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CANADA

### **New Zealand's Views on the Proposals for New and Emerging Issues Relating to the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity**

We refer to Notification No. 2009-159 of 19 November 2009 (the Notification) inviting Parties and relevant organisations to contribute views and information related to the proposals received by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on new and emerging issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to provide comment in accordance with Decision IX/29 paragraph 9 based on the criteria set out in paragraph 12 (the relevant criteria).

We preface our comments by saying that the CBD already has a very full agenda. Therefore, like Mexico, New Zealand is of the view that the CBD's focus should be on the **full and effective implementation of existing activities** rather than taking on new issues, especially those that may not be directly within the mandate of the CBD or are being dealt with in other fora. We note in this regard paragraph 7 of Decision IX/29 which "[underlines] the need to reduce the number of agenda items for consideration by the Subsidiary Body at each meeting in order to improve the effectiveness of its proceedings".

Paragraph 11 of Decision IX/29 requested that proposals for emerging issues should, where possible, be accompanied with relevant information to substantiate their proposals including why the issue needs urgent attention by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). Without supporting information, it is difficult to assess the merits of the various proposals. Accordingly, New Zealand has limited its assessment, using the relevant criteria, to four proposals that were accompanied by supporting information; namely: (i) ocean acidification (ii) Arctic biodiversity (iii) impact of ground level ozone on biological diversity and (iv) marine protected areas and undersea noise. From this assessment New Zealand considers that **ocean acidification**, with its wide geographic coverage, uncertain and complex effect and potential to affect global marine food chains and communities appears to have the most relevance and merit for **possible elevation to the SBSTTA**

**agenda** as a new and emerging issue. In contrast, the other three issues appear either too specialised or narrow in scope, focus on additional research or gaps analysis or are beyond the core mandate of the CBD.

We stress that our conclusions at this stage are based only on the information that accompanied the proposals that we were asked to evaluate. We plan to revisit the issue prior to SBSTTA once we know what new and emerging issues are on the SBSTTA agenda for consideration by all Parties.

This process of identifying new and emerging issues highlights a fundamental challenge we face in the CBD, namely how to ensure that the SBSTTA process, including decisions on what new issues might be added to the CBD agenda, are informed by sound scientific advice. Without a solid scientific evidence base, and a forum where scientific issues can be properly assessed and debated, it is not possible to identify with confidence what subjects merit elevation to the CBD agenda.

New Zealand considers that the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) process offers a promising model to "filter" some of the issues before consideration by the SBSTTA. These issues include: the extent of knowledge, assessing the need for gap analysis, review of indicators and measures, determining the scope and possible solutions (including by other fora).

New Zealand recognises that it is difficult to dismiss topics as irrelevant when there is a linkage to biodiversity. Nevertheless it is important for the CBD to remain strategic in its approach. The revision of the Strategic Plan offers an opportunity for a thorough review of the SBSTTA process. In this regard, we consider that the promotion of the "SMART" concept (strategic, measureable, ambitious, realistic and time-bound) offers an excellent basis for incorporating a scientific perspective into the decisions and direction of the CBD, its role globally and in implementation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to receiving in due course the Secretariat's compilation of views on this issue for consideration by SBSTTA-14.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. McIsaac', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ed McIsaac  
New Zealand National Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity