



Convention on Biological Diversity

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SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Seventeenth meeting
Montreal, 14-18 October 2013

EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its eighth, tenth and eleventh meetings, discussed ways and means to improve the effectiveness of SBSTTA, and in decision XI/13 repeated its request to the Subsidiary Body, contained in decision X/12, to focus its work on the scientific and technical aspects of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the multi-year programme of work.
2. The Bureaus of the Conference of the Parties and SBSTTA, the Friends of the CBD at their meeting in Bogis-Bossey (Switzerland) held in February 2013, as well as the Executive Secretary in his statements, have repeatedly acknowledged the need to focus on the implementation of the decisions of the Conference of the Parties and to use a suitable format of the meetings of the Subsidiary Body accordingly.
3. The agenda for SBSTTA-17 is designed according to the above requests and will follow a format that is somewhat different from previous meetings. The proposed modifications in format were developed under the guidance of the SBSTTA Bureau and bearing in mind the resources that are available. The new format is intended to provide delegates with more time for scientific and technical discussions and exchanges so as to demonstrate how the available scientific information is useful in the Convention process and support Parties in implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the multi-year programme of work.
4. A key purpose of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties is to provide a mid-term review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and of progress towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Prior to this, SBSTTA-17 provides an opportunity for Parties, in an intergovernmental setting, to examine, from a scientific and technical perspective, the tools and guidance available both for supporting implementation of the Strategic Plan and for enabling monitoring of progress towards the Targets. It is envisaged that this discussion will be useful in supporting Parties in these two sets of tasks. It will also provide an opportunity to identify any important gaps and consider how they might be addressed. On the other hand, SBSTTA-18, as well as the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention (WGRI-5), will directly contribute to the preparation of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The sessions of SBSTTA in this intersessional period can therefore be regarded as complementary. While it is hoped that useful lessons will emerge from SBSTTA-17 for the conduct of future meetings, the changes introduced to the format of SBSTTA-17 are without prejudice to arrangements for SBSTTA-18.

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5. The purpose of this note is to explain the main differences in the organization of SBSTTA-17 compared to previous meetings of the Subsidiary Body. It is meant to complement the information contained in the annotated agenda (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/1/Add.1) for SBSTTA-17 and to help Parties prepare for the new format.

II. FORMAT

6. The key differences in the way SBSTTA-17 will be organized are:

(a) **All sessions will be held in plenary** – Unlike previous meetings of the Subsidiary Body, the entire agenda of SBSTTA-17 is organized in Plenary without the distribution of agenda items between two working groups. This is to facilitate broader engagement, in accordance with concerns repeatedly raised by Parties with small delegations and to facilitate scientific and technical discussions across the range of issues being discussed;

(b) To enhance the exchange of scientific and technical aspects and in order to facilitate more in-depth consideration of the issues on the agenda, **panel discussions, introductory presentations and question and answer sessions** have been incorporated into each session;

(c) **Draft recommendations have not been prepared in advance** – In previous meetings of the Subsidiary Body, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity had often suggested draft recommendations for consideration by the Subsidiary Body. However, anticipating the broad nature of the discussions at SBSTTA-17 and in order to encourage more open scientific and technical discussions and exchanges, draft recommendations have not been prepared. Rather, conclusions and, if appropriate, recommendations, are expected to emerge from the discussions in the course of the meeting.

7. During the first three days of the meeting (Monday to Wednesday), Parties will be invited to engage in in-depth substantive discussions on issues on the agenda and to share their experiences on the topics under consideration. Each issue under items 3, 4, and 5 on the agenda will be introduced by panel discussions, introductory presentations and question and answer sessions. Based on the discussions, the respective chairs of the sessions, with the support of the Secretariat, will prepare a summary of the session's proceedings, capturing the main points of the exchanges to be incorporated in the report of the meeting as well as providing some elements which Parties could draw upon when developing draft conclusions.

8. The last two days of the meeting (Thursday and Friday) are reserved for Parties to consider all the issues they discussed during the first three days, and the outcomes of the discussions jointly, and draft and agree on conclusions. The conclusions are not envisaged to necessarily address each issue on the agenda separately, but rather to provide integrated and consolidated guidance. Some conclusions could be calling for actions by SBSTTA itself, while others might be formulated, within the mandate of SBSTTA and instructions from the Conference of the Parties, as messages addressed to other actors such as the research community, funding bodies or IPBES. In addition, a limited number of recommendations to the Conference of the Parties could also emerge as an outcome of the meeting.

