

**Elaboration of options for
enhancing synergies among
biodiversity-related conventions**

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and
ECOLEX	environmental law information service
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
InforMEA	United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
PIMS	programme information management system
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Executive summary

Over the past decades, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements. These efforts have put in place a comprehensive governance regime addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. As, however, the number of obligations under such legal instruments has grown, so have concerns about how to implement them effectively and coherently, and about the possibility that there might be duplication of efforts. As a result, significant efforts have already been made to improve alignment among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and coordination, and this work continues.

The options for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions (focusing on the global level) set forth in the present paper respond to calls by the governing bodies of conventions, the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to explore opportunities for synergies, in order to achieve more coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. The present paper is one of several outputs being delivered by the UNEP project on improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies.

The preparation of the paper began with online surveys, sent by UNEP to national focal points, authorities and convention secretariats in early 2014, which helped to inform the elements of an initial draft document, which was discussed at a first expert meeting in August 2014. Based on the inputs received during this meeting, a first draft of the paper was completed in late 2014, and subsequently sent out for review to key stakeholders, including the convention secretariats. Following the review period, a revised version was finalized, providing input to a second expert meeting in May 2015, which further refined and elaborated the options, as set out in the present paper.

Through seven linked thematic areas, the paper provides 28 options (see list below), under which 88 actions have been identified for various actors, including Governments, convention secretariats, UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors.

The options are proposed to achieve two main outcomes: first, implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation among convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions; and, second, increased collaboration and cooperation in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors, and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations development assistance frameworks and in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals).

1. National biodiversity strategies and action plans, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Options:

- 1.1 Taking into account already existing materials, prepare streamlined and simple guidance and tools for facilitating the development, revision and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) across the conventions.
- 1.2 Support the integration of NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and sustainable development instruments at all levels.
- 1.3 Support parties in promptly obtaining funding provided through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs, through the promotion of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in a coordinated manner among their respective national authorities.
- 1.4 Support the exchange of experience on the development and implementation of NBSAPs and voluntary peer review of NBSAPs, including through the NBSAP Forum, with a particular focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.
- 1.5 Explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, by focusing efforts on collaboration between national focal points, authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of NBSAPs in different countries.

- 1.6 Elaborate on the role of each convention and United Nations body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

2. Reporting, monitoring and indicators

Options:

- 2.1 Building on present work, and recognizing the existing reporting obligations under each of the conventions, explore the possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and develop and test such an approach by addressing the identified benefits.
- 2.2 Enhance coherence in reporting through supporting indicator development and monitoring, building on existing work, including that of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership.
- 2.3 Further develop online reporting and information management systems and continue working to ensure their interoperability.
- 2.4 Continue support for reporting processes through joint (regional) capacity-building activities.
- 2.5 Increase reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions.

3. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and strengthening the science-policy interface

Options:

- 3.1 Conventions should continue a close dialogue with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on the timely and coherent communication of key findings across the governing bodies and the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 3.2 Conventions should consider and identify common issues for closer cooperation in developing and making future requests of the Platform, so that the priorities requested address areas of common interest.
- 3.3 Efforts should be stepped up to ensure that the governing and subsidiary bodies of conventions and convention secretariats interact with the Platform in a coherent and timely manner.

4. Information management and awareness-raising

Options:

- 4.1 Develop shared approaches for the more effective use of global information management tools.
- 4.2 Deliver joint information and awareness campaigns, including in the context of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011–2020).

5. Capacity-building

Options:

- 5.1 Strengthen the support provided by UNEP regional offices for implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for sustaining the functions of the multilateral environmental agreement focal points.
- 5.2 Identify immediate opportunities for collaboration on capacity-development activities and develop harmonized and possible common approaches.
- 5.3 Promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity-building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

6. Funding and resource efficiency

Options:

- 6.1 Convention secretariats should collaborate on new initiatives for obtaining additional financial resources.
- 6.2 The biodiversity-related conventions should pursue a coordinated approach to securing funding from GEF and the Green Climate Fund.
- 6.3 Encourage donors, particularly those concerned with development assistance, to help expand opportunities and provide further incentives for coordination and synergies.

- 6.4 Share information on work to support parties in resource mobilization, including in relation to innovative financial mechanisms that promote cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 6.5 Review and share past and current experiences relating to synergies between the multilateral environmental agreements and wider mainstreaming efforts, to identify means of boosting the cost-effectiveness of synergistic action on biodiversity.

7. Institutional collaboration

Options:

- 7.1 Focus and enhance the work of UNEP in supporting the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels, including, where appropriate, by promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in their implementation, in those areas that fall within its mandate, through its various programmes, initiatives and policies.
- 7.2 Strengthen the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (Biodiversity Liaison Group) as a mechanism for promoting collaboration and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions within its mandate.
- 7.3 Encourage mutually supportive decisions and possible common decisions across the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions for achieving coherence at all levels, including further developing and strengthening joint work programmes and memorandums of understanding.
- 7.4 Develop mechanisms to share expertise across the biodiversity-related conventions in order to seek and identify common issues to address, and actions to undertake, at a programmatic and political level, to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in a coordinated manner.

Recognizing that enhancing synergies across conventions requires a party-driven process, the present paper may be used by parties to the relevant conventions to promote collaboration and cooperation. The paper will also provide draft elements for the UNEP Executive Director's report on synergies between the multilateral environmental agreements, to be delivered to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session in May 2016. Moreover, it will support the party-led process established through decision XII/6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Co-chairs' perspective on meeting outcomes

Over the past decades a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements have been adopted, which have put into place a comprehensive legal and governance regime for addressing most biodiversity issues. When considered together, however, they can be challenging to implement in a coherent manner. As a result, there have been calls by governing bodies of conventions, and also by UNEP, to explore possible synergies between such multilateral environmental agreements, with the specific aim of making their implementation more coherent, efficient and effective.

The present options paper has been prepared through a UNEP project on improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies, the aim and mandate of which are described in detail in the introductory part of the paper. This project was funded by the European Union, with additional support from the Governments of Finland and Switzerland.

The options paper is the outcome of two expert meetings convened by UNEP as part of the project. These expert meetings on the elaboration of options for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements were both held in Switzerland, the first in Interlaken from 26 to 28 August 2014, and the second in Bogis-Bossey, from 13 to 15 May 2015.

Discussion at the expert meetings demonstrated that there are many relevant activities already completed or under way, involving convention secretariats, governing and advisory bodies of the conventions, United Nations bodies and other stakeholders, such as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. These include achievements, mandates, opportunities and activities that can be readily built upon, and it was recognized that these must be considered carefully, and wherever possible appropriately used as a basis for potential further action. It was also highlighted that it would be important to identify options that would lead to clearly identified benefits and substantive goals.

The options paper sets out 28 recommended options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, under which 88 action points in total have been identified for various actors, which include: parties; UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies; convention secretariats; and others. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors. The focus of the options paper is on programmatic cooperation, for which national biodiversity strategies and action plans, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide the essential foundations.

In addition to the specific options, the co-chairs identify five overarching considerations which came out through the process:

- (a) Benefits to be gained by implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a synergistic and coherent manner, so as to increase their national implementation, efficiency and effectiveness;
- (b) Importance of acknowledging and building on the past, existing and planned activities of biodiversity-related conventions and others to identify and address opportunities to build synergies and increase coherence in the implementation of the conventions;
- (c) Value of engaging with the activities of UNEP (and other relevant entities) to identify and address opportunities to build further synergies and increase coherence in the implementation of the conventions;
- (d) Potential opportunities for the further promoting of synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the global Sustainable Development Goals and their targets;
- (e) Need for all actors, including Governments, United Nations bodies, conventions and their secretariats, and other stakeholders, to continue to promote and undertake mutually supportive efforts and approaches aimed at enhancing coordinated and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, building on existing activities and experience.

Where the role of UNEP is concerned, the expert discussions indicated that there was a clear need to focus and enhance the Programme's work in supporting the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels, including, where appropriate, by promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in their implementation, in those areas that fell within its mandate. That work should both acknowledge and build on past, existing and planned initiatives, within and outside UNEP.

A summary of the workshop discussions and the options paper has been prepared for the UNEP Executive Director and, while recommending action relevant to a range of actors and processes, the summary focuses on how UNEP can more effectively support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including in the context of the “One United Nations” initiative. The summary clusters UNEP-specific options and action points, identifying new opportunities for synergies, including, but not restricted to, the following actions that emerged from the expert discussions:

(a) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets as a framework for action: ensure the effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets into the medium-term strategy and future work programme of UNEP, recognizing that these are not only key to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, but that they provide a framework with which biodiversity-related conventions and United Nations bodies have already aligned themselves, and within which synergies in the implementation of such conventions may be addressed in a systematic and integrated way;

(b) National biodiversity strategies and action plans: communicate at all levels the importance of national biodiversity strategies and action plans as high-level policy instruments for delivering coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. This includes mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant sectors, through all appropriate national planning processes, building upon what has already been achieved by the biodiversity-related conventions and others, and taking advantage of the opportunity that this brings to leverage resources;

(c) Support at the regional level: strengthen the support provided by the focal points of the regional biodiversity agreements within UNEP, for the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for this. Working in collaboration with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and relevant organizations – regional and other – UNEP could develop a coherent framework for the work of their regional focal points. This framework could guide UNEP regional-level support for the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and for a more synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and link it to the work of UNEP with United Nations country teams, so as to contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;

(d) Resource efficiency and mobilization: encourage the creation of more opportunities for coordination and synergies, and share information on work, to support parties in resource mobilization that promotes cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions. This could involve supporting parties in prioritizing coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in national plans on which donors base their funding priorities (such as the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks), pursuing a coordinated approach to obtaining funding from GEF and the Green Climate Fund among the biodiversity-related conventions, and promoting the benefits of synergies among the multilateral environmental agreements to GEF and donors, including by sharing experiences on how this can enhance the cost-effectiveness of action on biodiversity;

(e) Capacity-building: as chair of the Environment Management Group of the United Nations, and in accordance with the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, “The future we want”,¹ UNEP is empowered to lead efforts to formulate strategies on the environment that are United Nations system-wide, and promote possible ways to strengthen coherent and system-wide action on capacity-building, with a view to facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. These should build on the previous work of the Issue Management Group on Biodiversity of the Environment Management Group, and take into account the current follow-up work of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets task force, the capacity-building work being done under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. Working with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, and also through such collaborative mechanisms as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets task force, UNEP should explore the development of a coherent capacity-building framework to help achieve this. In addition, working with the members of the United Nations Development Group, it should support the increased integration of biodiversity considerations into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process to ensure that the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are more effectively pursued as a coherent framework for action on biodiversity and ecosystem services;

(f) Coherent approaches and practical tools for information and knowledge management: working with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP should continue and

¹ General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex. Available from: <http://www.unccd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html>.

enhance its contribution to interoperable data, information, knowledge and tools which support clear implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including tools to support reporting. It should continue working with key stakeholders, including convention secretariats and parties, on the further development and improved delivery of tools such as UNEP Live, online reporting tools, InforMEA, and mapping the contributions of the biodiversity-related conventions, United Nations bodies, and other relevant organizations, towards implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and application of the UNEP publication: *UNEP Sourcebook of Opportunities for Enhancing Cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at National and Regional Levels* (referred to hereinafter as the UNEP Sourcebook).

It is expected that the options paper, together with the background material produced for the two expert meetings, will be useful for discussion and possible further action in a number of forums. These include the United Nations Environment Assembly, the governing and advisory bodies of each biodiversity-related convention, the liaison group of the biodiversity-related conventions and the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. The options paper will also be one of several inputs to the informal advisory group of the party-led process initiated by the Convention on Biological Diversity under decision XII/6, concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. It should be noted, however, that, while some of the choices presented in the options paper could already be taken up by UNEP, parties, convention secretariats and other stakeholders, other options will rely on the political will of parties to introduce such ideas during meetings of the conventions' governing bodies. Thus, country and party ownership of the synergies process are key elements for a successful outcome.

The discussions during this process demonstrated that there is both genuine interest and significant experience that can be applied to improving the effectiveness of, and cooperation among, the biodiversity-related conventions. As the co-chairs of the two expert meetings, we would like to thank all the participants who have contributed to the development of the present paper. Without their dedicated input the production of this options paper would have not been possible.

Background

Over the past decades, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements. These efforts have put in place a comprehensive governance regime addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. As, however, the number of obligations under such legal instruments has grown, so have concerns about how to implement them effectively and coherently, and concerns have also been raised that there might be a duplication of efforts. As a result, significant efforts have already been made to improve alignment among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, and this work continues. To that end, there have been calls by the governing bodies of conventions, by the United Nations, and by the UNEP Governing Council in 2012 to explore possible cooperation, coordination and synergies between such conventions, with the specific aim of making their implementation more coherent, efficient and effective.

Thus, in February 2012, the UNEP Governing Council, in paragraph 1 of decision SS.XII/3 on International Environmental Governance², recognized the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognizing their respective mandates, and encouraged the conferences of the parties to those conventions further to strengthen efforts in that regard, taking into account relevant experiences. In paragraphs 2 and 3 of the same decision, the Executive Director was requested to undertake, as appropriate, further activities to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements, taking into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conferences of the parties, and to explore the opportunities for further synergies in the administrative functions of the multilateral environmental agreement secretariats administered by UNEP and to provide advice on such opportunities to the governing bodies of those multilateral environmental agreements.

In making that decision, the UNEP Governing Council considered how the efficiency and effectiveness of international environmental governance might be increased, in particular through reducing fragmentation and the potential for duplication (issues of concern raised in the first and second reports of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit on its review of environmental governance within the United Nations system³) and improving efficiency. Enhancing coordination and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements was also called for in paragraph 89 of “The future we want”. In that paragraph, heads of State and other high level officials recognized the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the multilateral environmental agreements and encouraged parties to such agreements to consider further measures as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication and enhance coordination and cooperation among those agreements, including the three Rio conventions, and also with the United Nations system in the field.⁴

The interim results of a recent study undertaken by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) that reviewed the decisions and resolutions of six biodiversity-related conventions found that, based on the study’s methodology, 849 paragraphs or subparagraphs in nearly 200 of the 1,200 decisions and resolutions that were reviewed⁵ provided guidance applicable for the implementation of various aspects of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, many covering closely related topics. These results build on earlier mapping efforts (e.g., by the United Nations Environment Management Group and individual conventions) in indicating possible areas for further review and further opportunities for cooperation and collaboration among biodiversity-related conventions, including a potential need for consolidating guidance to support those attempting to follow coherent approaches to attainment of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The options for further enhancing synergies set forth in the present paper have been developed through the UNEP project on improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related

² United Nations, “Proceedings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twelfth special session”, decision SS.XII/3. Available from: <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-xii/docs/Proceedings/K1280542%20-%20e-GCSS-XII-14.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2015].

³ “Management review of environmental governance within the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2008/3); “Post-Rio+20 review of environmental governance within the United Nations system” (JIU/REP/2014/4).

⁴ See footnote 1.

⁵ The majority of the decisions and resolutions reviewed were from the World Heritage Convention. It should be noted that the some 200 decisions and resolutions noted are from all the biodiversity-related conventions and that the various conventions deemed to provide the principal share of guidance (based on the study’s methodology) differ from one target to another of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies, which aims to deliver the above mandate from the UNEP Governing Council, and help inform decisions on related issues by the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.⁶ This project explored options for further synergies at all levels between six biodiversity-related conventions, with a view to achieving improvements in efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced collaboration⁷ and cooperation.⁸ It looked into the potential for synergies in the widest sense, and included consideration of all activities that aim to enhance cooperation and collaboration, in relation to strengthening implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.⁹ The work was supported by the European Union and by the Governments of Switzerland and Finland.

In fulfilment of this mandate, UNEP carried out online surveys of national focal points and authorities of six biodiversity-related conventions (and their secretariats) considered by the project. The results of this survey informed two expert meetings convened to elaborate options for identifying potential ways of enhancing synergies in implementation of the conventions. While the meetings focused on options at the global level, in some cases options or actions for the regional or national level were also identified.

The first expert meeting was held in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 26 to 28 August 2014, and based on its outcome, an initial set of options was prepared. This outcome was refined with written comments from participants, and circulated for wider peer-review by UNEP member States and also by national focal points and authorities for the conventions, through notifications sent out by convention secretariats. The second expert meeting, held in Bogis-Bossey, Switzerland, from 13 to 15 May 2015, refined the options paper. The paper, and a summary for consideration by the UNEP Executive Director, were finalized following further review and submission of written comments by workshop participants that refined the options suggested at the expert meetings. Participants at the expert meetings included representatives of convention secretariats, national focal points and authorities and experts identified by UNEP, meeting in their personal capacity, and the discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule,¹⁰ facilitated by two co-chairs.¹¹

The present paper and the summary will inform draft elements of recommendations by the UNEP Executive Director to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its second session, in May 2016, in response to the UNEP Governing Council decision SS.XII/3 referred to above. The options paper contains 28 recommended options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, under which 88 action points in total have been identified for various stakeholders, which include: parties to conventions, UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies, convention secretariats and others. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, and also existing and planned, initiatives undertaken by a number of actors. The summary for the UNEP Executive Director captures the essentials of the discussions, presents overarching considerations for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and lists UNEP-specific options and action points clustered in a policy relevant manner. While recommending action relevant to a range of actors and processes, the summary focuses in particular on the role of UNEP and how it can more effectively support the coherent implementation¹² of the biodiversity-related conventions, including in the context of a “One United Nations” approach to support action at all levels.

⁶ This project has run in parallel to the work of, and seeks to complement, the UNEP task team on multilateral environmental agreements, which is exploring the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and the agreements for which UNEP serves as secretariat or performs secretariat functions (Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – CITES, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, including the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, together with a number of regional agreements).

⁷ Defined, for this project, as “working together to produce a shared discrete output”.

⁸ Defined, for this project, as “working together towards a common aim or objective”.

⁹ While the options presented focus on the biodiversity-related conventions, the applicability of the options to other multilateral environmental agreements should also be considered.

¹⁰ When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker or speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed, thus enabling the experts to speak and air their views freely.

¹¹ The co-chairs were identified prior to the meeting by the UNEP project team.

¹² Defined, for this project as “implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a consistent manner as a whole”.

