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JOINT MEETING OF THE BUREAUX OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND
THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,
TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE
Mexico City, Mexico, 25 and 26 April 2017

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST JOINT MEETING OF THE BUREAUX OF THE CONFERENCE OF
THE PARTIES AND THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND
TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD**

INTRODUCTION

1. The first joint meeting of the Bureaux of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) in the inter-sessional period was held on 25 April 2017 in Mexico City, Mexico, at the offices of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico (SEMARNAT). The joint meeting was followed by formal separate meetings of each Bureau that took place on the morning of 26 April 2017, and reconvened in the afternoon of 26 April 2017.
2. The meeting was attended by the following members of the COP Bureau: Mr. Enrique Lendo (representing Minister Rafael Pacchiano Alamán, COP President, Government of Mexico), Mr. Samuel Ndayiragije (Burundi), Mr. Cheik Mohammed El Abd (Mauritania, substitute for Tunisia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol), Ms. Gwendalyn Sisor (Palau), Mr. Sergei Melnov (Belarus), Ms. Elvana Ramaj (Albania), Mr. Luciano Donadio Linares (Argentina, substitute for Brazil in matters related to the Nagoya Protocol), Ms. Marina Hernández (Dominican Republic, substitute for Saint Kitts and Nevis for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol), Mr. Hayo Haanstra (Netherlands), Mr. Basil van Havre (Canada), Ms. Tone Solhaug (Norway, substitute for Canada for matters related to the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol), and Mr. Francis Sabino Ogwal (Uganda, Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation).
3. The meeting was attended by the following members of the SBSTTA Bureau: Ms. Theresa Mundita Lim (Philippines, Chair of SBSTTA), Ms. Eugenia Arguedas Montezuma (Costa Rica), Ms. Lourdes Coya de la Fuente (Cuba), Mr. Hendrick Segers (Belgium), Mr. Norbert Barlocher (Switzerland), Mr. Samuel Dieme (Senegal), and Mr. Sergiy Gubar (Ukraine).
4. Also present, as observers were Mr. Juan Antonio Mateos and Mr. Hesiquio Benitez (Mexico, COP Presidency), Mr. Diego Alonso Simancas (Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Jing Xu (COP15 host representative), and Ms. Elizabeth Mrema (UNEP).

5. The Secretariat was represented by: Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer (Executive Secretary), Mr. David Cooper (Deputy Executive Secretary), Mr. Worku Damena Yifru (Senior Legal Officer), Mr. Sarat Babu Gidda and Ms. Christine Estrada.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. The meeting was opened by His Excellency Mr. Rafael Pacchiano Alamán, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico, and President of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties at 10:15 a.m. on 25 April 2017. Mr. Pacchiano made brief introductory remarks about the main outcomes of the meeting in Cancun last December and encouraged participants to seek ways to improve the implementation of the Convention and developing the post-2020 framework on biodiversity.

7. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Dr. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, also welcomed participants and introduced herself as the new Executive Secretary of the Convention. She congratulated Minister Pacchiano on a successful UN Biodiversity Conference which had delivered many useful outcomes on mainstreaming and other issues. She provided an overview of her strategic vision and the main areas that need further focus in order to elevate profile of the biodiversity agenda. She highlighted the need to accelerate implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 by focusing on what can be done now in order to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. She noted that the next UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt in 2018 would coincide with the 25th Anniversary of the Convention, providing an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Convention, to reflect on the limitations and learn from both. She also looked forward to the meeting in Beijing in 2020, noting that the Secretariat already had the mandate to start preparing for the follow-up to the current strategic plan.

8. Ms. Theresa Mundita Lim from the Philippines, Chair of SBSTTA, and Mr. Francis Sabino Ogwal from Uganda, Chair of SBI, also offered brief introductory remarks. This was followed by a round of presentations from each of the participants.

9. Ms. Norma Munguía Aldaraca, the General Director of Global Issues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, was present at the opening of the meeting. She updated the Bureau on the establishment of the “Group of Friends of Biodiversity and Ecosystems” at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote mainstreaming of biodiversity.

ITEM 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

10. The provisional agenda prepared by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/COP/Bur/2017/1/2) was adopted.

