



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

SECRETARIAT

Ref.: SCBD/STTM/JM/va/34267

26 March 2003

NOTIFICATION

Subject: Establishment of an ad hoc technical expert group on mountain biodiversity (SBSTTA/VIII/1)

Dear Madam / Sir,

In its recommendation VIII/1 (attached for ease of reference), the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) adopted the structure of the programme of work on mountain biological diversity with its elements and goals, as specified in annex I of the recommendation. In paragraph 3 of the recommendation, SBSTTA established an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Mountain Biological Diversity, with terms of reference described in annex II of the recommendation. The AHTEG will assist SBSTTA in its further work on mountain biodiversity prior to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2004 by reviewing the suggested actions contained in the proposed programme of work on mountain biological diversity, and identifying gaps in order to include new suggested actions.

You are hereby invited to submit the name of an expert from your country who may be called upon to serve in the AHTEG, together with a description of his/her expertise to carry out the mandate of this group.

Once the nominations are received, the Executive Secretary will select the experts with due consideration given to gender, geographical balance, and level of expertise on mountain biological diversity. As stated in paragraph 3 of recommendation VIII/1, experts will be selected, to the extent possible, from those delegates that attended the eighth meeting of SBSTTA held from 10 to 14 March 2003 in Montreal. The Government of Italy is currently considering financing the meeting at a date and venue yet to be determined.

The nomination of experts should be sent to the Secretariat, by fax or electronic mail no later than **30 April 2003**.

I wish to thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter and for your continued support of the work of the Convention.

Please accept Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

[signed]

Hamdallah Zedan
Executive Secretary

To: All CBD National Focal Points
cc: SBSTTA Focal Points



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SBSTTA recommendation VIII/1

Annex I

Programme of work Mountain Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

1. Mountain areas cover almost one quarter of the Earth's land surface and host about 12% of its human inhabitants. Additionally, mountains provide vital natural resources for lowland peoples. Mountains are both a unique environment in their own right, and one that incorporates many of the existing thematic programmes under the Convention. For example, forests, inland waters, dry and sub-humid lands and agricultural programme elements can all be found in mountain biological diversity. The present programme of work on mountain biological diversity features goals and activities that are specific to mountain biological diversity, although the existing programmes of work on forests, inland waters, agricultural, and dry and sub-humid land biological diversity, also apply to mountain ecosystems. Therefore, the goals and activities contained in the existing programmes of work of each of these thematic areas should also be applied and implemented, whenever appropriate, for their respective areas in mountain ecosystems.

2. Mountain biological diversity is of high importance for a number of ecological functions. The integrity of soils is the prime focus for ecosystem services and human needs. Soil retention and slope stability are closely connected with the extent of above-ground and below-ground vegetation, both essential to ecosystem resilience after disturbance. The high plant functional diversity of mountain ecosystems may also add to their resiliency and, should extreme disturbances occur, often provides effective barriers to high-energy events such as rock falls and avalanches. It also may reduce extensive damage levels at lower elevations. Although it has been to date impossible to provide a thorough definition of mountains with both universal application and acceptance, there are a number of characteristics that are unique to mountain ecosystems. These are referred to in the note by the Executive Secretary on the status and trends of, and threats to, mountain biodiversity prepared for the eighth meeting of SBSTTA (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/5).

3. Information and input from international forums may also be taken into account. In particular, chapter 13 of Agenda 21 that relates to sustainable mountain development, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development which also considered mountain ecosystems. Paragraph 42 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit states that "mountain ecosystems support particular livelihoods, and include significant watershed resources, biological diversity and unique flora and fauna. Many are particularly fragile and vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and need specific protection". The Plan of Implementation proposed a number of specific actions to be undertaken in regard to mountains. The 2002 International Year of the Mountains also provides valuable input. In addition, a number of international agreements and bodies, institutions, and program initiatives may be considered such as the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP), the Centre for Mountain Studies, the

Consortio para el Desarrollo de la Ecoregion Andina (CONDESAN), the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI), the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) of DIVERSITAS, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), the Alpine Convention, and the World Conservation and Monitoring Centre (WCMC).

B. Overall purpose and scope of the programme of work

4. The overall purpose of the programme of work is the significant reduction of mountain biological diversity loss by 2010 at global, regional and national levels through the implementation of the three main objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

5. The implementation of the programme of work aims at making a significant contribution to poverty alleviation in mountain ecosystems and in lowlands dependent on the goods and services of mountain ecosystems and thereby contribute to objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation, and the Millennium Development Goals.

