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**INFORMATION ON THE PROCESSES AND OPERATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC BODIES OF  
RIO CONVENTIONS, BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS AND THE GLOBAL  
ENVIRONMENT FACILITY<sup>1</sup>**

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The present note has been prepared to gather information on: the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Scientific Committees of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention. It also examines the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

2. The Chairs of SBSTTA may wish to use this information when they are drafting their proposals to improve the effectiveness of SBSTTA. It was collected through desk research, extracted from documents of the meetings of respective scientific bodies and/or the governing bodies of CITES, CMS and Ramsar, as well as through consultation with officers of the respective Secretariats of the above-listed conventions and the STAP of the GEF. The views reported in this document do not necessarily represent those of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and neither of the other Rio and biodiversity-related conventions nor the GEF.

<sup>1</sup> This document was originally prepared as an input to the Brainstorming Meeting of SBSTTA Chairs on Ways and Means to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body, Paris, 24-25 July 2006.

3. The information is organized under the following headings: (i) mandate; (ii) composition and governance; (iii) meetings, agenda and proceedings; (iv) documentation; (v) assessments; (vi) outputs and reports; (vii) funding; and, (viii) previous evaluations of effectiveness of the scientific subsidiary bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and the GEF. To the extent possible, the information was sought and organized around a few questions listed under each heading.

## II. MANDATE

4. What is the mandate? Is the mandate restricted to biological and natural sciences or does it allow for discussions of political and socio-economic nature?

### *CBD SBSTTA*

5. As per paragraph 2 of Article 25 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the mandate of the SBSTTA is to:

- (a) Provide scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity;
- (b) Prepare scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of this Convention;
- (c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies;
- (d) Provide advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; and
- (e) Respond to scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to the body.

6. The functions, terms of reference, organization and operation of this body may be further elaborated by the Conference of the Parties.

### *UNFCCC SBSTA*

7. As per Decision 6/CP. 1, the role of the UNFCCC SBSTA is to link the scientific, technical and technological assessments and the information provided by competent international bodies, and the policy-oriented needs of the Conference of the Parties. As per Annex I of that same decision, functions to be carried out include:

- (a) provide assessments of the state of scientific knowledge relating to climate change and its effects (see section (v) on assessments below)
- (b) prepare scientific assessments on the effects of measures taken in the implementation of the Convention.
- (c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how, and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or of transferring such technologies.
- (d) Provide advice on scientific programmes, and on international cooperation in research and development related to climate change, as well as on ways and means of supporting endogenous

capacity-building in developing countries, and assist the Parties in implementing Articles 5 and 6 of the Convention.

(e) Respond to scientific, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to the body.

### *UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology*

8. As per Article 24 of the Convention text, a "Committee on Science and Technology is established as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties to provide it with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought."

9. As per COP decision I/15, its advisory functions are:

(a) Provide scientific and technological information needed to implement the Convention.

(b) Collect information, analyse, assess and report on the impact of developments in science and technology and give advice on the possible utilization of such developments for the implementation of the Convention.

(c) Advise the Conference of the Parties on the possible implications of the evolution of scientific and technological knowledge for programmes and activities under the Convention, particularly in connection with the review of implementation pursuant to paragraph 22 (2) (a) of the Convention.

(d) Advise on possible research priorities for particular regions and sub-regions, reflecting different local conditions

(e) Make recommendations on the establishment of ad hoc panels, including issues relating to the terms of reference, composition and modalities of work of the panels.

(f) Advise on the structure, membership and maintenance of the roster of independent experts bearing in mind the recognition in the Convention of local knowledge and expertise.

10. In addition to these functions, the CST also performs data and information functions, research and review functions, functions related to technology and evaluation functions.

### *CITES Scientific Committees*

11. CITES has three scientific committees: the Animals Committee, the Plants Committee, and the Nomenclature Committee. The latter is only made up of two members. The Plants and the Animals Committee have clear and similar mandates designed to deliver specific outputs. As per Annex II of Resolution 6.1, the Animals' Committee's mandate is to:

(a) Establish a list of those animal taxa included in Appendix II which are considered as being significantly affected by trade, and review and assess all available biological and trade information, including comments by the range States;

(b) Assess information on those species for which there is evidence of a change in the volume of trade or for which specific information is available to indicate the necessity for review;

(c) Undertake a periodic review of animal species included in the CITES Appendices (lists of species threatened by extinction) by:

- (i) establishing a schedule for reviewing the biological and trade status of these species;
  - (ii) identifying problems or potential problems concerning the biological status of species being traded; and
  - (iii) informing the Parties of the need to review specific species, and assisting them in such reviews.
- (d) Make available advice on management techniques and procedures to range States that request this.
- (e) Other tasks - including, inter alia, providing advice to the Nomenclature Committee, drafting resolutions on animal matters for consideration by the Conference of the Parties,

12. Resolution 9.1 expanded the Animals Committee's mandate to "deal with the transport of live animals" an issue.

13. The Committees consider strictly biological science and thus feature a unilateral approach to issues. While some socio-economic issues have made their way into discussions (i.e. enforcement measures), the ability of the Committee and its members to address them has been handicapped by the narrow scope of their expertise, which is mainly scientific.

#### *CMS Scientific Council*

14. The specific functions of the CMS Scientific Council (SC) are determined by the Conference of the Parties. Article VIII of the Convention cites the following as potential functions:

- (a) providing scientific advice to the Conference of the Parties, and all other bodies of the Convention, including Agreements;
- (b) recommending and evaluating research on migratory species;
- (c) making recommendations as to the migratory species to be included in Appendices I and II<sup>‡</sup>;
- (d) making recommendations as to specific conservation and management measures to be included in Agreements on migratory species; and
- (e) recommending solutions to problems relating to the scientific aspects of the implementation of CMS, in particular with regard to the habitats of migratory species.

15. Amongst others, a specific mandate has been given to the SC to provide advice in regards to funding and selection of small conservation projects of migratory species supported by the Convention.

16. The adoption of the CMS Strategic Plan for 2006-2011 led the SC to identify and detail its contributions to support implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan (see CMS/ScC.13/Report Annex II).

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<sup>‡</sup> Appendix I lists migratory species that have been categorized as being in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant proportion of their range. Appendix II lists migratory species that have an unfavourable conservation status or would benefit significantly from international co-operation organised by tailored agreements.

### ***Ramsar STRP***

17. As per Resolution 5.5, most recently updated by Resolution IX.11, the mandate of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention is to give scientific and technical assistance to the Secretariat and the Standing Committee and, through them, to the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The STRP performs the scientific and technical review tasks entrusted to it on a triennial basis by the Conference of the Contracting Parties. It reports intersessionally to the Standing Committee.

18. The STRP has a number of on-going tasks, including:

(a) a) STRP National Focal Points: establish and maintain contact with STRP National Focal Points, with the assistance of the STRP Support Service, so as to ensure that their advice and expertise is fully contributed to the work of the Panel

(b) Regional categorization advice: advise on any request from a Contracting Party to participate in the activities of a different Ramsar Region to that which they are assigned under the regional categorization of the Convention.

(c) c) Ramsar Small Grants Fund projects: at the request of the relevant Administrative Authority, ensure the involvement of the STRP National Focal Point in monitoring and evaluating an SGF project.

(d) Wetland project development and evaluation: upon request, assist Contracting Parties and bilateral development agencies in screening, development and evaluation of wetland projects.

(e) Ramsar Sites Database: receive progress reports and advise on future needs and developments of the Ramsar Sites Database, maintained for the Convention by Wetlands International.

(f) Montreux Record: advise the Bureau on requests from Contracting Parties for removing Ramsar sites from the Montreux Record of sites facing damaging change in ecological character.

(g) Collaboration with other Conventions and agreements: ensure cooperation, exchange of information and coordination of activities, where appropriate, with other MEAs' scientific and technical subsidiary bodies (and their related processes), including through actions in Joint Work Plans.

(h) Drafting technical Resolutions: Prepare draft Technical Resolutions, circulate for consultation to STRP National Focal Points and review for transmission to the Standing Committee. (Resolution VIII.45)

19. STRP is also required, as a priority area of its work, to identify new and emerging issues and introduce them to the COP and into its workplan.

20. The STRP's workplan focuses on the substantive immediate and high priority tasks determined by the COP. COP 9 (Resolution IX.2) identified 26 immediate and high priority tasks under a number of thematic work areas, and a number of lower priority tasks for STRP. This prioritisation by COP is significant in helping the STRP focus development of its Workplan.

21. Although socio-economic matters are not explicitly stated in the STRP's mandate, they are treated as within the overall scope of the Convention, and hence the STRP's work. For example, criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance, developed by STRP, include socio-economic and cultural criteria. Even so, STRP has not become a politicized body, leaving contentious political issues to the Standing Committee and Conference of the Parties.

### ***GEF STAP***

22. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the GEF (STAP) has a mandate of providing independent strategic scientific advice to the GEF at the strategic, programmatic and project level. STAP's role in providing strategic advice on:

(a) the state of scientific, technical and technological knowledge related to each focal area, highlighting policy and operational implications for the GEF;

(b) the scientific and technical aspects of specific strategic matters such as cross-cutting issues; scientific coherence of GEF operational strategies and programs, and their consistency with GEF policies and objectives; integration on national and global benefits in GEF interventions; and

(c) on research, by identifying applied/targeted research which would improve the design and implementation of GEF projects, and by reviewing the research work of the Implementing Agencies and the GEF Secretariat.

23. In the project cycle, STAP's role is to contribute to ensuring the scientific soundness and technical quality of GEF projects through independent reviews and objective scientific and technical advice through:

(a) Conducting selective reviews of projects in certain circumstances and at specific points in the GEF project cycle as an integral part of ongoing processes;

(b) Establishing and maintaining a roster of experts for the mandatory scientific and technical review of full-size GEF project proposals before inclusion in the work programme;

(c) Advising the GEF on technical review procedures; and

(d) Guiding the choice of scientific indicators to measure project impact.

24. In 10 years of discharging its mandate, STAP has provided advice to the GEF on a wide range of specific strategic and programmatic issues, and its role in the project cycle through its roster of experts continues to be recognized as important by the GEF Council. Nevertheless, the body has a marginalized role, and remains largely excluded from the GEF's strategy formulating processes. STAP's standing in the GEF has also been affected by the panel's difficulty to timely respond to GEF requests for advice. The GEF Council in June 2006, however, recognized the importance of STAP, and requested the Chair of the Panel to review the Terms of Reference of STAP, and develop a proposal to enhance the role and relevance of STAP. STAP was also requested to work with all the GEF entities on the project review process with the view to strengthening the scientific and technical aspects of project proposals, and to extend its work at the regional level.

### **III. COMPOSITION AND GOVERNANCE**

25. How many members does the body have? How are they nominated or appointed and for how long? Do selection criteria include scientific expertise, geographical distribution and gender balance? Do they work on their own capacity or as their country representatives? Are observers allowed? How many as compared to the active members? What is the role of the observers? What is the governance structure of the body?

### ***CBD SBSTTA***

26. The average number of participants to SBSTTA meetings is about 500. Participants to SBSTTA meetings are government representatives "competent in the relevant field of expertise". In practice, however, many delegates are not scientific experts but government representatives. It is not necessarily the same representatives that attend all meetings. Representatives change from time to time.

27. Approximately 25% of participants are observers, representatives of NGOs, IGOs, UN Agencies and Universities.

28. The SBSTTA Bureau is composed of ten members and led by a Chairperson elected by the COP. There are two members from each regional group and there is an attempt to achieve gender balance. Members are appointed for fixed two-year terms.

### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

29. The average number of participants to meetings of the SBSTA and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) is 1500, when the sessions are not held in conjunction with COP.

