

SIXTH TELECONFERENCE OF THE BUREAU OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES IN THE INTER-SESSIONAL PERIOD

25 June 2020, 7:00am EST

Participants

Presidency: Mr. Hamdallah Zedan (Egypt);

Africa: Mr. Eric Okoree (Ghana); Mr. Melesse Maryo (Ethiopia);

Asia and the Pacific: Mr. Vinod Mathur (India); Ms. Leina El-Awadhi (Kuwait);

Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Helena Jeffery Brown (Antigua and Barbuda); Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez (Costa Rica); Mr. Joaquín Salzberg (Argentina, substitute for Costa Rica for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Central and Eastern Europe: Ms. Teona Karchava (Georgia); and Mr. Dilovarsho Dustov (Tajikistan, substitute for Georgia for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Western Europe and Others: Ms. Gabriele Obermayr (Austria); Ms. Rosemary Paterson (New Zealand); and Ms. Marie Haraldstad (Norway, substitute for New Zealand for matters related to the Nagoya Protocol);

Ex-officio: Ms. Charlotta Sörqvist (Sweden), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation; Mr. Hesiquio Benítez (Mexico), Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice; Mr. Basile van Havre (Canada) and Mr. Francis Ogwal, Co-chairs of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;

Incoming COP 15 Presidency: Mr. Liu Ning (China); Ms. Yueyu Zou (China)

Secretariat: Ms. Elizabeth Maruma-Mrema, Executive Secretary; Mr. David Cooper, Deputy Executive Secretary; Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director of Implementation Support Division; Mr. Alexander Shestakov, Director of Science, Society and Sustainable Futures Division; Mr. Wataru Suzuki, Global Coordinator of the Japan Biodiversity Fund; Mr. Worku Yifru (Senior Legal Officer); Ms. Gudrun Fosse, Head of Administration, Finance and Conference Services Division; and Mr. David Ainsworth, Public Information Officer.

Opening of the Meeting

1. The teleconference was opened at 7.00 am Montreal time, by the Chair, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, representative of the President of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The Chair welcomed all the Bureau members, wishing everyone well in the ongoing situation. On behalf of the Bureau, he congratulated Elizabeth Mrema on her appointment as Executive Secretary and Minister Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, the Bureau member from Costa Rica, on his appointment as CEO of the Global Environment Facility.
2. The Chair noted the five agenda items that would be covered during the call:
 - i.) Update on recent activities including the International Day for Biological Diversity
 - ii.) Update on scenarios and preparations for SBSTTA and SBI
 - iii.) Briefing from the WG2020 co-chairs on the post-2020 process
 - iv.) Briefing on the preparations for the UN Summit on Biodiversity
 - v.) Implications of the postponement of COP-15

I.) Update on recent activities including the International Day for Biological Diversity;

3. On the invitation of the Chair, the Executive Secretary briefed the Bureau on recent activities.

4. The Executive Secretary thanked the Chair and the Bureau for their congratulations and support. She also extended congratulatory remarks to the Bureau member of Costa Rica on his appointment.
5. She then proceeded to inform the Bureau that despite the ongoing global pandemic, the Secretariat had still planned a number of events for the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB). She invited the Secretariat's Information Officer to provide further detail.
6. The Information Officer presented the main activities that took place to celebrate this year's IDB. He highlighted that this was the first year all celebrations had moved to an online format and reminded the Bureau of the theme which was "Our solutions are in Nature", indicating that it remained relevant through the ongoing pandemic. He informed the Bureau of significant events that took place on the 22 May, including an online webinar organized by the Permanent Mission of Norway in New York. This event, which garnered over 2000 views on YouTube, had nine participating Ministers of Environment as well as interventions from eighteen member states that focused on the importance of biodiversity for the post-2020 process, avoiding future pandemics and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, he informed the Bureau of other events held by partner organizations such as UNESCO, FAO, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network and others.
7. He noted that the Secretariat put together a series of messages (wave of solidarity) and unrolled them around the world. Messages were received from the majority of COP Presidencies, from other UN organizations such as FAO, UNEP, UNESCO, as well as the biodiversity related conventions. Indigenous peoples and local communities also provided messages. He indicated that there had been a good response from Parties for the online activities and a report with all the detailed information was being prepared. He also noted that the logo had been translated into 51 languages, including one in Braille. Lots of videos had been produced, receiving over 200,000 views and continuing.
8. Finally, he indicated that the website had a 62% increase in visibility, with the IDB webpage doubling in views. Social media had a good reach and the media outreach increased which was an indication that biodiversity importance has increased around the world. He concluded by highlighting some of the lessons learned for next year and indicating the importance of working with partners and Parties closely.
9. The Bureau thanked and congratulated the Secretariat for the efforts done in regard to IDB and overall communications, indicating that the materials online had been easy to share and encouraged the team to keep with the good work.

