



Twenty Second Meeting of the
Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advise - SBSTTA
Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD
July 2 - 7, Montreal

Brief Report for Civil Society

Introduction	page 3
Agenda Item 3 Digital sequence information on genetic resources (DSI) Recommendation SBSTTA-22/1	page 4
Agenda Item 5 Synthetic Biology Recommendation SBSTTA-22/3	page 4
Agenda Item 6 Updated scientific assessment of progress towards selected Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options for accelerating progress Recommendation SBSTTA-22/4	page 5
Agenda Item 7 Protected areas and other measures for enhanced conservation and management Recommendation SBSTTA-22/5	page 5
Agenda Item 8 Marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, addressing anthropogenic underwater noise and marine debris, biodiversity in cold-water areas and marine spatial planning Recommendation SBSTTA-22/6	page 6
Agenda Item 9 Biodiversity and climate change: ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction Recommendation SBSTTA-22/7	page 6

Brief Report for Civil Society

This report does not aim to present an exhaustive analysis of each agenda item discussed at SBSTTA 22, but rather to point out key and relevant aspects of the agenda that relate to the work of civil society and that could help in the advocacy work of the organizations and networks interested in the CBD process. The report also presents references for material that could be useful to understand details of the negotiation.

The Twenty Second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 22)¹ created great expectation among civil society, specially around the agenda items related to Synthetic Biology (Synbio). In this occasion, the groups working on Synbio, Digital Sequence Information (DSI) and related topics, were able to organize a number of meetings and side events but also a demonstration outside the venue² that called the attention of official delegates and created positive pressure for action. It is also important to highlight the concerning, increased and intense participation of the private sector in particular around Synthetic Biology.

Also, and parallel to the official meeting, the Second Conference entitled Fostering Community Conservation II³ took place in Montreal bringing together a large number of communities, indigenous peoples and actors from around the world who are dedicated to conserving forests and biodiversity.

In summary, the hard work of civil society made it clear that our presence is important in the process and that further efforts should be undertaken to ensure and enhance a full and effective participation of civil society not only for the credibility of the process but also for the implementation on the ground as the materialization of the decisions taken at higher levels is in the hands of real stake and rights holders.

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-22>

² https://www.facebook.com/thegybn/videos/1746178395429809/UzpfSTE0NzA4NjE5NTM2MDQ1ODoxNzMzMDE5MDE2NzY3MTYw/?fb_dtsg_ag=AdxKYGnCiY--guLdboE6-bIYYDnedxpaKWaeC886b9QFJQ%3AAadywhHhf7XWljYHFka7YmHYMlumbiDoeHU9JPmgBC2QtmQ

³ <https://globalforestcoalition.org/fccc-2018/>

Agenda Item 3
Digital sequence information on genetic resources (DSI)
Recommendation SBSTTA-22/1

The first element to notice about document CBD/SBSTTA/REC/22/1 discussed at SBSTTA, is that it is all in brackets because no consensus was reached on this particular issue. In the CBD, the debate emerged when the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Synthetic biology identified in 2015, an important potential impact of sequence information on the Convention as “access without benefit sharing.” Now, COP 14 in Egypt is mandated to consider any potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention but will face a great challenge considering the bracketed text. Several elements of discussion cause disagreement among Parties but the essence is again a fight between those who only seek private profit versus an equitable share of benefits and specially with those who are the custodians of nature but are not even aware of the new threats surrounding their lives. While some Parties argue that this is not even under the mandate of the Convention, others seek more clarity before making any decision including for instance a definition of DSI. Although it is reasonable to debate and understand a topic before acting, we should bear in mind that specific groups benefit from this status quo and lobby for no regulation at all.

Those who need more information before jumping straight into the recommendation discussed by SBSTTA 22, may find it useful to consult some documents prepared by the Secretariat on this matter: CBD/SBSTTA/22/INF/2; CBD/SBSTTA/22/INF/3; CBD/SBSTTA/22/INF/4⁴; but also material prepared by civil society such as the briefing entitled Sequence Information: A key topic for the Biodiversity Convention⁵.

Agenda Item 5
Synthetic Biology
Recommendation SBSTTA-22/3

This agenda item is particularly complex as it is highly technical and new, even for delegates from the so called developed nations as one can witness in corridor talks. The estimations of this industry’s growth in the market is millionaire and therefore private involvement is broad in the CBD and their lobby is intense not to say unbalanced compared to the participation of stake and rights holders that face severe limitations to be part of the process including even obstacles in access to visas to attend the meetings.