In addition, the present options paper, as well as background material produced for the expert meetings, may also be used by parties to the relevant conventions to inform discussions at meetings of governing bodies. This recognizes that progress in enhancing coordination,¹³ cooperation and collaboration across the biodiversity-related conventions will require a party-driven process, consistent with paragraph 89 of “The future we want” and mutually supportive decisions across the meetings of the various conferences of the parties. A number of forums will provide opportunities for further discussion and action, including the United Nations Environment Assembly, governing and advisory bodies of each of the biodiversity-related conventions, the Biodiversity Liaison Group¹⁴ and the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. The paper will also be one of several inputs to the informal advisory group of the party-led process initiated by decision XII/6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will prepare options for parties of the various biodiversity-related conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them, thereby supporting implementation of paragraph 89 of “The future we want”, which, as cited above, called on parties to the various multilateral environmental agreements to enhance their coordination and cooperation.

Concurrent with the work that has led to the options paper, UNEP has also been compiling guidance, experience and lessons learned at the national level in respect of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, working closely with convention secretariats and national focal points and authorities. This resulted in the UNEP Sourcebook, launched at the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, held in June 2015 at Punta del Este, Uruguay.

The promotion of enhanced synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, although not expressly mentioned, is relevant in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the global Sustainable Development Goals. The present paper was written before the final outcome of this process, however.

¹³ Defined, for this project as “the organization of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively and without duplication (within an organization or among organizations and different actors)”.

¹⁴ Consisting of the heads of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Ramsar Convention, the World Heritage Convention and the International Plant Protection Convention.

Options for enhancing collaboration and cooperation

Options for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions are set out in the present paper. These options are proposed with a view to achieving two main outcomes, namely:

(a) *Implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions carried out in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation among convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions.*

(b) *Increased collaboration and cooperation in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors, and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations development assistance frameworks and in furtherance of the sustainable development goals).*

It has not been within the scope of this project to develop indicators for the options presented, for the purpose of measuring progress in their implementation towards achieving the outcomes above, nor to assess the resource implications of the options. It is recognized that these would be important steps when taking any of the options forward.

While presenting the options in the present paper, it is recognized that there are a number of party and secretariat-led efforts already completed, under way or planned, which have aimed or are aiming to enhance coordination and synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions. In addition, a number of proposals for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions have been developed through other means and processes, and while some have been realized, others have not yet come to fruition. The present options paper has been informed by considering whether and how such existing or planned initiatives and progress made to date can be built upon.¹⁵

With regard to existing initiatives, a number were particularly noted. The outcome of the recent ninth meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group¹⁶ agreed on actions that relate to a number of options outlined in the present paper, including those relating to facilitation of access to financial resources from GEF, cooperation on online reporting; the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and communication and public awareness.

In addition, an important element now being addressed is a party-led process concerning synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. As previously mentioned, in paragraph 6 of decision XII/6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the parties agreed to the establishment of a regionally balanced informal advisory group, composed of two members per region, to prepare, in consultation with the secretariat, prior to the first meeting of the subsidiary body on implementation, a workshop with the task of preparing options which might include elements that could contribute to a possible road map, for parties to the various biodiversity-related conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them. The workshop will engage parties and the secretariats of all seven of the biodiversity-related conventions, together with other relevant organizations.

At the same time, the UNEP task team on the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered convention secretariats¹⁷ undertook consultations through two working groups that have explored a number of the issues raised in the present paper. The Executive Director held a consultative meeting with the heads of the convention secretariats in June 2015 to review and consider the final report and recommendations from the task team. The meeting approved the report of the working group on programmatic cooperation with the aim of strengthening the programmatic collaboration, and agreed on the way forward for the implementation of the approved recommendations of the task team. It also requested that the working group on administrative arrangement finalize its work as soon as possible for review and approval by the task team, before the Executive Director and the heads of the convention secretariats provided final approval.

¹⁵ An overview of existing initiatives for enhancing coordination and collaboration at various levels across the biodiversity-related conventions was released as a background document for the second expert meeting, held from 13 to 15 May, in Geneva.

¹⁶ Held on 16 August 2014, in Warth, Switzerland. Meeting report available at <http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/BLG-9-rep-final-en.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2015].

¹⁷ Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, and Convention on Migratory Species.

It should also be recognized that, although the options have been clustered under seven themes, there are many links between them. Of particular note are the decisions taken by the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, which are boosting efforts to align around the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to acknowledge and promote NBSAPs as a framework for coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. The NBSAP is the national implementation mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity. NBSAPs are therefore significant opportunities for coordination and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions. In this context, it should also be noted that, by resolution 65/161, the General Assembly has affirmed the overarching role of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, for the entire United Nations, including all multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations bodies. Advancing the continued development of comprehensive and coherent NBSAPs, which take into account and promote synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level, is critical for enhancing coordination and synergies, and also for effective implementation, and is therefore central to many of the options proposed in the present paper.

Equally important is the fact that a more synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions will also be achieved through better mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (such as development, trade, finance, climate change, forestry, fisheries, agriculture and health). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the global Sustainable Development Goals, together with national planning processes such as those associated with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, should provide platforms for mainstreaming work. Such policy integration is vital to the coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. Likewise, the mainstreaming of biodiversity within the 2030 Agenda will facilitate fulfilment of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. Accordingly, biodiversity mainstreaming should be an essential feature of parties' and convention bodies' efforts. This allows countries to optimize processes, with potentially significant savings of resources. Such integration requires the involvement of actors in addition to national focal points and authorities of the conventions.

The options are outlined in seven thematic sections: NBSAPs; the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; reporting; monitoring and indicators; the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and strengthening the science-policy interface; information management and awareness-raising; capacity-building; funding and resource efficiency and institutional collaboration. The options and associated actions for various actors presented are those that were suggested at either of the expert meetings and then refined by subsequent written comments from meeting participants. Each thematic sector starts with the overall intended outcome of the options and associated actions presented.

I. NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Anticipated outcome: The governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions, and also United Nations bodies and agencies, continue to align their strategies and activities with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. NBSAPs therefore serve as frameworks for national-level implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors. Improvements in guidance and support, and increased engagement of national focal points and authorities from all conventions to which countries are party, help to encourage the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions through NBSAPs.

All the biodiversity-related conventions have taken steps to align their strategies with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and this represents a significant advancement in achieving synergies at a policy and programmatic level, and it has already provided impetus for collaborative action at global and national levels. At its 2010 meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity agreed to translate this overarching international framework into revised and updated NBSAPs by 2015, and this process for revising and updating NBSAPs has led to governing body decisions across conventions. For example, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) have all encouraged and provided guidance to their parties' national focal points and authorities to engage with the development, revision and implementing process of the NBSAPs.

As of August 2015, 42 out of the 52 NBSAPs submitted since 2010 have taken the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 into account. In all, 132 parties from the Convention on Biological Diversity have not yet submitted a post-2010 NBSAP, as envisaged by Aichi Biodiversity Target 17.¹⁸ Many parties from the Convention on Biological Diversity, however, are in the final stages of the NBSAP revision or development process. There is an urgent need for support in the preparation of the remaining NBSAPs, and frameworks for national-level implementation of all the biodiversity-related conventions, as appropriate. At the same time, as the new NBSAPs move to the institutional phase there is scope to build on the current impetus with greater action to support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions through NBSAP implementation, including the design of shared sets of national level targets and indicators, and for strengthening the institutional arrangements for implementation, such as national focal point coordination meetings.

Fundamentally, NBSAPs should be seen as high-level policy documents for mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors, and an incentive to develop a more coherent approach to resource mobilization at global, regional and national levels.

Support for NBSAP revision and implementation should be carried out in collaboration with all relevant actors, including parties, convention secretariats, UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant United Nations and non-United Nations bodies such as the International Tropical Timber Organization, development cooperation agencies and other partner organizations.

One of the tools providing support for NBSAP revision and implementation is the NBSAP forum. This is a global partnership hosted by the Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, UNEP and UNDP, which aims to support countries in finding the information and help that they need in order to develop and implement effective NBSAPs. The NBSAP forum has become both a repository of useful resources, and a community of practice, and an increasing number of organizations are becoming involved.

Option 1.1: *Taking into account already existing materials, prepare streamlined and simple guidance and tools for facilitating the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs across the conventions.*

Some conventions, such as CITES and the Convention on Migratory Species, have already developed convention-specific guidelines for their national focal points and authorities to engage in the revision, updating and implementation of NBSAPs. Further convention-specific guidance might be necessary. As many parties should soon complete their NBSAPs, such guidance should be prepared quickly and

¹⁸ <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/> [accessed 10 August 2015].

be practical. There is scope for enhanced collaboration on these activities to support NBSAP implementation. This could be useful in addressing key concepts (e.g., development of national indicators and resource mobilization) that are common across the conventions and in taking forward the mainstreaming of NBSAPs into wider policy sectors.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Convention secretariats, Biodiversity Liaison Group, UNEP and partner organizations should jointly develop simple guidance for bringing about a synergistic approach in the implementation of NBSAPs, e.g., guidance on developing collaboration between national focal points and authorities to identify potential opportunities for synergies, promoting actions on resource mobilization for more than one convention, and targets and indicator development and monitoring;
- (b) Convention secretariats should consider the issuance of a joint or similar communication to national focal points and authorities from all conventions on the use of the NBSAP revision and implementation process to foster collaboration at the national level. The substance of such a communication could refer to the case studies from the NBSAP section of the UNEP Sourcebook, case studies from non-governmental organizations, and potentially to the review of biodiversity-related convention decisions and resolutions and their relationship with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets undertaken by UNEP-WCMC.

