



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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STATEMENT BY

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

TO

**THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODY ON
SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE
(SBSTTA-7)**

Montreal, Canada, 12 - 16 November 2001

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

First, may I say how pleased I am to welcome you once again to Montreal for this very important seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

I am also very pleased to welcome you personally, Mr. Chairman, to your first meeting of SBSTTA in that capacity. I am well aware of your long commitment to the work of SBSTTA as a member of its Bureau and I am sure that your presence in the chair augurs well for the success of this meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Cristian Samper, the outgoing Chairman, for his invaluable contribution and support to the work of SBSTTA.

As always, a special word of gratitude goes out to those Parties whose generous contributions have enabled such a wide participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition. They are Denmark, the European Commission, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairman,

As I have said, this is a very important meeting—both because of its timing and because of its subject matter. The timing is important because the results of this meeting will be considered at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties next April, which, in turn, will feed into the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September. The meeting thus marks the last chance for this body to let its voice be heard in the preparations for the ten-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21.

The substance too is important, given that its main theme is forest biological diversity. Forests harbour the greatest wealth of biological diversity of any terrestrial ecosystem. That wealth is being lost at a frightening rate. This meeting represents a unique opportunity for this body to contribute its collective knowledge and expertise to international action to stem that loss.

First, however, I would like to briefly review the major developments that have taken place within the framework of the Convention since you last met in March. The period has been a busy one, so I will limit myself to three major aspects of our work in that time, namely:

- The implementation of the third objective of the Convention, access and benefit-sharing;
- The implementation of the second objective, sustainable use of biological resources; and

- The preparatory work for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

First, on access and benefit-sharing, I am pleased to report that last month saw a major breakthrough towards the implementation of the elusive third objective of the Convention—the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Meeting in Bonn, the *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-sharing approved for transmittal to the Conference of the Parties a set of draft guidelines on access and benefit-sharing, to be known as the “Bonn Guidelines”. These are intended to guide Parties in the development of national legislation on the subject and thus provide a clear framework for access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from their use. The Working Group also approved a plan of action for capacity-building for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing. The draft Bonn Guidelines are considered by many Parties to be a major milestone in the work of the Convention. Their development demonstrates that the Convention process is capable of addressing challenging issues, as it did with the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

In a related development, it is also encouraging to note the recent successful conclusion of the work within FAO to revise the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity. The new International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture fills an important gap left by the Convention and will be a major contribution to the achievement of its overall objectives.

With regard to sustainable use—the second objective of the Convention—a workshop on sustainable tourism was held in Santo Domingo in June and prepared draft guidelines on sustainable tourism in vulnerable areas, which you will consider under agenda item 3.4. You will have the opportunity to examine these guidelines in the course of the week with a view to their onward transmission to the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, if you so decide. More recently, a workshop on sustainable use was organized by the Secretariat in Maputo. This was the first of a series of three such workshops, to be held with the support from the Netherlands in different regions of the world with the aim of identifying elements for guidelines on sustainable use of biological diversity. The results of the Maputo meeting are before you as an information document, and the conclusions of all three workshops will be taken up by the Conference of the Parties in April next year.

With regard to preparations for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol—or “MOP-1”, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP) held its second meeting in Nairobi from 1 to 5 October 2001. I am pleased to inform you that the meeting made considerable progress on most of the issues and produced a number of concrete recommendations to MOP-1. It also agreed on several inter-sessional activities. MOP-1 is scheduled to be held in conjunction with the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties next April. In the event that the fiftieth instrument is not deposited in good

time for the entry into force of the Protocol, a third meeting of the ICCP will be held instead on those dates.

Mr. Chairman,

The provisional agenda before you essentially consists of three clusters of items:

- Reports;
- The main theme: forest biological diversity; and
- Other substantive issues.

The first cluster includes progress reports on the *Ad hoc* technical expert groups established under the Convention; assessment processes; the implementation of the programme of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands; and the development of practical principles, operational guidance and associated instruments on sustainable use.

Since your last meeting, there has been some progress with respect to the *Ad hoc* technical expert groups.

- The Expert Group on Forest Biological Diversity has completed its work and the results are before you under agenda item 4.
- The *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas held a very productive first meeting last month in Leigh, New Zealand. The work will be continued and expanded on during the inter-sessional period.
- The Expert Group on Biological Diversity and Climate Change is scheduled to meet twice, tentatively in January and in the late spring of 2002. Selection of experts will be completed in the very near future, and also the date and venue will be announced soon.
- The Group on Dry and Sub-humid lands is tentatively scheduled to meet in the first half of 2002.
- The Group on Mariculture is tentatively scheduled to meet in July 2002. This meeting will be held in collaboration with FAO.

May I take this opportunity to thank those Governments and organizations whose financial and logistical contributions have supported the holding of the three expert group meetings to date.

With regard to assessments, a procedure has been developed and is being used. However, this procedure will be refined in light of experience with ongoing assessment

processes and with SBSTTA guidance. A progress report on these ongoing assessments is before you at this meeting.

With respect to dry and sub-humid lands, progress made includes the finalization of the joint work programme between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification at a liaison group meeting organized jointly by the two secretariats in Bonn from 30 April to 2 May 2001. This is an important area for cooperation with the Convention to Combat Desertification, and a report on the status of the joint work programme between the two secretariats is also before you under this cluster of items.