30. Members to SBSTA are government representatives competent in the relevant field of expertise.

31. At the commencement of the first meeting of each ordinary session, a President, seven Vice-Presidents, the Chairmen of the subsidiary bodies established by Articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, and a Rapporteur shall be elected from among the representatives of the Parties present at the session. They will serve as the Bureau of the session. Each of the five regional groups is represented by two Bureau members and one Bureau member shall represent the small island developing countries. The offices of President and Rapporteur shall normally be subject to rotation among the five regional groups.

### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

32. Members of the Committee are selected with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa, and shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

33. The CST is governed by a Bureau composed of one Chairperson and four Vice Chairpersons. The Chairperson is elected by COP and the CST elects four Vice-Chairpersons.

### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

34. The Animals Committee and the Plants Committee each have 10 members. They are regional representatives elected by the COP but are appointed in their own individual capacity. Gender balance and expertise areas are not criteria at the moment. This has led to some imbalance when tackling specific or emerging issues, such as marine species, when only one or two members of the committee dominate discussions.

35. Although the Committee members are the only ones able to vote, Parties' observers and NGOs make important contributions. At the last meeting of the Plants Committees, there were 73 Parties' observers and 28 NGO observers present, in addition to the 10 Committee Members.

36. A recent attempt has been made to limit the number of observers and NGO representatives to one delegate per NGO. Observers and NGO representatives must now submit a curriculum vitae when applying for observer status. An improvement in the quality of contributions has been noted but the number of participants has not been significantly reduced.

37. The Committee elects a Chairperson. Strong chair leadership in the past year has been reported to lead to enhanced effectiveness of the work by the Committee. An imbalance between developing and developed countries chairmanship has been noted, as chairpersons from developed countries are able to devote more time to their Chairperson responsibilities due to their access to other financial resources.

### *CMS Scientific Council*

38. Each Party is entitled to appoint a qualified expert as a member of the Scientific Council. In addition to the members appointed by the individual Parties, the Conference of the Parties can appoint other experts to the Council to cover fields of particular interest to the Convention. These experts are called Conference-appointed Councillors and will often chair specific Working Groups or give specific advice and support Chair of Council and promote intersessional activities. The Scientific Councillors are to be appointed on the basis of their scientific expertise, and are not country representatives. In practice, however, they are sometimes appointed on the basis of their position in governmental or scientific institutions.

39. SC members sit permanently on the Committee until a new member is appointed as a replacement. Permanent alternate members, authorised to participate in meetings of the Council when the regular Councillor cannot attend, can be appointed.

40. Observers from countries, CMS Agreements and relevant organizations are allowed to participate in meetings of the Council. A limited number of bodies/organizations and the chairs of Scientific/Technical Advisory bodies of Agreements are considered permanent observers, and are automatically invited to SC meetings. Other observers, including representative of any Party, non-Party State or organization can be allowed to participate in individual SC meetings at the Chairperson's discretion.

41. A Chairperson is elected every three years to preside meetings of the Council, liaise with other bodies and oversee intersessional work by Working Groups or individuals as mandated. A Vice-Chairperson is also elected and assists the Chairperson in the execution of its duties.

### *Ramsar STRP*

42. The thirteen members of the STRP are appointed by the STRP Oversight Committee, from nominations from the Parties, STRP National Focal Points and the members and observers of the STRP. Each member is appointed to serve in their own right for their expertise, and are not country/Party representatives. The current STRP membership includes not just biological scientists, but also socio-economic, environmental law and communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) experts.

43. Seven members are experts on the each of the seven priority thematic work areas for the Panel: For the 2006-2008 triennium these are: wetland inventory and assessment, wise use and ecological character, water resource management, Ramsar site designation and management, wetlands and agriculture, wetlands and human health, and Communication Education and Public Awareness. Priority work on strategic reviews and emerging issues is lead by the STRP Chair and Vice-chair. The other six members are a regional networking expert for each of the Ramsar Regions. In addition, a representative of each the Convention's five International Organization Partners (IOPs: BirdLife International, IUCN, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), WWF and Wetlands International) is appointed as a member of the Panel. There are currently 25 Observer organisations including Secretariats of relevant MEAs and Chairs of these MEAs' Scientific Bodies. Additional observer organisations and individual experts may be invited to participate at the invitation of the Chair or with the Chair's approval, in relation to increasing capacity on STRP's priority tasks.



44. A Chairperson and a Vice-chair are appointed from the appointed members by the STRP Oversight Committee, for a three-year term. Together they sit on the Oversight Committee which also includes the Standing Committee Chair and Vice-Chair, and the Ramsar Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General. The Oversight Committee appoints STRP members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair; oversees and advises on the intersessional work of STRP, approves use of STRP's core budget and approves the schedule of STRP meetings. The Oversight Committee reports intersessionally to the Standing Committee.

45. Due to its small size and past very limited resourcing, STRP members have significant responsibilities and in past triennia the Panel has lacked the capacity to deliver all the work expected of it by the COP.

### ***GEF STAP***

46. STAP has fifteen members who are internationally recognized experts in the GEF's key focal areas of work: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, sustainable land management and persistent organic pollutants.

47. The Executive Director of UNEP, based on the recommendations of a search committee made up of implementing agencies and the GEF Secretariat, appoints the members of STAP and also designates a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson upon approval of the GEF Council.

48. The selection of the ten core members reflects:

(a) Recognized leadership in the GEF focal areas of biological diversity, climate change, international waters, and ozone depletion, as well as land degradation, and an ability to bridge scientific, technological, economic, social and policy issues;

(b) Geographical and gender balance;

(c) Experience in the management of science and with knowledge of issues in the implementation of complex international initiatives;

(d) An understanding of the organizational and operational setting of the Implementing Agencies (UNEP, World Bank and UNDP), particularly the context of programme and project development and implementation; and

(e) Knowledge about the scientific and processes required for the implementation of relevant conventions in developing countries and familiarity with relevant international assessments.

49. In addition to the ten core members, five additional "special" members are appointed on a yearly basis, to provide expertise on specific work program items.

