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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Eighth meeting

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Item 26.2 of the provisional agenda*

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF INLAND WATER ECOSYSTEMS

WWF International - Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan

Note by the Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary is circulating in the annex, for the information of Parties at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, information supplied by WWF International in support of, *inter alia*, the following sections of decision VII/4 (the programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems): paragraph 11, which recognizes the presence of inland water ecosystems within agricultural lands, forests, dry and sub-humid lands, and mountains, and the ecological connectedness between inland waters, estuaries and inshore coastal areas and, accordingly, *encourages* Parties, other Governments and organizations to ensure cross-referencing to, and coherence with, the other thematic programmes of work while implementing this programme of work; paragraph 14 (b) which requests the Executive Secretary to ensure that inland water ecosystem issues are fully incorporated, as appropriate, into all other thematic work programmes; and Programme Element 1, Goal 1.1 (annex to decision VII/4) which is to integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into all relevant sectors of water-resource and river-basin management, taking into account the ecosystem approach.

* UNEP/CBD/COP/8/1.

Annex

WWF – INTERNATIONAL¹
MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. The *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan* consists of a methodological proposal for the ecosystem-based, cross-biome, inter-sectoral, cost-effective and integrated implementation of the *Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)*.

2. This proposal takes fully into account the goals, objectives and activities under each of the thematic programmes of work and the cross-cutting issues of the CBD.

3. Based on the *ecosystem approach*, the *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan* aims at addressing the following issues:

a) Streamlining the ecosystem approach and the programmes of work under the CBD:

3.1 A fundamental premise of the ecosystem approach is to recognize connectivity between biomes and propose management strategies that conserve natural linkages.

3.2 While the ecosystem approach stresses the importance of cross-biome, inter-sectoral, integrated planning and management of ecosystems and their biodiversity components, the biome-based division of thematic programmes may artificially isolate natural systems that, in reality, are intimately inter-connected and mutually dependent on one another;

b) Level of complexity of the current system:

3.3 As WWF experience has shown, a challenge to implementation of the CBD in some countries, especially in developing nations, is the complexity of linkages between the six thematic programmes of work, 16 cross-cutting issues, and the guidelines and recommendations respectively approved thereunder.

3.4 This results in a complicated matrix of expectations and, in some cases, inadequate guidance for a Party to digest and then implement at the landscape/seascape level, i.e., at any scale other than the particular biome addressed by each thematic programme.

c) Promoting uniformity among the different thematic programmes:

3.5 Excluding a few biome-specific issues, the existing programmes of work contain very similar information and address common management issues, which have often been organised and presented in different ways, as each programme evolved. Indeed, the programmes differ considerably in their structure, internal organization (goals, objectives, activities etc.) and level of detail. This is partly because the programmes have evolved in different time-scales.

¹ WWF International, Global Freshwater Programme, 1250 24th St. NW, Washington, DC 20037-1193 USA; Main Phone: 202-293-4800; Direct Phone: 202-778 9792; Fax: 928 395 6423; chris.williams@wwfus.org; www.panda.org/livingwaters

3.6 The fact that the thematic programmes are not completely uniform poses a difficulty for biodiversity protection at a landscape, river basin or seascape scale. This situation tends to promote biome-specific management responses rather than the more holistic, ecosystem-based approach.

4. The *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan* presents an optional tool to simplify, to the benefit of the Parties to the CBD, the task of applying the Convention's agenda, while, at the same time, furthering the ecosystem approach. It is thus a proposal for cohesive, harmonized, and integrated biodiversity protection across interrelated biomes.

5. The *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan* represents, in one single, standardised document the content of the six programmes of work in a more didactic, straight-forward, and comprehensible framework of cross-biome sub-programmes.

6. It also puts in evidence the key management challenges and issues with implementing the CBD, irrespective of the biome, and accounts for eventual biome-specific management or priority issues contained in the original programmes.

7. From an administrative perspective, this *Plan* condenses the text that Parties have to consult in the development of their own national approaches to implementing the CBD. Parties can now consult one cross-biome implementation plan for landscape, seascape, and river basin scale planning. If necessary, national agencies can always go back to the existing six thematic programmes for further clarifications in relation to a specific biome or issue.

8. Nature designed ecosystems with connectivity and thus actions to protect biodiversity need to take these interrelations into account, through the effective application of an ecosystem approach. For this reason, the *Plan* assists the urgent need for the CBD to move to a cross-biome, integrated approach to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. The *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan* proposes a methodology to guide and support the Parties in this direction.

9. WWF would thus like to bring this *Plan* to the attention of the 8th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity as part of its ongoing support to the Convention process. WWF encourages its use by Parties, and invites the Executive Secretary to revise it periodically and make it available via the *Clearing House Mechanism*.

For further information on the *Mountains to the Sea Implementation Plan*, please refer to the link <http://assets.panda.org/downloads/mountaintoseareportphase2.doc> and/or contact Christopher E. Williams, Manager, River Basin Conservation, WWF Global Freshwater Programme, chris.williams@wwfus.org.
