

Scientific Body ends with calls for more progress at next session in Doha

Bonn, 29 May (Hilary Chiew) – The 36th session of the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) concluded last Friday (25 May) with expressions of frustration among developing countries who wanted to see more progress on issues of concern to them at the next session in Doha, Qatar.

The issues discussed included agriculture, the Forum on response measures, and methodological guidance for activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD-plus), and 'Research and Systematic Observation'.

Eighteen draft conclusions on various agenda items were agreed to for the consideration and adoption at the 18th session of the Conference of Parties in Doha later this year.

SBSTA Chair Richard Muyungi of Tanzania presided over the plenary.

On the issue of REDD-plus, the co-chair of the contact group on this agenda item, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Philippines) reported to the plenary that a draft conclusion and an Annex of draft text related to modalities for national forest monitoring systems and measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) of REDD-plus activities has been presented. She said Parties had a useful exchange of views on issues relating to drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and identified a number of issues relating to drivers, including some that were described as 'prickly' and concluded that further elaboration and discussion of this topic is required.

Due to the limited time available, Tauli-Corpuz said Parties could not fully consider the issues relating to safeguards and forest reference levels as mandated by decision 12/CP.17 adopted in Durban. However, she said they recognised the

need to consider further guidance on reporting on how safeguards are addressed and respected, and agreed to continue this consideration at the next session. Also, at the next session, Parties will initiate work on developing guidance for the technical assessment of proposed forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels.

Algeria speaking for the Group of 77 and China stressed that the work on agriculture must be consistent with Article 9 of the Convention (which relates to the mandate of SBSTA) and is based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR).

It called for the assessment of existing scientific and technological knowledge on agriculture and climate change, increase knowledge sharing, improve agricultural productivity and resilience in the context of climate change and improve capacity building in developing countries. The G77 underscored the importance of agriculture in adaptation and its relative priority compared to mitigation and the need to achieve food security, particularly in developing countries.

The G77 welcomed the discussion at the first meeting of the Forum on response measures to implement the work program with the objective of having a clear set of modalities for the operationalisation of the Forum and work program, including inter alia, assigning specific tasks and activities for the rest of the year and creating an outline schedule for 2013 to address specific needs and concerns of developing countries. It urged developed countries to provide financial support for the implementation of the work on agreed activities.

Algeria highlighted the importance of the review of the Nairobi Work Programme's (NWP) objectives, action-oriented sub-themes and working areas, and the need for the NWP to further enhance its work with a view to support the Adaptation Framework and its provisions.

The G77 recognised the activities done by the Technology Executive Committee (TEC) during 2012 and welcomed its rolling work plan for 2012- 2013. It emphasised the necessity for the TEC to structure its work plan in short and medium term, including the organisation of a thematic dialogue on enabling environment and on barriers to technology development and transfer. It also recommended the TEC to consider interaction with other institutional arrangements under the Convention, including the Climate Technology Centre Network, the Financial Mechanism and the Adaptation Committee.

It also welcomed the exchange of views on carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) in geological formations under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) activities with the aim to provide clarification on certain technical and legal issues at the 37th session of SBSTA. It requested that necessary resources are allocated for the technical paper to be prepared by the Secretariat for this purpose.

On the discussions on the general guidelines for domestic measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of domestically supported nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries (NAMAs), it aimed to continue the interactive exchange of views on the guidelines at the 37th session of SBSTA.

On the issue of methodological guidance for activities relating to REDD-plus, the G77 called for further discussions to ensure transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness and effectiveness in the presentation of the summary of information on how the safeguards referred to the Cancun decision (1/CP.16) are being addressed and respected. The G77 and China supported the dialogue on this issue taking into account the results of discussions on finance under the AWG-LCA and the need for adaptation in each country.