In order to better understand the discussions during the plenary sessions, you can consult the Earth Negotiation Bulletin⁶ for July 2 and 5 that details some of the interventions made by Parties and civil society on this agenda item.

The document produced at SBSTTA 22 is coded as CBD/SBSTTA/REC/22/3 and still contains brackets that will need to be discussed at COP 14 in Egypt. For further

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-22>

⁵ www.synbiogovernance.org

⁶ <http://enb.iisd.org/biodiv/sbstta22-sbi2/2jul.html>

information on the position of civil society on this matter, you can consult our ECOs published during the meeting at www.cbd-alliance.org.

Agenda Item 6

Updated scientific assessment of progress towards selected Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options for accelerating progress

Recommendation SBSTTA-22/4

The first section of the recommendation adopted is a clear recognition by SBSTTA that progress is still insufficient to achieve the Aichi Targets and corresponding elements of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Later in the document, SBSTTA's recommendation for adoption of the COP includes an urge for Parties, in accordance to national circumstances, to take a number of actions by 2020 on Aichi Targets for which progress needs to be accelerated. It is worth noting that most Aichi Targets require urgent accelerated progress and that the actions suggested are good in essence but the decision does not imply any considerable added pressure for governments to implement such actions in the short run.

It is claimed that SBSTTA is not an implementing body, but then the recommendations emerging from here should feed SBI as the one in charge of implementation. Unfortunately, the decision of SBI on this agenda item does not move beyond recognizing that progress is insufficient and also fails to create any concrete action to be implemented in the short run.

In the corridors, and based on talks with different actors, it is well understood that action is insufficient but we might not need more assessments with the same conclusion over time. Instead, we need to create a momentum for concrete action. Civil society should play a big role in this regard by putting pressure on the whole process to deliver results that can be implemented with no more delay.

Finally, the recommendation emerging from SBSTTA 22, includes an Annex that contains possible actions to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Agenda Item 7

Protected areas and other measures for enhanced conservation and management

Recommendation SBSTTA-22/5

A landmark decision was taken during SBSTTA 22 with the adoption of a definition of "other effective area-based conservation measures" known as OECMs for short that include among others, territories and areas managed, conserved and governed by indigenous peoples and local communities. According to the view of groups that have been working for a long time on these matters, the next steps should include a recognition and support for legitimate OECM governance authorities and a provision of policy frameworks that can prevent threats such as extractive concessions in OECMs.

For further details, you can review the recommendation coded as CBD/SBSTTA/REC/22/5 that also includes as an annex a Voluntary guidance on the integration of protected areas and other effective area based conservation measures into wider land and seascapes and mainstreaming across sectors to contribute, inter alia, to the sustainable development goals. In this case, as it has been naturalized within the convention, certain parties like

Brazil try to reduce the implementation capacities or the binding nature of the decisions by several means including for instance by emphasizing the voluntary nature of the guidance.

Agenda Item 8

Marine and coastal biodiversity: ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, addressing anthropogenic underwater noise and marine debris, biodiversity in cold-water areas and marine spatial planning

Recommendation SBSTTA-22/6

The discussions on this agenda item went around the options for modifying the description of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas; for describing new areas; and for strengthening the scientific credibility and transparency of this process.

An element that could be of interest of civil society is that the recommendation, that still contains brackets to be discussed at COP 14, urges Parties to increase their efforts in addressing the potential impacts of deep-sea mining on marine biodiversity. The CBD Alliance in coordination with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) held an informative call on this issue prior to SBSTTA 22 and some other plans include the organization of a side event at COP 14. If you are interested in joining the efforts around this topic, you can write to gadirlavadenz@gmail.com to get connected with the group working on this matter.

Agenda Item 9

Biodiversity and climate change: ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction

Recommendation SBSTTA-22/7

The central component in recommendation CBD/SBSTTA/REC/22/7 is the adoption of the voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, that includes an important section on the integration of knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The recommendation encourages Parties to integrate ecosystem based approaches when updating their nationally determined contributions pursuant to the Paris Agreement. However, given the still low profile of the CBD and its decisions in the international environmental governance, it is uncertain the extent to which this decision will be implemented at national level in coordination among those in charge of biodiversity matters and those in charge of climate change issues.

Report prepared by

J. Gadir Lavadenz Lamadrid

CBD Alliance Coordination

Thanks to the kind support of Heinrich Böll Foundation

www.cbd-alliance.org

August, 2018