50. Due to its size, STAP relies heavily on its networks in formulating advice on the state of knowledge on specific issues. The multidisciplinary of the panel is an advantage when advice on cross-cutting issues or interlinkages is required, but a weakness when more narrow focal-area specific issues are under discussion. The lack of time of members has also affected the panel's integration in the GEF.

## **IV. MEETINGS, AGENDA AND PROCEEDINGS**

51. What is the frequency of the meetings? Are there any intersessional consultations? If so how? How is the agenda prepared? How many items are contained in the agenda? How much time is allocated to

each item? Is time sufficient to go through all items? Is work entirely conducted in plenary or are working groups established?

### ***CBD SBSTTA***

52. Two one-week meetings of the CBD SBSTTA are held prior to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The interaction between SBSTTA members is often limited to the meeting time. The Secretariat conducts the required intersessional work and interacts with the SBSTTA Bureau. Additional intersessional work is conducted through Ad Hoc Technical Expert Groups (AHTEG) established by the SBSTTA.

53. The agenda of the meetings is prepared by the Secretariat, in accordance to COP decisions, and in consultation with the SBSTTA Bureau. At SBSTTA XI (2005) the agenda featured 10 items. Time is often too short to adequately discuss all items.

54. The meetings start in plenary and then two Working Groups are established after a half-day. There has been reluctance to split into more working groups as developing countries who can only send one or two representatives to each meeting feel they would not be adequately represented in the negotiations. In the past, the limited number of working groups has somewhat prevented the in-depth discussion of some agenda items. In fact, participants only have time to discuss the draft recommendations contained in the documents prepared by the Secretariat.

### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

55. One meeting is held between COPs and the other is held in conjunction with COP. Both meetings last between five and ten days. SBSTA meets in parallel with UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI).

56. The agenda holds on average 14 items and is based on COP requests. It is prepared by the Secretariat. The President, upon the request of the Chairman of a subsidiary body, may authorize the President to adjust the allocation of work.

57. Decision-making is achieved through consensus. So far the SBSTA has not resorted to voting. There is currently no consensus on rule 42 of the draft rules of procedure. This rule is not being applied.

58. Contact groups and informal consultations are common at SBSTA meetings to allow the main body to make progress on its agenda. The Chair of SBSTA is often requested to draft conclusions in consultation with interested Parties. Both the contact group and informal groups generally take place between the opening and closing SBSTA plenary.

### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

59. The CST meets in conjunction with the UNCCD COP, every two years. Meetings last three days. Intersessional meetings are also held.

60. The agenda is prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat. The agenda stems from COP decisions and on average includes 13 items.

### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

61. The meetings of CITES' Scientific Committees are held annually for a period of 5 days each. The Secretariat prepares the draft agenda on the basis of COP decisions. The last meeting's agenda contained 23 items. It has been hard to adequately address all items in the time allocated for each meeting.

62. After a brief plenary session chaired by the Chairperson, members break into small working groups (4-8 people) and work simultaneously on different issues. While this working method has been deemed productive, insufficient translation was noted as a barrier to participation in some cases. During the meeting, members work in a more informal setting, without making country statements.

63. Intersessional work has not been very effective. This can be explained by the Members' other commitments and responsibilities. However, at the last meeting, task forces were established with lead persons designated to steer the intersessional work and all immediate priorities will be supported by funds from the core budget for consultants.

### *CMS Scientific Council*

64. The CMS COP is held every three years. There were two meetings of the Scientific Council in between the two last COPs that lasted three days each. The Secretariat prepares the draft agenda and a timetable in consultation with the Chair. It is then submitted to SC members who can suggest changes. On average, the agenda will contain 10 items. The majority of time is dedicated to substantive items, e.g. work on the CMS strategy. When there is a long agenda, ad-hoc working groups are established to consider some items.

65. The SC is flexible in its structure and allows for small groups to conduct work in parallel on different issues.

66. When intersessional work is needed, work will be conducted electronically within a defined group that will table report at SC meeting. There is interest from SC Members and the CMS Secretariat to develop better and more systematic means of intersessional work to enhance productivity of meetings.

### *Ramsar STRP*

67. The Ramsar STRP meets approximately annually, for 4-5 days. Length of meetings is determined in part by available budget, but can be varied at the request of the Panel depending on need. At the last meeting, STRP 13 in May 2006, there were 15 agenda items. The agenda content and size is determined largely by the priority thematic work areas and tasks established in each triennium for the Panel.

68. Although the time available in the agenda for addressing all necessary items, full coverage of the agenda is achieved through flexible arrangements during the meetings for break-out groups and parallel working. STRP 12 completed its work and is planning a set of mid-term workshops for its Working Groups in March 2007 to consider the results of the intersessional work. A further plenary session, STRP14, is anticipated to take place in early 2008, focussing on STRP's sign-off on products to be considered by Standing Committee and COP10.

69. For each of the priority thematic work areas, STRP thematic lead members are appointed to lead STRP Working Groups and other processes responsible for developing and delivering the tasks requested by COP under each of the themes; and to oversee work of any task force established within the Working Groups. Co-leads can be, and are, appointed, as are task force leads for specific priority tasks. This work is done mostly intersessionally. The Ramsar Convention Secretariat operates an STRP Support Service Website (developed for the STRP by wetlands International in the 2003-2005 triennium) which facilitates, communication, dialogue and review of the intersessional work of STRP.

70. A key priority task of the STRP's regional networking members is to develop and maintain enhanced linkages with STRP's National Focal Points and other national and regional experts to contribute to the Panel's work, working with the Secretariat's Senior Regional Advisors.

### ***GEF STAP***

71. STAP holds biannual three-day meetings. They are generally held six weeks before GEF council meetings in order to have the documents with proposals and recommendations ready.

72. Members of the Panel attend along with representatives of the implementing agencies, as well as the GEF and STAP Secretariats. Members conduct consultations between meetings through teleconference and e-mail, mostly within their working groups.

73. At the last STAP meeting, there were 10 items on the agenda. Some of those are short and procedural matters. The agenda-setting process is open and flexible. The GEF Council, implementing agencies, STAP Members and the Secretariat all can add items to the agenda. Members have expressed the need to spend more time on substantive than on procedural issues in panel meetings.