On the methodological discussions related to the guidelines for the Biennial Reports from Annex I Parties and the development of a common tabular format for reporting part of the information required, the G77 acknowledged the progress of the work. However, it expressed concerns over the delay in the work on the review guidelines for biennial reports, national communications and annual inventories from

Annex I Parties. While recognizing that the completion of this work is due only at COP 19, given the amount of work required and the importance of this, immediate engagement of Parties is necessary, in order to ensure a comprehensive outcome.

On the common metrics to compare emissions of different GHGs, it welcomed the workshop held last April here in Bonn that confirmed the importance of the exchange between science and policy. The group reiterated the relevance of the choice of the common metric in the context of future policy considerations under the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol.

Bolivia speaking for the **ALBA-TCP** emphasized that there were still a large number of tasks to be carried out. It welcomed the positive development of different approaches towards mitigation and adaptation and stressed that it was important to strengthen work between adaptation and mitigation. It also called for the recognition of the comprehensive contribution of forests to indigenous peoples who live in them. It also noted the lack of progress and support in the research and systematic observation of climate change.

It said the MRV of domestically-supported NAMAs in developing countries undermined the principles of CBDR under the Convention and noted that the preliminary potential elements do not take into account equity and national circumstances.

It was disappointed that there was no conclusion on the issue of agriculture although this is a key sector for developing countries in terms of ensuring food security.

Honduras representing the **Dominican Republic, Guatemala** and **El Salvador** said the NWP must continue to be supported to assist Parties in their response to climate change, adding that adaptation has to be taken into account as transforming agriculture means adapting to climate change and achieving food security at the same time. On REDD-plus, it supported the holistic approach, taking into account the full and multiple functions of forests and wanted all the functions to be recognised at the global level.

Nauru speaking on behalf of the **Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)** expressed disappointment with the outcome of

deliberations under on ‘Research and Systematic Observation.’ Science and hence research are a fundamental part of Parties’ common efforts to prevent dangerous climate change. The research dialogue is hence an important forum to facilitate discussions on scientific issues. In Durban, Parties agreed that the long-term global goal should be a key research area. AOSIS believed that the focus on the long-term global goal should be on those particularly vulnerable developing countries such as SIDS (Small Island Developing States) and LDCs (Least Developed Countries) who will be most affected by the impacts of climate change and the ambition level of the long-term global goal.

AOSIS expressed deepest disappointment that some Parties have intervened to remove references to the long-term goal from the SBSTA agenda item on further research. Could it be that they do not want research on low emission scenarios and tipping points? Or that they do not want research on assessing the emission reductions needed to limit warming to 1.5°C or on the impacts that could be avoided compared to where there current policies are heading us (which is) over 3.5°C warming? It hoped that the long-term goal will be addressed at each session of the ‘Research and Systematic Observation’ agenda in SBSTA.

Representing the **LDCs, Gambia** welcomed the progress in the NWP and that the group would submit their views on the new work areas of the NWP which it stressed must cover all elements of the Cancun decision including ‘loss and

damage’. It echoed AOSIS’ disappointment on the lack of progress in ‘Research and Systematic Observation’ which was crucial in the fight against climate change. It also said that it is extremely important to have better understanding of the available knowledge in agriculture.

Bangladesh said the TEC must address the issue of intellectual property rights as a barrier to technology transfer. It welcomed the methodological discussions on REDD-plus and supported the dialogue.

Papua New Guinea spoke for the **Coalition for Rainforest Nations**. It lamented that progress has been limited in this session as Parties continue to reopen issues already agreed. It said in Cancun, Parties decided that MRV for REDD-plus should be consistent with MRV for NAMAs. It said Parties do not need to reinvent the wheel every single time.

On the issue of coastal marine ecosystems under ‘Research and Systematic Observation’, it was deeply concerned by the lack of progress in this session. It said days had been spent quarrelling about procedural issues with the blatant intention to delay any discussion on substance. SBSTA was expressly requested to consider the need for a workshop on the issue. While developing countries desperately and urgently need to initiate a discussion on coastal marine ecosystems in mitigation and adaptation, some Parties have merely offered to delay this process for at least two years. This was unacceptable, it added.