ITEM 3. OVERVIEW OF THE WORKPLAN OF THE BIENNIUM

11. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the main outcomes of the Cancun meetings, reminding participants that the official reports from the meetings are available on the Convention’s website. The Secretariat also highlighted the commitments announced by Parties especially in terms of implementation, and underscored the importance of promoting the main outcomes adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

12. The Secretariat provided an overview of the results of a survey of Parties concerning the experience in holding concurrent meetings at the 2016 UN Biodiversity Conference and also of an online survey of participants in the Conference, covering this issue, as well as other issues including the format and timing of the High-Level Segment, the parallel events, and the logistics for the conference. Documents providing more detailed information had been circulated to the Bureau members in advance. In general terms, respondents had expressed satisfaction with holding the meetings concurrently, as well as with the format of the High-Level Segment and logistics. Some of the concerns expressed were mainly related to the cost effectiveness for participants of the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol¹, and the difficulty of small delegations to follow all the issues.

¹ Prior to the Cancun concurrent meetings, the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol was being held for one week period back-to-back with the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

13. Members of the Bureaux considered that the online survey and its assessment were very useful to learn about what works and what needs improvement for future meetings. In terms of integration, they agreed that holding the meetings concurrently was generally efficient and effective in promoting integration among the Convention and its Protocols, but that solutions needed to be sought for Parties with smaller delegations and funding for participants. It should be noted that many respondents considered the criteria as “partially met” rather than “fully met”. The members of the Bureaux considered that the optimum timing of High-Level Segment would depend on its purpose and the nature of the decisions at the Conference of the Parties, noting that a high level segment towards the end of the COP allows Ministers to facilitate negotiations. Generally, however, the Bureaux members agreed that the timing of the segment should be decided by the host country as the incoming COP Presidency. They agreed that both volume of participation and the involvement of strongly committed ministers are valuable for a successful impact.

14. The Secretariat provided an overview of the preliminary list of items for the provisional agenda of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as well as the preliminary list of items for the provisional agendas for the ninth meeting of the COP-MOP of the Cartagena Protocol and the third meeting of the COP-MOP of the Nagoya Protocol, noting that the list provided was not definitive. The Secretariat requested guidance from the Bureaux on how to best streamline the decisions.

15. Members of the Bureaux expressed concerns with the large number of decisions and length of decisions taken resulting from the meetings of the Convention and its Protocols. They agreed that a decision-tracking tool would facilitate in reducing overlap. They urged for the timely provision of documents by the Secretariat and agreed to make an effort to be selective and prioritize issues that are more significant. The bureaux highlighted the need to better communicate the outcomes of the meetings.

16. The Bureaux held a general discussion on the preparation of decisions and the allocation of work between the two subsidiary bodies. The bureaux noted that the subsidiary bodies play an important role in preparing for the Conference of the Parties and the meetings of the Parties to the Protocols, and that, especially in the context of the time constraints of the concurrent meetings, it was desirable to avoid the re-opening of issues that had already been agreed at these subsidiary bodies. In this respect, the Bureaux members emphasised the need for adequate funding for the participation of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing states.

17. The Bureaux further noted that it is very important to carefully separate the scientific and technical issues from those of a more political nature, and discuss these accordingly in the appropriate subsidiary body so as to avoid overlap in the discussions². The Bureaux asked for clarification as to what actions it could take in order to have a more pragmatic approach with the allocation of agenda items. The Secretariat advised the Bureaux that even though they cannot take or change decisions, the Bureaux could guide the work of the subsidiary bodies in terms of proposing new approaches and methodologies of work that could increase effectiveness and efficiencies, and advise the Secretariat that shorter and more concise decisions be made.

18. The members of the Bureaux noted that they could play an important role on engaging Parties in the preparation and review of documents, as well as in the response to notifications more generally.

ITEM 4. APPROACHES FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE POST-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

19. The Executive Secretary introduced this item, noting the mandate from COP 13 to start preparing for the follow-up to the current strategic plan, which will be considered in Beijing in 2020. She noted that the current Strategic Plan and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a framework, not only for the Convention on Biological Diversity, but for all the biodiversity related conventions. The Executive

² The Secretariat advised that the previous COP Bureau had discussed this same issue; and agreed to an indicative allocation of items for each subsidiary body as contained in the table annexed to the minutes of the meeting of the Bureau held on 1 November 2015, available at this link: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop-bureau/cop-bur-2015/cop-bur-2015-11-01-minutes-en.pdf>.

