

Submission by the United States of America

Content of the SBSTA Workshop for the Research and Systematic Observation Agenda Item
26 March 2013

The United States welcomes the opportunity to present our views on the content of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) workshop on the technical and scientific aspects of ecosystems with high-carbon reservoirs not covered by other agenda items under the Convention, such as coastal marine ecosystems, in the context of wider mitigation and adaptation efforts.

Coastal ecosystems, in particular tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrass meadows, sequester and store substantial amounts of carbon, often referred to as “coastal blue carbon.” These ecosystems are important for the many ecosystem services they provide, including their roles in carbon sequestration and storage. Effective ecosystem-based management and restoration of these coastal marine ecosystems can support and enhance their ability to serve as long-term carbon sinks for climate change mitigation purposes, and minimize conversion or degradation that contributes to carbon emissions. The United States believes additional research, monitoring, and assessment of coastal blue carbon ecosystems could be beneficial.

The United States sees the upcoming SBSTA workshop as an opportunity to gain a collective understanding of the importance of coastal blue carbon ecosystems and the current state of the science regarding their carbon storage and sequestration potential. It would be valuable to have presenters address the following questions during the workshop:

Understanding the Benefits of Blue Carbon Ecosystems

- How do carbon storage and sequestration in coastal ecosystems result in value to humans?
- What do we know scientifically about the ability of tidal marshes, mangroves, and seagrass meadows to store and sequester carbon?
- What are the potential carbon benefits of conserving and restoring these ecosystems, and how do they compare to other high-carbon ecosystems?
- What adaptation co-benefits do these ecosystems provide?
- What baseline information, metrics, and tools exist to measure and monitor carbon storage and sequestration potential in these ecosystems?

Status of Blue Carbon Ecosystems

- Where precisely are these ecosystems located, and what is their global extent?
- What is the current status of these ecosystems (health and rates of loss), and what is predicted to happen to them under different development and climate scenarios?
- How do changes in these ecosystems affect their carbon sequestration and storage potential?

Blue Carbon Challenges and Opportunities

- What are key research and technical challenges and uncertainties that limit our understanding of these systems and their carbon services?
- What key scientific and socio-economic research and technical issues do we need to address to enhance our ability to manage these systems for carbon sequestration and storage?

It would be valuable to have presenters share relevant scientific and technical work taking place around the world and to share information about our blue carbon research and monitoring efforts.