74. STAP also holds technical workshops jointly with the GEF to review specific issues in-depth.

## **V. DOCUMENTATION**

75. How many documents are prepared? Who prepares the documentation? Is there a maximum length for the documents? In what language(s) are they made available? Do they include draft recommendations? Are they submitted to peer-review by scientists, governments, others? When and how are they distributed?

### ***CBD SBSTTA***

76. At its last meeting, SBSTTA had 26 official documents and 24 information documents prepared by the Secretariat. The maximum length of official documents is 15 pages but information documents have unlimited length as they are not distributed - they are only made available through the web.

77. Documents contain recommendations that are amended according to need during the SBSTTA meeting and then submitted to COP. Documents are distributed six weeks prior to the beginning of the meeting in the six official UN languages. They are peer-reviewed.

### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

78. Documentation is prepared by the Secretariat. The last meeting (SBSTA-24 in 2006) had 18 pre-session documents and four information documents.

79. The documents may contain a section called "possible action by SBSTA". Generally, pre-session documents do not contain text of "draft conclusions" per se; however, in cases where the draft conclusions or draft COP decision would serve to adopt, for example, a work programme, guidelines, frameworks or the like, a draft text for it would be included in the pre-session document.

### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

80. The documents are prepared by the Secretariat. The average number of official documents is seven while the average number of information documents is two.

### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

81. At the last meeting of the Animals Committee there were 21 official documents and 5 information documents. Members of the Committee and working groups draft the documents with significant assistance from the Secretariat. There is a self-imposed 12-page maximum length for documents. Hard

copies of the documents are sent forty days before the beginning of meetings and are made available in English, French and Spanish.

### *CMS Scientific Council*

82. The documents for the SC are prepared and finalized by the CMS Secretariat, in some cases with the assistance of consultants. They are not peer reviewed. Members of the Council can also submit documents for the consideration of the meeting. The last meeting of the CMS Scientific Council featured 13 official documents and 13 information documents. Copies should be sent out 40 days prior to the meeting. The working languages of the SC are English, French and Spanish. Official documents are normally made available in English, and translated to the extent possible into French and Spanish. Information documents are normally made available in the original language, and are not translated for the purpose of the meeting.

### *Ramsar STRP*

83. The documentation for Ramsar STRP meetings is the fruit of joint efforts between Secretariat, STRP Chair and members and leaders of Expert Working Groups. During most of the triennium substantive documents delivering tasks are treated as working papers and are not publicly posted, but rather are made available for review and input from all those provided with access to the STRP Support Service Website, which includes all STRP members and observers, STRP National Focal Points, other invited experts and Secretariat staff. The process of finalising, and peer-reviewing, of documents depends on the type of product (see Outputs and Reports below).

84. The STRP works in English only, but key messages and materials are anticipated to be made available in other languages to National Focal Points in different regions through the work of the regional network members on the Support Service Website.

### *GEF STAP*

85. Documents are prepared by the Secretariat and consist largely of draft advice, work program item proposals and other substantive or procedural documentation, for review and adoption by the STAP. There were 13 documents prepared for the last meeting. They are prepared in English only and reviewed during the meetings. STAP reports, advice and proposals related to project review procedures are sent to the GEF Council as information documents. STAP advice documents contain an executive summary and recommendations to the GEF. Documents do not have length limitations.

## **VI. ASSESSMENTS**

86. Does the body conduct scientific assessments? If so, how are the findings disseminated? Are their findings translated into policy recommendations? What other additional scientific bodies can be established to feed in the assessments (i.e. AHTEG for CBD SBSTTA)? How are they funded? How is the wider scientific community involved in their preparation?

### *CBD SBSTTA*

87. Decision VIII/10 Appendix C to Annex III established a process for the conduct of scientific and technical assessments initiated by the SBSTTA.

88. Assessments must be mandated by COP. Background documents are then drafted by the Executive Secretary with or without the assistance of consultant or collaborating organization, and/or expert

meeting (ad hoc technical expert groups). It is then peer-reviewed and then submitted to SBSTTA. For example, CBD is currently preparing an assessment, provisionally titled "Effects of Unauthorized Harvesting on Forest Biodiversity with Emphasis on Bushmeat".

#### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

89. As per Article 9 of the Convention and Decision 6/CP.1, SBSTA's functions include: "To provide assessments of the state of scientific knowledge relating to climate change and its effects. In this context:

(a) To summarize and, where necessary, convert the latest international scientific, technical, socio-economic and other information provided by competent bodies including, *inter alia*, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), into forms appropriate to the needs of the Conference of the Parties, including in support of the review of the adequacy of commitments; and

(b) Compile and synthesize scientific, technical and socio-economic information on the global situation on climate change, provided by, *inter alia*, the IPCC, as well as on the latest developments in science, to the extent possible, and assess the implications thereof for the implementation of the Convention; and formulate requests to competent international scientific and technical bodies."

90. The Conventions calls on the COP to "seek and utilize... the services and cooperation of, and information provided by, competent international organizations and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies." (Article 7.2(1)) in order to promote the implementation of the Convention. To this end, the COP and its SBs cooperate with other international organizations and bodies. This includes the IPCC, GCOS and many others.

91. Assessments are disseminated in various ways, including through pre-sessional official documents. The assessment reports of the IPCC are regularly distributed by the IPCC during the sessions of the UNFCCC bodies.

#### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

92. The CST bases its work on assessments conducted by partner organizations and submissions by Parties. It also bases its work on ad hoc panels of government-nominated experts that provide information and advice on specific issues.

#### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

93. CITES' Scientific Committees do not conduct assessments themselves. Rather, they review and comment assessments prepared by others. They sometimes commission other organizations to conduct the needed assessments.

#### ***CMS Scientific Council***

94. The CMS Scientific Council does not systematically conduct assessments. However, it does oversee a review of status of priority species (Appendix I species designated for Concerted Actions), which normally leads to the development of action plans. A systematic review of Appendices is scheduled by the Strategic Plan 2006-2011.

