

Observations from the CBD SBSTTA 15, Montreal, 06.-11.11.2011 Report prepared by ibn

About SBSTTA

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) has the task to prepare the decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) from a scientific perspective. Therefore, the agenda of a SBSTTA meeting has to take up the items that will be discussed by the next COP (to be held in October 2012 in India). All 193 Parties to the Convention are invited to take part, as well as Intergovernmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations and other observers. The Institute for Biodiversity – Network e.V. (ibn) is registered as observing NGO to the CBD since 1996.

Agenda Items

In its 15th meeting in Montreal from 06.11.-11.11.2011 SBSTTA dealt with the following items in preparation for COP 11 (to be held in October 2012 in India):

Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020: Updated technical rationales and indicators

The Strategic Plan contains the targets the Parties to the CBD have set themselves until 2020 (more about the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity targets at <http://www.cbd.int/sp/>). To measure the success in reaching these targets indicators are needed. An expert group had listed which indicators already exist on global level and which could also be used on national level. SBSTTA decided to take note of that list and recommended to COP 11 to do the same, in the understanding that this set of indicators is a flexible framework and work to include new indicators or refine existing ones is needed.

From a perspective of the programme “Sustainable Land Management” it can be noted that contributions for the refinement of indicators would be welcomed by the CBD, especially to indicators that measure the value of ecosystem services in local and regional contexts and the role biodiversity plays for sustaining these services.

Ways and means to support ecosystem restoration

Ecosystem restoration is explicitly mentioned in two of the 20 targets of the Strategic Plan and therefore ways and means to support restoration had to be discussed. As this had not been an agenda item in CBD meetings so far the first step is to compile information on tools and technologies, experiences and best practices. The draft decision before SBSTTA 15 had envisaged an expert group to be established by COP 11 to fulfil that task. But delegates (especially from EU countries) argued that SBSTTA 15 can request the Executive Secretary to do this before COP 11 so that this information will be already available at COP 11. The plenary followed this arguments and the Secretary will have to report on progress during COP 11 so that then the need for an expert group can be further discussed in the light of the compiled information.

As many regional projects in the LAMA programme include restoration efforts they can report on their findings as soon as results are produced so that this information can be included in future compilations of the CBD secretariat. As a first step in that direction the Institute for Biodiversity – Network (ibn) together with the GLUES coordinators prepared a respective poster for SBSTTA 15 and contributed to the CBD technical series (see below).

Draft comprehensive capacity-building strategy for the Global Taxonomy Initiative

It is acknowledged that taxonomy is a basis for understanding biodiversity and measure trends and statuses. On the other hand there is a lack of taxonomic capacity in many countries, including the mega-divers countries. Therefore, a comprehensive capacity-building strategy

for the Global Taxonomy Initiative was developed. Some Parties felt that the strategy should be further developed and revised and therefore requested the Executive Secretary to do so and make the revised version available to SBSTTA 16 (May 2012) for finalization and then possibly adoption during COP 11.

As LAMA projects are set up in direct cooperation with local scientist and include the participation of local students, capacity building is included in the RPs, in some also directly on taxonomic issues. These efforts can also be reported as examples of implementing the capacity building strategy.

Invasive alien species: Proposals on ways and means to address gaps in international standards regarding invasive alien species introduced as pets, aquarium and terrarium species, as live bait and live food

An expert group had found that there is a gap in the international standards regarding invasive alien species if these are introduced as pets or for terrarium or aquarium use, and commented on the risks when these species are released accidentally or on purpose. As these standards are set by specific committees under the WTO, CBD can only ask these committees to deal with the issue and offer cooperation.

In our understanding there is no obvious connection to LAMA projects under this agenda item.

Inland water biodiversity: Implications of changes in the water cycle, and freshwater resources in the implementation of the programmes of work

Based on several reports the importance of inland water biodiversity was stressed and the implications were discussed that result from climate change and human influence on freshwater ecosystems (e.g. pollution, construction, water taking for irrigation).

As there is a separate convention that deals with wetlands (the Ramsar Convention) there has been established a joint work programme with the CBD. SBSTTA recommended to enhance this cooperation.

Several LAMA regional projects deal with the sustainable use of freshwater resources, especially in semi arid or arid regions and can therefore report on their results in due time to future CBD meetings (as well as to meetings under the Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD). The projects that deal with wetlands as such (like e.g. TFO) can also report to meetings of the Ramsar Convention (next Ramsar COP in 2012).