III. SESSIONS

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday

9. The discussions during the first three days on agenda items 3 (facilitating the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets through scientific and technical means) and 4 (Assessing the effects of the types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention) will be structured to address Strategic Goals A through D of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Agenda items 5 (Contribution of the Convention to the Intergovernmental Science-policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) intersessional process) and 6 (Progress reports by the Executive Secretary) will be addressed individually,

preceded by an introductory session. Accordingly, the proposed organization of work from Monday to Wednesday is as follows:

- Overview of agenda items 3 and 4 (Monday, a.m.)
- Agenda items 3 and 4: Strategic Goal A (Monday, p.m.)
- Agenda items 3 and 4: Strategic Goal B (Tuesday, a.m.)
- Agenda items 3 and 4: Strategic Goal C (Tuesday, p.m.)
- Agenda items 3 and 4: Strategic Goal D (Wednesday, a.m.)
- Agenda items 5 and 6 (Wednesday, p.m.)

10. Each of the three-hour sessions is envisaged to follow the structure given below (some variations may occur, particularly in the time allocated):

- Chair's remarks and introduction;
- Presentations by experts on a panel (about 30 minutes);
- Time for comments, questions and answers, in particular to highlight Parties' specific experience based on the presentations by the panellists (about 30 minutes);
- Introduction to background document(s) by the Secretariat;
- Statements by Parties and observers (about 90 minutes);
- Brief summary by the chair. A more comprehensive summary note will be prepared and provided after the session.

11. Accordingly, there will be opportunities in each session for Parties to share experiences or raise issues in response to the panel presentations.

12. Parties may wish to contribute their own experience, related to the topic of the session, in the time reserved for questions and answers following the panel presentations in the sessions on the different Strategic Goals. In particular, they are invited to address, for each Strategic Goal, the availability or lack of tools and guidance.

13. Parties and observers will then have the opportunity to make statements on the agenda item and document(s) under discussion. Parties and observers who have spoken previously in response to the panel presentation will be given the floor again to make their statements. In their statements on agenda items 3 and 4, Parties and observers may wish to put particular emphasis on elaborating on their perspectives on the availability, adequacy, use and effectiveness of policy support tools, observations, and of data systems for monitoring biodiversity as well as specific scientific and technical needs to improve the ability to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and to enhance access and share the benefits of the utilization of genetic resources. Thus, in these more formal statements, Parties may focus on elements which they would like to see reflected in the conclusions.

14. Parties will be requested to keep their interventions concise (preferably 5 minutes, 2 minutes for observers). Parties may however request the floor again during this segment in order to respond very briefly to other interventions. Longer versions of statements will be made available, upon request, on the SBSTTA-17 web site. Where possible, copies of statements should be provided to the documentation desk in advance to be made available to interpreters.

15. The chair of each session, supported by the Secretariat, will prepare a note to summarize the session's outcomes and elements for potential conclusions. These will be made available as soon as possible to facilitate further discussions and observations.

16. On Tuesday and Wednesday evening, Parties and observers will have the opportunity to meet as Friends of the Chair. In these groups, participants will be invited to complement, refine and elaborate on those elements which they would like to include into the conclusions. The meetings of the Friends of the Chair on Tuesday and Wednesday will serve to ensure that all elements, including those not initially or inadequately captured in the chair's notes, are brought into the discussion. The chairs of the Friends of the Chair sessions will invite participants to focus on bringing all elements to the table rather than attempting to agree on a list of elements or specific text.

Thursday and Friday

17. On Thursday and Friday, Parties will be invited to prepare the conclusions of the meeting. The Chair of SBSTTA, with the support of the Secretariat, may prepare draft text to facilitate the work of the Plenary, on the basis of the previous discussions in Plenary and the work of the Friends of the Chair groups. Parties may wish to agree on conclusions that could be drawn upon to support implementation by Parties of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as well as a limited number of recommendations to the Conference of the Parties. Parties may also wish to consider structuring the conclusions by the actors they would like to address, for example, to consolidate all conclusions relevant to IPBES, the research community or to science funding bodies in one conclusion, rather than developing separate conclusions by topic.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

18. Documents for SBSTTA-17 are available on the meeting's webpage (<https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-17>). Delegates are encouraged to download documents to their mobile devices or to bring their own copies of all documents. In order to minimize the environmental impacts of the organization, a "print-on-demand" system is being implemented on a trial basis. In-session documents will continue to be made available in both paper and electronic formats during the meeting. Pre-session documents will be printed upon request only at the meeting venue. Depending upon the level of demand, delays may occur in reproducing documents.

V. PARALLEL EVENTS

Demonstration kiosks

19. From Tuesday to Friday, a number of demonstration kiosks on various relevant topics will be available in a dedicated space at the meeting venue, where experts will be available to present available practical tools. These will include information and reporting tools that are closely related to the agenda of the meeting. Parties are invited to participate in the demonstration kiosks to learn about available practical tools and exchange their experience.

Side-events

20. The topics of side-events at SBSTTA-17 are closely related to the issues on the agenda and provide an opportunity for Parties to engage in more in-depth technical discussions at these events. Regional groups are encouraged to schedule their coordination meetings in a way to allow at least some members of their delegations to attend side-events. Side-events will take place at lunchtimes from Monday to Thursday as well as Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. As is usual practice, space will be provided for regional meetings in the mornings prior to the start of the official sessions.