II.) Update on scenarios and preparations for SBSTTA and SBI;

10. The Chair then moved on to agenda item 2 and asked the Executive Secretary to provide an update.
11. The Executive Secretary made reference to the message sent to the Bureau on 12 June where the revised dates for COP 15 and related meetings of the Protocols were proposed from 17-30 May 2021 and expressed hope this was acceptable to all Parties. She thanked the representatives of the Government of China for the close cooperation in finding suitable dates. However, she informed the Bureau that the proposed dates overlapped with FAO's World Forestry Congress which was already planned for 24 to 28 May 2021, noting that the Secretariat was consulting with FAO to see how to ensure synergies between the two events.
12. She then indicated the Secretariat had been working hard to find a venue for SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3 and informed the Bureau that the proposed new dates and venue for these two meetings were 2-14 November 2020 in Quebec City, but would continue keeping this under review in light of the pandemic. She also indicated the Secretariat has reached out to the Government of Colombia to determine new dates for WG2020-3 in February or March 2021. She noted that there was good progress on the preparation of documents for SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3. Most of the documents would

be published by the end of the month, except for those related to the post-2020 process which will be issued for peer review and finalized in early August.

13. Finally, she advised the Bureau of a proposal to organize a week of virtual meetings in September to support preparations for SBSTTA and SBI and to give further momentum to the process ahead of the UN Biodiversity Summit. She then invited the Deputy Executive Secretary to provide further details.
14. The Deputy Executive Secretary made reference to the documents previously circulated to the Bureau. He reiterated that the Secretariat continued to keep the table of meetings under full review pending on how the pandemic situation unfolded, as well as the potential calendar congestion for next year. He indicated that as a contingency plan for these meetings and the COP, the Secretariat was exploring back-up dates in case the COP could not be held in May 2021. The Secretariat was also discussing closely with the Government of China what measures would need to be in place to ensure the health and safety of all delegates.
15. He noted that given that SBSTTA and SBI had had to be postponed a second time, the week of virtual meetings in September would be important for three reasons, a.) to provide information ahead of SBSTTA and SBI to facilitate discussions, b.) to set the scene for the UN Biodiversity Summit, and c.) to provide political momentum to the post-2020 process. He also informed the Bureau of the proposal to launch the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-5) during that week, on 15 September. Both the SBSTTA and COP Bureaux would be briefed on GBO-5 a few days before. He noted that an additional reason to host the virtual meetings in September was to give the opportunity to focal points to familiarize themselves with the online platforms, which would accommodate the official languages, and to begin exploring the viability of using online platforms. Finally, he emphasized that the events during the September week were for presentation and information only, not for formal negotiations. Decisions would be taken formally in November.
16. The Chair then invited the representative of the incoming COP 15 Presidency to address the Bureau. The representative from China thanked the Secretariat for the guidance and cooperation in finding new dates for COP 15. He acknowledged the potential overlap with FAO's World Forestry Congress but noted that the dates for the High-Level Segment were not yet determined, therefore there was still a possibility to find an opening to avoid conflict. He expressed hope the Bureau would endorse the new COP dates proposed for May 2021.
17. The Chair then invited the SBSTTA Chair to take the floor. The SBSTTA Chair informed the Bureau that there had been good progress with the preparations. He advised that the documents on synthetic biology, risk assessment and management, marine biodiversity and agriculture soil biodiversity were published online. He also noted that fifteen information documents were available online, and that three documents (IPBES, Health and Invasive Alien Species) were still in process. Regarding agenda item 3 on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, he informed the Bureau that the WG2020 Co-chairs had provided updated goals and targets, as well as 2030 milestones to facilitate development of the updated monitoring framework. He also indicated that the Co-chairs had supported development of information documents on links to SDGs and annotations to terms and concepts used in the language of the goals and targets.
18. The SBSTTA Chair also indicated that the peer review process of pre-session document 3 add.1 with revised monitoring framework and relevant information documents was already available online (<https://www.cbd.int/sbstta24/review.shtml>). He informed the Bureau that the four briefing sessions to be held mostly in July, which were open for all Parties and stakeholders, were to facilitate the SBSTTA-24 preparatory process. The first phase would focus on the post-2020 and the second phase of the webinars that would take place at the end of August and early September, would cover SBSTTA-24 agenda items. He further noted two additional preparatory meetings: one on 15 September to launch GBO-5's key messages and media awareness campaign, and one on 18

