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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
First meeting
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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Note by the Interim Secretariat

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 25 of the Convention on Biological Diversity establishes a Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to provide the Conference of the Parties and, as appropriate, its other subsidiary bodies with timely advice relating to the implementation of the Convention. The functions and organization of this Body are outlined in the same article and were further elaborated in the note, UNEP/CBD/IC/2/19, prepared by the Interim Secretariat for the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Convention on Biological Diversity (ICCBD).

2. Given the fundamental importance of SBSTTA for the implementation of the work of the Conference of the Parties, ICCBD recommended that the Conference of the Parties should consider putting this Body in operation as soon as possible (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, para. 287).

3. This note:

(a) Summarizes the main recommendations/suggestions formulated on SBSTTA by ICCBD at its second session;

(b) Presents a set of possible decisions that the Conference of the Parties might consider at its first meeting to ensure a prompt operation of the Subsidiary Body.

2. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF ICCBD ON SBSTTA

4. In order to facilitate the decisions of the Conference of the Parties on this item, ICCBD formulated some suggestions on the functions of SBSTTA, guidelines for its operation and its multidisciplinary nature (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, paras. 289-297).

2.1 The functions of SBSTTA

5. ICCBD noted that the functions of SBSTTA listed in article 25, paragraph 2, of the Convention had been well elaborated in document UNEP/CBD/IC/2/19. Taking into account the comprehensiveness of these

functions, the Committee recommended subparagraphs (a), (c) and (d) of article 25, paragraph 2, as priority functions, including advice on capacity-building for carrying out activities under the Convention. These priority functions are:

- (a) The provision of scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity;
- (b) Identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and advice on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies;
- (c) The provision of advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components.

2.2 Guidelines for the operation of SBSTTA

6. ICCBD recommended that:

(a) Scientific and technical advice should include advice on policy issues related to scientific and technical programmes and international cooperation in research and development, but not other policy issues;

(b) SBSTTA should draw on the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/IC/2/11) and on the agenda for scientific and technological research prepared by that meeting (UNEP/CBD/IC/2/Inf.2).

(c) In order to enhance the efficiency of SBSTTA, the following bodies might be established:

(i) Panels to deal with specific issues;

(ii) A small multidisciplinary steering committee or bureau with equitable regional representation that could meet more frequently than the entire Body; or a two-tier body, of which the first tier would be open-ended, and the second tier would comprise representation of any one or any combination of the following: geographic regions, regional expert groups, biomes, eco-regions or scientific disciplines relevant to the implementation of the Convention, including socio-legal and economic sciences;

(d) The rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties, which include provisions for subsidiary bodies, might be adapted to suit the specific needs of SBSTTA;

(e) SBSTTA should respond to - but not anticipate - the needs of the Conference of the Parties;

(f) The meetings of SBSTTA could be held annually, with the same frequency as the meetings of the Conference of the Parties or more frequently to give the Body sufficient opportunity and flexibility to address its work programme and provide advice to the Conference of the Parties;

(g) As concerns timing, the meetings of SBSTTA could be held back-to-back with the Conference of the Parties or far enough in advance of the Conference of the Parties so that SBSTTA could finalize and distribute its report;

(h) A separate budget line for SBSTTA should be created within the budget of the Secretariat of the Convention.

2.3 Multidisciplinary nature of SBSTTA

7. Expertise that would need to be represented in SBSTTA should cover all the disciplines required for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention including, in particular, the functions specified in article 25, paragraph 2. The disciplines to be represented, as recommended by the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (see UNEP/CBD/IC/2/11, annexes II - IX) are related to:

(a) Identification, characterization and monitoring of ecosystems, species and genetic resources;

(b) *In situ* and *ex situ* conservation of components of biological diversity;

(c) Technologies for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components;

(d) Ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components;

(e) Ways to integrate, in modern management practices, knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles;

(f) Scientific and technical programmes for training in conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (at local, regional and national levels);

(g) Collection, management and transfer of data.

3. POSSIBLE DECISIONS NEEDED FOR EARLY OPERATION OF SBSTTA

8. In order to put SBSTTA in operation as soon as possible, the Conference of the Parties may wish, at its first meeting:

(a) To define the terms of reference of the Body;

(b) To decide on organizational and procedural matters relating to the Body;

(c) To set the date and venue of its first meeting;

(d) To decide on financial arrangements for the Body.

