

**Convention on Biological Diversity
Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
Sixteenth Meeting, Montreal April 30-May 5**

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Responsibilities: Assist Eric Blencowe (DEFRA) and Andrew Stott(DEFRA) in the review of:

- 1) Island Biodiversity
- 2) Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA)
- 3) Adverse Impacts to Marine Biodiversity

Additional: Attended two side events, “Underwater Noise” and “Blue Carbon”

Key points and issues:

- 1) Island Biodiversity
 - a. Many felt, including the UK, that the Island Summit requested was beyond the mandate of SBSTTA to propose and too short notice for a successful outcome. This was changed to “ SBSTTA welcomes the proposed initiative of Island States to organize an island summit on the margins of the eleventh meeting of COP...”
 - b. All island priorities included in decision IX/21 were asked by the UK and others to be included and given equal attention, rather than focus international attention and action on invasive alien species, climate change adaptation and mitigation, marine protected areas and capacity building, as given in the first draft. A change was made to include all six priorities, adding fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources and poverty alleviation.
 - c. The need to “accord priority to the management of terrestrial protected areas, including inland waters” was made by the UK and others.
 - d. The recognition that biodiversity loss can occur in uninhabited islands was added, at the instigation of the UK
 - e. Financial mechanism, support, capacity-building and need for legislation for implementation were brought forth as critical points
 - f. Transboundary pollution was addressed and specifically added calling on Parties to enhance regional and international cooperation, at the request of the UK and other countries.
- 2) EBSAs
 - a. Scientific Robustness and validity of EBSAs put forward following workshop was discussed in light of endorsement of reports for COP
 - b. Process with which SBSTTA synthesizes workshop reports, endorses and recommends to COP was not found clear, and request was repeatedly made to identify this process

- c. Clarity was given on the fact that SBSTTA compiles a report following EBSA workshops which is endorsed and sent to COP, and not all individual country reports stemming from workshops.
- d. Question was raised on what goes in the repository, how the information in the repository is used, and by whom. This resulted in the specification of an information-sharing mechanism for the dissemination of scientific information obtained through EBSA workshops. More precisely “noting the need to have a clear distinction between the repository containing the information included on the basis of endorsements by the Conference of the Parties as called for in paragraph 42 of decision X/29 and other information entered in the information sharing mechanism:” was included.
- e. The distinction between EBSAs and MPAs was re-affirmed several times, emphasizing that EBSAs are not necessarily MPAs. The identification of these as MPAs is part of a second process driven by national decision-making when within EEZ, and according to international law when in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).
- f. In particular, two countries voiced concern on the results of the North Eastern Atlantic Workshop; this 2-day workshop was not deemed sufficient to propose all EBSAs forward. Similarly, others voiced concern on the Mediterranean EBSAs, and mention was made that political sensitivities had to be considered in the final workshop reports.
- g. Concern was raised by certain regions (namely Africa and South America) that there had been no regional workshops pertaining to their waters; Russia offered to host the next EBSA workshop for their region, and Peru noted the importance of upwelling systems and their consideration for EBSAs.
- h. The need for capacity building to extend beyond the use of training manuals for workshop processes was re-iterated several times and acknowledged by all, but with care that it falls within national budget capacity, and beyond the scope of SBSTTA to specify what type of training.
- i. In conclusion, it was decided that only 6 EBSAs resulting from the North Eastern Atlantic Workshop would be included in Annex I of 6.1, that Table 4 would be modified to clarify the Mediterranean results, and other deletions would be made to the Latin American and Caribbean Report and Asia Report.
- j. Furthermore, it was requested that where needed, further information and assessment would be made on areas already considered (namely those of the NE Atlantic), and reviewed by EBSA prior to COP11. The *endorsement* by SBSTTA of the EBSAs resulting in Annex 1 was still not resolved, and maintained in brackets, as consensus was not reached.

3) Adverse Impacts

- a. The title was amended based on one country’s note that “fisheries” per se is not an adverse impact. Additionally, the threats initially mentioned were not considered to be the only threats to biodiversity, and hence the title changed to reflect a broader scope.
- b. Much of the discussion revolved around the acknowledgement that there remains scientific gap in the impact of threats; especially with regards to underwater noise. It

was pointed out that firstly a definition of noise needs to be clarified, with an approved international terminology for a proper assessment of its impacts.

- c. In light of the sporadic information, a call for enhanced cooperation with other international organizations and strategies was made, for a synergistic approach rather than risk duplication of work; notably FAO, UNEP and the Honolulu strategy for marine debris were mentioned.
 - d. Assistance for capacity building, financial resources and technical guidance was requested by African countries.
 - e. The urgency for assessment of underwater noise impact and need for further research, and application of mitigation measures was re-iterated several times, mentioning the need for guidelines on monitoring and measurement of underwater noise, as well as acoustic mapping. This led to the agreed need to “develop indicators and explore frameworks for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity” prior to COP12.
- 4) New and Emerging Issues section was discussed at length , based on the fact that available scientific information on geo-engineering is lacking in many respects, that impacts are not well understood, and on whether issues mentioned are truly new and emerging; this resulted in three options to be sent to COP11 for decision at this time.
- a. Option 1- Deciding not to add any of the proposed new issues to the agenda
 - b. Option 2- Applying the precautionary approach, especially in relation to impacts of synthetic biology products/organisms/ and techniques.
 - c. Option 3- a compromise between the two, where the need to establish a process for identifying new and emerging issues requires further refinement, and that further scientific information is necessary. It was requested that the Executive Secretary prepare a synthesis report prior to COP12.