Option 1.2: *Support the integration of NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and sustainable development instruments at all levels.*

A number of global and regional initiatives and projects already exist to foster the integration of biodiversity into a variety of sectors. To date, however, these mainstreaming activities generally do not take into account the benefits to be gained from the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Convention secretariats should provide further joint support and guidance to parties with regard to the mainstreaming of the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions into wider sectors;
- (b) UNEP, including regional offices, UNDP and other United Nations bodies, working together with convention secretariats, should jointly contribute to guidance on integrating NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and sustainable development programmes;
- (c) UNEP, in consultation with convention secretariats and parties, should ensure effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the medium-term strategy and future work programme of UNEP;
- (d) The United Nations Environment Management Group should ensure effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in wider United Nations policies and strategies on the environment, recognizing that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a framework within which synergies in the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions can be harnessed in a systematic way;
- (e) UNEP and the Biodiversity Liaison Group should communicate the importance of NBSAPs as high-level policy instruments for mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant sectors through all appropriate national planning processes, and the opportunity that this brings to leverage resources for synergistic and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions;
- (f) UNDP and United Nations country teams, in consultation with Governments, should integrate biodiversity into common country assessments, thereby informing United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;
- (g) Governments should collaborate with national sustainable development councils and bodies, if in place, to facilitate mainstreaming of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and implementation of NBSAPs, in order to deliver the co-benefits for the synergistic and coherent

implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, including the leveraging of resources.

Option 1.3: *Support parties in promptly obtaining funding provided through GEF for the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs, through the promotion of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in a coordinated manner among their respective national authorities.*

Although, among the biodiversity-related conventions, GEF is only the financial mechanism for the Convention on Biological Diversity, it can support projects that provide benefits under multiple conventions. The Biodiversity Strategy under the sixth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund includes a specific paragraph on synergies, which may provide a basis for collaboration with other biodiversity-related conventions, in particular in NBSAP revision and implementation processes. In addition, in relation to the forthcoming GEF replenishment period, decision XII/30 of the Convention on Biological Diversity invites the governing bodies of the other biodiversity-related conventions to provide elements of advice concerning the funding of national priorities that may be referred to GEF through the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (see option 6.2, action (e) below).

Recommended actions:

Convention secretariats, GEF focal points, UNEP (including UNEP regional biodiversity focal points), UNDP and other GEF implementing agencies should encourage parties to take advantage of GEF funding for the development and implementation of NBSAPs, which serve as frameworks for the synergistic implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions, and should provide information on how to do so and facilitate experience-sharing.¹⁹

Option 1.4: *Support the exchange of experience in the development and implementation of NBSAPs and voluntary peer review of NBSAPs, including through the NBSAP Forum, with a particular focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.*

Voluntary peer-review of draft NBSAPs is currently offered to countries through the NBSAP forum to enhance the quality of the final NBSAPs. In addition, a Convention on Biological Diversity working group for the development of a methodology for voluntary peer review of implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been established. This group had its inception meeting in February 2015 in Tbilisi.

Recommended actions:

- (a) UNEP and UNDP, using GEF NBSAP support funds and potentially other funding sources, should organize workshops for experience-sharing on the implementation of NBSAPs with a particular focus on synergies and mainstreaming of NBSAPs into other sectors, plans and programmes;
- (b) UNEP, UNDP and the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat and partner organizations should, as a matter of priority, sharpen the focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions in the work of the NBSAP forum, and invite other convention secretariats to provide more tools and guidance to be displayed on the forum;
- (c) The Convention on Biological Diversity working group on the development of a methodology for voluntary peer-review should ensure that the methodology includes consideration of the extent to which NBSAPs promote coherent implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions;
- (d) Convention secretariats should consider ways to ensure that their specific convention's guidance (including on NBSAPs) and tools are built into the voluntary peer-review process.

Option 1.5: *Explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, by focusing efforts on collaboration between national focal points, authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of NBSAPs in different countries.*

¹⁹ See GEF/R.6/20/Rev.01, GEF-6 Programing Directions, p. 8, 26 November 2013 [online]. Available from: http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/GEF_R.6_20.Rev_01,%20%20Programming%20Directions,%20Final,%20November%2026,%202013.pdf. Accessed: 10 March 2015.

Biodiversity is not limited by national boundaries, but cuts across regions and continents, often involving multiple countries. By focusing efforts on enhanced regional coordination, stakeholders can access resources together, or coordinate their activities towards a common regional or transboundary goal.

Recommended actions:

Convention secretariats, UNEP regional biodiversity focal points and UNDP should explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, and, in collaboration with convention secretariats, support regional coordination and collaboration on NBSAP implementation, including through existing regional platforms and bodies, by developing regional strategies as appropriate.

Option 1.6: *Elaborate on the role of each convention and United Nations body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.*

In 2011, the United Nations Environment Management Group began mapping activities and initiatives of its members, including biodiversity-related conventions, against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This mapping exercise initially drew on an earlier report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) that had been requested by the chairs of the scientific advisory bodies. The CITES secretariat thereafter provided the Environment Management Group secretariat with an official mapping of the convention's strategic vision objectives against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which replaced the initial IUCN mapping and was incorporated into the Environment Management Group's final mapping exercise. More recently, the secretariat's mapping was reviewed and revised by the CITES Standing Committee Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements in January 2015, in the context of using it as a basis for annotating the proposed new CITES implementation report with relevant targets, and this work will be discussed by the CITES standing committee at its sixty-sixth meeting in January 2016.

The new Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016–2024 also includes a mapping of the plan's goals and targets with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.²⁰ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force²¹ has an important role to play in elaborating on the role of each convention and United Nations body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. At the second expert meeting under the UNEP project on synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP-WCMC presented the interim results of a study that it had undertaken to map certain convention articles, strategic objectives, resolutions and decisions of the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and options for both advancing and finalizing the study.

Recommended actions:

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force should be strengthened and the contributions of the various members mapped against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets – building on existing mapping exercises. This can then be used as a basis for identifying opportunities for increased collaboration between conventions and United Nations bodies at national, regional and global levels.

²⁰ Resolution XII.2, annex 2, of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

²¹ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force was established under a memorandum of cooperation on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, between the Convention on Biological Diversity and 27 of the largest international agencies, organizations and environmental conventions, including the secretariats of CITES, the Convention on Migratory Species, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force is made up of the heads or deputy heads of the signatory organizations and its purpose is to promote information exchange and, where appropriate, to coordinate the activities of the respective institutions to achieve the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

II. Reporting, monitoring and indicators

Anticipated outcome: Heightened cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions on the development and use of indicators, and on the organization and management of reporting processes, leads to a more coherent use of data and indicators for monitoring at all levels and streamlined reporting processes that facilitate the preparation, delivery and use of reports.

The monitoring of and reporting on implementation activities are key obligations for parties to the biodiversity-related conventions. It is recognized that each convention has its own reporting framework, and mandatory reporting requirements, and that some of these will remain distinct. There is nevertheless further scope for streamlining the reporting process, accompanied by complementary capacity-development efforts, to decrease the costs of monitoring, lighten the burden on parties, and to increase the utility and quality of reports and the feedback that parties receive on their reporting to assist with policy development and decision-making.²² There are limitations to this, given the provisions of the various conventions and the variation in the governing body sessions of the conventions and protocols.

A strategic approach to timelines for reporting could potentially decrease the burden of work for parties and enable more effective contributions to future assessments, such as the Global Biodiversity Outlook and deliverables of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. This would involve information relevant to multiple conventions being managed on an ongoing basis at the national level and used for reporting to the different conventions at an appropriate time. This need has long been recognized, and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, along with the development of indicators to monitor progress at global and national levels, provide a new opportunity for streamlining national reporting and for mainstreaming biodiversity into wider sectors. The involvement of indigenous and local communities, and also of civil society in general, in reporting is also a shared interest across several conventions.

Developing a coherent set of national and global level indicators for reporting and informing progress on achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets could be a powerful tool when mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors, including informing the development of Sustainable Development Goal indicators. This will involve working with the Biodiversity Indicator Partnership, the outcomes of the Convention on Biological Diversity Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, and the Inter-Agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. Regarding the last mentioned, proposed indicators will be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-seventh session in March 2016 and thereafter approved by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. This work must bear in mind the respective timelines for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (2020) and the global Sustainable Development Goals (2030).

There have been promising developments in convention online reporting systems as tools for the ongoing maintenance of appropriate data and delivery of this information for reports. For example, the online reporting system²³ developed for the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement has subsequently been used by other agreements in the Convention on Migratory Species family, and for the Convention's 2014 national reports to its Conference of the Parties at its tenth and eleventh meetings. The online reporting system has also been customized for use by CITES and the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), and application of the system for future reporting cycles is in preparation.

Another example of an online reporting system is the periodic reporting assessment under the World Heritage Convention, which is informed by the state of conservation information system. Working on the interoperability of the different systems will be essential for any future activities: ensuring information interchange between reporting systems will increase the effectiveness of the systems collectively, and reduce overlap in information requirements individually.

²² Noting the work already under way through regional groups, such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme and the Caribbean Community, on consolidated reporting templates, governing bodies and secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements, and UNEP-WCMC.

²³ The system was developed by UNEP-WCMC in partnership with the secretariats of the Convention on Migratory Species and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement, and was first used for the submission of national reports under the Agreement to the Meeting of the Parties at its fifth session in 2012. The online reporting system enables secretariats easily to generate tailored online questionnaires for completion by parties.

