



**CONVENTION ON  
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**SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL  
AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE**

First meeting

Paris, 4-8 September 1995

**PROPOSAL FOR A MEDIUM-TERM PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE SUBSIDIARY  
BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE, 1995 - 1997**

Note by the Secretariat

**1. Introduction**

1 At its first meeting, held in Nassau from 28 November to 9 December 1994, the Conference of the Parties requested the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to prepare a proposal for a medium-term programme of work (1995-1997) based on the priorities set in the programme of work of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and on Article 25 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and to submit it to the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/17, p. 53).

2. The purpose of this note is to assist the SBSTTA in developing a proposal for its medium-term programme of work by:

(a) briefly reviewing possible tasks that could be derived from its functions listed under Article 25, paragraph 2;

(b) identifying in the medium-term programme of work of the Conference of the Parties 1995 - 1997 (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/17, pp. 61-65) the items on which advice from the SBSTTA might be required by the Conference of the Parties at its third and fourth meetings;

(c) suggesting means by which the SBSTTA may wish to carry out its work and ensure effectiveness in discharging its functions.

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**2. Possible tasks derived from Article 25, paragraph 2, of the Convention**

3. Article 25, paragraph 2, provides the framework for any programme of work of the SBSTTA. An indicative list of tasks derived from this article is contained in annex III of the note by the Interim Secretariat on the SBSTTA submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/11, pp. 7-11).

4. Provision of scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity (Article 25, paragraph 2(a)) requires a quantitative and qualitative description of the current magnitude and distribution in time and space of biological diversity at the gene/genome, species/community and ecosystem/habitat levels. It also requires identification, inventorying and monitoring of biological diversity and its components. These tasks may be carried out in accordance with the provisions of Article 7 of the Convention. This information will constitute a set of baseline data which could guide policy decisions regarding conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components. The scientific expertise needed for biosystematic research is inadequate in most countries. This is especially true for freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems and for bacteria, single-celled organisms, small invertebrates, and fungi in the terrestrial and marine realm. Other problems which hinder progress include: (i) poor access to, and use of, existing information on biological diversity housed in numerous reference collections, mainly in a non-computerized form; and (ii) the lack of national and international strategies, plans and programmes.

5. Preparation of scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention (Article 25, paragraph 2(b)) may start with a review of the forces driving changes in biological diversity and its components. This may be followed by a survey of the types of measures taken at both the national and international levels to conserve biological diversity and to use its components sustainably. This compilation may draw on information provided in biological diversity reports including national reports (Article 26 of the Convention), country studies and national strategies, plans and programmes, and global biodiversity assessments. The consequences of changes in biological diversity can be assessed by measuring the affected components of biological diversity and/or by monitoring indicators. Indicators are components of biological diversity which are highly sensitive to environmental perturbations and can signal the possible effects of such perturbations on a number of other components of biological diversity. The choice of indicators is guided by the fact that they represent a particular use, ecosystem or management concern or that they are easily sampled, sorted and identified. It is widely recognized that the work on indicator components of biological diversity should be emphasized. It is also widely recognized that data to be presented in national reports should be standardized in order to allow comparison and to facilitate use by other Parties. The results of the scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention will be the basis for the development of additional measures for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or for the improvement of existing ones.

6. The identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and the provision of advice on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies (Article 25, paragraph 2(c)) may require a review of, and recommendations on, approaches to the transfer of relevant technologies. The report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/16), held in Mexico City from 11 to 15 April 1994, contains indicative lists of: (i) technologies, including biotechnologies; (ii) indigenous and local communities practices; and (iii) suggestions on 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. Ways and means of promoting development of technology may include: (i) identification of possible approaches for strengthening the interaction among scientific, technical, industrial and governmental institutions in order to conserve and use sustainably the components of biological diversity; (ii) identification of possible north-south and south-south private sectors partnership arrangements through joint initiatives; and (iii) consideration of how the clearing-house mechanism being established under the Convention can facilitate access to and transfer of technology.

