

# Managing Biodiversity

## On the 16th session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

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The 16th session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held from 30 April to 5 May 2012 in Montreal, Canada. More than 400 representatives from governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, business and academia attended the meeting.

SBSTTA 16 adopted 15 recommendations, including a package on marine and coastal

(COP II) to be held during 8-19 October 2012 in Hyderabad, India.

*Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas:* Agenda item 6.1 on EBSAs saw a lot of discussion, with some delegates pointing to the ambiguity of whether the reference is to EBSAs in areas within or beyond national jurisdiction.

The Canadian delegation stressed that the three regional workshops organized by the CBD secretariat, in collaboration with other regional organizations, were meant only for 'describing' EBSAs, not for 'identifying' EBSAs. This position was supported by other delegates. The SBSTTA recommendation, therefore, stresses that the identification of EBSAs and the selection of conservation and management measures is a matter for States and competent intergovernmental organizations, in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Iceland, Norway, the United States, Argentina and the United Kingdom questioned EBSAs that had been described, as they were in overlapping jurisdictions. The suggestion to declare EBSAs as marine protected areas (MPAs) was challenged by a number of countries, including Canada, Mexico, Argentina, China and India.

### Scientific validity

Delegates also questioned the scientific validity of the information collected, pointing to other regional processes that have also gathered relevant information. There is need to review the present data in light of other available information, it was stressed.

### SBSTTA 16 also adopted recommendations on biodiversity and climate change...

biodiversity. The marine and coastal biodiversity recommendation covered three agenda items—ecologically and biologically significant areas (EBSAs); sustainable fisheries and adverse impacts of human activities on the marine environment; and marine spatial planning and voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental assessments in marine areas.

SBSTTA 16 also adopted recommendations on biodiversity and climate change, an in-depth review of the programme of work on island biodiversity, incentive measures, and new and emerging issues. These recommendations have been forwarded to the 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties

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Representatives from countries in Africa pointed out that as no regional workshop on EBSAs had been organized in their region, it was difficult for them to comment on the recommendations to COP.

The lack of participation of indigenous and local communities in regional workshops was discussed. SBSTTA recommended that indigenous and local communities should be invited to participate in future workshops on the issue.

*Social and cultural criteria:* A study, undertaken within the context of Article 8(j) of CBD, identifying specific elements for integrating the traditional, scientific, technical and technological knowledge of indigenous and local communities and social and cultural criteria for the identification of EBSAs and the establishment and management of MPAs, was discussed. The study focuses on the social conditions that determine the long-term biological viability of conservation initiatives. It highlights the importance of taking into account humans and their needs, including the needs of future generations, while designing schemes for conservation and management of marine resources, including the identification and management of EBSAs and MPAs.

The study notes that traditional knowledge could be important not only for identifying areas that meet EBSA criteria, but also for identifying traditional marine management systems and strategies that have great significance in how biodiversity is managed in the world's oceans. These traditional systems have concepts of stewardship and intergenerational responsibility for sustainable use of marine resources, and employ multiple tools and approaches that lead to sustainable, and adaptive management practices.

The draft recommendation to SBSTTA acknowledges the report and asks countries to use these criteria for the description and identification of EBSAs. During discussions on the issue, delegates called for including the traditional knowledge of

indigenous and local communities, with the approval and involvement of the holder of such knowledge, for the description of areas that meet the criteria for EBSAs. Canada, supported by Peru, suggested that this be strongly recommended to COP. The recommendation, based on suggestions from Canada, further notes that socially and culturally significant areas may require enhanced conservation and management measures, and the criteria for identification of such areas should be developed with appropriate scientific and technical rationale.

In its statement, the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), recalling also decisions from COP 9 (IX/20) and COP 10 (X/29), asked Parties to take concrete steps to integrate the traditional scientific, technical, and technological knowledge of indigenous and local communities, at all stages of the process of identifying and describing EBSAs, including through the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities at all regional workshops organized for the purpose. ICSF pointed out that as this has not happened so far, the process of describing EBSAs undertaken to date must be considered preliminary.

With reference to the training manual and modules on EBSAs prepared by the CBD secretariat,



Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, CBD Executive Secretary; Senka Barudanovic, SBSTTA 16 Chair; and David Cooper of the CBD Secretariat at the plenary session

SBSTTA requested the Executive Secretary “to further refine the training manual and modules, as necessary, including through further consultation with Parties and the development of training materials on the use of traditional knowledge”.

*Adverse impacts of human activities:* Agenda item 6.2 was on addressing the adverse impacts of human activities on marine and coastal biodiversity, including coral bleaching, ocean acidification, fisheries and underwater noise. With reference to the workshop on sustainable fisheries organized in Norway in December 2011, it was noted that the background study and the discussions focused more on areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Japan highlighted the fact that regional fisheries management bodies play a leading role in conservation and management of fisheries in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The SBSTTA recommendation encourages constructive collaboration between biodiversity and fisheries bodies, recognizing that fisheries management bodies are competent bodies for managing fisheries.

Delegates also agreed that coral bleaching and ocean acidification are important areas, especially for small island developing countries, where communities are dependent on fish for food security and livelihoods.

On the issue of underwater noise, delegates called for more research to improve understanding and awareness of the issue among relevant stakeholders.


*MSP, MPAs, EIA and SEA:* Agenda item 6.3 was on marine spatial planning (MSP), MPAs and voluntary guidelines for the consideration of biodiversity in environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in marine and coastal areas.

The question of whether the draft voluntary guidelines, which focus more on areas beyond national jurisdiction, are also relevant for waters within national jurisdiction, was debated. Parties, especially Australia, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, pointed to the need for more discussion and feedback from

countries. The entire guidelines were, therefore, placed within square brackets in the final recommendations to COP. The CBD secretariat was requested to circulate the guidelines and provide more time for Parties to study and comment on them.

ICSF, in its statement, highlighted that EIA processes for waters within national jurisdiction must integrate additional aspects. For example, given that tenure rights of indigenous peoples and small-scale fishing communities in coastal and marine areas within national jurisdiction are often not well recognized, it is essential that the EIA guidelines specifically require their identification.

ICSF, therefore, called on Parties to seek the additional elaboration of the guidelines for coastal and marine areas within national jurisdiction, with the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in the process, and drawing on their traditional knowledge systems.

ICSF further urged that the proposed guidelines fully integrate principles from two important CBD guidelines, namely, the Tkarihwaie:ri Code of Ethical Conduct and the Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines. 

#### For more

[www.icsf.net/en/statements.html?radio=1](http://www.icsf.net/en/statements.html?radio=1)  
**ICSF statement on Agenda Item 6:  
 Marine and Coastal Biodiversity**

[www.cbd.int/sbstta16/documents/](http://www.cbd.int/sbstta16/documents/)  
**SBSTTA 16 – Official Documents**