Ultimately it is the parties which adopt their reporting frameworks through governing body decisions for each convention. Thus, action is needed to assist parties in taking decisions that are mutually supportive and implemented in a coordinated manner. In this context, recent decisions by the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions are encouraging and form a good basis for further work. Such decisions include: Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/6²⁴ requesting the Executive Secretary to explore the potential for a more coherent reporting framework with other biodiversity-related conventions; Convention on Migratory Species resolution 11.10²⁵ inviting the Biodiversity Liaison Group to undertake efforts to increase synergies with respect to monitoring and reporting; and CITES decision 16.44 (f) directing the Standing Committee to consider how best to report CITES input to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Option 2.1: *Building on present work, and recognizing the existing reporting obligations under each of the conventions, explore the possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and develop and test such an approach by addressing the identified benefits.*²⁶

This could include exploring the opportunities to align convention reporting with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Such a modular approach would allow for some shared reporting, along with reporting on convention-specific elements, without increasing the burden of reporting.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should provide some guiding principles (such as desired impacts) on, practical advice on a strategic approach to, and outline opportunities for further work on, the harmonization of reporting, including in relation to timelines for reporting, and modular approaches to reporting;
- (b) With guidance from the Biodiversity Liaison Group, the convention secretariats should undertake a review of possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and carry out a stocktaking of the current planned reporting requirements in order to identify potential for developing shared reports on certain issues, making this information available to parties. The stocktaking could include general country information (for example biodiversity status, legal measures taken, NBSAP priorities), and information on particular cross-cutting issues;
- (c) Informed by the results of action (b) above, and as part of the development of national reporting formats and any accompanying guidance, convention secretariats, with the support of the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative,²⁷ should jointly develop some shared reporting modules as demonstrations of what can be achieved, to be considered by parties;
- (d) Convention secretariats should invite parties from both developing and developed countries to

²⁴ Decision XII/6, paragraphs 4 (c) and 4 (d). In addition, in decision XII/29, paragraph 6, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to explore the potential for a more coherent reporting framework with other biodiversity-related conventions to improve access to relevant data for the implementation of the Convention and to reduce the reporting burden on parties, and make use of the experiences from this work when preparing proposals for the sixth national report.

²⁵ In Convention on Migratory Species resolution 11.10, the Conference of the Parties invites the members of the Biodiversity Liaison Group to strengthen cooperation and coordination with a view to increasing synergies among their respective explorations and developments of online reporting systems as a means to increase synergies on national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions.

²⁶ The national implementation of a number of multilateral environmental agreements relates to common topics and themes. A modular approach would identify and group the implementation requirements of relevant conventions along specific topics. For example, information on site-based approaches to conservation of biological diversity could be held in one place and made available for reporting to, and also implementation of, a range of conventions and mechanisms.

²⁷ The overall aim of the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiatives to contribute to more effective implementation of the agreements by improving coherence in the area of data and knowledge sharing within and across clusters of such agreements and United Nations bodies that host them, including UNEP, UNESCO and FAO. It aims to facilitate discussions among the multilateral environmental agreements on issues related to environmental governance by demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborative activities and harmonized approaches and processes in the field of information and knowledge management.

engage in pilot projects to test and refine these modules;

- (e) In support of this work, convention secretariats, UNEP and other host institutions²⁸ should provide guidance and capacity development for the preparation of reports and for the increased coordination of national focal points and authorities on reporting;
- (f) Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions should consider decisions in support of this work including on shared reporting modules and timelines for reporting.

Option 2.2: *Enhance coherence in reporting through supporting indicator development and monitoring, building on existing work, including that of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership.*

Indicators have become an important tool for providing a scientific basis to measure progress in the implementation of a convention, and joint indicator processes that can foster streamlining and harmonization of national reporting. In addition, a more coherent approach to using indicators across conventions could facilitate communication, including communication into other sectors.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, working with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, should take forward technical work on the development of indicators for assessing progress towards the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group of the Convention on Biological Diversity on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 could contribute technical input to this effect and help strengthen the mandate of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership;
- (b) Conventions should increase their engagement with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, for example through facilitating and promoting joint capacity-building activities for the development of national indicators;
- (c) Parties should be encouraged to develop or select common indicators (across conventions) that align with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (noting the mapping exercises mentioned in option 1);
- (d) Parties, supported by the efforts of the convention secretariats and others, including UNEP and other United Nations bodies, and making use of the work of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, should be encouraged to seek the integration of biodiversity indicators into those of the Sustainable Development Goals and into the monitoring of national sustainable development plans.

Option 2.3: Further develop online reporting and information management systems and continue working to ensure their interoperability. There is potential for building on the online reporting systems mentioned above and other systems to support more streamlined and efficient reporting processes, the sharing of information arising from reporting, and potential harmonization of national reporting templates. In addition, there are several information management systems under development and in use (please see thematic area 4 on information management and awareness-raising), which could be tailored to further support streamlined reporting. UNEP Live is an online knowledge management platform for searching national, regional and global data and knowledge to support assessments of the state and trends of the environment including of ecosystems and biodiversity.²⁹ InforMEA is the first project established by the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative (co-chaired by UNEP and CITES). It currently includes information on 43 global and regional legally binding instruments on environment, including their decisions and resolutions, news, events, membership, national focal points, national reports, implementation plans and other information, under the custodianship of 18 multilateral environmental agreement secretariats hosted by four United Nations organizations and IUCN. UNEP Live is an active partner in the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative and will seek to establish semantic standards in various fields and will use the ontology on environmental law and conventions once finalized by the initiative. The consolidation of

²⁸ See footnote 26 for examples of such host institutions.

²⁹ UNEP Live provides access to reports, data, maps (including near real-time data), and links to UNEP knowledge assets such as the programme information management system (PIMS) database, InforMEA, and others. It has a thriving community of practice portal, which enables experts to share ideas, data and knowledge, and also enables users to create maps by dragging and dropping georeferenced data on to base maps.

such information on user-friendly platforms should facilitate access to relevant information for reporting.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The convention secretariats, through the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative, should continue to oversee the development of online reporting systems but with greater involvement of countries, including through greater use of pilot projects (see option 2.1);
- (b) Convention secretariats and UNEP should take forward the key short-term actions identified at the December 2014 expert meeting on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of the multilateral environmental agreement and interoperability between reporting systems for biodiversity data,³⁰ including the further development of online reporting tools and introducing offline capabilities;
- (c) UNEP, in consultation with convention secretariats and Governments, should give consideration as to how to increase the interoperability of information systems and tools such as UNEP Live and InforMEA with online reporting systems for improved delivery and use of data and information for monitoring and reporting.

Option 2.4: Continue support for reporting processes through joint (regional) capacity-building activities. This option can build on the existing good practices and experience from conventions, such as from the World Heritage Convention on ways to support reporting through experience exchange, capacity-building and feedback mechanisms.

Recommended actions:

UNEP regional offices, with the participation of relevant convention secretariats, should explore immediate opportunities for joint capacity-building activities on reporting of progress towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and on the use of online reporting tools.

Option 2.5: Increase reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions. Parties to conventions should continue to be encouraged to provide information through their national reports on how they have enhanced synergies and facilitated coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions to which they are party. Such reporting should become or remain a regular agenda item for the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. Such efforts will help with the sharing of lessons learned and best practices and the identification of relevant capacity-building needs.

Recommended actions:

- (a) If not already provided, convention secretariats (building on the efforts of those that have already done this) should provide guidelines to parties for reporting on how they have enhanced synergies and facilitated the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and develop a shared module to be included in future national reporting templates;
- (b) The Biodiversity Liaison Group and convention secretariats should develop a more standardized approach across the conventions on how they report to their governing and advisory bodies on cooperation with other conventions;
- (c) The multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative should regularly report on progress to parties;³¹
- (d) Observer organizations attending meetings of convention bodies should, when possible, report on their contribution to, or perspectives on, efforts to facilitate coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

³⁰ Co-hosted by the CITES secretariat and UNEP-WCMC under the auspices of the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative.

³¹ Including the outcomes of the aforementioned expert meeting on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements.

III. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and strengthening the science-policy interface

Anticipated outcome: As a result of additional forward planning and cooperation, within their respective mandates, the biodiversity-related conventions make effective use of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in supporting the work of their scientific advisory and governing bodies, including on communicating the value and importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to decision-makers, and strengthening the science-policy interface at all levels.

The newly established and quickly developing Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services will play a key role for the biodiversity-related conventions, and there is a clear opportunity for conventions to work together both in identifying what is required from the Platform, and in using its deliverables.

The conventions should continue to build upon the current momentum and position themselves in the emerging new architecture on the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.³² Strengthening the relationship between the Platform and the biodiversity-related conventions is important in order to enable it to contribute effectively to the advisory and policy decision-making processes of the biodiversity-related conventions. Many opportunities related to the Platform have already been explored, for example through the convention governing body or subsidiary body discussions and decisions, as well as through meetings of the Platform's Plenary and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. Looking further ahead, the Platform's work programme will be completed in 2018 or early 2019, and therefore planning for the next work programme will begin a year or so earlier. This is likely to include a new call for requests on what the Platform should address. It should also be noted, that several governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions have taken decisions positioning themselves relative to the Platform, encouraging collaboration between parties and the Platform's national focal points.

