

## **SBSTA: Parties agree to focus on adaptation in agriculture outcome**

Bar Harbor, USA, 18 June (Doreen Stabinsky and Azeb Girmai) – After an inconclusive late-night session on 13 June, negotiations on agriculture at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) ended Friday 14 June with a short set of chairs' conclusions focused on adaptation.

Parties agreed on a submission process, followed by a workshop to be held at SBSTA 39, on “the current state of scientific knowledge on how to enhance the adaptation of agriculture to climate change impacts while promoting rural development, sustainable development and productivity of agricultural systems and food security in all countries, particularly in developing countries. This should take into account the diversity of the agricultural systems and the differences in scale as well as possible adaptation co-benefits.” Parties will consider the report of the workshop at SBSTA 40 (2014).

The negotiations on agriculture during the Bonn session took place in a contact group chaired by Ester Magambo (Kenya) and Hans Ake Nilsagard (Sweden). The chairs' conclusions were subsequently adopted by the final SBSTA 38 plenary on 14 June.

The contact group opened on 6 June, with Co-chair Magambo noting that discussions were continuing in what would be a long-term process.

**Egypt**, speaking on behalf of the **Group of 77 and China**, emphasized the importance of agriculture, food security, and food production. It said the Group was keen for the discussions to move forward for better understanding and fruitful outcomes. Egypt noted three main pillars for the G77 and China: emphasis on all the principles and provisions of the Convention, in particular common but differentiated responsibilities; adaptation as the core issue and core scope for any work to be related

to agriculture; and the relation of agriculture and adaptation to the transfer of technology, finance, and capacity building. It noted the group was open for discussions in good faith, with a willingness to move forward.

**The Gambia** representative, speaking on behalf of **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**, said he was a practicing farmer, and knows how he is affected every day by climate change. The LDCs supported having a dialogue on adaptation and noted that research and development, transfer of technology, finance, and capacity building are essential in helping rural poor farmers. It noted that there had been progress and a draft text carried over from Doha, although there were still divergences on issues. It suggested a workshop or a few workshops could be held in Warsaw to highlight differences so there is a common understanding. The Gambia said it was not fair for farmers if meaningful progress was not made.

**Malawi** spoke on behalf of the **African Group**, acknowledging the progress made in Doha and the priority attached by the Group in advancing work under Article 9 (of the UNFCCC). It said African's priority is to discuss the impact of climate change on agriculture, paying special attention to smallholder, marginal farmers, with the work implemented through the short, medium, and long-term. It suggested expert meetings and a workshop as a way forward.

It noted that a key element in the Doha text was to assess the state of knowledge on the impact of climate change on agriculture and how to deal with the sector in a changing climate, addressing climate change while promoting rural development. It also noted a need to identify efficient technologies and know-how, and that cooperation in research and development could be improved. Malawi further noted that concrete steps could enhance understanding and that there was a need to start

somewhere. It suggested to look at adaptation and co-benefits, and agreed that means of implementation – technology transfer, finance, and capacity building – were important and could have concrete impact on local farmers.

**India** said that the statement by Egypt (for the G77 and China) captured what the Group felt strongly. It noted that agriculture is a matter of highest priority, central to the livelihoods and lives of hundreds of millions dependent on subsistence agriculture. It was important to be sensitive to how we handle agriculture, as we are dealing with humans, not buildings, cars, or transportation. India noted that agriculture was a topic on which they were willing to engage, reemphasizing the points that the G77 coordinator had mentioned: principles of the Convention and common but differentiated responsibilities to frame the discussion, and Articles 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5 to provide context.

It also said that to frame the discussion in a constructive way under the UNFCCC, adaptation must be at the core of the discussion, as it is a crying need for many developing countries. Food security and rural areas depend on agriculture. It further noted the need to look at the means of implementation: capacity building, transfer of technology, and finance.

**Saudi Arabia** said the focus should be on three main elements: co-benefits of adaptation, technology, and the principles and the provisions of the Convention, including common but differentiated responsibilities, which plays an important role. It said there is a need to look at intellectual property rights and discuss issues of crop diversity and resistance to climate change. It also noted the role of (agriculture) subsidies in developed countries, pointing out that USD 350 billion were paid in subsidies in 2009, and asked delegates to think in terms of the amount of money in the GCF. Saudi Arabia said subsidies played a very important role, and in this respect common but differentiated responsibilities are important. It suggested to restructure subsidies, and suggested more specific work, including a workshop and technical papers, could be devoted to this subject.

**The Philippines** said it was grateful for the Saudi Arabian input for highlighting the impact of subsidies. It said it was speaking on behalf of 100 million people who live on a lot of islands and who are very vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Food security is a central objective of the Philippines government, and it faces the challenge of competing with heavily subsidized foreign

competition. Climate change impacts are a dangerous game changer, affecting agriculture, economy, and social development, and a danger to national development objectives.

It explained that an emphasis on adaptation and common but differentiated responsibilities was needed because there are many needs to be addressed. It gave several examples of needs in the Philippines: the country cannot continue to invest in rural roads only to be obliterated with every storm; there is a need for new technological platforms to address additional production challenges; and there are constraints from slow onset events, including in coastal agricultural areas which are 60% of agricultural production area, and a need to consider where to relocate production areas and population while feeding an increasing population.

**Brazil** stated that agriculture was a very important and exciting issue and agreed with the common concerns that had already been articulated by many, including food security and vulnerability to climate change. It agreed that a priority focus on adaptation was needed. It pointed to a common objective, the main objective of the Convention, to assure that food production is not affected.

