

SBSTA session remains suspended

Bonn, June 8 (Hilary Chiew) - The 34th session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), remained suspended for a further two days on June 7 and 8th as Parties continue to be deadlocked over an agenda item on response measures which is pending resolution under the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI).

The SBSTA session opened on the morning of June 6 but Parties could not adopt the provisional agenda as Saudi Arabia and Bolivia wanted changes made to two of the agenda items, resulting in the Chair Mama Konate from Mali suspending the session for informal consultations. Apparently, consultations on the REDD issue is said to have been concluded but consultations on REDD are still ongoing.

Saudi Arabia had submitted a proposal to replace agenda item 7 on "Economic and social consequences of response measures" with the title "Forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures". It wanted the amendment to reflect the mandate from COP 16, which was for the chairs of SBSTA and SBI to conduct a forum to discuss modalities to measure impact of response measures. Since the SBI was also dealing with the same issue, the Chair of SBSTA proposed that Parties wait for the outcome of informal consultations being undertaken by the SBI Chair, which apparently is still on-going.

Bolivia disputed the inclusion of REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forests Degradation) as an agenda item (item 4) as it had objected to the adoption of the Cancun decision. Ambassador Pablo Solon of Bolivia said his country rejected carbon trading in relation to forests as this reduced forests to mere carbon sinks. He said Bolivia believed it is essential for all countries to avoid deforestation and forest

degradation but via an integral management of forests and not just by mitigation of its carbon emissions. He said that the financing for forests is necessary but it should not come from carbon market mechanism. He said that Bolivia's views on this matter were not allowed to be discussed at Cancun.

Bolivian's position drew sharp objections from several members of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations such as Guyana, Costa Rica and Colombia. **Guyana** said that since the Cancun decision was decided by the Conference of Parties, no single body should subsequently question it. It opposed Bolivia's move in the strongest term as forests offer early and cost-effective mitigation measures. **Costa Rica** echoed Guyana's statement.

Tuvalu expressed sympathy for Bolivia's position, but said that those views can be discussed when the agenda item is discussed. It shared the concerns of Bolivia on the way REDD was approached at Cancun where there was no contact group but only bilateral consultations without stakeholder inputs, adding that was a flawed process.

It suggested that all consultations on REDD are made in a contact group so stakeholders can have significant inputs on the work of SBSTA and the matter is addressed in an open and transparent manner.

Bolivia suggested to change the title of agenda item 4 to include "forest-related actions" besides reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. It said its suggestion in no way changes the views of all Parties but signaled inclusiveness and its own flexibility to make progress in SBSTA.

At the onset of the session, the Chair invited Parties that submitted new proposals listed as agenda items 13 to 16 to make clarification of their proposals.

Algeria and **Saudi Arabia** wanted the inclusion of “Carbon dioxide capture and storage in geological formation as clean development mechanism project activities” **Papua New Guinea** wanted the inclusion of “Blue carbon: coastal marine systems”. **Bolivia** wanted the inclusion of an agenda item entitled “Rights of nature and the integrity of ecosystems”. **Ecuador** wanted the issue of impacts of climate change on water resources and water resource management to be discussed in SBSTA while Canada wanted a work programme on agriculture.

Due to the limitation of time, the Chair proposed that agenda items 1 to 12 that contained ongoing work and mandated tasks to be adopted with the exception of items related to response measures and REDD. The Chair said that having consulted the SBI Chair and to avoid discussion of the same issue, the SBI will take the lead in resolving this matter. On the issue of REDD, he proposed holding informal consultations.

On the new proposals for inclusion of agenda items, the Chair proposed that Parties consult

informally to deepen understanding of issues and determine further consideration.

Many Parties - the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Pakistan, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Argentina, Egypt, China, Costa Rica, Philippines, Tuvalu, Papua New Guinea and Ecuador expressed their support for the Chair’s proposal with China and Venezuela emphasizing that consultations on the new items should only be held if they are included on the agenda eventually.

The Chair urged Parties to adopt the agenda pending the changes in relation to response measures and REDD but Saudi Arabia, Bolivia and Papua New Guinea said they could not adopt the unknown but have to be clear on what is being adopted.

The session was announced for reconvening at 3pm on June 7 but did not take place. At 6pm, the Chair conveyed a message through the secretariat that the consultations under the SBI on response measures were still ongoing and that SBSTA will not reconvene until June 8, but as consultations were still on-going, the suspension continues.