6. The programme of work focuses on addressing characteristics and problems which are specific to mountain biological diversity. These include:

(a) The particularly high concentration of biological diversity hotspots in mountain regions, including high ecosystem diversity, high species richness, high number of endemic and endangered species, and high genetic diversity of crop, livestock, and their wild relatives;

(b) The fragility of mountain ecosystems and species and their vulnerability to human and natural disturbances, in particular to land use change and global climate change;

(c) The upland-lowland interactions which characterize mountain ecosystems, in particular with relation to water and soil resources;

(d) High levels of cultural diversity, and the particularly key role of indigenous and local communities in the conservation and management of mountain biological diversity.

7. The programme of work also seeks to avoid duplication with existing thematic work programmes and other existing initiatives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Parties are encouraged to apply where appropriate the objectives and activities from these thematic work programmes to the conservation of mountain biological diversity, the sustainable use of mountain biological diversity, and the equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

8. The programme of work is intended to assist Parties in establishing national programmes of work with targeted goals, objectives, and actions, with specific actors, timeframes, inputs, and expected measurable outputs. Parties may select from, adapt, and/or add to, the goals, objectives and actions suggested in the current Programme of Work according to particular national and local conditions, and their level of development. Implementation of this programme of work should take into account the ecosystem approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In determining national programmes of work, Parties are encouraged to pay due regard to the social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits of various options. In addition, Parties are encouraged to consider the use of appropriate technologies, sources of finance, and technical cooperation, and to ensure,

through appropriate actions, the means to meet the particular challenges and demands of their mountain ecosystems.

Programme element 1: Direct actions for conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing

Goal 1: To prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of key threats to mountain biological diversity

Suggested actions

- Assess and address both local and long-range pollution issues.
- Assess and address inappropriate land use practices in mountain ecosystems
- Implement actions directed at maintaining and/or enhancing soil stability, and soil ecological integrity.
- Prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of economic development and enhance positive impacts of such development on mountain biological diversity through the adequate treatment of biological diversity in environmental, social, and cultural assessments at sectoral, programme, and project level, taking into account cumulative impacts.
- Prevent the introduction of alien species that threaten mountain ecosystems and mitigate their negative impacts on mountain biological diversity in accordance with international law.
- Mitigate the impacts of global climate change on mountain biological diversity
- Prevent and mitigate loss of mountain biological diversity arising from anthropogenic disturbances.
- Implement programmes to address deforestation, erosion, land degradation, disruption of water flows, retreat of glaciers and loss of biological diversity.
- Identify and develop strategies to prevent, eradicate, and control invasive alien species that may threaten mountain biological resources.

Goal 2: To protect, recover, and restore mountain biological diversity

Suggested actions

- Assess and develop strategies aimed at minimizing the threats of genetic erosion on food crops, paying particular attention to centres of crop origin.
- Identify and protect unique, fragile mountain ecosystems, biological diversity hotspots and their associated species, and narrowly-distributed endemic taxa, giving special consideration to measures aimed at strict protection whenever feasible.

- Develop strategies for land use planning at the landscape level, taking into account elements of ecological connectivity, and establishing national and subregional networks of protected areas, while respecting the rights and full participation of indigenous and local communities.
- Identify suitable practices for enhancing the degree of ecosystem sustainability and site productivity, with particular emphasis on degraded slopes.
- Prevent and mitigate losses of mountain biological diversity due to fragmentation and land use conversion.

Goal 3: To promote the sustainable use of mountain biological resources

Suggested actions

- Promote sustainable land use practices in relation to agriculture, animal husbandry, and forestry in mountain ecosystems.
- Develop, validate, and implement sustainable land use practices, including those of indigenous and local communities, for the conservation and use of agrobiodiversity in mountain ecosystems.
- Develop, validate, and implement community-based management systems to conserve and sustainably use mountain biological diversity.
- Promote integrated watershed management practices at the local, national, and regional levels.
- Promote partnerships between all stakeholders, including indigenous and local communities, involved in the sustainable use of mountain biological resources.
- Assess and manage the impact of tourism and sport activities on mountain ecosystems, as well as the development of associated human settlements and facilities, e.g., waste disposal facilities, ski lifts, roads, and associated infrastructure.
- Strengthening local capacity for tourism management, in order to assure that benefits derived from tourism activities are shared by local communities, preserving natural and cultural heritage values.

Goal 4: To promote access to, and sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources related to mountain biological diversity in accordance to national legislation where it exists.

Suggested actions

- Strengthening capacity of indigenous and local communities, particularly those living in developing countries, to have access to genetic resources and to engage in equitable benefit-sharing arrangements.

Goal 5: To maintain genetic diversity in mountain ecosystems in particular through the preservation and maintenance of traditional knowledge and practices.

Suggested actions

- Implement activities aimed at maintaining the already high levels of agrobiodiversity in mountain ecosystems, and the goods and services it provides, both for meeting local demands and to ensure sources of food security.
- Implement provisions contained in Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, taking into consideration the needs of developing countries.
- Develop, validate, and implement sustainable use practices for plant, animal, and microorganism genetic resources.