#### ***Ramsar STRP***

95. Assessments may be requested of the Panel as workplan priority tasks approved by COP. For example, current key tasks includes wetland status and trends assessment, and indicator assessment of the

effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention. Members of the Panel can and do become involved in wider assessment processes, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and advise the Convention on the outcomes and significance of such assessments.

### ***GEF STAP***

96. STAP does not produce assessments in its own right. Rather, it galvanizes assessments, highlighting the relevance and implications for GEF strategies and operations. In its advice to GEF, it canvasses contributions from the wider scientific and technical community. STAP has for instance promoted the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA).

## **VII. OUTPUTS AND REPORTS**

97. What are the subsidiary scientific bodies' outputs (i.e. recommendations, decisions, assessments, guidelines)? Are the outputs put to use by the Secretariat, COP, and Parties? How is the report circulated? Is it peer-reviewed after its production? Is it also shared with other scientific bodies?

### ***CBD SBSTTA***

98. The SBSTTA produces recommendations to the Conference of the Parties, some of which have been endorsed in full by the latter. Such endorsement makes these recommendations de facto decisions of the Conference of the Parties. Parts of other recommendations have also been endorsed, and many others have been taken up in modified form.

99. Its report is translated into the six official UN languages and made available on the internet. It is sent to those who request it.

### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

100. The UNFCCC recommends draft decisions for adoption by the COP or COP/MOP and adopts conclusions itself. Generally the outcome of a SBSTA session is in form of "Conclusions", which in some cases contain attached - as a separate document - a draft COP decision which SBSTA recommends for adoption. The draft COP decisions are generally adopted by the COP or the COP/MOP.

101. Its report is translated into the six official UN languages and made available on the internet. It is also sent to those who request it.

### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

102. The CST adopts draft decisions which are included in its report for the consideration of the COP. Those draft decisions are usually adopted by the COP during the plenary in the days following the CST meeting.

### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

103. CITES Scientific Committees produce recommendations. Some are built upon at COPs. However, political dimensions of issues at COP can sidetrack biologically valid responses recommended by the Scientific Committees.

104. Its report is posted on the website and made available in English, French and Spanish.

### *CMS Scientific Council*

105. The SC not only provides recommendations to COPs and Parties - it provides useful focused outputs, including inter alia identification of candidate species for listing in its Appendixes, preparing Action Plans for protection and recovery of Appendix I species that do not yet have one, identify main strategic research priorities to address the conservation of migratory species, develop guidance and formalise a mechanism for rapid CMS action and advocacy in response to emergency and non-compliance situations, etc.

106. Reports of the SC Meeting is disseminated on the web and sent to those who request it.

### *Ramsar STRP*

107. Ramsar STRP provides technical information in a number of different forms, depending on the nature and purpose of the product. These include draft COP Resolutions (decisions) and attached scientific and technical guidelines for Parties, which are approved by the Panel and then transmitted to the Standing Committee and COP (in the three Convention languages). The Panel also provides to Standing Committee and COP advice and recommendations on future scientific and technical implementation priorities, in the form of a draft Resolution and annexed tasks and priorities and, through Resolution VIII.45, on all scientific and technical Resolutions including those submitted by Parties.

108. Larger, more detailed reports (reviews, assessments, methodologies etc.) are now published through the Ramsar Technical Report series. These are peer reviewed by all STRP participants, and additional reviewers. They are Web-published in English in .pdf format, and translated and/or printed if additional resources are available.

109. Guidance adopted by COP and supporting materials, are subsequently compiled as thematic "Wise Use Handbooks" and made available on Web and CD-ROM to Parties and others in the three official languages of the Convention. The 3rd edition of Handbooks, incorporating STRP guidance adopted at COP9, will be published in 2006.

### *GEF STAP*

110. The STAP meeting reports are not widely disseminated, as they are mainly intended for GEF Council members, the GEF Secretariat and the implementing and executing agencies. When relevant for project development, STAP advice may also be further distributed at the national level though the implementing agencies.

111. STAP's strategic advice usually takes the form of recommendations for possible GEF responses and interventions and scientific and technical issues to take into consideration in the development of Operational Programmes and other policy frameworks. In addition, STAP systematically recommends areas for targeted research in each of the issues it takes up. Its recommendations are normally supported by an analysis of the state of scientific and technical knowledge and information in the area, including gaps and how they could be addressed.

112. At the programme and portfolio level STAP's advice is often directed at underlying assumptions of specific programmes that influence project design, the design of tools, instruments and methods that can be applied to operationalize policy advice, and strategic technological questions.

113. At the project level, and aside from the selective review mechanism, STAP has the opportunity to directly guide research and assessment projects through its participation in the steering committees of those projects. STAP may also be requested to review specific project proposals, because of their innovative or controversial nature and/or the risk they carry.



114. In its advice to the GEF, STAP attempts to integrate and unify concepts from the domains of both the natural and social sciences and to encourage the use of technological innovations and innovative, science-based approaches. It also draws on the multi-disciplinary strength of the panel to advise on cross-cutting issues and on the linkages between the focal areas and their impact on GEF operations.

115. Another important role of STAP is to oversee the scientific and technical reviews of all GEF projects, produced by the STAP roster of experts.

### **VIII. FUNDING**

116. Who funds the subsidiary scientific body? Do donors have influence on the agenda and outcomes of the meetings?

#### ***CBD SBSTTA***

117. The CBD SBSTTA is funded through the core budget of the CBD. Occasionally some activities are funded from the core budget (e.g., some AHTEGs), many other activities of the SBSTTA are funded through voluntary funds.

#### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

118. The SBSTA is funded through the core budget of the UNFCCC. Attendance of representatives from eligible Parties at COP sessions and its subsidiary bodies is funded by the trust fund for participation. Some activities mandated by the SBSTA, including workshops and the preparation of specific reports, are sometimes funded by voluntary contributions to a supplementary fund. The Special Trust Fund for the Host Country Contribution to the UNFCCC (the "Bonn Fund"), which, *inter alia*, covers the cost of the conference location, when the sessions are held in Bonn.

#### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

119. The CST is funded through the core budget of the UNCCD.

#### ***CITES Scientific Committees***

120. Parties make contributions to a Trust fund. The Members of the Committees must be supported by their institutions and governments. At present, the funding is inadequate.

#### ***CMS Scientific Council***

121. Funds are supplied by the Secretariat from established Trust funds to support members from developing countries and Conference-appointed members.

#### ***Ramsar STRP***

122. STRP is funded through the core budget of Ramsar. Until the 2006-2008 triennium this was limited to only delegate meeting support and maintenance of the STRP website system, but now permits some outsourcing of substantive work tasks. Additional funding is at times obtained from individual donors for specific activities.

#### ***GEF STAP***

123. STAP is funded by the GEF and is hosted and administered by UNEP. It has its own budget to ensure the independence of its operations.

## **IX. PREVIOUS EVALUATION**

124. Has any evaluation of the body's effectiveness been conducted in the past? If so, what were the main conclusions?

### ***CBD SBSTTA***

125. The Ad-Hoc Open Ended Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI) met for the first time in September 2005. It reviewed the various processes of the Convention, including the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technical Advice and suggested recommendations to the COP (See UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/1/3 Table 2 of Appendix A).

126. Decision VIII/10 of COP 8 reflects these recommendations.

### ***UNFCCC SBSTA***

127. The SBI considers improvements to the organization of the intergovernmental process. The document FCCC/SBI/2006/L.9, section E recommended:

- Differentiating the topics under the research and systematic observation item and considering them in the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) on an alternating basis;
- Considering national communications only once a year, preferably during the first sessional period;
- Considering cooperation with relevant international organizations only once a year in the SBSTTAA, preferably during the first sessional period; and
- Considering the reports by UNFCCC expert groups only once a year, preferably during the first sessional period;

### ***UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology***

128. A preliminary report of the group of experts on "Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology" was prepared in 2003 (ICCD/COP6/CST/3). It used a thematic approach and makes recommendations on:

- Assessment of desertification on the global, regional and national levels
- Help in providing an updated World Atlas of Desertification
- Assist in providing a science plan for land degradation research
- Poverty and land degradation: an assessment methodology
- Help in developing a web-based glossary of terms relevant for desertification
- Reinforce a mechanisms for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network
- Assist in developing a common benchmark and indicators and monitoring systems
- Short-term early warning systems

129. The Group of Expert's four-year work programme is scheduled to end in 2006. A final report will be issued.

130. The present note has been prepared to gather information on: the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Scientific Committees of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the

Scientific Council of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention. It also examines the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

131. Each COP since COP-4 has passed a decision on Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology.

### *CITES Scientific Committees*

132. A Review of CITES' three Scientific Committees (Plant Committee, Animal Committee and Nomenclature Committee) was requested by CITES COP 13 (2004) with a view to improve and facilitate the performance of their functions. The review was undertaken and should be finished in time to be considered by the Animal and Plant Committees at AC22 and PC16 (July 2006).

133. The desired outputs of the review include: recommendations, modifications to Resolutions and Decisions, manuals, reference documents, and the development of indicators to monitor the improvement of the performance of the Committees.

134. Based on the above, the Working Group recommended the following particular elements to be covered, and basic tasks and products to be produced by the review. These are considered to be essential for its completion, and will serve to guide the main activities of the Committees:

(a) a) Identify and clearly delimit the functions and tasks that should be taken by the members of the Plants, Animals, and Nomenclature Committees, noting the roles, functions and tasks undertaken by other bodies of the Convention;

(b) b) Compile all the available relevant elements and procedures related to the functioning of the Scientific Committees (Resolutions, Decisions, discussion documents, information documents, guiding principles, etc.) that could serve as the basis to measure and improve their performance;

(c) c) Perform a gap analysis of duties, again noting the roles of other bodies of the Convention (e.g. Scientific Unit of the Secretariat, observer Parties) as a guide to identify weak points in the performance of the Scientific Committees;

(d) d) Undertake an assessment of the achievements of the Committees in relation to roles, tasks and duties assigned to them, including, but not limited to, those covered by the Strategic Plan;

(e) e) Make a detailed analysis of the main elements of the Convention on which the Committees depend (e.g. Secretariat support), and also consider those factors that could be compromising their performance. In consultation with Committee Chairs and Members, look at ways to improve or modify relevant procedures within the Convention if needed;

(f) f) Examine opportunities for efficiencies in the functioning of the Committees to help ensure that resources available for the implementation of the Convention are optimally used;

(g) g) Examine available mechanisms to deliver the products of the revision, including recommendations, strategies, specific proposals for capacity-building activities, financing needs, technical support from external bodies (such as the CBD, FAO or the IUCN SSC Specialist Groups, etc.), documentation of case studies and best practices, indicators, or general mechanisms to assist the Committees in having a significant impact on the implementation of the Convention by Parties; and

(h) h) Consider options for ongoing or periodic review of the Committees to ensure that improvements are sustained<sup>‡</sup>.

135. As of May 2006, revised terms of reference were submitted to the Standing Committee for consideration at their next meeting.

### *CMS Scientific Council*

136. At its seventh meeting, the CMS COP instructed the Scientific Council to produce a strategy on its scientific and conservation work. This was suggested in CMS/SC12/Doc.3.

137. Key drivers for a more strategic approach were:

- Increase in numbers of species on the appendices, demanding the attention of the Scientific Council;
- Increasing (understanding of the) gravity and complexity of threats facing migratory species;
- Inadequate availability of funding for conservation actions, leading to the need to make hard decisions prioritisation;
- Growing in the numbers of Parties to the Convention, and thus Scientific Councillors; and
- Demand to coordinate effectively with other Conventions.