7. The requirements for the provision of advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (Article 25, paragraph 2(d)) were considered at the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity. The Meeting among other things listed possible elements for an agenda for scientific and technological research. It also provided advice on mechanisms for identifying scientific programmes and international cooperation and on national capacity building. It recognized that comprehensive surveys of scientific programmes and strategies require substantial time to complete.

8. The SBSTTA can draw on the report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/16) to prepare its advice on scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions put to it by the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies (Article 25, paragraph 2(e)). These questions may cover: (i) methodologies for identification, inventorying and monitoring of biological diversity and its components; (ii) the scientific basis and techniques for conserving genetic materials and species both *in-situ* and *ex-situ*, conserving ecosystems important for the maintenance of biological diversity, and ensuring and monitoring the sustainable use of biological diversity components. The latter would require advice on methodologies for environmental impact assessment and minimization of adverse effects on biological diversity.

### **3. Other matters on which advice from the SBSTTA might be required**

9. The draft provisional agenda prepared by the Conference of the Parties for the first meeting of the SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/COP/1/17, pp. 54-55) lists in addition to the consideration of the *modus operandi* of the SBSTTA and the preparation of a proposal for its medium-term programme, matters on which advice from the SBSTTA is required by the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties. These are matters identified in the medium-term programme of work of COP for 1995, that are relevant to the functions of the SBSTTA as described in Article 25, paragraph 2.

10. For 1996 and 1997, the same approach may be used to identify items on which advice from the SBSTTA might be required by the Conference of the Parties at its third and fourth meetings. Such possible matters are presented in the annex of this note. In addition, the SBSTTA can include in its medium-term programme of work some consideration of the "relationship of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the Commission on Sustainable Development and biodiversity related conventions, other international agreements, institutions and processes of relevance", one of the standing items in the medium-term programme of work of the COP (see UNEP/CBD/COP/1/17, p. 61).

11. The SBSTTA may also wish to advise the COP on matters not included in the COP medium-term programme of work, but that should be considered in 1995-1997 to enable and assist the Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention and in deriving full benefit from its provisions. "Conservation and sustainable use of forests" is one such matter. The SBSTTA may also wish to identify significant and emerging scientific, technical and technological issues and bring them to the attention of the Conference of the Parties for possible action.

12. Following the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its third session held in New York in April 1995, on the establishment of an Open-ended Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the SBSTTA may wish to consider, at its second meeting, whether scientific and technical advice on the relationship between forests and biological diversity may be requested for the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It may be recalled that the Conference of the Parties expressed its commitment to contribute to the conservation, management and sustainable use of forests. This contribution would be consistent with its role in developing means aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the Convention with respect to forests, as reflected in its Decision I/8, paragraph 15.

13. In 1997, the SBSTTA may undertake an overall assessment of its work and of the effectiveness of its advice. Such an evaluation should lead to the identification of elements of the *modus operandi* of the SBSTTA that could be modified or strengthened and of elements for consideration for its programme of work for the following period. The results of this evaluation could be submitted to the COP for consideration at its fourth meeting as part of the review of the COP medium-term programme of work.

#### **4. Ways and means by which the SBSTTA may wish to carry out its medium-term programme of work**

14. The SBSTTA's scientific and technical advice will play a critical role in facilitating implementation of the Convention's provisions. The programme of work of the SBSTTA is based on the priorities set in the programme of work of the Conference of the Parties. Like the COP work programme, the programme of work of the SBSTTA will have to be adjusted as the need arises at its subsequent meetings.

15. The annex to this note gives some idea of the amount and complexity of and the linkages among the tasks before the SBSTTA. Some items listed in the annex under a given function may be related to other functions. This is, for example, the case for item 5 in 1995: "provision of advice on the scientific, technical and technological aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biological diversity". Consideration of this item listed under Article 25, paragraph 2(e), has to take into account the other provisions (a) to (d) in Article 25, paragraph 2. Provision of advice on some items listed distinctly in a given year may require consideration of the advice prepared under other items. For example, in 1995, the item on "scientific and technical information to be contained in national reports on measures taken for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the Convention" is relevant both to the "scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity (Article 25, paragraph 2(a))" and to the "preparation of scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention (Article 25, paragraph 2(b))". The item "Ways and means to promote and facilitate access to, and transfer and development of technologies as envisaged in Articles 16 and 18 of the Convention" is scheduled to be treated every year, with an emphasis on biotechnology in 1997.