9. A short organizational meeting of SBSTTA has been proposed for 5 December 1994 and included in the provisional organization of work of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/1/Add.2) for which a draft provisional agenda is contained in annex I. The draft provisional agenda for the first meeting of SBSTTA is outlined in annex II. The report of the organizational meeting of SBSTTA will be submitted for consideration and approval by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting.

3.1 Terms of reference of SBSTTA

10. Terms of reference for SBSTTA are outlined in annex III. They derive from the functions listed under article 25, paragraph 2, of the Convention and are based on the discussions and recommendations of ICCBD and the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity. The specific tasks identified or implied in these terms of reference will need to be prioritized and scheduled in keeping with the decisions of the meeting on elements and schedule of work in the Medium-Term Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties. The draft provisional agenda for the first meeting of SBSTTA will be revised in the light of the decisions of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the elements of its Medium-Term Programme of Work and on the basis of the draft provisional agenda for the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

3.2 Organizational matters relating to the operation of SBSTTA

11. ICCBD suggested the establishment of panels, a steering committee or bureau, or a body of representatives of specific entities referred to in paragraph 6 (c) above to facilitate the discharge of the functions of SBSTTA. The Conference of the Parties may consider this issue at its second meeting on the basis of the recommendation of the first meeting of SBSTTA. The Conference of the Parties may, therefore, wish to request the Interim Secretariat to compile a roster of experts with experience in the fields of relevance to the Convention (see para. 7 above). The roster would be based on nominations received in writing from the Parties and from competent entities and would be updated by the clearing-house mechanism.

12. ICCBD also suggested that the Conference of the Parties might wish to review the performance of SBSTTA periodically (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, para. 289). This review may be based on the reports submitted by SBSTTA to the Conference of the Parties (article 25, para. 1). For this purpose, the Conference of the Parties may provide the Subsidiary Body with guidance and a time-frame for reporting. On the basis of its review, the Conference of the Parties may formulate additional guidelines aimed at ensuring the efficiency of SBSTTA in the discharge of its functions.

3.3 Procedural matters

13. The Conference of the Parties may wish to elect the chairperson of the first meeting of SBSTTA as provided for in rule 26, paragraph 3, of the draft rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties. The proposed organizational meeting of SBSTTA would provide the opportunity for the election of the other officers of the Bureau (see the draft provisional agenda of the organizational meeting of SBSTTA in annex I).

3.4 Date and venue of the first meeting of SBSTTA

14. It is proposed that the organizational meeting of SBSTTA should recommend the date and venue for its first meeting for consideration and approval by the Conference of the Parties. In accordance with rule 3 of the draft rules of procedure, meetings shall take place at the seat of the Secretariat, unless the Conference of the Parties decides otherwise or other appropriate arrangements are made by the Secretariat in consultation with the parties.

3.5 Financial arrangements

15. The Conference of the Parties might decide that the financial matters relating to the operation of SBSTTA, in particular the sources of funding, should be arranged following the financial rules governing the funding of the Secretariat of the Convention, and that the financial requirements for the operation of SBSTTA should be reflected in the budget of the secretariat.

Annex I

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING FOR THE SUBSIDIARY BODY
ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Draft provisional agenda

Monday, 5 December 1994

1. Opening of the session.
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1 Election of officers;
 - 2.2 Adoption of the agenda.
3. Provisional agenda for the first meeting (see annex II).
4. Date and venue of the first meeting.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report.

Annex II

FIRST MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY
ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Draft provisional agenda

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1 Adoption of the agenda;
 - 2.2 Organization of work.
3. Matters related to the organization of SBSTTA.
4. Programme of work of SBSTTA for 1995-1999.
5. Preparation of matters on which advice from SBSTTA is required by the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
6. Draft provisional agenda of the second meeting of SBSTTA.
 7. Date and venue of the second meeting.
 8. Other matters.
 9. Adoption of the report.
 10. Closure of the meeting.