138. The new strategy was embodied by the first Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) to be adopted by the Scientific Council. The SIP proposed a number of new tools and directions for the Scientific Council, including:

- The development of a number of new information documents to provide better information for decision-making;
- A more evidence-based approach for decision-making (i.e. scientific reviews of different taxonomic groups and threats to migratory specie);
- More attention to Appendix I species;
- New measures to give enhanced attention to and address habitat loss and fragmentation;
- Increased synergy;
- Monitoring and evaluation, notably a number of measures to improve the feedback on successful implementation of the Plan and the Convention; and
- Recommendations of a more procedural nature were also made including: increased intersessional work, regionalise work of SC, and a reduction of the size of SC for some meetings.

139. The links between the SC's mandate and the goals of the Convention were made explicit through the adoption of the Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) for the SC. This was done with a view to reinforce the overall framework provided by the CMS Strategic Plan and represents a shift to a more strategic and outcome-focused work method for the SC. Coupled with indicators and defined milestones for completion, the SIP enables a clear and regular assessment of progress. The SIP can be found in CMS/ScC.13/Report Annex II.

### *Ramsar STRP*

140. STRP reviewed its modus operandi in the 2003-2005 triennium. That review identified a significant number of limitations and bottle-necks which were reported to the Standing Committee, including:

- the onus placed upon a few key people to ensure coherence across the suite of tasks;

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<sup>‡</sup> Review of the Scientific Committees - PC15/AC21 WG1 Doc. 1  
<http://www.cites.org/common/com/AC-PC/X-PC15-AC21-WG1.pdf>

- the delay in building and implementing a work plan following the last COP, including the lack of funding to engage experts to prepare draft materials;
- the loss of momentum after the first enthusiastic and ambitious work-plan session at the Panel's first plenary session of the triennium;
- the limited expertise of each of the members appointed to the Panel;
- the difficult role of observer organization representatives who must act as liaison with less motivated experts within their organizations; and
- the excessive number of tasks assigned by the COP and SC, even within the SC's prioritization for this triennium.

141. The Panel recommendations included:

- Parties should nominate for the Panel experts in their own right, with the appropriate level of knowledge of wetland conservation and wise use, and with the necessary language abilities, so as to have the strongest possible Panel;
- A set of expert Working Groups should be established immediately after COP;
- Prioritisation of future STRP tasks, to be prepared by Chair, Vice Chair, Working Group co-leads and the Secretariat and approved by COP;
- A rolling six-year programme of work for the STRP would allow rapid dispersal of funds when they become available towards pending priority work;
- Establishment of a mechanism to appoint an expert "Technical Advisor" for each of the Panel's priority themes of work to advise on the scope and contents of products requested of the Panel within their areas of expertise, identify lead experts with the appropriate global expertise to prepare draft materials, and support and guide the work of any relevant Working Group established by the Panel;
- CEPA Specialist Group to advise to the STRP;
- Urge the Standing Committee and COP to consider the allocation of a core budget for substantive work, so that the Panel can initiate high priority work in a timely manner;
- Develop the involvement and capacity of the STRP National Focal Points network, and their Terms of Reference should be reviewed; and
- Request the Standing Committee to consider "the future scope and opportunities for widening its work, including inter alia advising on site designation and management issues, reviewing the use of existing tools, identifying gaps in the Convention, and interaction with the work of other Conventions. Such a broader role could be achieved through a balance between forward, proactive and strategic advice and responsive problem-solving on emerging one-off issues. It is recognized, however, that increasing the scope of activities of the STRP members will not be feasible for volunteer STRP participants without additional resources.

142. On the basis of these recommendations, a significantly revised modus operandi was adopted by COP9 (2005) (Resolution IX.11), with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness, and to avoid "political" issues arising or affecting the Panel's membership and operations. First indications, from the operations of STRP13 (May 2006), are that this new modus operandi has already led to significant improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

### *GEF STAP*

143. Two internal exercises have been conducted to evaluate STAP. In 1997, the GEF Council reviewed the incorporation of STAP advice. The conclusions were positive and found that implementing agencies used STAP advice and incorporated it into their activities. The exercise also found that advice was most effective when timely and operationally focused, and least useful when very broad in scope.

144. STAP is evaluated as part of the Overall Performance Studies of the GEF, which take place prior to each replenishment. This is not an in-depth evaluation though, and consists of a summary of views held by GEF agencies staff and STAP members. No independent evaluation of STAP has been conducted thus far.

## X. CONCLUSIONS

145. Limited meeting time was a concern for all examined scientific subsidiary bodies. There was consensus that intersessional work could remediate to this problem by enhancing productivity and quality of the subsidiary bodies' work. However, it was also recognized that members of scientific subsidiary bodies have other responsibilities and it is thus hard to dedicate as much time as needed to their responsibilities to subsidiary bodies.

146. During meetings, many of the examined subsidiary bodies use small working groups to address issues simultaneously and find that it improves efficiency. It allows members to concentrate on substantive issues, rather than procedural matters. The downside however is that some Parties may feel that they are left aside from discussions when they are not able to send representatives to all working groups.

147. It was noted that appointment of members of scientific committees based on their scientific expertise is important and enhances quality of outputs. Government representatives are less independent and therefore may make politically-based recommendations rather than science-informed decisions. On the other hand, national representatives may receive more support from their governments, thus creating more ownership of Convention processes by Parties.

148. A general concern was the lack of follow-up on scientific advice provided by the subsidiary bodies. Indeed, it is widely felt that scientific advice is insufficiently translated into policy.

149. Although it is advisable that subsidiary scientific bodies should stick to scientific issues, it is often difficult to separate or distinguish scientific and socio-economic and political issues when they overlap. While addressing socio-economic and political issues within scientific subsidiary bodies sidetracks it from its original mandate, it is also detrimental to ignore socio-economic and political aspects of environmental issues.

150. Strong governance and leadership of scientific bodies is important. A strong and active Bureau, Chair and Secretariat are crucial elements that allow for the production of relevant and timely scientific advice. Strong governance and leadership can also contribute to reducing dissention and procedural delays during meetings.

151. Funding has been noted in most instances to be insufficient which leads to a sub-optimal quality and quantity of outputs. In some cases, there was a perception that donors' interests superseded the common interest in scientific bodies' agendas and decisions.