Option 3.1: *Conventions should continue close dialogue with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on the timely and coherent communication of key findings across the governing bodies and scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.*

The work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services includes a range of deliverables that will be directly relevant to the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. These deliverables will be more effectively used if consideration is given ahead of time to their relevance to biodiversity-related convention implementation at global, regional and national levels, and how this can best be communicated and built upon. In doing so it should be recognized that while some of the Platform's deliverables may be relevant to only one convention, others are more broadly relevant. Where the assessments and findings are relevant to multiple conventions, it will be important to cooperate and collaborate in their review and use.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Convention governing and advisory bodies should consider how and when they will use the deliverables of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the extent to which they will cooperate or collaborate in doing so,³³

³² It should be noted that the secretariat of the World Heritage Convention has no direct work relation to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, instead this is the role of its host organization UNESCO.

³³ For example, decision XII/25, paragraph 5 (e), of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- (b) Convention secretariats should provide access to the Platform’s deliverables when they become available, including assisting parties in understanding how they are relevant to implementation;³⁴
- (c) Convention secretariats should work closely with the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, both separately and in cooperation, so that timetables and potential areas of cooperation and collaboration are well understood.³⁵

Option 3.2: *Conventions should consider and identify common issues for closer cooperation in developing and making future requests of the Platform, so that the priorities requested address areas of common interest.*

In developing its first work programme for 2014–2018, the Platform put out a call for requests, inputs and suggestions, and its Plenary has to date placed particular emphasis on requests conveyed to it by the biodiversity-related conventions. Enhanced cooperation among conventions in developing requests for submission to the Platform when it prepares its next work programme could result in requests that are relevant across multiple conventions, and which help support coherent implementation.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions should consider how they want to respond to future calls by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for requests, inputs and suggestions, common to several conventions, and whether they want to do this collaboratively through the Biodiversity Liaison Group;
- (b) Bodies such as the scientific advisory bodies and the Biodiversity Liaison Group should be involved in helping to develop and prioritize requests to be submitted to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services by conventions (recognizing that these requests still have to go through processes established by individual conventions);
- (c) Secretariats working through Biodiversity Liaison Group should consider establishing a joint process amongst the conventions for identification of emerging issues common to several conventions that could be addressed by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in the future.

Option 3.3: *Efforts should be stepped up to ensure that the governing and subsidiary bodies of conventions and convention secretariats interact with the Platform in a coherent and timely manner.*

Both the chairs of the scientific advisory bodies and the Biodiversity Liaison Group have a key role to play in increasing cooperation and collaboration amongst the biodiversity-related conventions with respect to strengthening the science-policy interface, and in developing the relationship with the Platform. This includes opportunities for sharing information and planning joint activities, but it also includes opportunities for collaborating on engagement and thereby sharing costs.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The chairs of the scientific advisory bodies should receive a clear mandate for their work from the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions of the participating conventions and meet on a regular basis;
- (b) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should have the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services as a regular item on its agenda, and should continue to invite the Platform’s Executive Secretary to participate in their

³⁴ For example, decision XII/25, paragraphs 5 (c) and (f), of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

³⁵ For example, decision XII/25, paragraph 5 (a), of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

meetings as an observer, as agreed at the 9th meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group;

- (c) The chairs of the scientific advisory bodies or Biodiversity Liaison Group should ensure regular and coordinated participation of the chairs of advisory bodies, the chairs of the governing bodies and the secretariats as observers to the Plenary and the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (including through identifying a lead scientific chair where resources are limited).

IV. Information management and awareness-raising

Anticipated outcome: Information is more effectively used in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, through improved interoperability and coordination of information management and awareness-raising, supported by capacity-building at the national and regional level.

Taking into account ongoing work under the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative and the Biodiversity Liaison Group, improved coordination on information management and awareness-raising, supported by capacity-building at national and regional levels, could contribute to: more coherent implementation of the conventions; more efficient reporting; more effective efforts to raise awareness of the values and importance of biodiversity; and mainstreaming efforts. At present, the information and awareness-raising activities of the conventions are still rather fragmented. The Aichi Biodiversity Target Task Force has now been revitalized, however, and there is increased emphasis on using the United Nations Decade for Biodiversity to expand and better link outreach efforts. For example, General Assembly resolution 68/205 on World Wildlife Day, the celebration of which is facilitated by the CITES secretariat, links this event to the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

In this context, recent decisions by conferences of the parties provide a good basis for further work. Both Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/6³⁶ and Convention on Migratory Species resolution 11.6³⁷ requested the Biodiversity Liaison Group to consider ways and means to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies. In addition, Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/2 requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the development of a global communication strategy, to be implemented over the second half of the United Nations Decade, incorporating messaging approaches to be used as a flexible framework for parties and relevant organizations; to undertake actions to develop and use messaging approaches for the specific target groups in the context of the different Aichi Biodiversity Targets; and to conduct a workshop to develop and use messaging approaches for the specific target groups in the context of the different Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to report on the outcomes of the workshop to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting.

Option 4.1: *Develop shared approaches for the more effective use of global information management tools.*

Global information management tools and databases relevant to the biodiversity-related conventions and their protocols include InforMEA – the United Nations information portal on multilateral environmental agreements, UNEP Live, ECOLEX – the environmental law information service, and the various types of clearing-house mechanisms. Development of a coherent capacity-building approach for the use of the global information management tools, taking into account the information technology infrastructure needs of the parties, could support the implementation of this option. Further ideas on implementation could be adapted from the recommendations included in the United Nations joint inspection unit report.³⁸

Recommended actions:

- (a) UNEP, convention secretariats and other partners in the multilateral environmental

³⁶ Decision XII/6, paragraph 4.

³⁷ Resolution 11.6, paragraph 17.

³⁸ See the full report entitled “Review of management of internet websites in the United Nations system organizations”, 2008, available at https://www.unju.org/en/reports-notes/archive/JIU_REP_2008_6_English.pdf (accessed: 31 July 2015).

agreement information and knowledge management initiative, should consider the outcome of the party-led process initiated by Convention on Biological Diversity in decision XII/6 concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions;

- (b) UNEP, in consultation with parties and convention secretariats, should consider how to make UNEP Live more useful to support countries in coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements;
- (c) UNEP, convention secretariats and others should make use of the capacity-building activities of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in building capacity for the use of global information tools;
- (d) InforMEA partners should seek greater involvement of Governments in the work of InforMEA to help raise awareness of the tools it works on, and to ensure greater accuracy and utility;
- (e) InforMEA partners should ensure that the information they provide to InforMEA is validated and properly tagged and InforMEA should further develop quality assurance processes with convention secretariats, relevant United Nations bodies and parties;
- (f) Convention secretariats should continue to cooperate in sharing lessons learned and exploring ways to build greater interoperability between web portals and clearing-house mechanisms of the biodiversity-related conventions. This could include, for example, the development of more links and tags among the information portals of convention websites.

Option 4.2: *Deliver joint information and awareness campaigns, including in the context of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011–2020).*

This would require cooperation across convention secretariats and with other partners (including States, United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations, regional bodies, the private sector, civil society and the media) and tailoring joint awareness-raising activities for different target audiences. There could also be coordinated and joint activity on designated international days (such as the International Day for Biological Diversity, World Wetlands Day, World Wildlife Day, World Bird Day and others) and years, noting that some are official United Nations events and others are not. New and innovative ways should therefore be explored in order to ensure optimal use of resources and maximized impact.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Collaboration among the communications officers of the biodiversity-related conventions and other partner organizations, as agreed by the Biodiversity Liaison Group, should be further strengthened, in particular to achieve increased awareness within other sectors. This has already started and could be built upon (for example, through periodic meetings by remote means, such as teleconferencing) to consider and to take forward the development of joint campaigns;
- (b) In developing the proposed global biodiversity communication strategy, the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat should facilitate work with other conventions, organizations and processes to agree on content and target sectors, build understanding of target audiences, and develop messages;
- (c) Convention secretariats should continue to seek more ambitious and innovative means of engaging people through different media, including television or social media. Consideration should be given to a smaller number of bigger campaigns;
- (d) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should cooperate in such campaigns, including in the joint review of opportunities and through helping define a more strategic approach by, for example, reviewing the strategies of international days, and identifying annual cross-cutting themes;
- (e) Convention secretariats should support parties in awareness-raising campaigns, for example, through the provision of template communications, new stories and other products, which parties could then adapt to their own needs in order to address different target groups (political level, general public, and others);
- (f) Convention secretariats, UNEP and other partners should seek to engage, on an Organization-wide basis, in awareness-raising activities to increase the impact of campaigns. This could include the participation of Biodiversity Liaison Group members at communication group

teleconferences within the United Nations system. Similarly, convention secretariats and parties could collaborate with non-governmental organizations and their extensive networks;

- (g) Convention secretariats should make more use of joint secretariat statements at official meetings (such as those convened for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), and also more joint op-ed pieces for transmission to the media.

V. Capacity-building

Anticipated outcome: The capacity for coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level is further increased, as a result of increased cooperation and a more coordinated approach to capacity development by the conventions, coupled with appropriate support from United Nations bodies and other key stakeholders.

The Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome from the 2010 meetings of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on International Environmental Governance recommended a United Nations system-wide capacity-building framework for the environment, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building³⁹. A call for the continued and focused implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan was made in “The future we want”.⁴⁰ UNDP is the lead entity in the United Nations for capacity-building and it hosts the country-level resident coordinators, and leads in the coordination of United Nations development assistance frameworks.