Annex III

PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SBSTTA

1. TASKS DERIVED FROM THE FUNCTIONS LISTED UNDER
Article 25 OF THE CONVENTION

1.1 Provision of scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity (article 25, para. 2 (a))

1. The ICCBD at its second session considered this task as a priority (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, para. 290).

1.1.1 Identification, inventorying and monitoring

2. Provision of scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity includes identification, inventorying and monitoring of biological diversity and its components. As stated in article 7 (b) of the Convention, particular attention should be paid to biological diversity components requiring urgent measures and those which offer the greatest potential for sustainable use. Article 7 (c) adds that monitoring as well as identification should include processes and categories of activities which have or are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the conservation of biological diversity. The expected output from this task is a set of baseline information, including *inter alia* on threatened species and ecosystems. This information is needed for the development of national and global strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components.

3. In order to initiate the process, the Conference of the Parties may wish to request SBSTTA to advise on guidelines that would promote and harmonize national assessments of the status of biological diversity and facilitate the compilation of data.

1.1.2 Organization of databases

4. Information derived from identification and monitoring activities is normally maintained and organized in databases. The ICCBD recommended (see UNEP/CBD/IC/2/2, annex I, para. 4) that:

(a) Formats should be developed for data entries. However, some representatives at the second session of the ICCBD expressed the view that it was premature to identify software at this stage;

(b) Regional training programmes should be instituted on the use of those formats;

(c) Existing databases of relevance to the Convention should be catalogued and their gaps and linkages identified (see UNEP/CBD/IC/2/2, annex III, para. 43(b)).

5. SBSTTA might be requested to analyse the work started by the Interim Secretariat briefly reported in document UNEP/CBD/IC/2/15, and advise on modalities for the preparation of a catalogue of existing databases of relevance to the Convention. This meta-database and the databases in the catalogue will be useful in the operation of the clearing-house mechanism (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/8).

1.2 Preparation of scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention (article 25, para. 2 (b))

6. In order to reduce, stop and prevent the depletion of the components of biological diversity, various measures have been taken at both national and international levels. It is necessary to survey the types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and assess their effects on biological diversity and its components. Indicator species could be identified and monitored to facilitate the environmental impact assessment of the measures. The results from this task and from the assessments carried out under 1.1 above will be the basis for the development of additional measures or improvement of existing ones.

7. SBSTTA may be requested to advise on the survey of the types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and on the scientific and technical assessment of them. In addition, SBSTTA may be requested to provide guidelines on the preparation of national reports in accordance with article 26 and to participate in the review of those reports.

1.3 Identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technology and know-how relating to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components and advice on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies (see article 25, para. 2 (c) of the Convention)

8. ICBCD at its second session recommended this activity on the priority list of tasks for SBSTTA (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, paras. 288-297). Previously, the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity considered this task in accordance with its terms of reference (see UNEP/CBD/IC/2/11, paras. 47 - 73) and presented:

(a) An indicative list of technologies and know-how relevant to the identification, characterization and monitoring of ecosystems, species and genetic resources;

(b) An indicative list of technologies appropriate for the *in situ* conservation of components of biological diversity;

(c) An indicative list of technologies and know-how for the *ex situ* conservation of components of biological diversity;

(d) An indicative list of technologies for sustainable use of biological diversity and its components;

(e) An indicative list of ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

(f) Ways to integrate, in modern management practices, knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles;

(g) An indicative list of scientific and technical programmes for training in conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (at local, regional and national levels);

(h) Some advice on data collection, management and transfer.

9. SBSTTA may thus be requested to follow up the work initiated by the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity, to provide more details on such technologies and know-how, and

to elaborate further the ways and means of promoting the development and transfer of appropriate technologies and know-how and of integrating, in modern management practices, knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles, as stipulated in article 8 (j).

1.4 Provision of advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (see article 25, para. 2 (d) of the Convention)

10. The Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity examined the main processes or mechanisms for identifying scientific programmes and international cooperation, and for strengthening national capacity to develop and carry out scientific programmes, and scientific programmes, research and development areas that would benefit from international cooperation (see UNEP/CBD/IC/2/11, paras. 24 - 46). The Experts:

(a) Recognized that comprehensive surveys of scientific programmes and strategies require substantial time to complete and suggested that in the short term, illustrative models, case studies and examples of successful international cooperation on the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components be gathered and disseminated;

(b) Listed possible elements for an agenda for scientific and technological research (UNEP/CBD/IC/2/Inf.2);

(c) Provided advice on mechanisms for identifying scientific programmes and international cooperation, and on national capacity-building.

