

BIODIVERSITY

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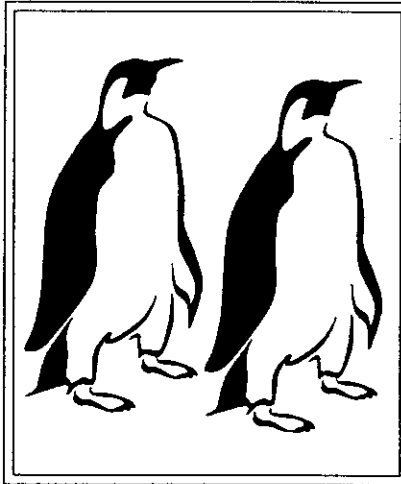
Substance and Science at SBSTTA

The second annual meeting of the Convention's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice began on a note to be heard throughout the week-long conference, held in Montreal September 2-6. In his opening remarks, chairman Peter Schei of Norway stressed that SBSTTA must practice and demonstrate scientific integrity in its work and advice.

Mr. Schei also said that it was essential for SBSTTA to work with and draw upon the knowledge of the scientific community and its existing bodies at national, regional and international levels.

He emphasized that SBSTTA should not become a "mini Conference of the Parties" or a "drafting committee" for the COP.

Many delegates made similar points, calling for sharp limits to the agenda and greater involvement of scientific organizations. They further stressed that the upcoming third



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meeting of the COP needs to set priorities for the SBSTTA so it does not become too bogged down with work to function effectively.

There were also suggestions that the CBD process is in need of scientific authority in the form of a peer review process similar to that provided by

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of internationally renowned experts who advise the CBD's sister convention. But despite his opening remarks, Mr. Schei commented that it was still too early to judge whether the SBSTTA process needs altering.

The newly elected bureau includes Setijati Sastrapradja (Indonesia), Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias (Brazil), Edgar Gutierrez-Espeleta (Costa Rica), Gabor Nechay (Hungary), Mick Raga (Papua New Guinea), Francesco Mauro (Italy), Isa Omarovich Baitulin (Kazakhstan), Zeineb Belkhir (Tunisia), Jameson Vilakati (Swaziland).

The next meeting of the SBSTTA will again take place in Montreal from July 14-18, 1997.

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Regions get ready for Argentina conference

To familiarize participants with the issues and help them prepare for COP III, a series of regional meetings are taking place in October. The first of the meetings -- for Central and Eastern European countries with economies in transition -- took place in Bratislava, Slovak Republic Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. The African regional meeting was held in the Seychelles Oct. 9-10.

Participants discussed implementation of the CBD at the regional level, heard from the Secretariat on the status of preparations for COP III, and attended presentations by the Global Environment Facility, the CBD's financial mechanism. Reports on the Montreal SBSTTA meeting and the Biosafety meeting in Aarhus, held July 22-26, were also distributed.

The CBD's principal officer for intergovernmental affairs Claude-Georges Ducret said the discussion with the GEF Secretariat sparked strong interest. "We had a very good exchange of views between delegates and the GEF representatives," he noted.

Similar meetings are scheduled for Asian region countries in Malaysia October 17-18 and for Latin American and Caribbean countries in Saint Lucia October 24-25.

Details of the COP agenda

Stacks of COP documents in English were mailed out to participants on September 27. Translations into the UN's five other languages are mostly completed and many are already in the mail. The Documents have also been posted on the Internet at <http://www.biodiv.org/sec-test.htm>. Instead of carting around a pile of papers, participants can save a tree and download the documents.

At the end of September there were some 80 documents on the list for COP III (November 4-15 in Buenos Aires) including 44 information documents. In certain cases there are a number of documents dealing with one theme. On the subject of finances, for example, participants will receive seven documents ranging from the Report of the Global Environment Facility to a paper on the "Availability of Additional Financial Resources and Possible Suggestions to Funding Institutions on How to

Make their Activities More Supportive of the Convention".

Three documents are devoted to forests, two to cooperation with other biodiversity related conventions and organizations and three to biosafety.

Separate documents cover Access to Genetic Resources, Promoting and Facilitating Access to and Transfer and Development of Technology and Intellectual Property Rights.

The World Trade Organization has contributed a document on the Relationship between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

With such a lengthy agenda and no possibility of evening or weekend sessions at the Buenos Aires meeting, organizers expect to see a lot of contact groups trying to hammer out deals well into the early hours of the morning.

The penguin connection

Penguins mingled with delegates at the SBSTTA conference and there are also plans for them to meet participants at COP III.

In Montreal, the city's mayor Pierre Bourque hosted a reception at the Biodome, which features four different ecosystems and their inhabitants. The penguins are part of the polar regions' exhibit.

At COP III, delegates will have the chance to visit the penguins in their natural habitat. At



Punta Tombo in Patagonia, some 350,000 Magellanic penguin breeding pairs arrive each year.

Patagonia is a two hour plane trip south of Buenos Aires.

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GEF opens its books

Funded projects include one in Patagonia, Argentina

The CBD's interim financial mechanism will get a chance to show the Parties to the Convention what it's all about by organizing a workshop during COP III. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) will detail some of the activities it has under way in the conservation of biological diversity.

