

Developing countries emphasize adaptation as priority for action on agriculture

Bonn, 23 May (Doreen Stabinsky) - In the exchange of views on agriculture at SBSTA 36, developing countries have emphasized that adaptation must be a priority in how the SBSTA considers agriculture.

Decision 2/CP.17, in paragraph 75, requested the SBSTA to carry out an exchange of views on issues related to agriculture. Submissions were also requested in the decision.

At the first meeting on Wednesday, 16 May, **the G77 and China, represented by Bolivia**, outlined its position on the exchange of views. It stated that there was a need to speak broadly about issues related to agriculture so as to exchange views on the main topics of interest, without prejudging the possible result of the exchange.

According to the G77 and China, the discussions in SBSTA should take into account a number of general principles, in particular:

- the particularities of agriculture, in terms of its relation to food security, recognizing article 2 of the UNFCCC, which states that the objective of the Convention should be achieved to ensure that food production is not threatened;
- the fundamental importance of agriculture for social and economic development and rural development, in particular for developing countries, where a large proportion of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood;
- the need to respect the principles and provisions of the Convention, in particular equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and the promotion of an open and supportive international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and development, in particular in developing country Parties;
- the important challenges that agriculture faces in

relation to climate change, due to its particular vulnerability to its adverse effects;

- the acknowledgement of the special economic and social conditions of developing countries, of the regional, national and local specific contexts and the differences between agricultural systems, the importance of adaptation and of safeguarding food security, the interests of small and marginal farmers, the rights of indigenous peoples and traditional knowledge and practices; and
- the importance of addressing the obstacles to transfer of technologies and know-how for adaptation to developing countries.

The representative of the G77 and China went on to convey specific views in relation to the SBSTA work. They emphasized that adaptation in agriculture and achievement of food security should be the priority for the SBSTA work on agriculture.

The G77 and China said that the discussion of agriculture and adaptation in the SBSTA should follow the terms of article 9 of the UNFCCC, taking into account the policy context and general principles they had detailed previously. They suggested the SBSTA could undertake a number of tasks in relation to agriculture:

- provide assessments of the state of scientific knowledge relating to adaptation to climate change and its effects on agriculture;
- the identification of innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how for adaptation in agriculture;
- advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring of technologies for adaptation;
- provide advice on scientific programmes, international cooperation in research and development related to adaptation to the effects of climate change in agriculture, as well as on

ways and means of supporting endogenous capacity building in developing countries.

The G77 and China further emphasized the need to pay adequate attention to urgent issues, such as adaptation in agriculture to cope with climatic extreme events, such as heat waves, droughts and floods and other particularly vulnerabilities, and to ensure adequate means of support to face these adverse effects, in terms of finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building.

Gambia, on behalf of the **LDCs**, articulated six components of possible SBSTA work on agriculture:

- assessment of the state of knowledge and information
- cooperation on research and development
- modeling in the agriculture sector, including to include local situations in LDCs
- using an integrated approach that would consider livelihoods and the entire life cycle of agricultural inputs
- measurement and methodological issues, noting that the LDCs are responsible for few emissions
- transfer of technology

Malawi, on behalf of the **African Group**, suggested it was important to agree on guiding principles, framed in terms of spatial and temporal scale, with adaptation as the overriding priority.

Switzerland, for the **Environmental Integrity Group**, stated that a work programme on agriculture must deal with both adaptation and mitigation and that it must be based on science.

The Philippines noted that agriculture is a primary sector in its economy. Already climate change has affected investments, production and productivity. It noted that SBSTA work should have a strong focus on adaptation and improving climate resiliency. It proposed that SBSTA should undertake an assessment of climate change impacts on agricultural and food productions systems in different regions, examining best practices of communities. It further noted that SBSTA work should be in accordance with the principles of the convention.

Tanzania, associated itself with the G77 and China, LDCs and the African group, stating that agriculture is the backbone of its economy, and that it contributes 50% of its GDP. It noted that impacts on agriculture will affect its economic sustainability.

