

VI. Research and systematic observation

(Agenda item 6)

33. The SBSTA noted with appreciation the oral statements by the Chair of the Steering Committee of the GCOS and the Director of the GTOS secretariat.

34. The SBSTA expressed its gratitude to the GCOS secretariat for its updated proposal¹⁶ for the possible revision of the UNFCCC reporting guidelines on global climate change observing systems.

35. Having considered the GCOS proposal, the SBSTA decided to recommend a draft decision containing revised UNFCCC reporting guidelines on global climate change observing systems for adoption by the COP at its thirteenth session (for the text of the decision, see FCCC/SBSTA/2007/L.14/Add.1).¹⁷

36. The SBSTA recalled its request¹⁸ to the GCOS secretariat to provide, for consideration by the SBSTA at its thirtieth session, a comprehensive report on progress with the GCOS implementation plan. It also recalled its invitation to Parties¹⁹ to submit to the secretariat, by 15 September 2008, additional information on their national activities with respect to implementing the plan, and encouraged Parties to use the guidelines mentioned in paragraph 35 above when providing that information.

37. The SBSTA expressed concern that the regional action plans developed under the GCOS regional workshop programme remain largely unimplemented, and encouraged international organizations and development partners to provide further technical and financial support through existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes in order to advance implementation of priority elements identified in the GCOS regional action plans.

38. The SBSTA encouraged the GCOS secretariat, when preparing the report mentioned in paragraph 36 above, to consider, as appropriate, information on progress in implementing the regional action plans.

39. The SBSTA welcomed the progress report on the assessment of the status of the development of standards for each of the essential climate variables in the terrestrial domain prepared by the GTOS secretariat in response to an invitation by the SBSTA at its twenty-third session.²⁰ The SBSTA encouraged the GTOS secretariat and the sponsoring agencies of GTOS to finalize the assessment and invited the GTOS secretariat to report to the SBSTA on progress at its twenty-ninth session.

40. The SBSTA welcomed the efforts by the GTOS secretariat to develop a framework for the preparation of guidance materials, standards and reporting guidelines for terrestrial observing systems for climate, in response to decision 11/CP.9. The

¹⁶ FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.26.

¹⁷ For the text as adopted, see document FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1, decision 11/CP.13.

¹⁸ FCCC/SBSTA/2005/10, paragraph 94.

¹⁹ FCCC/SBSTA/2005/10, paragraph 95.

²⁰ As mandated, the GTOS secretariat provided a progress report on this matter to the SBSTA at its twenty-sixth session (FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.6). It provided an update to this report prior to the twenty-seventh session of the SBSTA (FCCC/SBSTA/2007/MISC.27).

SBSTA welcomed the progress report by the GTOS secretariat on this matter and took note of the different options for such a framework presented therein.²¹ The SBSTA encouraged the GTOS secretariat and the sponsoring agencies of GTOS to continue developing the framework in the way they consider most appropriate, making use of existing institutional bodies and processes, where appropriate, and taking into account that such a framework should meet the following criteria:

- (a) Standards should be developed on a scientifically sound basis;
- (b) The framework should provide for the involvement of governments in the development of standards and guidance materials and in their implementation;
- (c) Access to those standards and guidance materials should be free and unrestricted;
- (d) The process for developing the standards and guidance materials and the operation of the framework should be cost-effective and sustainable and take into account existing standards and guidance materials;
- (e) The framework should be flexible in view of future needs and developments in this area.

41. The SBSTA commended the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the Parties supporting space agencies on the progress made in 2007 in implementing actions in response to the GCOS implementation plan, and looks forward to continued progress during 2008. The SBSTA invited the CEOS to provide an updated progress report by its twenty-ninth session. The SBSTA noted the continued close working relationship between GCOS and the CEOS for linking space-based capabilities with global climate observing requirements.

42. The SBSTA welcomed the Cape Town Declaration²² adopted at the Group on Earth Observations Ministerial Summit, which recognizes the important contribution the Global Earth Observation System of Systems can make in response to the needs of the Convention and the growing need to further enhance such contributions. The SBSTA noted that such contributions will be made mainly through GCOS.

43. The SBSTA noted that systematic and continuous observations have significantly contributed to the key findings of the AR4 of the IPCC and play an integral and increasingly important role in monitoring and assessing impacts of, and in supporting adaptation to, climate change, as well as in contributing to the reduction of uncertainties. The SBSTA noted the importance of robust scientific information derived from the state-of-the-art observing technologies as well as conventional observations for supporting scientific assessment to inform action to address climate change.

²¹ See footnote 20.

²² Available at <<http://earthobservations.org/>>.

44. The SBSTA was informed of the workshop organized by GCOS, the World Climate Research Programme and the International Geosphere–Biosphere Programme,²³ held in Sydney, Australia, in October 2007, which examined, among other issues, requirements for future systematic observations resulting from the findings of the IPCC AR4. The workshop reinforced the importance of sustaining the long-term operation of the climate observing systems which provide the essential climate variables set down in the GCOS implementation plan and highlighted the need for Parties to share their data freely. The SBSTA noted that such efforts are particularly urgent in developing countries; however, it was noted that a number of areas also need to be addressed in developed countries.

²³ Workshop titled .Future climate change research and observations: GCOS, WCRP and IGBP learning from the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report.