16. Although the listing of items by year can help the SBSTTA to focus its work, it may not be possible to finalize advice on a given item in the scheduled meeting. It may therefore be necessary to initiate discussions at one meeting and to continue the discussions at subsequent meetings.

17. In order to discharge its function effectively, the SBSTTA might need to identify the priority items of its programme and to recommend to the COP mechanisms that could be devised in order to ensure effectiveness in the discharge of its work. Such mechanisms may include the establishment of *ad hoc* and/or permanent panels to deal with specific issues.

## Annex

### MATTERS ON WHICH ADVICE FROM SESTTA MIGHT BE REQUIRED BY THE MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES.

| Functions   | Year   |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
|   | 1995   | 1996   | 1997   |
| Provision of scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity (Article 25, paragraph 2 (a))   | 1. Alternative ways and means in which the Conference of the Parties could start the process of considering the components of biological diversity particularly those under threat and the identification of action which could be taken under the Convention (priority item). | 1. Review of assessment of biological diversity made in 1995, and provision of advice on methodologies for future assessments.<br><br>2. Alternative ways and means in which the Conference of the Parties could start the process of identification, monitoring and assessment of components of biological diversity, as well as processes and categories of activities which have or are likely to have significant adverse impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in accordance with Art. 7. |  |
| Preparation of scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention (Article 25, paragraph 2 (b)) |  |  | 1. What kind of scientific and technical information should be compiled and what ways and means should be used for public education and awareness to promote and encourage understanding of the importance of and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity? and what topics should be included in educational programmes in accordance with Art. 13?<br><br>2. What kind of scientific and technical information should be collected for environmental impact assessment of projects and what ways and means should be used to share this information to promote minimization of adverse impacts in accordance with Article 14? |

| Functions  | Year  |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | 1995  | 1996   | 1997  |
| Identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and provision of advice on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies (Article 25, paragraph 2 (c)) | 2. Ways and means to promote and facilitate access to, and transfer and development of technologies as envisaged in Articles 16 and 18 of the Convention (priority item).   | 3. Ways and means to promote and facilitate access to, and transfer and development of technologies as envisaged in articles 16 and 18.<br><br>4. Ways and means to preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and to promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices, in accordance with Art. 8 (j).  | 3. Ways and means to promote and facilitate access to, and transfer and development of biotechnology in accordance with Article 19.   |
| Provision of advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (Article 25, paragraph 2 (d))   |   |  | 4. Provision of advice on the scientific, technical and technological aspects of international cooperation in the area of conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components, in accordance with Art. 18. |
| Scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to the body (Article 25, paragraph 2 (e))   | 3. What kind of scientific and technical information should be contained in national reports on measures taken for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the Convention? (priority item).<br><br>4. How can the Convention on Biological Diversity contribute to the preparation for the forthcoming International Technical Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 1996?<br><br>5. Provision of advice on the scientific, technical and technological aspects of the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biological diversity (also taking into account the other provisions in Article 25, paragraph 2)(priority item). | 5. Provision of advice on scientific, technical and technological aspects of the conservation of agricultural biological diversity and sustainable use of its components (also taking into account the other provisions in Article 25, paragraph 2).<br><br>6. Provision of advice on scientific, technical and technological aspects of the future programme of work for terrestrial biological diversity in the light of the outcome of deliberations of the third session of CSD in 1995.<br><br>7. How can the Convention on Biological Diversity contribute to the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly to review implementation of Agenda 21? | 5. Identification of alternative models and mechanisms for linkages between <i>in-situ</i> and <i>ex-situ</i> conservation.   |