South Africa agreed with the position of the G77 and China and the African Group and explained its submission with three points:

- they made a submission because it was an opportunity to provide prominence within UNFCCC of the contribution of agriculture to adaptation, and to highlight “the overriding blindingly obvious fact that agriculture in terms of priorities is in the context of adaptation.” Therefore the focus of work to be undertaken should be primarily on adaptation issues;
- the submission was also an attempt to illustrate the added value of work that could be done to other UNFCCC processes. For example, the work of SBSTA could provide a technical evidence base for work under the Adaptation Framework;
- the work under SBSTA should be consistent with guiding principles of convention.

The **United States** supported other countries that suggested the mandate of the SBSTA in Article 9 could guide the work, helping to define key issues and a way forward. They also spoke about possible synergies between adaptation and goals of improved efficiency, productivity and resilience. They proposed a technical expert meeting to take place between now and Doha to address these points.

Bangladesh, associating itself with the G77 and China, LDCs and the African Group, noted that food security remains the most important issue, which cannot be threatened.

Uganda, supporting the statements of the G77 and China, the LDCs, and the African Group, noted that agriculture is a key cornerstone of livelihoods for most of its population. Much of agriculture in Uganda is rain fed and vulnerable to climate change impacts. The poorest persons in the country depend on agriculture and there is a strong need to take into account the importance of adaptation for the most vulnerable.

New Zealand noted the fundamental importance of agriculture to all parties. More than 50% of the New Zealand economy is based on agriculture and it could agree with much of what had been previously said. It noted the serious nature of the challenge facing agriculture, and suggested an integrated approach was needed with respect to food production that addressed both mitigation and adaptation. He noted that the purpose of engaging under the SBSTA was to assist parties to take science-based actions on agriculture and to feed a

growing world population in a sustainable, resilient, and efficient manner. He also agreed with focusing discussions using the SBSTA mandate under article 9.

Costa Rica suggested there was a need to achieve a balanced approach. It stated that even if we recognize the importance of adaptation, the agriculture sector plays a key role in a low carbon development strategy, linking mitigation and adaptation.

India associated itself with the statement of the G77 and China, and spoke of the challenge of its large population, noting that the requirement for food security is most important. It noted the difficulty to implement a work programme that included both adaptation and mitigation, and suggested that the focus of SBSTAs work should be on adaptation for small marginal farmers. SBSTA could also consider transfer of technologies, the promotion of climate resilient adaptation technologies, and the provision of technical advice.

Togo said that agriculture is its most vulnerable and affected sector. It said that there is a need for new technologies and scientific methodologies to produce new crop varieties and that SBSTA should focus on new technologies to help have new ways of production for food security. They also noted that SBSTA should consider finance aspects.

Parties continued to exchange views over two further sessions in the first week, with developing countries consistently noting the serious adaptation challenges that they faced in their countries in their agriculture sectors, and continuing to insist that the focus of the SBSTA be on the links between agriculture, adaptation and food security.

On Monday, the chair provided countries with a first draft of possible conclusions.

Bolivia, on behalf of the **G77 and China**, in responding to the first draft, stressed that they had been very clear, and very happy to see the emphasis on the importance of adaptation in the first sessions. They reflected the disappointment of the group that the word “adaptation” was not reflected in the first draft, noting this was problematic for the group and made it difficult to agree on further activities if there were not an adaptation focus to those activities.

They noted their concern that some issues appeared from outside of the discussion, notably references to work on mitigation that had taken place under

the LCA. They suggested that the previous issues had not led to great advances and in this context were not likely to be helpful.

The group agreed with the suggestion for submissions, on how to address effects of climate change on agriculture, identify developing country adaptation needs, as well as support for adaptation in agriculture from developed countries. However the group noted that they had not come to agreement on the matter of holding an in-session workshop at SBSTA37

The **Republic of Korea** noted that a workshop and an expert meeting would be a good way to start an important discussion, and suggested that the IPCC and the FAO might be invited to the expert meeting. They reiterated the Environmental Integrity Group call for synergy of effort between actions on adaptation and mitigation and suggested text to that effect.

