

1N9; tel: +1 (514) 288 22 20; fax: +1 (514) 288 65 88; e-mail: [biodiv@mtl.net](mailto:biodiv@mtl.net).

**WORLD FOOD SUMMIT:** The FAO's World Food Summit, scheduled for 13-17 November 1996 in Rome, Italy, is expected to renew international commitment to eradicating hunger and malnutrition and achieving food security, and adopt a policy and plan of action document. For information contact: the World Food Summit Secretariat, FAO, viale delle Terme di Caracalla, I-00100, Rome, Italy; tel: +39-6/5225 2932; fax: +39-6/5225 5249; e-mail: [food-summit@fao.org](mailto:food-summit@fao.org). Also try the World Food Summit Web site at <http://www.fao.org>.

## BIOSAFETY

**WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL BIOSAFETY:** This workshop, sponsored by Friends of the Earth Europe and the European Commission, is scheduled for 12-13 September 1996 in Brussels, Belgium. For more information contact Gill Lacroix or Dan Leskin, FOE Biotechnology Programme, 29 rue Blanche, B-1060 Brussels, Belgium; tel: +32-2-5420180; fax +32-2-5375596; e-mail: [100717.1155@compuserve.com](mailto:100717.1155@compuserve.com).

**UNEP BIOSAFETY WORKSHOP:** A technical workshop on biosafety will be held prior to COP-3 of the CBD in Buenos Aires from 31 October to 1 November 1996. Contact Hamdallah Zedan, UNEP Biodiversity Unit, Nairobi, Kenya, fax +254-2 623 926, e-mail [hamdallah.zedan@unep.org](mailto:hamdallah.zedan@unep.org). UNEP's International Register on Biosafety, which was launched in Geneva on 8 July 1996, can be found at <http://irptc.unep.ch/biodiv/>. For more information, contact Michael Williams, UNEP(Geneva), tel: +41 22 979 9242/44, fax: +41 22 7973464, e-mail: [mwilliams@unep.ch](mailto:mwilliams@unep.ch).

## GENETIC RESOURCES

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES:** The FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture will meet for its Third Extraordinary Session, from 9-12 December 1996, to further negotiations on the revision of the International Undertaking in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The session will be preceded by a two-day meeting of the working group. For more information, try the FAO Home Page at <http://www.fao.org>.

**SEVENTH SESSION OF THE FAO COMMISSION ON GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE:** This meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 1997 at FAO Headquarters in Rome. For more information, try the FAO Home Page at <http://www.fao.org>. Also try <http://web.icppgr.fao.org>.

## MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY

**FIRST MEETING OF EXPERTS ON MARINE AND COASTAL BIODIVERSITY:** Indonesia has offered to host the first Meeting of Experts, which is expected to convene early in 1997. The exact date is still to be determined. For information contact the CBD Secretariat, World Trade Centre, 413 St. Jacques Street, Office 630, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9; tel: +1 (514) 288 22 20; fax: +1 (514) 288 65 88; e-mail: [biodiv@mtl.net](mailto:biodiv@mtl.net).

## FORESTS

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS:** The third session of the IPF will be held from 9-20 September 1996 in Geneva and IPF-4 will be held in New York in 1997. For more information contact: Elizabeth Barsk-Rundquist, tel: +1 (212) 963-3263; fax: +1 (212) 963-1795; e-mail: [barsk-rundquist@un.org](mailto:barsk-rundquist@un.org). For more information, try the UN Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) Home Page at <http://www.un.org/DPCSD>.