Brazil noted that agriculture was a very diverse sector, and that social and economic functions varied among and within countries, requiring a differentiated approach and attention. It said common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities was a common concern. It was important also to establish means of implementation and capacity to adapt.

**Ethiopia** said that discussion should start off from the Doha text and that the discussion on agriculture should focus on the mandate of SBSTA. It agreed with previous speakers on the importance of food security. It reiterated that the three pillars mentioned by the G77 and China were important for the group and might be discussed more in a workshop if a decision were taken to have one. It pleaded with Parties to make progress in this session on agriculture, and mentioned that Parties are having discussions on agriculture in other bodies, such as the ADP

**Ireland**, speaking on behalf of the **European Union** (EU), noted the sensitivity of food production and climate change. It said that an emphasis on productivity, resilience, and efficiency was necessary. According to the EU, the elements required to move the agenda forward include looking into a wide range of practices, techniques, and technologies; and endogenous technical and

organizational options that are adapted to a variety of local and national circumstances. There was also a need to address farmers' priorities in the work of the contact group. Ireland noted that in the room there were areas of convergence and divergence, and suggested that the views of all Parties could be reflected in the outcome. An inclusive step-by-step approach, and increased understanding, could help advance the exchange of views.

**Australia** said that agriculture was one of the most important issues to be discussed at SBSTA38. It said the mandate and frame for the negotiations should come from Article 9. It was concerned about the lack of progress to date, feeling as if the process had become stuck. Australia noted a need to have clear objectives, and that the objective of the work of SBSTA should be to provide farmers and landholders with science and technological advice, emphasizing resilience, productivity, and efficiency, with the process based on these three elements. It noted a need to focus on the individual farmer and landholder, so they can produce more goods, leading to increased food security and increased security of livelihoods.

**New Zealand** said that its agricultural sector was not subsidized, and that the agriculture sector was responsible for 50% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions. It noted that if the main emphasis of SBSTA was on adaptation, there was no space to discuss New Zealand's agriculture emissions, which could only be addressed if the scope of the work was broad. It agreed with the importance of food security, the role of agriculture in the economy, and adaptation, but said that issues related to emissions were also important.

It agreed that Article 9 was relevant, but not Article 4 (on Parties' commitments taking into account common but differentiated responsibilities), and that a process should be initiated to provide scientific and technical advice. New Zealand said there was an opportunity for the UNFCCC to enhance agricultural cooperation and that the role of the UNFCCC is to facilitate more capacity-building exercises.

The contact group then met several times over the following week in informal consultations. During the course of the consultations, a draft text was tabled by the G77 and China, based on text that had resulted from the Doha meeting. New Zealand also tabled proposed text.

When the contact group reconvened on Friday, 14 June, it debated the status of the two texts. Some Parties, including Costa Rica, Colombia, Malawi,

Tanzania, Ethiopia, as well as the EU, suggested to append the G77 and China text to the chair's draft conclusions. Other Parties, including the Philippines and India, suggested that no text be appended. New Zealand proposed to append both texts that had been tabled.

Australia then proposed to end the process discussion and take a small step forward on substance, by opening a submission process on adaptation and co-benefits for agriculture in response to climate change, and a workshop to discuss the submissions.

Egypt asked for five minutes for the G77 and China to consider proposals made, including the suggestion of Australia. When the Group returned from its brief caucus, it proposed wording on a submissions process and an in-session workshop at SBSTA 39 on adaptation and adaptation co-benefits (the text found in the first paragraph of this article). Parties will consider the report of the workshop at SBSTA 40. The first paragraph of the chairs' conclusions, as proposed by the G77 and China and accepted by delegates in the room, notes that the exchange of views at SBSTA 38 was "on the basis of the principles and provisions of the Convention." The meeting ended in agreement on the text as proposed by the G77 and China.

In the final SBSTA plenary, after the adoption of the contact group chairs' conclusions, a number of Party groupings took the floor to voice their support for the progress made in the agriculture negotiations and to provide comments on the conduct of the in-session workshop.

**The Philippines**, on behalf of the **Like Minded Developing Countries in Climate Change**, emphasized the need to ensure balanced representation at the workshop for effective participation of developing countries as well as a balance in the selection of presentations and panelists. Parties should be informed of themes beforehand, to ensure transparency, inclusiveness and openness. It requested that the (UNFCCC) Secretariat avoid unnecessary overlap with regional meetings when scheduling the workshop. It also requested for its intervention to be recorded.

Richard Muyungi, SBSTA chair, responded that as it was an in-session workshop, hopefully all Parties would be able to participate.

**Uruguay** said that for many developing countries, agriculture is a crucial issue, and the discussions at Warsaw are key to providing technical input to close

the gap on the issue, explaining and exploring all possibilities, to move towards convergence.

**Malawi**, speaking for the African group, said agriculture was of great importance to their economies, and looked forward to the submissions and participation in the workshop.

**Egypt**, on behalf of the **G77 and China** echoed the concerns of the Philippines and others. It noted the good spirit shown by everyone to reach the conclusion, and looked forward to more progress before the COP, in Warsaw, and after.

**Venezuela** noted that agriculture was of the highest concern for the country. It raised the concern that it is extremely difficult for developing countries to try to attend every meeting invented in every session, in reference to the large number of workshops that were to take place in the intersessional period prior to COP 19. It was also concerned that the Convention cannot transform the issue of agriculture into an intellectual exercise, but that it was very important to now move from intellectual activity to actually compromising (to reach consensus on a decision).