2 February 2001

Hamdallah Zedan
Executive Secretary
Convention on Biological Diversity

Dear Mr Zedan

GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR PLANT CONSERVATION

Thank you for your request for feedback and information on the strategy.

New Zealand Position

As you may recall, New Zealand expressed support for the concept of a strategy during the Nairobi discussions, but some reservations about the details proposed in the Gran Canaria document. We were involved in the drafting of the final recommendations, and strongly supported them. Following the Nairobi meeting, we provided informally to the chair of SBSTTA some ideas on what might be included in a strategy.

As we said in our intervention, plant conservation is often neglected, with charismatic vertebrates tending to receive the bulk of available resources. We would welcome a plant conservation strategy which would help to redress that balance by providing a focus for efforts to improve plant conservation.

That said, New Zealand would clearly only support a strategy that was well crafted, providing a practical and focused guide for plant conservation work. Such a strategy should recognise the primacy of in-situ conservation, although also recognising the valuable role which ex-situ conservation can play in some circumstances.

Role of a Strategy

Plant conservation, particularly in-situ conservation, is primarily a local effort. A global strategy therefore needs to do two things:

1. Provide guidance and direction to Parties for their national efforts; and
2. Provide a framework within which international or regional support for local conservation would be developed and provided.

The main forms of international/regional assistance which could be provided are:

1. The provision of financial resources (through aid partnerships);
2. The provision of technical support, including technical support relating to taxonomy, pest management, rare species management. That types of support might include

sharing of expertise, the development and transfer of techniques or technology, sharing of infrastructure/equipment/facilities, etc.
3. Co-operation between agencies/countries with similar problems.
4. Increasing public and political appreciation for the need for and value of plant conservation work, in order to enhance financial and practical support, reduce threats, and reduce opposition to plant conservation efforts.

Form of a Strategy

A strategy could be a fairly generic document, identifying general approaches and principles, or it could also contain more specific priorities and tasks. The latter would clearly be more useful, but more difficult to develop and gain agreement to.

A possible structure for a strategy is:
1. Introductory material, setting out the imperative for conservation work.
2. Guidance to Parties on the steps for achieving plant conservation.
3. Guidance to Parties on priorities for plant conservation. This should include principles for setting priorities, and might also include actual priorities.
4. Guidance to the international community on global priorities.
5. How the international community can support local conservation efforts. This section might also identify key players, and deal with relationships between players and programmes (e.g. looking at the role of GTI, GISP, etc).
6. Identification of key steps to make progress in elaborating and/or implementing the strategy.

Development of the Strategy

Given our view that in-situ conservation should be the focus for the strategy, we believe that it is important that the development of the strategy involve people with expertise in this area.

It is our view that a draft strategy or an outline strategy should be developed before SBSTTA 7, in order to allow countries considering the issues raised by the COP to have a more concrete proposal to examine.

New Zealand Involvement

New Zealand wishes to continue its strong involvement in this work. We would be very willing to provide expert input and drafting assistance in the period before SBSTTA 7.

Paula Warren
CHM Focal Point

Cc: C. Samper, Chair of SBSTTA

GLOBAL PLANT STRATEGY

Background

Take material from IABG document.

Introduction

Take material from IABG document.

Plant Conservation: Guidance on Elements for National Implementation

The objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity are the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

Biological diversity means the variability among living organisms, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

The Convention places a priority on *in-situ* conservation, recognizing that *ex-situ* conservation is predominantly for the purpose of complementing *in-situ* measures.

The following are the key elements for plant conservation work at a national level:

(a) Identifying status and trends of plant biodiversity, including:
- Taxonomic work, particularly to identify endemic species;
- Surveys and inventories to determine distribution and status;
- Identifying which species and populations face a threat of extinction;

[CBD Article 7]

(b) Establish a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biodiversity.
[CBD Article 8a]

(c) Manage threats to that plant biodiversity which has been identified as threatened, including through managing alien species and managing activities which might affect plant biodiversity.
[CBD Article 8, particularly d, e, g, h, i, k, l

(d) Promote the recovery of threatened plant biodiversity, including through rehabilitating and restoring habitats, *ex-situ* work, and reintroduction of species.
[CBD Article 8f]

(e) Develop strategic approaches to the work, particularly within national biodiversity strategy and action plans.
[CBD Article 6]

Priorities for Plant Conservation Work

Identifying Priority Species

The highest priority for plant conservation work is those plants which are threatened with extinction.

Threat classification systems (for example the IUCN listing process) can be used to identify these, where adequate taxonomic, distributional and status information is available.