Sustainable use of biodiversity: Revised recommendations of the Liaison Group on Bushmeat including options for small-scale food and income alternatives, and report on how to improve sustainable use in a landscape perspective

Sustainable use of biodiversity is one of the three main targets of CBD and different aspects of this overarching topic are discussed in many SBSTTA and COP meetings. In this case the focus was on the unsustainable use of bushmeat and the recommendations an expert group had provided. Discussions went on how these recommendations can now be implemented.

As all regional projects of the LAMA programme investigate sustainable use of biodiversity they can all contribute to the discussion under the CBD, even if they do not deal explicitly with the sub-topic of bushmeat and poaching. Some projects in fact investigate the ways local people sustain themselves including hunting opportunities as one service of the respective ecosystem.

Arctic biodiversity

The biodiversity of the Arctic is a new topic under the CBD and in this first round of discussion it was mainly welcoming existing information e.g. from reports under the Arctic Council. Further cooperation with this council was recommended.

As none of the LAMA projects deals with arctic environments the connection to this agenda item is not obvious. Nevertheless, as the Arctic is home to many migratory species (e.g. different goose species wintering in Germany) projects dealing with ecosystems at the German coast might have a link to the topic.

Ways and means to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice

This agenda item was a more technical one and dealt with future tasks of SBSTTA. It was recommended to think about close cooperation with the developing Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

SBSTTA meetings will always be a good opportunity to present scientific findings of LAMA regional projects in side events and/or poster presentations.

LAMA-Poster and Contribution to CBD Technical Series 62

As restoration as a self-standing agenda item was new to SBSTTA meetings (see second agenda item above), the secretariat had invited poster contributions to ways and means to support ecosystem restoration and compiled the contributions in an extra volume of the CBD Technical Series (Vol. 62). The Institute for Biodiversity – Network (ibn) together with the GLUES coordinators prepared a respective poster for SBSTTA 15 and contributed to Volume 62. The CBD Technical Series is available at <http://www.cbd.int/ts/>.

The poster informed about the funding programme as such, showing a map depicting the localisation of all regional projects. Furthermore, the programme parts dealing with restoration of the following regional projects were outlined: COMTESS, SuMARiO, Carbiocial, and SASCHA.

Side events

The following side events were visited:

Investing in ecological infrastructure – the economic rationale for ecological restoration

- Examples for restoration
- Economic considerations on restoration versus conservation of intact ecosystems
- Society of Ecological Restoration International; <http://www.ser.org/>

Life redesigned: synthetic biology and the risks to biodiversity and livelihoods

- Latest trends and status in synthetic biology
- Containment measures
- Risk for biodiversity and livelihoods
- Considerations with respect to the 2020 targets

The nature index for Norway – a new measure of biodiversity

- Presentation of the Norwegian nature index
- Methods for data collection and integration
- Capacity building for other countries in order to use the Norwegian approach

Forest restoration and climate change mitigation

- Presentation of maps for potential forest restoration
- Announcing of the Bonn Challenge for reforestation

- PACTO as example for restoration efforts in the Mata Atlantica of Brazil (more information at <http://www.pactomataatlantica.org.br/index.aspx?lang=en>)

GEOBON: assessments of observation capabilities for 2020 targets

- The GEOBON report constitutes the first attempt to assess the adequacy of global observation systems for the monitoring of biodiversity, with focus on the development of indicators for the monitoring of ecosystem services. More about GEOBON at <http://www.earthobservations.org/geobon.shtml>.

Climate and biodiversity: so-called solutions to climate change could further deplete biological diversity and undermine ecosystem resilience

- Large scale solutions to climate change including geo-engineering and biofuels
- Risks to biodiversity from these attempts including land grabbing

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

- Introduction of the new UNEP document on the IPBES work programme from 31.10.2011, open for comments (side event for IPBES insiders only, as now information on the history of the process was provided)

Feedback for GLUES and ibn

As SBSTTA is the scientific body of the CBD, the SBSTTA meetings provide an excellent opportunity to present results from regional projects according to the respective agenda items. SBSTTA 15 has again shown that in many recommendations the Executive Secretary is requested to compile information and make it available for Parties. Of course, these compilations draw also upon information presented at side events, posters and written contributions and comments. This direct way of feeding scientific information in policy processes should be used intensively during the full duration of the funding programme.

To keep updated with the ongoing processes under the convention personal participation of ibn representatives is essential as the publicly available final documents do not report about the decision making process and do not mention which Party favoured which approach or solution. But this information is of high relevance if project results should also help to support national decision making in the partner countries of the regional projects.

Furthermore, visiting side events helps to get information of other ongoing initiatives that can be of relevance for regional projects like e.g. the PACTO initiative in Brazil (reforestation in the Mata Atlantica) that was presented at SBSTTA 15 side events.

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