

Scientific body adopts conclusions at closing plenary

Bonn, 19 June (Hilary Chiew) – The closing plenary of the 34th Session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bonn adopted several decisions late night on Thursday, 16 June. Among the highlights were work related to the implementation of the Cancun decision on forest-related activities and a forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures to address climate change.

The conclusion of the final plenary was delayed with an intense exchange between Bolivia and members of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations over a proposal by Papua New Guinea to include mangroves, tidal salt marshes and seagrass meadows, referred to as “blue carbon” as an item for further research and systemic observation. Bolivia, supported by Venezuela, was opposed to this, expressing concerns that research on “blue carbon” would “sow the seeds for creating new market mechanisms including through geo-engineering”. PNG denied that it was advocating a new market mechanism and insisted that this was an important matter for further research in relation to climate change. Having no consensus on the issue, Chair of SBSTA, Mr. Mama Konate (Mali) ruled that “blue carbon” would not be an item for further research under the body.

(Geoengineering is the deliberate manipulation of Earth systems to alter the climate, including what concerned critics say are high risk technologies such as blasting particles into the stratosphere to mimic volcanic eruptions to block sunlight and “fertilizing” oceans to grow plankton blooms for carbon sequestration.)

On methodological guidance for activities relating to forest related activities or REDD-plus, the Cancun decision (1/CP.16) requested SBSTA to undertake, among other matters, the following in

the development of its work programme to: (i) identify land use, land-use change and forestry activities in developing countries, in particular those that are linked to the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, identify the associated methodological issues to estimate emissions and removals resulting from these activities, and to assess their potential contribution to the mitigation of climate change, and report on the findings to the COP at its eighteenth session on the outcomes of the work referred to in this paragraph; and (ii) develop as necessary, modalities for measuring, reporting and verifying anthropogenic forest-related emissions by sources and removals by sinks, forest carbon stocks, forest carbon stock and forest area changes resulting from the implementation of activities.

Accordingly, SBSTA in its Bonn session decided to continue its consideration of the methodological guidance, taking into account the elements referred to in the Cancun decision with the aim of completing its work on these matters at the 35th session and reporting to the 17th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 17) in Durban this December, including any recommendations for draft decisions on this matter. It also requested the UNFCCC Secretariat to organise meetings of technical experts on those matters.

Bolivia said it was prepared to work constructively with the broader approach towards REDD-plus and that it would provide more elements on the guidelines on safeguards and reference levels. Australia was pleased with the progress made and announced that it would provide A\$500,000 for further technical work. **Norway** also said it was ready to provide finance for REDD-related activities.

On the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures, the following conclusions were adopted. The SBSTA

and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) invited Parties and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations to submit further views on this matter by 19 September 2011 and requested the Secretariat to compile these views for consideration by SBSTA and SBI at its 35th sessions. It welcomed the special event in the context of the forum held during the Bonn session and requested the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Chairs of the SBSTA and SBI to prepare a report on this special event. Parties agreed that the forum will continue to do its work as agreed following the Cancun decision with a view to adopting at COP 17, modalities for the operationalisation of the work programme and a possible forum on response measures. (See TWN Bonn News Update 21 for a report on the special event.)

On the issue of “revision of the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual inventories for Parties included in Annex I to the Convention”, SBSTA initiated its consideration of the annotated draft of the revised UNFCCC Annex 1 reporting guidelines but was unable to finalise its consideration. The SBSTA requested the Secretariat to prepare a new version of the annotated draft based on the outcomes of its 34th session in time for a fourth workshop of the work programme on revising the guidelines. Parties agreed to consider the matter further at its 35th session, with a view to preparing a draft decision on this matter for adoption by COP 17.

On the issue of the “Nairobi Work Programme,” SBSTA agreed to consider at its 35th session, possible areas of further work on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change with a view to defining the duration and activities for its next phase. It also invited Parties and relevant organisations to submit their proposals for upcoming activities.

Following a proposal from Ecuador for a new agenda item on “water resources and integrated water resources management”, informal consultations were held and Parties agreed to reflect in the report of SBSTA that this matter would be discussed under the Nairobi Work Programme at its next session.

On the issue of “scientific, technical and socio-economic aspects of mitigation of climate change”, SBSTA welcomed the “Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation” (SRREN) by the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and noted that the report highlighted the significant technical potential of renewable energy and its large potential to mitigate climate change and provide wider benefits.

Several other conclusions on various agenda items were also adopted. Following informal consultations among Parties, there was no agreement to include “a work programme on agriculture” (a proposal by Canada) or “the rights of nature and the integrity of ecosystems” (as proposed by Bolivia) as new agenda items.

Ambassador Silvia Merega of Argentina, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China noted the progress made under the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. She said that the review of the Programme is an important step forward to identify the positive outcomes and the shortfalls of the implementation of the NWP as a way to build upon lessons learned on the relevant matter of adaptation. She however pointed out that there was minimal progress in fulfilling the NWP’s objectives of assisting developing country Parties in taking informed decisions on adaptation. The agreed interim activities from now to the 35th session of SBSTA should begin to address this shortfall, she added.

She welcomed the draft conclusions on research and systematic observation noting that the workshop and dialogue provided Parties with the opportunity to interact with the scientific community and acknowledged the value of their research activities around the world, in particular, in developing countries. She stressed that the research results must be shared with all sectors of the public, especially in developing countries. She urged the Secretariat to organise further workshops and dialogues as they were important to inform the process and requested Parties to provide the necessary resources to support these initiatives.

She also welcomed the forum on the impact of the implementation of response measures and its special event convened by the Chairs of the SBI and SBSTA to be continued at the 35th session with the objective of developing a work programme under the subsidiary bodies to address these impacts, and with a view to adopting, at COP 17, modalities for the operationalisation of the work programme and a possible forum on

response measures.

Grenada, representing the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** believed that the IPCC's SRREN provided a clear pathway on how to close the existing mitigation gap between the pledges of Parties and what was required to prevent dangerous climate change. In this respect, it said, the deliberations have to go further than just welcoming the report and encouraged Parties to implement the recommendations contained in that report.

On research and systematic observation, it stressed the importance of observation to support research and monitor the impacts of climate change. It called for support of ground-based observation networks in data sparse regions of the world such as small island states and low lying coastal areas. On the NWP, it emphasised that the mechanisms should be developed to ensure that the results of the activities are transferred into actual practice at the national and community level.

Gambia speaking on behalf of **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, said it welcomed the review of the NWP as an important step forward in adaptation, which is particularly important for LDCs given that these countries have the least

adaptive capacity to the adverse impacts of climate change. It called for priority to be given to enabling access to technologies.

Egypt representing the **African Group**, welcomed a further forum for sharing good practices on technology development and transfer. It noted that the impacts of response measures are of concern to all countries and would like to see in Durban, a permanent forum established to address the impacts of the implementation of response measures.

India noted that the issue of potential consequences on developing countries of actions taken by the developed country Parties is a matter of significant concern and was opposed to unilateral trade measures being imposed in the name of addressing climate change. In this context, along with other like-minded countries, India had made a submission to the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Hungary, speaking on behalf of the **European Union (EU)** regretted that Parties had yet to find a way to address agriculture in SBSTA. It was satisfied however that SBSTA has started operationalising the Cancun Agreement on a number of important issues.