September that would address GBO-5 entirely with elements covered by discussions on WG2020-2 in Rome.

19. Finally, he indicated that the SBSTTA Bureau decided that during SBSTTA-24, agenda item 3 on the post-2020 would be introduced by the Co-chairs, that keynote speakers (including from WHO and FAO) would focus on soil biodiversity, marine environment and biodiversity and health agenda items, and to have a poster session on biodiversity and health including considerations for future prevention of zoonosis pandemics. He concluded by thanking the Co-chairs and the Secretariat for their contribution and cooperation.
20. The Chair then invited the Chair of the SBI to provide an update on preparations for the meeting. She advised the Bureau that the annotated agenda had been revised to take into account the outcomes of WG2020-2 in Rome and was available in the CBD website. She also highlighted that the preparations of the documents were well under way and that the extended calendar had benefited this. She indicated that a number of addenda and information documents to support various agenda items would be uploaded on an on-going basis.
21. The SBI Chair also informed the Bureau that after taking into consideration the impact of COVID-19 and the recovery packages that were being developed by Governments around the world, the Secretariat would be calling for another meeting of the Informal Advisory Group on Mainstreaming to update this important document to ensure that it was commensurate with the new reality the world is facing. She indicated that once the document was updated, it would be shared with the Bureau for their review.
22. On the post-2020 process, she indicated that a number of SBI-3 agenda items would provide elements and other inputs to the process. In addition, she noted that the Secretariat would prepare a document for agenda item 5 which was intended to bring all the different elements that input to post-2020 together in one document to provide guidance to the Co-chairs, as requested by COP 14. She assured the Bureau that this document would be prepared in consultation with the Co-chairs to ensure coherence between the guidance from SBI-3 and the development of the draft of the global biodiversity framework, as well as to ensure the Co-chairs would be able to directly request SBI for guidance in areas of importance to their work. She then outlined a series of official and informal webinars proposed to take place in relation to the work of SBI to help prepare for the meeting.
23. Finally, in regard to the trial phase of an open-ended forum on review of implementation, the Chair of SBI proposed to the Bureau that this forum be undertaken online in order to save time during SBI-3. She proposed the date of 17 September 2020 for a four-hour forum from 7:00am to 11:15am (EDT), with a 15-minute break and which would be held in all six official UN languages. She highlighted that it would be useful to test this modality in September as it would give time between the online forum and the discussion at SBI-3 about the future review mechanism. It would also allow to explore if the online forum could perhaps become part of a future review mechanism with a schedule of periodic online forums throughout the year to increase the number of Parties that may wish to participate in such review processes. She advised the Bureau could consider the experiences from the online forum at its meeting in October and decide if an additional session of the forum should also be held at SBI-3.
24. The Chair thanked the Secretariat and the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI for the documents and reports on the status of preparation. He then invited the Bureau to provide comments and feedback.
25. Members of the Bureau also thanked the Secretariat the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI for all the documents and comprehensive information provided. They also thanked the Government of China for the efforts in securing new dates for COP 15. Although the Bureau did not express opposition to the new proposed dates, they noted the need to recognize that the dates would be subject to the global situation and how it evolved, reiterating that inclusivity was very important and that no Party could be left behind. The Secretariat assured members of the Bureau that they would keep the situation under constant review and reminded the Bureau that changes had implications for the WG2020-3 and COP itself.

