



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED MEGADIVERSE COUNTRIES

DATE: 13 OCTOBER 2013
VENUE: ICAO, MONTREAL, CANADA ROOM CR3
TIME: 13:00 – 18:00
CHAIR: MS MALTA QWATHEKANA, SOUTH AFRICA

The meeting commenced on the afternoon of the 13th October 2013 and was attended by delegates from the following countries: South Africa, China, Philippines, Malaysia, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, and Guatemala. Apology was received from India.

Opening, welcome, purpose of the meeting and expected outcomes: South Africa opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present. The chairperson indicated that the meeting was originally planned for two days, however, due to the unavailability of the majority of members of the group, it was later agreed that the meeting will be shortened to a half-day. She indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to look at the history and original purpose of the formulation of the Like Minded Mega diverse Countries' Group; what the Group has achieved, what is outstanding, whether it is worth continuing as a group and if so what should be the roadmap. The chairperson emphasized that it would be critical for the group to ascertain whether there is still a need for the group to continue to exist given the achievement of the Nagoya Protocol and if so, requested that the purpose of the continuation had to be elaborated.

The chairperson mentioned that the generation of the agenda was through a thorough consultation process with member states. However, an invitation for members to add any additional items was extended but no additions were proposed and the agenda was adopted as presented.

Mexico gave a presentation on the history of the group (refer to presentation for details), from its establishment in Cancun, Mexico, in February 2002, through the Cancun declaration, which was signed by 12 countries, through the Cusco declaration in November 2002, to the New Delhi declaration in January 2005. Mexico indicated that the group was created as a mechanism for consultation and cooperation to promote the interests and priorities related to the preservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, with a number of objectives indicated in the declaration. The group noted that its primary purpose was the negotiation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS in light of the fact that these are countries rich in biological diversity, which was the basis for like-mindedness.

Brazil gave an account of its chairmanship from 2008 through to the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010. Brazil emphasised that

the group should continue to exist and carry its work forward. It was further highlighted that there is however, a need for the group to work on critical things that the group should focus on and the chair of the group was tasked to facilitate the process. Generally all members were in support for the continuation of the group.

Current status of membership: The group started with 12 countries, and has since grown to 17 countries. However, there's a need to confirm the membership status of the group. South Africa, as the current chair, was mandated to undertake this task.

The matter of the absence of the group website was also discussed. The chair was then tasked to follow up on this and to ensure on-going functioning of the website even after the chairmanship term. It was requested that it should be a secured site since the Group sometimes deal with confidential matters.

Brazil commended Mexico for the presentation made and further added that Brazil during its chairmanship convened two specialists' and one ministerial meetings. Brazil also led negotiations towards a package deal from Nairobi to Nagoya and that led to the adoption of a 2011/2020 strat Plan and Aichi Biodiversity targets, the Nagoya Protocol on ABS and the budget. Brazil further elaborated on how important it is to continue with the group and requested that other members should be encouraged to actively participate. The presiding country should ensure that members are encouraged to participate fully in the future. South Africa was therefore tasked to follow up with Madagascar and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Emphasis was also put on the fact that the Nagoya Protocol is not in force as yet and that the LMMC Group need to act together and support one another in ensuring that the LMMCs become Parties to the Protocol and that they are among the first 50 countries required for the Protocol to be in force. There was also a general feeling that the Group should not be seen as only having relevance to the Nagoya Protocol but to other matters of interest to the Group particularly those that affect biological diversity.

The chair also mentioned that on acceptance of the chairmanship, RSA had suggested to host an LMMC meeting which is the one held in Montreal Canada as it is cheaper for members if meetings for the Group are held back to back with other meetings. It was therefore agreed to have LMMC's meetings on the margins of other big meetings. It was also agreed that South Africa follows up on the status of the Rules of Procedures for the group for possible adoption. Current presiding country to ensure that the latest version is located and circulated to members for comments and legal vetting within their respective countries.

Philippines and South Africa made a presentation on the status of negotiations under the Intergovernmental Committee of the Nagoya Protocol, highlighting issues requiring a united voice by the group during ICNP3. Consequently, the group agreed on the following actions and way forward:

- Ratification of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS: The group noted that as of 13 October 2013, only 25 Parties to the CBD (4 of which are members of the group) have ratified/acceded to the Protocol, and encouraged members who have not yet done so, to ratify/accede to the Protocol as a matter of priority. Members were encouraged to speak to their principals to prioritize the ratification;

- Website and mechanism for communication: South Africa was requested to explore the possibility of developing a website for the group, as well as a centralised communication mechanism (e.g. creation of an e-group/workspace) to facilitate active intersessional communication;
- South Africa to also to explore the possibility of getting assistance from the CBD secretariat to provide space for the LMMC website.
- Another agreed upon activity was to get all the declarations of the LMMCs in the LMMC website for ease of reference. Delegates emphasized that the Group has got a lot to do with regards to the implementation of the Cancun declaration.
- Preparations for ICNP-3: Discussions on issues highlighted in Philippines and South Africa's presentations will be undertaken through e-mail, building towards ICNP-3 in February 2014. Communication should be through national focal points for the CBD and the Protocol. South Africa should also draft a paper on the LMMC key issues within the Nagoya Protocol which will be the group's legacy and contribution to the global discourse; Members to be consulted for inputs and comments.
- Collaboration during SBSTTA-17: This should be done on a case-by-case basis. South Africa should also engage members of the group that did not attend the meeting with a view to brief them on the outcomes of the meeting and establish the status of their membership;
- Meeting of experts during the intersessional period before COP12: If South Africa considers hosting a meeting of experts during the intersessional period, it should be noted that financial support may be required to bring some members of the group to the meeting. It would thus be more cost-effective to conduct discussions through electronic means rather than through physical contact and to consider having back to back meetings with bigger meetings such as the UNGA or WGRI, SBSTTA, COP, etc
- Meeting of Ministers prior to COP12: In the event that 50 Parties ratify/accede to the Protocol in time to have the first meeting of the Protocol in October in the Republic of Korea, it would be useful to have a meeting of Ministers during the UNGA session in September 2014.
- Participation in other international fora, e.g. WIPO, ITPGRFA, IPBES: members should further discuss how the group can participate in these and other relevant fora
- Rules of Procedure: The Rules of Procedure for the group should be finalised as a matter of urgency. This is going to be done via emails and the participants were encouraged to start their respective internal approval processes.
- LMMC members to ensure that they are adequately represented in different fora to avoid being marginalised in decisions taken
- Members present in the meeting were requested to provide contact details for the focal points of the Nagoya Protocol so that they participate in the online discussions in preparation for ICNP -3.
- South Africa to consult the members on the possible ministerial meeting agenda should the Protocol secure enough Parties to become in force
- The members of the LMMC to consider drafting a letter in support of the letter written by the Africa Group to the EU Parliament on the draft European Union Regulations on Access and Benefit Sharing of Genetic Resources.

Presentations by Mexico, Philippines and South Africa will be circulated with the report of the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 16:30