A more coordinated and coherent approach to capacity-building among the biodiversity-related conventions in selected areas could enhance the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts on synergies. In this context, it should be noted that, in its decision XII/6, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested the executive secretariat to prepare a study on key capacity-building and awareness-raising needs regarding cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements at the national level as an input to the party-led process initiated by the same decision concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Synergies should be built in an inclusive way by involving all resource networks and actors, including United Nations bodies, development cooperation agencies, regional and subregional institutions, local governments and communities, universities, private sector bodies, and civil society organizations. This should link to the capacity-building efforts of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, where appropriate, and its current work to review capacity-building needs. Opportunities for advancing synergies through the NBSAP Forum should also be considered. North-South and South-South cooperation should be encouraged.

At the same time, ensuring adequate funding for UNEP regional focal points for the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements is crucial, since they provide valuable capacity for addressing implementation of the conventions at the regional level, working closely with parties and the relevant convention secretariats.

Option 5.1: *Strengthen the support provided by UNEP regional offices for implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for sustaining the functions of the multilateral environmental agreement focal points.*

Since the inception of the UNEP multilateral environmental agreement focal point programme in 2009, UNEP regional focal points for the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements have supported the synergistic implementation of the agreements, including through: pilot projects and capacity-building workshops; the facilitation of information exchange and networking among Governments on implementation of the agreements; the facilitation of an integrated approach towards the organization of regional consultations both before and after meetings of the various conferences of the parties focused on multiple biodiversity-related conventions.

Recommended actions:

- (a) UNEP, with input from convention secretariats, should develop a coherent framework on the role of the UNEP regional focal points for the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements in supporting implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. This framework could be integrated into appropriate plans, programmes and strategies (see option 7.1) and guide UNEP regional level support for the NBSAP process, the coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, including supporting access to GEF and other sources of funding, and UNEP work with United Nations country teams to contribute to United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;

³⁹ UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.1

⁴⁰ See footnote 1.

- (b) UNEP and convention secretariats should regularly liaise on the activities of UNEP regional focal points for the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements in the implementation of joint capacity-building activities;
- (c) UNEP should strengthen its regional capacity to support implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions (see option 7.1).

Option 5.2: *Identify immediate opportunities for collaboration on capacity-development activities and develop harmonized and possible common approaches.*

When considering capacity-development requests from parties, convention secretariats could enhance collaboration in the short term by also considering whether the activity could be designed to benefit implementation of more than one convention. In the longer term they could seek more harmonized ways to receive, review and respond to capacity-building requests from parties.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Parties should seek decisions from the conferences of parties on joint capacity-building initiatives concerning implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- (b) Convention secretariats should identify and address immediate capacity-building needs with synergistic potential. This could be done by building on already planned activities;
- (c) Convention secretariats and the Biodiversity Liaison Group should consider developing a mapping exercise to identify overlaps in capacity-building decisions among the biodiversity-related conventions as a basis for considering and proposing further opportunities for the joint delivery of capacity-building. In doing so, they should consider ongoing capacity-building efforts of other processes such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. This could form the basis of the study on capacity-building and awareness-raising needs regarding cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements at the national level that will be carried out in fulfilment of Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/6.

Option 5.3: *Promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity-building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.*

This should be done in partnership with convention secretariats and the parties to the respective conventions and make use of the existing coordination structures such as the United Nations Environment Management Group and United Nations Development Group. Such efforts should build upon the previous work of the Issue Management Group on Biodiversity of the Environment Management Group, and take into account the current follow-up work of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force, the capacity-building work being done under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Bali Strategic Plan Increased integration of biodiversity considerations into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process is needed in order to more effectively identify and address capacity-building needs on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Recommended actions:

- (a) As chair of the United Nations Environment Management Group, the Executive Director of UNEP, building on relevant existing work, should, working with convention secretariats, promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity-building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including by exploring the development of a more coherent capacity-building framework;
- (b) UNEP, in partnership with convention secretariats, relevant United Nations bodies, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society should seek immediate opportunities to facilitate capacity-building on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level;
- (c) UNEP and UNDP should encourage and work closely with United Nations country teams, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework at the national level, to support capacity-building on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

VI. Funding and resource efficiency

Anticipated outcome: Options and opportunities for resource mobilization are increased as a result of enhanced collaboration among the biodiversity-related conventions and other key stakeholders with respect to achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the related support that they provide to parties.

In order to achieve the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a significant increase in resources (financial, institutional, human and technical) will be required. This has been recognized by governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and, as a result, much work has been done to provide guidance to parties on resource mobilization from existing and new and innovative sources. This includes work done under the auspices of the strategy for resource mobilization for the Convention on Biological Diversity, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting. Other examples include the UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative, launched in 2012, which is a global partnership seeking to address the challenge of biodiversity finance in a comprehensive manner.

Further collaboration across the biodiversity-related conventions towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets could increase options for resource mobilization, boost the effectiveness of spending and lead to resource savings. At the same time, the mainstreaming of biodiversity into wider policy sectors will open up significant opportunities for more efficient policymaking processes and co-funding⁴¹ This could be supported, at the national level, by increased incentives for submission and funding of projects specifically aiming to increase cooperation and enhance synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, and mainstreaming into wider sectors.

Following the recent replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund, biodiversity is the largest focal area (\$1.2 billion) of GEF. The GEF biodiversity portfolio is built on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, following guidance from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. As stipulated in the programming document for the sixth replenishment of GEF, owing to the inclusive and comprehensive nature of the GEF biodiversity strategy, there is ample opportunity for the inclusion of pertinent GEF-eligible activities, as prioritized in countries' revised NBSAPs, to exploit this synergy among the conventions and to advance shared objectives.⁷

In support of this, by its decision XII/30,⁴² the Conference of the Parties to the Convention invited parties to enhance coordination among biodiversity-related convention national focal points. This will foster the identification of national priorities in support of the implementation of the various biodiversity-related conventions that are aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and enable parties to incorporate them into their NBSAPs. Responding to a recommendation of the Biodiversity Liaison Group, the decision also invited the governing bodies of the various biodiversity-related conventions to provide elements of advice, as appropriate, on funding of national priorities that may be referred to GEF through a decision by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting. This decision was welcomed by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species at its eleventh meeting, which asked the Convention's Standing Committee to prepare such advice concerning national priorities for implementation of the Convention. Increased access to GEF funding will depend upon coherent and robust guidance from convention governing body decisions.

Option 6.1: *Convention secretariats should collaborate on new initiatives for obtaining additional financial resources.*

The convention secretariats could work together to review new opportunities and make joint approaches to relevant institutions; and how the parties could benefit from securing alternative funds to support integrated approaches for implementing the various biodiversity-related conventions (such

⁴¹ CBD High-Level Panel (2014). *Resourcing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets: An Assessment of Benefits, Investments and Resource needs for Implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Second Report of the High-Level Panel on Global Assessment of Resources for Implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.* Montreal, Canada <https://www.cbd.int/financial/hlp/doc/hlp-02-report-en.pdf>

⁴² Decision XII/30, paragraph 1.

as the UNDP Adaptation Programme). This option could be considered in particular in relation to the funding of shared priorities, for example NBSAPs and cross-cutting work programmes.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should facilitate further review of relevant funding programmes and promote the development of opportunities and strategies for joint fundraising efforts;
- (b) Convention secretariats should jointly develop additional guidance for parties on how to gain access to financial resources.

Option 6.2: *The biodiversity-related conventions should pursue a coordinated approach to securing funding from GEF and Green Climate Fund.*

The convention secretariats, UNEP regional offices (including regional focal points for the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements) and UNDP should provide information and encourage countries to take advantage of the opportunity of GEF funding for development and implementation of NBSAPs that are frameworks for implementation of all of the biodiversity-related conventions and for integrated approaches to implementation of the conventions. This approach will also enable and enhance cooperation among the Rio conventions, namely, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. Efforts in response to Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/30 could be extended to consider the opportunities provided by the Green Climate Fund.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and convention secretariats should act on Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/30 on the financial mechanism with regard to the provision of elements of advice concerning the funding of national priorities that may be referred to GEF through the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (b) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should continue to liaise with GEF, including by inviting the GEF secretariat to its regular meetings, to enhance synergies on financing and access to GEF funding for the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions;
- (c) Convention secretariats and GEF implementing agencies should continue to support this by facilitating liaison among the national focal points and authorities of different conventions, capacity-building on the development of joint proposals including on biodiversity-related issues covered by conventions that are not independently able to access GEF funding, and raising awareness of national GEF operational focal points on the opportunities for synergistic implementation;
- (d) The Biodiversity Liaison Group, convention secretariats and GEF implementing agencies should consider employing similar efforts to capitalize on the opportunities provided by the Green Climate Fund;
- (e) UNEP and convention secretariats should raise awareness and facilitate use of the UNEP Sourcebook (May 2015), which includes guidance on obtaining GEF funds for the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Option 6.3: *Encourage donors, particularly those concerned with development assistance, to help expand opportunities and provide further incentives for coordination and synergies.*

The Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a coherent framework for the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and should be recognized as part of countries' wider efforts to achieve sustainable development. The mainstreaming and integration of Aichi Biodiversity Targets in national policies, plans, programmes and strategies facilitate the synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions and could increase co-benefits and opportunities for funding. For their part, donors could promote synergies and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in their funding priorities.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Parties should be supported (including through guidance by UNEP, UNDP and convention secretariats) in prioritizing coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in national plans on which donors base their funding decisions, including United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks;
- (b) Convention secretariats, parties and UNEP should seek to promote through, for example, awareness-raising activities, the benefits of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions to donors such as GEF, the Green Climate Fund, the World Bank, the private sector and charitable foundations.