Identifying Priority Areas

For many places (e.g. the tropics) and/or for some plant groups (e.g. bryophytes, seaweeds) the available information is unlikely to be sufficient. In those circumstances, priorities for work will need to be identified by focusing on ecosystem and habitat issues.

Pick up the material in IPAs in WWF 2.1

Identifying Priority Actions

Annex 1 contains a set of factors to consider in setting priorities for management action.

Specific Priorities

The following species and areas have been identified in other international processes as being a high priority for action:

[The following is not a complete list of these and is included only for illustrative purposes]

1. wild relatives of key domestic crops
2. the following biodiversity "hotspots" identified by …
3. species identified in the Red Data listing by IUCN

International Community Support for National Implementation

While most plant conservation work will be done at the national level, the international community have a vital role to play in supporting this implementation. That support can take a number of forms.

[The following list is not complete and is included only for illustrative purposes.]

Cooperation between countries
Where countries have similar plant biodiversity, or are tackling similar threats to plant biodiversity, cooperation may be appropriate to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the work. International organizations can provide assistance to such cooperative

initiatives, including by helping countries to identify potential partners, facilitating the development of cooperative initiatives, and providing financial and/or technical support to those initiatives.

Information Sharing and Management
Information technology can play an important role in plant conservation work, to allow better access to information (e.g. through data base networks) and to allow the combining of data to directly generate new information. International and regional initatives, such as GBIF, BINs (e.g. IABIN), NETs (e.g. Pacinet), etc have an important role to play in facilitating improved access to and use of available information.

Providing Guidance and Technical Advice
Actions must be designed at the national level, and in general only high level guidance can be globally applicable. The international community can, nevertheless, provide significant guidance to countries at the global and regional level. For example…

Controlling the trade in rare plants and controlling the threat that trade may pose to plants
A number of international conventions have an important role in plant conservation. These include CITES, conventions relating to timber production and other harvest activities, and conventions relating to the movement of alien species that might threaten plants (notably the IPPC). These conventions should ensure that their work provides optimal support to the priority work at a national level.

[add the priorities for work into each item]

Key Steps to Make Progress

The following have been identified as the most urgent actions to be undertaken to progress the implementation of this strategy and the Convention in relation to plant conservation.

[The following list is not complete and is included only for illustrative purposes.]

Priority for Parties
Review and if necessary revise NBSAPs to ensure they set clear priorities for plant conservation work, in accordance with the priorities in this strategy.

Implement the priority actions identified in NBSAPs.

Priorities for International Conventions
IPPC and CBD to identify any gaps in coverage or improvements needed in IPPC ISPMs, to ensure that plant conservation matters are taken into account.

FAO to identify and undertake priority work to increase the implementation of the strategy on wild relations of crops (not the correct name).

Priorities for Botanical Gardens
Botanic gardens to develop action plans for supporting the implementation of this strategy, including in particular contributions to public awareness and support for plant conservation, providing information support for *in-situ* plant conservation projects, and carrying out priority *ex-situ* work identified in NBSAPs.

Etc.

Annex 1: Factors for setting management priorities

Factors to consider in developing priorities should include:

Value of the Work

- How valuable is the plant biodiversity which is being protected (taking into account such factors as distinctiveness, rarity, viability, condition)
- How effective would the proposed action be in protecting that value
- What other benefits will derive from the work (including building increased capacity to tackle other projects)

Urgency

- How long can action be deferred without irreversible loss of biodiversity occurring
- How much will costs escalate if the response is deferred
- How rapidly will the benefits be achieved

Feasibility

- Legal risk: do the necessary legal powers exist to allow the project to be completed
- Political risk: could opposition (or lack of strong support) from the public, politicians, or other parties prevent successful completion of the project
- Institutional risk: does the institution have the commitment and capacity to complete the project
- Operational risk: are there other reasons why the project might not be completed or successful (e.g. weather, seasonal fluctuations in seed production)
- Outcome risk: are we sure that the project will have the desired effect on the valued biodiversity

Costs

- Could the project cause unacceptable side effects (e.g. to other biodiversity values, to public support for other projects)
- Does the action cause the loss of another benefit to society (e.g. might legal protection of a plant species reduce availability of a traditional food source)
- How much will the project cost
- Will the project require the use of scarce people, equipment or other resources which would prevent other projects proceeding

Appropriate Mix of Projects

- What is the optimal mix of projects for the available budget (taking into account factors such as geographic spread, the range of biodiversity protected, making efficient use of institutional capacity)

[These are the factors included in the alien species papers.]