26. The Bureau noted with satisfaction the assurances from the Secretariat and the Chairs of SBSTTA and SBI that there would be very close coordination and collaboration with the Co-chairs of the post-2020 process to ensure coherence.
27. In response to questions from Bureau members, the Secretariat clarified the distinction between the virtual preparatory meetings, and the webinars. The virtual preparatory meetings would be interactive sessions open to all Parties, with interpretation in all six UN languages, and would be chaired by the Subsidiary Bodies in preparation for the meetings. In contrast, the webinars which would be for information purposes, and would be divided in time zones and held at different times; these would not have interpretation. Members of the Bureau also suggested that with respect to virtual meetings, the Secretariat could also record some of the online meetings and make them available after. They also emphasized that these meetings should only be for informational purposes and not for actual negotiations. The Secretariat reassured the Bureau that no decisions would be made in the virtual meetings, and that it would go step by step.
28. Members of the Bureau also drew attention to the COP 14 decision which requested the Secretariat to prepare ideas for the modernization of the BZ fund and recommended this matter be included in the budget agenda item of SBI and highlighted in the annotated agenda. The Secretariat responded that the mandate from the COP was to prepare this item for the next COP, and as usual it would be helpful for SBI to have inputs on the process and review some aspects of it. In addition, the Secretariat indicated there might be a need to consider SBI having some input on how to deal with the budget gap issue.
29. The Chair thanked everyone for their comments and moved on to agenda item 3.

III.) Briefing from the WG2020 co-chairs on the post-2020 process

30. The Chair then invited the Co-chairs of the post-2020 process to provide the Bureau with an update.
31. The Co-chair from Canada made a brief presentation to the Bureau, providing an overview of the activities they had engaged in since the last Bureau meeting. He indicated that they looked forward to continued coordination with SBSTTA and SBI and had been working closely with the respective Chairs. He indicated that the documents would be available in August and they would try to ensure they would be available as early as possible. He also informed the Bureau that the thematic consultations would be done online and that there would be a number of webinars leading to the first draft, which would be available ahead of WG2020-3, and thereafter another draft package would be prepared for COP.
32. The Bureau thanked the Co-chairs for the update and stressed the importance of having the documents for the meetings well in advance, as it is important to be well prepared for the meetings and it takes time to coordinate with all the countries.

IV.) Briefing on the preparations for the UN Summit on Biodiversity

33. The Chair then invited the Secretariat to provide an update on item 4 of the agenda.
34. The Deputy Executive Secretary began by reminding the Bureau that the UN resolution set out the modalities for the Summit, which were circulated through a notification to the Parties. The dates were set out for the first day of the general debate and day after, but he informed the Bureau of a recent proposal to hold the Summit on 30 September. He noted that it would mostly be a virtual meeting, with the possibility of a few key actors present in New York. As it would be a Summit meeting and the purpose would be to hear heads of state on the ambition to accelerate action, he emphasized the importance of urging national focal points to encourage the participation of their heads of state. He also informed the Bureau that a concept note had been prepared and was in the office of the President of the General Assembly, and it would be circulated to them as soon as it

would be available. He concluded by indicating that they were on track for September to give context and momentum to the post-2020 process and hoped that Parties would use the opportunity to promote biodiversity and COP 15 at the highest level.