Secretary noted that the Strategic Plan 2011-2020 also includes a “vision” for 2050 that will remain relevant; thus the plan and targets are steps in a longer strategic process. She posed a number of questions, including: should the current targets be maintained, updated or replaced? What mechanisms for support, review, reporting and accountability to accelerate should be part of the new plan? How do we increase the level of ownership and engagement of Parties? Can we learn from the climate process in this regard? She emphasized that in her view, implementation would have to be at the heart of the new plan or post-2020 framework. She further noted that there was also a need to link biodiversity to other agendas, in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

20. The Secretariat provided further information on the mandates and gave a brief overview on the approaches that had been employed for the preparation of the post-2020 Strategic Plan. The Secretariat noted the importance of fully involving the other biodiversity-related conventions and other sectors and stakeholders in the consultations leading to the new plan. A document on these matters had been circulated to Bureaux members prior to the meeting.

21. The members of the Bureaux thanked the Secretariat for the document and considered key elements of the process. They concluded that stronger political linkages are very important in order to bring more visibility to the biodiversity agenda. In this regard, they welcomed the idea of forming a troika among the Governments of Mexico, Egypt and China in order to create a political process in favour of biodiversity and create momentum for the post-2020 agenda. Members of the Bureaux also noted that early engagement of other biodiversity-related conventions was very important in order to ensure ownership and coherence of work, and suggested that a message be sent to the upcoming meetings of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species and the Ramsar Convention, inviting them to provide strategic inputs to the process.

22. Bureaux members also agreed that implementation is of key importance, not only in achieving the current plan, but also for any future plan. The members of the Bureaux agreed that efforts should focus around improving national biodiversity and strategy action plans and improving monitoring and reporting. The Bureaux noted that biosafety should be included and that the existing programmes of work under the Convention should be utilized. They noted the need to continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Convention processes.

23. The Secretariat took note of the suggestions made and stated that it would circulate a revised version, prior to making it available to all Parties and observers through a notification with a view to soliciting views and inputs. This would be a first step in responding to decision XIII/1, para. 34. The Secretariat advised that it would begin preparing the proposal for a comprehensive and participatory preparatory process and timetable for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan 2011-2020, taking into account views and inputs submitted, for peer review and finalization prior to the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

ITEM 5. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COP AND SBSTTA BUREAUX

24. The Secretariat made a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of Bureau members. It clarified that the Bureaux main function is to provide guidance on how to organize and manage meetings. The Secretariat reminded participants that active engagement of the Parties is fundamental and encouraged the Bureaux to urge their regions to participate in the process. It was suggested that the Secretariat should explore the possibility of providing training sessions for Bureau members, including on chairing of meetings and that, in this context, the arrangements under the Basel-Rotterdam-Stockholm Convention should be reviewed.

25. The Bureaux noted that the rules of procedure allow the subsidiary bodies, such as the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, to take decisions by qualified majority. While this could perhaps be used to reduce the number of brackets in the texts that are forwarded to the Conference of the Parties, it was noted that the latter would still have the prerogative to review such recommendations. The preparation of draft decisions and recommendations was also discussed. Under the Convention, the Secretariat is mandated to prepare draft recommendations according to the *modus operandi* of the subsidiary bodies. The Bureaux explored to what extent Parties may take the lead in

developing draft decisions, similar to the practice under CITES and UNEA, where decisions are prepared, by and large, by parties or member states.

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

26. Under this item, the Bureau member from Switzerland provided a brief overview to the participants on the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs – DART, a project supported by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the European Union and implemented in collaboration with InforMEA and UNEP-WCMC. He elaborated that DART is an instrument intended to support Parties and their national reporting mechanisms in the efficient organization, maintenance and updating of key components for national reports under several biodiversity-related agreements.

ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

27. The representative of the COP Presidency thanked the Secretariat for the preparations and the Bureau members for their engagement and contribution to the joint meeting. The session on Tuesday, 25 April 2017 was suspended and resumed on the next day in the afternoon. The meeting was closed on Wednesday, 26 April 2017 at 3:30 p.m.