The **Russian Federation** also supported the addition of the text suggested by the Republic of Korea, emphasizing the importance of synergy.

Sierra Leone associated itself with the views of the G77 and China, noting that there appeared to be a deliberate attempt not to use the term adaptation. It noted that Sierra Leone by default practices a system of agriculture that mitigates climate change, and encouraged other Parties to look at its agriculture inventory. It stated that mitigation is not the way forward and associated itself with those members calling for the replacement of mitigation with adaptation.

Argentina also associated itself with the comments of the G77 and China as well as Sierra Leone, expressing concern that the word adaptation was not included in the text. For them, agriculture is fundamental for social and economic development, rural development, food security and livelihoods.

Argentina reiterated that recalling a previous report on mitigation would not be a balanced view, and given that adaptation should be the scope of the work moving forward, mentioning such a report would not be helpful.

They called for the articulation of more specific principles and provisions of the Convention, setting the policy context. They made specific reference to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, as well as the need to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to sustainable economic growth and

development in all Parties. They reiterated support for work established under article 9, recognizing that the policy context, such as CBDR, could not be forgotten.

Argentina suggested to remove a reference to resilience, and replace it with wording on adaptation: “to enhance adaptation in agriculture to the diverse effects of climate change on food security.” They also requested to emphasize diversity present at local, regional and national levels, noting that the reference to global in the current text does not allow recognition of differences and diversity.

Finally, they noted that before an in-session workshop could be agreed, there needed to be clarity on the substance of the workshop.

Tanzania expressed its agreement with the position of the G77 and China. It stated that agricultural issues should be considered from a national perspectives and that such issues were not global, but local in character.

The Philippines also associated itself with the position of the G77 and China, agreeing that adaptation should be the scope of the work to be reflected in the recommendation. They noted that for a word that had been used profusely during the discussions, it was disappointing that it did not appear in the draft text.

They also stated that they shared the views of Argentina, to refer to adaptation in agriculture, rather than resilience, and that the priority of the work in SBSTA should be to better understand how to enhance adaptation to climate change in agriculture. They also requested deletion of the reference to global food security, stating that “global food security doesn’t mean anything to my country.”

The **United States** rejected the proposal to add a reference to support from developed countries. While they acknowledged adaptation as a priority, they argued against limiting the focus of the work to adaptation and said that to focus SBSTA on just adaptation would be further than they are comfortable going. They also called a suggestion to take out references to efficiency and productivity as taking a step backwards.

Uganda associated itself with the statement made by Bolivia on behalf of the G77 and China,

reiterating the concern of developing countries about the reference to efficiency and productivity.

New Zealand stated that it was critical that the global context is recognized, and emphasized the need to retain the reference to global food security. He stated that adaptation is an issue for all parties, not just developing country parties, hence the need to keep a focus on the global.

The **European Union** noted the good atmosphere and wanted the text to strike the right balance. They considered that there is a need for a holistic approach on agriculture, with mitigation and adaptation going together.

Gambia said he had just heard that the rains had started back home, a month early, and that last year the rains had started a month late. He reiterated that the LDCs top priority is adaptation, yet the draft document has nothing in it related to adaptation.

China expressed its agreement with the views of the representative of the G77 and China, as well as the Philippines, Argentina and Gambia. They reiterated a point of New Zealand, that the document should include the opinion of all parties. It noted that during the last week of meetings, developing countries had emphasized again and again adaptation, as well as in submissions made prior to the meeting. It also noted that adaptation was central not only in developing, but also in developed country submissions, and noted its surprise to not see the word used even once in the draft conclusion.

It stated that not only should the discussion be focused on adaptation, but that adaptation should be the scope of the discussion. China also added that all activities of agriculture should include the principles and provisions of the convention, including common but differentiated responsibilities.

On the evening of Monday, 21 May, the Chair of the SBSTA, Richard Muyungi (Tanzania) issued a revised version of his text. After an informal consultation between Parties on the morning of 22 May, the chair suggested that bilaterals be conducted in order to bring Parties closer together, and that the group would reconvene on Thursday, 24 May, to consider the results of those bilaterals.