Mr. Chairman,

As I have said, the fact that the main theme of the meeting is forest biological diversity lends particular importance to this event. Forest issues are high on the international agenda as can be seen by the establishment of the United Nations Forum on Forests in late 2000 and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests this year. Forests will also feature prominently in the work of the *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Biological Diversity and Climate Change. This seventh meeting of SBSTTA will have the opportunity - and the responsibility - to develop very important recommendations that will tremendously influence the future role of our Convention with respect to forests.

The *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Forest Biological Diversity has accomplished an impressive amount of work, and the results of its deliberations are before you. I want to thank the experts for their participation and commitment to the group and, in particular, the two co-chairs who spent countless hours to support the work of the Group. I would like also to thank all the organizations that contributed to the work of the Expert Group and specifically FAO and CIFOR for their important contribution in the preparation of the Secretariat documents for the Group's first meeting. In addition, a special word of gratitude goes out to those members of the scientific community who gave their time and expertise to participate in the peer-review of the output of the expert group.

The results of the work of the Expert Group are reflected in the three main working documents circulated under item 4 of the provisional agenda, namely:

- The report of the Expert Group;
- The note by the Executive Secretary on consideration of specific threats to forest biological diversity; and
- The elements for a possible expansion of the programme of work on forest biological diversity, which are based on the conclusions of the Expert Group.

In addition, you also have before you a number of information documents deriving from the work of the Group. All these documents will be introduced fully when the item

is formally introduced. Suffice it to say at this stage that the purpose of this documentation is to facilitate consideration of the item by SBSTTA and to reflect the present state of knowledge on the issues. I am sure that you will find much food for thought in these documents as you embark upon your task this week.

I hope that, building on the work of the Expert Group, you will be able to bring a real influence to bear on the status and future of forest biological diversity. As you all know, the status of forests all around the world is a matter of extreme concern. I am confident that you are all eager to tackle such a heavy responsibility and to provide the Conference of the Parties with concrete proposals aiming at responding to this situation.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to turn now to the other substantive issues before the meeting, namely: agricultural biological diversity, plant conservation strategy, incentive measures and indicators of biological diversity and impact assessment.

The focus of the discussions on agricultural biodiversity will be on the International Initiative for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Pollinators. You are also requested to consider a progress report and proposals for the further implementation of the programme of work on agrobiodiversity, which has also been prepared by the Secretariat. One recent development in this area was the organization of an important symposium, here in Montreal last week, on managing biodiversity in agricultural ecosystems. This meeting was an initiative of the United Nations University, in collaboration with the Convention Secretariat, the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute and McGill University.

In considering the item on plant conservation strategy, SBSTTA is invited to address the scope and gaps of ongoing international initiatives for plant conservation and make recommendations to the Conference of the Parties concerning the development of the proposed global strategy.

With respect to incentive measures, you have before you the background analysis provided by the Secretariat and, most importantly, the proposals and recommendations prepared by the workshop on incentive measures organized by the Secretariat in Montreal from 10 to 12 October.

Concerning indicators for biological diversity, the Secretariat has provided an update on the work that has been undertaken since the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties through an interim progress report. It is my firm belief that the development of indicators is an important issue and we look forward to receiving your further guidance. Likewise with impact assessment, where you have before you draft guidelines prepared in response to decision V/18 of the Conference of the Parties. The Convention identifies impact assessment as a key instrument for achieving its objectives, and I would commend the draft guidelines for your consideration and approval on an interim basis.

Mr. Chairman,

There are two other matters on the agenda for this meeting, namely, preparations for the next two SBSTTA meetings and a decision on when to address mountain ecosystems, protected areas and transfer of technology and technology cooperation. In particular, you may wish to consider ways in which the Convention process can contribute to the International Year of Mountains, which is being celebrated next year.

It may also be advisable to brainstorm on the recommendations this body may wish to provide the Conference of the Parties with respect to the items for in-depth consideration at its eighth and ninth meetings. I think that the following four items are becoming important topical questions:

- The restoration and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and recovery of rare and endangered species bearing in mind Articles 8 (f), 9 (c) and 10 (d) of the Convention;
- Urban and peri-urban biodiversity;
- Islands biodiversity; and
- The role of biodiversity in human health.

Mr. Chairman,

This meeting of SBSTTA is also meant to contribute to the development of the Strategic Plan for the Convention. The Plan itself will be the focus of the Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and the Implementation of the Convention (MSP) that will take place next week. The overall purpose of this Plan is to provide strategic and operational guidance for the implementation of the programmes of work of the Convention. It will therefore provide an important link between the work of SBSTTA and the policies and actions that will be adopted by the Convention process as a whole. It is very important that next week's meeting should benefit from inputs from all bodies established under the Convention.

As the scientific advisory body of the Convention, SBSTTA should consider whether these goals are credible and feasible. The SBSTTA Bureau has agreed to participate in the MSP and provide scientific, technical and technological advice on the draft elements. But the credibility of the Bureau input will depend on support from you, the experts, at this meeting.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, as has been the case in the past few meetings of SBSTTA, a number of leading experts to whom I wish to express my gratitude have been invited to give presentations to enrich our scientific discussion at this current meeting. In addition, following the practice adopted at your last meeting, poster sessions on forest biodiversity will be launched today. I would like to forward my appreciation to all those experts and

countries that have agreed to contribute to the poster session. Also available this week are the new additions to the Secretariat's technical publication series, which deal with aspects of forest biodiversity, as well as the final versions of the Handbook for the Convention and the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

I wish you a fruitful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Montreal.

Thank you for your attention.