



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC,  
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Item 4.2 of the provisional agenda\*

### RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED BY THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE AT ITS FIFTEENTH MEETING

#### *XV/5. Biological diversity of inland water ecosystems*

#### I. CONCLUSIONS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY

*The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice:*

1. *Emphasizes* that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide the overall framework of the Convention towards 2020 and should guide the future work of all of the Convention's cross-cutting issues and thematic areas;

2. *Notes with appreciation* the reports prepared by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/8; UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/9; UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/10; UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/11; and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/INF/15) and after considering them *concludes* that:

(a) The implications of the water cycle and freshwater resources in the implementation of all of the thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work of the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets are far-reaching including, *inter alia*, that:

- (i) The water cycle is a bio-physical process underpinned by ecosystems and that changes in water availability and quality, including *inter alia* humidity, soil moisture and evapo-transpiration of plants, affect biodiversity, ecosystem functions and the delivery of ecosystem services;
- (ii) There are many and varied implications of the way in which the water cycle functions, making it necessary to consider water a “cross-cutting” subject under the framework of the ecosystem approach;
- (iii) The water cycle forges strong links between the various Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and it remains important to adequately capture the relevant aspects of the water cycle through the monitoring framework for the Strategic Plan under further development (decision X/7);

\* UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/1/Rev.1.

- (iv) Biodiversity is essential to guarantee ecosystems are self-supporting and meet human needs for water-related ecosystem services in a cost-effective manner;
- (v) Biodiversity plays an important role in sustaining water for human activities such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries, among others;
- (vi) Taking into consideration that water issues and solutions can be very much case and locality specific, and it is not possible to be prescriptive or exhaustive regarding priorities, some key areas for additional attention can be identified, such as: the role of vegetation in sustaining local and regional precipitation and humidity; the importance of soil biodiversity with regards to soil moisture and water balances and therefore in sustaining land functionality; the importance of the water cycle in sustaining desirable levels of sediment transfer and deposition and the substantial ecosystem services this underpins (particularly in coastal areas); the role of biodiversity and ecosystems in regulating the extremes of water availability (including both drought and flooding); and the importance of the water cycle in the exchange of organic matter, nutrients and energy between forests, soils and water, which, for example, occurs seasonally in particular ecosystems such as the Amazon; and
- (vii) Groundwater and aquifers are important components of the water cycle and require more attention as they are suffering severe depletion in many regions. Groundwater and surface-water resources are inter-linked, including through wetlands and the functionality of land cover, including by facilitating soil-water infiltration;

(b) Water use for different purposes may affect downstream ecosystems and groundwater supplies, with consequent impacts on terrestrial ecosystems;

(c) Regional initiatives that establish frameworks by legal and other effective means for integrated water management can serve as models for other regions to strengthen effective trans-national catchment management systems;

(d) The findings, tools and methods that are already available should be applied at local, national or regional levels in order to address threats faced by inland water ecosystems, their functions and services;

(e) The work within the framework of the study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) and the application of economic-appraisal techniques to ecological resources present new opportunities to influence policies and decision-making at the national level. Economic assessments provide only a preliminary and limited approximation of the fiscal value of inland water ecosystems; they should not be taken as the definitive valuation of a given resource but serve only as a guide in the context of decision-making for developmental planning;

(f) Inland water ecosystems, including their watersheds, provide ecosystem services which are important for sustaining biodiversity and human well being. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance technical, financial and other capacity in developing country Parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, in order to promote sustainable water management;

(g) Women are key stakeholders in sustaining family well-being, and using the biodiversity components of water-related ecosystem services and their knowledge related to water is a key factor in the implementation of the programme of work on inland waters biodiversity;

(h) Indigenous and local communities that maintain a very close, holistic, cultural and spiritual relationship with essential elements of biodiversity associated with the water cycle, as

demonstrated in many cultural activities, including through indigenous languages, can help to promote sustainable water management based on their traditional knowledge;

(i) Nutrient loading, including from unsustainable agricultural production and other sectoral activities, is among the main threats to inland water and coastal biodiversity and is directly relevant to achieving targets 7, 8, 11 and 14, among others, of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. More attention should be paid to eutrophication in freshwater as well as in coastal ecosystems worldwide;

(j) In view of the increasing pressures on inland waters due to global changes, there is a need to better understand the impacts of these changes on inland waters biodiversity and how this affects ecosystem functions;

(k) The ongoing scientific work on this topic (as described in the progress report on the work in addressing paragraphs 39-41 of decision X/28 on review of information, and the provision of key policy-relevant messages, on maintaining the ability of biodiversity to continue to support the water cycle, (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/15/11 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/INF/15) will be a useful resource for the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice to consider this topic further in its future work in many subject areas, including in the implementation and the future review of the programmes of work of the Convention;

(l) The 6th World Water Forum, to be held in Marseille, France, in March 2012, represents an opportunity to raise awareness on biodiversity and water issues.

## II. REQUESTS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice *requests* the Executive Secretary, and *invites* the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to:

(a) Based on discussion with potential partners and stakeholders, include under the Joint Work Plan with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands an assessment of opportunities for enhanced collaboration on solutions to water problems and to report on the options to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(b) Make the report of the expert group on maintaining the ability of biodiversity to continue to support the water cycle (as established in decision X/28, paragraph 39) available for the information of, and a summary report of its findings for the consideration of, the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

(c) Further streamline their activities in order to make best use of available resources and to further explore the scope for greater integration of the work of the two Conventions across all relevant programmes of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in order to achieve the greatest synergy, including the potential for joint meetings, and to report on options to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

## III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice *recommends* that the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting:

1. *Recognizes* the importance of the water cycle to most areas of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to achieving most of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and *considers* raising awareness of this, and thereby strengthening implementation of the Strategic Plan, through, *inter alia*, making biodiversity and water a cross-cutting issue under the Convention on Biological Diversity;

2. *Considers* the outcomes of the expert group on maintaining the ability of biodiversity to continue to support the water cycle (as established in decision X/28, paragraph 39);

3. *Notes* that the term “wetland”, as defined by the Ramsar Convention, offers flexible scope for national interpretation for addressing biodiversity challenges related to ecological inter-linkages

between inland, coastal and marine areas, and *invites* Parties and other Governments to consider wider adoption of the term in implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly for achieving target 11 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020; and

4. *Takes note* that the year 2013 will be the United Nations Year of Water Cooperation and that this provides, together with the current “International Decade for Action ‘Water for Life’ 2005-2015”, opportunities to bring water and biodiversity issues to broad public attention.

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