Of special interest is the Patagonia Coastal Zone Management Plan. Argentina developed the Plan in order to protect its precious marine ecosystem from oil pollution by tankers. A spectacular array of wildlife makes its home along the almost 2000 miles of shoreline and the area is said to be one of the last unspoiled parts of the world.

The Patagonia project began in 1993 with a price tag of \$2.8 million and ended in July 1996. It was financed by the GEF, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme and executed by two NGO's.

A handful of delegates will get a chance to complement the workshop with a project visit to Patagonia located in the southern reaches of Argentina.

Other delegates will be able to join another project visit to the 'Conservation of Biodiversity in the Eastern Wetlands' in neighbouring Uruguay. This \$3-million, UNDP-implemented project is a branch-off of the Ramsar Convention and is developing a regional management programme for wetlands with an international emphasis.

The project has encouraged the formation of local resource users groups and aims to develop more

sustainable methods of rice cultivation. It has also made local authorities, landowners, producers and university researchers aware of how important their wetlands are.

Day two of the workshop will

feature presentations from other parts of the world, such as the Philippines Integrated Protected Areas

Project and the East African Biodiversity Project.

Both days of the workshop will provide time for a discussion period and filling out an evaluation questionnaire to see how participants rate the GEF.

The workshop will be conducted on 7 and 8 November during the COP's lunch breaks with a total of 200 participants, consisting mainly of delegates but also of NGO and media representatives.

The first half-hour of the session will consist of statements from the co-chairs, Mohamed El-Ashry, the GEF's chief executive officer, and Calestous Juma, CBD executive secretary. The workshop is being sponsored by the Swiss and Argentinean Governments.

For those who won't be participating, the GEF will set up a display near the plenary meeting room for COP, to distribute literature and show off its homepage.



New Parties to the CBD

Look how we're growing

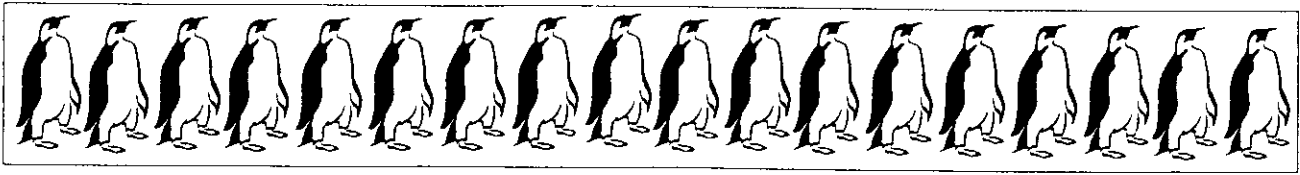
- 153. Congo (1.8.96)
- 154. Trinidad and Tobago (1.8.96)
- 155. Iran (6.8.96)
- 156. Kyrgyzstan² (6.8.96)
- 157. Mauritania (16.8.96)
- 158. Qatar (21.8.96)
- 159. Turkmenistan² (18.9.96)
- 160. Lao People's Democratic Republic² (20.9.96)
- 161. Haiti (25.9.96)
- 162. Croatia (7.10.96)

¹ Acceptance of the Convention

² Accession to the Convention

³ Approval of the Convention

-by Anna Albovias



New faces at the Secretariat

Preparations for COP, SBSTTA and the regional meetings have generated a huge amount of work in a short time. To help deal with the rush, the Secretariat has employed a number of consultants.

Kerry Ten Kate, taking time off from her regular job at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, played a key role in the preparation of SBSTTA and COP papers as did regular CBD consultants, **Tony Gross** and **Martin Jenkins**.

Alex James, a PhD candidate at Cambridge specializing in the economics of biodiversity, and **Melissa Diamond**, a graduate of the Vermont Law School's specialized environmental law program, contributed their expertise.

Further support was provided by **Thomas Yongo** and **Ruth Mackenzie**, both of whom are affiliated with the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development in London. Yongo recently attended the second Conference of the Parties of the Climate Change Convention, working as a lawyer for the Alliance of Small Island States.

Ellen Permato, a veteran of UN environmental work, came from Geneva to help with both the COP and regional meetings.

Yibin Xiang, a former official with the Chinese central government who recently completed a one-year assignment with the World Bank, is assisting the Secretariat with matters related to the Global

Environment Facility. And **Anja Jänz**, who has previous experience with the Climate Change Convention, has been helping to organize the regional meetings.

To keep the office running throughout its busiest season, the Secretariat has relied heavily on **Leticia Rubello**, formerly of the NAFTA environment commission and **Jeanne-D'Arc Byaje**, a veteran of UNEP in Nairobi. **Francis Dejon** and **Michel Ghattas** have obligingly helped out anywhere and everywhere they were needed.

Ghislain Germain has been given the job of putting the archives and library together. **Jorge Passalacqua** is looking after corre-

spondence. **Mary Soliman**, who has worked for WHO in the Middle East, has recently taken over document control.

Leonor Alvarado is the new voice answering calls at the reception desk. And **Rita Rabbath** books the airline tickets and looks after all the CBD-related travel. **Frida Velarde** is the newly appointed secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs.

Tiffany Prather is an intern from the Vermont Law School. And the person in charge of all the employee comings and goings is, **Marianne Derikx**, a human resources professional on loan from the Canadian government.

BIODIVERSITY

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