



PRESS RELEASE

International biodiversity meeting to evaluate progress at the half-way point of the UN Decade on Biodiversity

Montreal, 21 April 2016 – One of the main bodies under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is set to meet next week to discuss issues that will accelerate progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achieving its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

At the twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in Montreal, Canada, from 25 to 29 April 2016, delegates will address a wide array of topics, including mainstreaming of biodiversity into key production sectors, marine biodiversity, invasive species, synthetic biology, threats to pollinators and food production, protected areas and ecosystem restoration.

Mainstreaming biodiversity

Mainstreaming biodiversity is aimed at integrating the value of biodiversity in key decisions that impact it, thereby aligning sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity with the economic interests of relevant actors. Many economic sectors, particularly primary sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, depend on biodiversity and yet often have adverse impacts on the very biodiversity that helps sustain their long-term viability. Mainstreaming therefore consists of making economic sectors more aware of the values of biodiversity, the importance of well-functioning ecosystems, the opportunities that biodiversity provides, as well as the possible risks of biodiversity loss to their operations.

Parties to the CBD and other participants will consider issues related to mainstreaming with a focus on landscape approaches that integrate the natural functions of biodiversity and ecosystems in production systems for food and other resources. This topic will also be linked to discussions in the first meeting of the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Implementation, being held from 2 – 6 May 2016, on strategic actions that can be taken to further implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

Marine and coastal biodiversity

Marine and coastal environments contain diverse habitats that support an abundance of marine life. At this meeting, countries will consider several key issues threatening marine and coastal biodiversity, as reflected in Aichi Biodiversity Targets 10 (coral reefs), 11 (protected areas) and 12 (threatened species).

- Countries may decide to review the scientific assessment criteria for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and to use the information collected in the EBSA process to support ocean planning and management activities.



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- On marine spatial planning specifically, countries will examine draft guidelines and a toolkit to support countries' efforts to conserve and sustainably use marine and coastal biodiversity.
- Regarding marine debris, SBSTTA will recommend practical guidance to mitigate the impacts of plastics and other persistent marine debris on marine species
- Countries will discuss measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate the adverse impacts of underwater noise caused by human activities, taking into account the most recent scientific and technical information available on this issue.
- As a final point, SBSTTA will study the draft work plan on the issue of biodiversity and acidification in cold-water areas, in order to advance the CBD's work on the physical degradation and destruction of coral reefs (including cold-water corals), in collaboration with other competent organizations.

Invasive alien species

A major driver of biodiversity loss and extinction, invasive alien species threaten the natural equilibrium of ecosystems and increasingly pose risks to human health. In line with Aichi Biodiversity Target 9, which calls for several measures to tackle this global problem, countries will discuss the trade of alien species, as accelerated by internet-based commerce; the use of biological control agents against invasive alien species; and decision support tools intended to help assess and evaluate the social, economic and ecological consequences of invasive alien species. On the issue of biological control, specifically, countries can be expected to discuss the global experience with regards to the safe and effective release of alien species to control populations of invasive alien species in environments where these cause damage.

Synthetic biology

Synthetic biology is multidisciplinary field closely linked to developments in science, biotechnology and engineering. In the context of SBSTTA, countries will consider an operational definition of synthetic biology, examine relevant information pertaining to potential benefits and adverse effects of the components, organisms and products resulting from synthetic biology techniques, and whether or not recent developments in synthetic biology are sufficiently covered by current frameworks, including the CBD and its Protocols.

Pollinators, pollination and food production

More than three quarters of major food crops rely on animal pollination. Due to various pressures, including inappropriate pesticide use, agricultural practices and climate change, populations of wild pollinators have been declining. Recently, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) issued a thematic assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production. The assessment found that an estimated 16 per cent of vertebrate pollinators, such as birds and bats, are threatened with global extinction – increasing to 30 per cent for island species – with a trend toward more extinction. Based on national and regional information, the assessment also found that approximately 40 per cent of insect pollinators are currently endangered. At this meeting, countries will discuss how the findings of the IPBES assessment relate to the work of the Convention, including the need for policies and strategies related to the conservation of pollinators, the promotion of pollinator-friendly habitats, ways to improve the management of pollinators and to reduce the risk from pests, pathogens, invasive species and pesticides and ways to promote research, monitoring and assessment on pollinators. The deliberations at SBSTTA will help to support the coordinated management of pollinators and ultimately contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Protected areas and ecosystem restoration

During the meeting of the SBSTTA, countries will follow-up on relevant work undertaken on the issue of protected areas and ecosystem restoration. Ecosystem restoration involves rehabilitating and restoring degraded ecosystems and promoting the recovery of threatened species – it is therefore vital to achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 (to halve the rate of loss of natural habitats), 14 (ecosystem services are restored and safeguarded) and 15 (to restore at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems and enhance ecosystem resilience). On this issue, countries will discuss key elements of a short-term action plan on

ecosystem restoration and will examine draft guidance for the integration of biodiversity considerations into ecosystem restoration. Countries will also review the outcomes of the Convention's collaboration with competent organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

During SBSTTA, countries will also discuss the current status of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, which calls for the protection of 17 per cent of terrestrial land and inland water and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. Since 2004, protected areas have increased by 3 per cent in terrestrial and inland water environments, and by 6 per cent in marine and coastal environments. However, other elements of Target 11, including the ecological representativeness and effective and equitable management of protected areas, need more efforts in order to be achieved by 2020. Countries will therefore discuss priority actions to be undertaken in the next five years to address all these elements.

On other topics, countries will discuss issues related to biodiversity and climate change, sustainable wildlife management, the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, countries' sixth national reports, indicators for assessing progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and new and emerging issues.

Some 500 delegates, including representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities, are expected to attend the twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body held from 25 to 30 April 2016 at the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal, Canada.

SBSTTA is an intergovernmental body responsible for providing scientific, technical and technological advice related to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The scientific body plays a key role in assessing the current status of the world's biodiversity and in bringing emerging issues related to the conservation of biodiversity to the attention of the global community.

Recommendations emanating from SBSTTA 20 will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting, which will be held from 4 to 17 December 2016 in Cancun, Mexico.

Note to editors

SBSTTA-20 documents are available at: www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=SBSTTA-20

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 196 Parties up to now, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing are supplementary agreements to the Convention. The Cartagena Protocol, which entered into force on 11 September 2003, seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 170 Parties have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Nagoya Protocol aims at sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies. It entered into force on 12 October

2014 and to date has been ratified by 74 Parties. For more information visit: www.cbd.int. For additional information, please contact: Johan Hedlund on +1 514 287 6670 or at johan.hedlund@cbd.int; or Ulrika Nilsson on +1 514 287 8720 or at ulrika.nilsson@cbd.int