V.) Implications of the postponement of COP-15

35. After thanking the Deputy Executive Secretary for the update on the preparation for the UN Summit, the Chair moved to agenda item 5 and invited the Executive Secretary to take the floor.
36. The Executive Secretary began by noting that due to the pandemic and various restrictions imposed by Governments across the world, COP 15 was now planned to take place in May 2021, with the possibility that these meetings could be further delayed. Consequently, the approval of the programme budget for the 2021-2022 period would not take place this year as it normally would, and arrangements would need to be made.
37. She explained that the Secretariat considered there were two options for a solution to this issue, and three options for the process to deliver it. In terms of the solution, the two options were: a.) for the Executive Secretary to be authorized to use any unspent funds from the previous budget period to pay for salaries of the staff of the Secretariat and to cover other running costs until the time a new budget would be approved and came into effect; or b.) for an interim maintenance budget for the year 2021 to be developed and approved.
38. She stressed that given the limited amount of funds available, as presented in previous Bureau meetings, and the continuing uncertainties over the timing of COP, the Secretariat recommended the second option. She clarified that in either case, a draft decision would need to be prepared and this should be kept as simple as possible.
39. In terms of the process to deliver the solution, she expressed three possible approaches: a.) to organize an extraordinary meeting, associated with SBI or virtually; b.) the COP to adopt a decision remotely through a “no objection procedure”; or c.) through diplomatic communication. She noted that in the first case, there would be a need to obtain prior support of at least one-third of the Parties to convene an extraordinary meeting in accordance with rule 4 of the rules of procedure. In the first two cases, a process would be required for the accreditation of participants, as the CBD does not have permanent missions like UNEA or UNGA. She indicated that both these procedures would be time consuming. In the case of the third option, ministries of foreign affairs would be engaged through diplomatic channels. She also informed the Bureau that through UNEP, they have also approached the UN controller in New York to explore how to deal with this gap, but the discussion was yet to take place.
40. The Senior Legal Officer of the Secretariat noted that the first two options were essentially two forms of an option requiring a body, ie. COP. Therefore, option one is to have an interactive extraordinary meeting, and option two would be no interactive meeting and Parties agree through no objection. He finally stressed that this decision of the budget should take place this year.
41. Members of the Bureau thanked the Secretariat for the document and the proposals. They had a series of questions including by when they would need to decide how to proceed, how will this affect the voluntary trust fund and how would credentials be presented to the Secretariat. They also noted that other multilateral environmental agreements might be in the same situation and therefore the Secretariat could explore what they are doing and learn from their experience. The Bureau also requested the figures on the unspent balances to see if it would be enough to cover the costs for next year.
42. Members of the Bureau emphasized that a pragmatic solution was required. They also emphasized the importance of following proper rules of procedure and that all Parties should be included in the decision making. Given that the dates for COP may have to be constantly reviewed, they indicated that thought should be given to an interim budget for 2021.

43. They also noted that simplicity was key, and that if an interim budget was considered, there had to be no changes or controversial matters, if not it would be impossible to obtain consensus.
44. The Bureau also indicated that some countries needed the invoices to pay for the contributions. Members of the Bureau also indicated it would be helpful to have an update on the progress of disclosure.
45. Finally, members of the Bureau requested the Secretariat to compile responses to these requests and to advise when they could have another bureau meeting, perhaps within a couple of weeks as this was an important issue to address.

Closing of the meeting

46. No other issues were raised.
47. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation. The call was adjourned at 9:25 am.