11. SBSTTA may be requested to advise on the follow-up of these tasks considered by the ICCBD at its second session as a priority (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, paras. 288-297).

1.5 Response to scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to SBSTTA (article 25, para. 2 (e))

12. SBSTTA may be requested to provide advice *inter alia* on methodologies for identification, inventory and monitoring of biological diversity and its components, on scientific basis and techniques for both *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation of genetic materials and species, and for the conservation of ecosystems important for the maintenance of biological diversity, and for ensuring and monitoring the sustainable use of biological diversity components including advice on methodologies for environmental impact assessment and minimization of adverse effects on biological diversity. SBSTTA can draw on the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/IC/2/11).

2. TASKS DERIVED FROM THE OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION AND FROM RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ICCBD

2.1 Development of national strategies, plans or programmes for conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components (see article 6 of the Convention)

13. Article 6 of the Convention invites each Contracting Party to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components or to adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, *inter alia*, the measures set out in the Convention relevant to the Contracting

Party concerned. The Parties are expected to integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of biological resources into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. Development of national strategies, plans and programmes for conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components should be central to the Medium-Term Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/13).

14. SBSTTA may be requested to provide appropriate guidelines on development of national strategies, plans and programmes to facilitate and harmonize the work of the Parties.

2.2 Provision of priority advice on capacity-building

15. At its second session, ICCBD identified as one of the priority tasks of SBSTTA the provision of advice on capacity-building. SBSTTA may thus be requested to provide advice on strategies for building national capacity needed for carrying out activities under the Convention, particularly in relation with the priority tasks identified by the Conference of the Parties for its Medium-Term Programme of Work.

2.3 Access to and transfer of technology (article 16)

16. Article 1 of the Convention recognizes that appropriate transfer of relevant technologies is essential to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Article 16 of the Convention concerns access to and transfer of technology among the Parties to the Convention. At the first session of the ICCBD, Working Group II requested the Interim Secretariat to describe a range of appropriate models of technology transfer (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/3, annex I, para. 43 (c)). At the second session of the ICCBD, development of technologies was also emphasized in the light of article 16, paragraph 4 of the Convention, as well as the financial aspects of technology development and transfer (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, para. 148).

17. In order to determine how best to access and transfer technology as part of its Medium-Term Programme of Work, the Conference of the Parties may request SBSTTA to continue gathering information on appropriate models of technology transfer and to provide advice on appropriate procedures for access to, joint development and transfer of technology. This task might be facilitated by the clearing-house mechanism.

2.4 Clearing-house mechanism for technical and scientific cooperation (article 18, para. 3)

18. The Conference of the Parties may request SBSTTA to provide advice on the establishment, operation and review of the clearing-house mechanism for technical and scientific cooperation (see for details document UNEP/CBD/COP/1/8 on a Clearing-house mechanism for technical and scientific cooperation).

2.5 Handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits (article 19, paras. 3 and 4)

19. SBSTTA may be requested to describe and continuously update the scientific basis for safety in biotechnology to support the process of considering the need for, and modalities of, a protocol on safety in biotechnology called for in article 19, paragraph 3 of the Convention (see also UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, para. 226), and the approaches that the Conference of the Parties might choose for assessing and managing risks derived from applications of biotechnology and from the use of biotechnology products. SBSTTA may also advise on the most appropriate process for considering the need for, and modalities of, a protocol on safety in biotechnology, and

whether alien species referred to in article 8 (h) should be considered as part of any safety regulation system under the Convention as was suggested at the second session of the ICCBD.

2.6 Programme priorities and eligibility criteria regarding access to and utilization of financial resources

20. SBSTTA may be requested to provide advice on the development and review of programme priorities and eligibility criteria regarding access to and utilization of financial resources (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/4, paras. 144-149 and article 21, paras. 1 - 3 of the Convention).