Option 6.4: *Share information on work to support parties on resource mobilization, including in relation to innovative financial mechanisms that promote cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions.*

Several conventions have provided guidance to parties on resource mobilization and have also been discussing guidance on new and innovative financial mechanisms for biodiversity, such as: environmental fiscal reform; payment for ecosystem services; biodiversity offsets; markets for green products; and impact investment funds. The improved coordination of future efforts could eliminate duplication of guidance and help to identify and implement new mechanisms that support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and, in particular, their mainstreaming into wider sectors.

- Recommended actions:**
- (a) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should facilitate development of an overview of relevant guidance on resource mobilization and different approaches across conventions, identifying promising examples and best practices to facilitate experience-sharing;
 - (b) Parties should request additional guidance and capacity-building on resource mobilization, including resource efficiency, to be developed cooperatively among convention secretariats (see option 5.2);
 - (c) UNEP and UNDP should support the development of such guidance and capacity-building, in cooperation with other relevant organizations with expertise in this field (e.g., UNDP, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), and taking into account the needs across conventions;
 - (d) UNEP and convention secretariats should facilitate use of the UNEP Sourcebook (May 2015), which includes guidance on financial resource mobilization to support the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level.

Option 6.5: *Review and share past and current experiences relating to synergies between the multilateral environmental agreements and wider mainstreaming efforts, to identify means of boosting the cost-effectiveness of synergistic action on biodiversity.*

Enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements could increase the effectiveness of spending and lead to resource savings. Mainstreaming efforts can enable the delivery of co-benefits and drive the reform of policies/sectors with a negative impact on biodiversity, thereby freeing up resources that would otherwise be used for addressing negative impacts. Sharing examples of approaches to enhancing synergies and mainstreaming leading to cost-effectiveness would add to the evidence-base and provide lessons learned on the application of such approaches.

- Recommended actions:**
- Parties, UNEP, UNDP and convention secretariats should collaborate in sharing experiences on enhancing synergies through resource mobilization and efficiency, on mainstreaming efforts, and on whether and how synergies can increase the cost-effectiveness of actions on biodiversity. This information should be made available through existing platforms such as the NBSAP Forum.

VII. Institutional collaboration

Anticipated outcome: Coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels is enhanced as a result of increased cooperation among those institutions concerned with implementation of the conventions, including all relevant convention and United Nations bodies.

Institutional cooperation is essential to support coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels. Many institutions which are, or could be, supportive already exist at these different levels, and some of these need further development and strengthening. Global entities include the Biodiversity Liaison Group; the Environment Management Group; the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force; and the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management. In the future, enhanced collaboration of multiple conventions on the issue of the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions should be considered with additional relevant conventions and organizations. This could include cooperation with UNESCO, FAO, non-United Nations bodies like the International Tropical Timber Organization and IUCN; and with regional or subregional bodies such as the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, regional ministerial environment forums and development banks which, with their regional presence, outreach and convening powers, are well suited to promote the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in a coherent manner. For effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national level, the involvement of United Nations country teams through United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks is also crucial.

Given that the biodiversity-related conventions are legally separate and autonomous in their decision-making, it is essential that parties collaborate and cooperate to ensure that the decision-making bodies of the conventions act in a coherent manner and that their decisions are mutually supportive.

Regarding mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation at the national and regional level, the UNEP Sourcebook includes a section that provides a number of case studies and lessons learned on how different formal and informal mechanisms can facilitate cooperation, collaboration and coordination among national focal points and authorities of conventions and other key stakeholders to improve efficiency and effectiveness of activities.

Option 7.1: *Focus and enhance the work of UNEP in supporting the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels, including, where appropriate, by promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in their implementation, in those areas that fall within its mandate, through its various programmes, initiatives and policies.*

UNEP could strengthen its support for synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global level in various areas falling under its existing mandate, for example by supporting and facilitating cross-cutting activities for implementation of the conventions.

Recommended actions:

- (a) UNEP should integrate implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements into the relevant parts of the medium-term strategy for 2018–2021, and also into its future programmes of work, in close cooperation with the agreement secretariats, thereby resulting in synergies. This could build on the recommendations of the working group on programmatic cooperation of the UNEP Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats, as revised by the UNEP Multilateral Environmental Agreements Management Team.⁴³ These could include efforts to ensure that UNEP activities relevant to more than one multilateral environmental agreement are carried out in a more systematic and coherent manner;
- (b) Member States should ensure that support for implementation of the multilateral environmental

⁴³ Established in 2014, the UNEP Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats is composed of two working groups. One working group has been examining the effectiveness of administrative arrangements, and then considering how these could be improved. The other working group has identified priority areas for such programmatic cooperation based on directions from the relevant governing bodies and general and specific mandates, including identifying thematic and functional areas for potentially greater synergies.

agreements is considered in the relevant parts of the UNEP medium-term strategy and programmes of work.

Option 7.2: *Strengthen the Biodiversity Liaison Group as a mechanism for promoting collaboration and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions within its mandate.*

The Biodiversity Liaison Group has an important role in reviewing and advancing options for enhancing collaboration, cooperation and coordination at a practical level and has already achieved success in increasing the programmatic cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions. Possible means for strengthening the Biodiversity Liaison Group, and the time and financial resources implications of doing so, could be addressed in more detail by the workshop initiated by Convention on Biological Diversity decision XII/6.

Recommended actions:

- (a) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should seek closer collaboration and consultation with parties. This could include: consultations with parties on the work programme for the Biodiversity Liaison Group; increased transparency, including continued intersessional communication of its activities to the parties; and some means of involving parties in Biodiversity Liaison Group meetings (for example, by inviting members of the bureaux of the conferences of the parties and chairs of the standing committees);
- (b) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should scale up efficiencies by replicating the “lead secretariat” model. This would build on existing examples, such as the modality whereby the Convention on Biological Diversity represents the coordinated input of all the convention secretariats in the Sustainable Development Goals process, the Ramsar Convention those for water-related activities and CITES those for trade issues (including liaison with the World Trade Organization). This model could potentially be extended to a range of functions, for example, the identification of lead secretariats for work with funding institutions, for the development of communication and awareness-raising programmes, and for the development of online reporting. A recent example of the use of this model is resolution 11.10 of the Convention on Migratory Species, by which the Biodiversity Liaison Group was invited to consider options for enhanced cooperation on cross-cutting issues, including through exploring the possibility of identifying lead multilateral environmental agreements.⁴⁴

Option 7.3: *Encourage mutually supportive decisions and possible common decisions across the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions for achieving coherence at all levels, including further developing and strengthening joint work programmes and memorandums of understanding.*

The expert meeting background paper on the mapping of multilateral environmental agreements to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets produced by UNEP-WCMC (referred to in the Background section above) indicates possible areas for reviewing and further exploring opportunities for cooperation and collaboration among biodiversity-related conventions. Joint approaches identified could be captured in joint work programmes and memorandums of understanding. The Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2010–2015), the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention (2011–2020), and the Convention on Migratory Species and CITES (2015–2020) currently have joint work programmes in place, the joint workplan for 2012–2014 between the secretariats of the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on Biological Diversity is under renewal. In addition, by resolution 11.10, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species requested the Convention secretariat to prepare proposals to strengthen cooperation, coordination and synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions, including through joint workplans.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Resolution 11.10, paragraph 19, of the Convention on Migratory Species.

⁴⁵ Resolution 11.10, paragraph 8, of the Convention on Migratory Species.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Convention secretariats should further develop tools for supporting coherence at all levels, including the decision tracking tool mandated by Convention on Biological Diversity decision X11/28 and tools being developed by the multilateral environmental agreement information and knowledge management initiative;
- (b) Convention secretariats (if mandated by their governing bodies) should conduct a review and gap analysis, against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, of the effectiveness of relevant decisions adopted since 2010;
- (c) The Biodiversity Liaison Group should review the need and potential for the development of joint work programmes and memorandums of understanding, with a view to further increasing collaboration and cooperation, and with a focus on the mid-to-long term, including beyond 2020.

Option 7.4: *Develop mechanisms to share expertise across the biodiversity-related conventions in order to seek and identify common issues to address, and actions to undertake, at a programmatic and political level, to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in a coordinated manner.*

This can be facilitated by identifying common areas of expertise among the secretariat staff that can be useful across other biodiversity-related conventions. In this way, various officers and experts of each convention secretariat could be lent – or seconded – to other secretariats, thus avoiding the expense of securing other experts. There is existing experience of such practice to build upon: for example, a staff member of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has been based at the Convention on Biological Diversity secretariat; a joint CITES-Convention on Migratory Species officer is currently based in the secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species; and various secretariats and UNEP have seconded staff to one another for support for the sessions of their conferences of the parties and other events.

Recommended actions:

- (a) Building on existing experience, convention secretariats should review the potential for further sharing of expertise, to increase efficiencies and strengthen collaboration;
 - (b) For UNEP-administered conventions, and in accordance with any established United Nations mobility programme, UNEP and convention secretariats should organize and manage targeted rotation programmes for their staff if this is needed to help convention secretariats secure certain relevant expertise, or to assist the career development of certain staff.
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