Programme element 2: Means of implementation for conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing

Goal 1. To enhance the legal, policy, institutional, and economic framework

Suggested actions

- Develop and introduce incentive mechanisms for the provision and maintenance of ecosystem goods and services and identify and address perverse incentives and/or policy omissions that may impede the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in mountain ecosystems.
- Promote the diversification of income-generating activities in support of conservation and sustainable use of mountain biological diversity.
- Improve the understanding of the various underlying causes of mountain biological diversity loss.
- Integrate conservation and sustainable use of mountain biological diversity into sectoral policies and programmes.
- Review, revise and implement mountain land tenure and planning systems which provide a sound basis for the conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems.

Goal 2. To respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, practices and innovations of indigenous and local communities in mountain regions.

Suggested actions

- Promote networking and collaborative action, and facilitate the full participation of indigenous and local communities in decision making, paying particular attention to the empowerment of women.
- Encourage both decentralization and full participation and involvement of local communities in decisions that affects them.

- Implement activities aimed at the improvement of mountain livelihoods and the maintenance of cultural self-determination.
- Develop capacity-building measures to facilitate the involvement of indigenous and local communities and the application of the knowledge they hold, with their prior informed consent, in the management, conservation, and sustainable use of mountain biological diversity.

Goal 3. To establish regional and trans-boundary collaboration and the establishment of cooperative agreements

Suggested actions

- Promote international and concerted activities on mountain ranges, in order to create integrated trans-boundary co-operation supported by legislation, with protocols covering specific thematic issues such as landscape management, mountain agriculture, mountain forest, tourism, energy and conflict resolution.
- Improve transboundary cooperation promoting international research programmes on mountain ranges.

Programme element 3: Supporting actions for conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing

Goal 1. To develop work on identification, monitoring and assessment of mountain biological diversity

Suggested actions

- Develop where appropriate, specific mountain surveys in priority areas for conservation and sustainable use of mountain biological diversity.
- Apply whenever appropriate, the programme of work of the Global Taxonomy Initiative.
- Support the work of the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment.

Goal 2. To improve knowledge on and methods for the assessment and monitoring of the status and trends of mountain biological diversity, based on available information.

Suggested actions

- Development of monitoring systems based on identification of key abiotic and biotic indicators of changes in mountain ecosystem structure and function.

Goal 3. To improve the infrastructure for data and information management for accurate assessment and monitoring of mountain biological diversity and develop associated databases.

Suggested actions

- Develop and select international, regional and national criteria and where appropriate quantifiable indicators for mountain biological diversity, taking into account, as appropriate, existing work and processes on criteria and indicators on sustainable mountain management, as well as the knowledge held by indigenous and local communities.
- Conduct key research programmes on the role and relationship of mountain biological diversity and ecosystem functioning, considering ecosystem components, structure, function and processes.
- Enhance and improve the technical capacity at the national level to monitor mountain biological diversity, benefiting from the opportunities offered by the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity and develop associated databases as required at the global scale.

Goal 4. To improve research, technical and scientific cooperation, and other forms of capacity building related to mountain biological diversity.

Suggested actions

- Foster exchange of experiences and knowledge on sustainable development and ecosystem vulnerability among mountainous countries
- Conduct key research programs on mountain biological diversity, and its relationship to ecosystem structure and function

Goal 5. To increase public education, participation and awareness in relation to mountain biological diversity.

Suggested actions

- Promote educational and capacity-building systems tailored to the specific conditions of mountain ecosystems.
- Increase awareness of the potential contribution of knowledge, practices and innovations of indigenous and local communities to conservation and sustainable use of mountain biological diversity.
- Develop, validate, and implement ecotourism activities aimed at increasing awareness respect and knowledge for mountain biological diversity.

Goal 6. To promote the development, validation, and transfer of appropriate technologies for mountain ecosystems, including indigenous technologies in accordance with Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and related provisions.

Annex II

**TERMS OF REFERENCE AD HOC TECHNICAL EXPERT GROUP (AHTEG) ON
MOUNTAIN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

1. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Mountain Biological Diversity will undertake:
 - (a) A review of suggested actions contained in the proposed programme of work on mountain biological diversity as stated in annex I above;
 - (b) Identify gaps in suggested actions, and include new suggested actions whenever appropriate, under the relevant programme element and programme goals;
 - (c) Include the results of the consultation on the proposed programme of work on mountain biological diversity, as noted in paragraph 4 of the present note.

Duration of work

2. The work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Mountain Biological Diversity should be completed before the ninth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group will hold a meeting immediately prior to the ninth meeting of SBSTTA, and will subsequently report to SBSTTA.
