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A PROPOSED METHODOLOGY FOR THE PILOT PHASE VOLUNTARY PEER REVIEW OF NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (NBSAP) REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Prepared by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

BACKGROUND

1. At its fifth meeting, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention considered options for improving the efficiency of structures and processes under the Convention and, in recommendation 5/2, prepared a draft decision for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting, which, inter alia, would “enable a voluntary peer-review process for the national biodiversity strategies and action plans on a pilot basis by interested Parties making best use of mechanisms such as the NBSAP Forum”. The draft decision is reproduced in the compilation of draft decisions (UNEP/CBD/COP/12/1/Add.2/Rev.1).
2. Further, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a proposal for voluntary peer review of the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, taking into account the views expressed by Parties, designed to be implemented on a voluntary pilot basis by interested Parties, and submit this for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting (recommendation 5/2, para. 1(c)). Accordingly, the Executive Secretary has prepared document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/25/Add.3 and this supporting information document.
3. This information document is based on discussions which took place at the informal expert workshop convened, with financial support from the Governments of Norway and Switzerland, in Geneva, Switzerland, from 11-12 September 2014 to further develop the voluntary peer-review process as laid out in UNEP/CBD/COP/12/25/Add.3. The workshop was attended by experts from Belarus, Brazil, Malaysia, Norway, the Republic of Korea, South Africa and Switzerland in their personal capacities, and also received inputs from the OECD and UNECE Environmental Performance Review Units. Review processes of other institutions have also been taken into consideration in the development of this document.
4. During the workshop, a range of possible mechanisms for peer review were proposed and discussed. Opinions differed within the group as to the level of compliance and governance required for maximum effectiveness of the review process but it was agreed that during the pilot

phase at least, that the review process the emphasis should be on shared learning and peer exchange whilst at the same time exploring alternative operational structures.

GOAL, OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. The main goal of the CBD voluntary peer-review process is to help Parties to improve their individual and collective capacity to more effectively implement the Convention through the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAPs).

6. The current set of national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAPs) being developed or revised are supposed to take into consideration the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted in decision X/2. Thus these provide a convenient framework for the voluntary peer-review process.

7. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) or equivalent documents are a primary mechanism for implementation of the Convention (decision VII/30), and the benefits of peer-reviews are intended to provide participating Parties with information and advice which they might use either when developing/updating their NBSAPs, or to improve the implementation of their NBSAPs, including integration of biodiversity into broader policy frameworks. This will stimulate mutual experience-sharing, learning and capacity-building, with potential benefits for all Parties to the Convention.

8. Other objectives of the peer-review or positive benefits could include:

- To contribute to enhanced communication and dialogue between Parties facing similar biodiversity challenges;
- To facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and exchange of information and knowledge between other biodiversity-related processes in and between participating countries;
- To increase the potential for other Parties, as well as interested institutions, to use the lessons learned and recommendations made available through the peer-review process and in the final peer review reports;
- To contribute to the knowledge management processes of the Secretariat of the Convention, thus improving its knowledge products in general;
- To help national biodiversity institutions, non-governmental organizations and others in increasing the focus on biodiversity challenges at the national level; and improving public awareness of government biodiversity policies and actions; and
- To contribute to improving the credibility of processes under the Convention in the long-term and increase policy awareness on biodiversity issues across all sectors.

9. The proposed review process aims to meet various 'guiding principles' including, inter alia: i) transparency; ii) inclusiveness; iii) participatory; iv) comprehensive; and v) mutual trust. Participating countries are expected to share these principles and the objectives behind the voluntary peer-review process.

10. In addition, the review process should be:

- a) based on the principle that "peer" means CBD Party;
- b) voluntary;
- c) relatively simple and replicable;
- d) capable of being undertaken over a relatively short time;
- e) cost-effective;
- f) non-judgemental;

- g) flexible with options, but with an agreed common methodological framework to ensure coherence between successive review exercises;
- h) focused on sharing experience and learning lessons; non-prescriptive, options-based, shared-learning approach would be likely to be the most acceptable to countries;
- i) jointly owned by the volunteering (focus) country and the partner countries (the peers);
- j) flexible in allowing the country under review to be responsible for considering how it responds to any recommendations made and how it will use the review report;
- k) used by partner (peer) countries to be able to take a view on whether generic lessons have relevance and application in their own country;
- l) used by the Secretariat to highlight common lessons about what works well (leading to progress) and what works less well (leading to little or no progress, and presenting a continuing challenge), and to share this more broadly across the Convention¹;

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PILOT GROUP

11. It is proposed that, for the purposes of the Pilot Phase, a small group of Parties is formed to participate in the pilot and to prepare, in collaboration with the Secretariat, a report for WGRI/SBI in 2016.
12. The Pilot Group should comprise between 10 and 15 Parties. Participation in the Group will be on a voluntary basis and will be initiated through a Notification to be issued after COP 12 if the Conference of the Parties adopts the WGRI recommendation to establish the pilot phase.
13. Participation in the group will be guided by the following criteria:
- a) regional balance;
 - b) 5NR submitted;
 - c) revised NBSAP adopted as a policy document at the highest possible level; or advanced draft of a revised NBSAP, or policy equivalent;
 - d) willing to both contribute to reviews and/or be reviewed;
 - e) able to contribute to costs, either in-kind or via Voluntary Fund; and
 - f) evidence of high level government support for the voluntary peer-review process.

SELECTION OF PARTIES TO BE REVIEWED

14. As all Parties joining the pilot group must be willing to be reviewed (see above), but not all can be reviewed during the pilot phase before WGRI/SBI and COP13, there will need to be a process for selecting the countries to be reviewed.
15. It is proposed that a meeting of the pilot group be held in late 2014 or early 2015 to decide which Parties from the group will be reviewed during the pilot phase, based on the following considerations:
- a) to cover as broad a range of “conditions” as possible – socio-economic, geographical, ecological, etc.
 - b) agreement by consensus within the pilot group; and
 - c) able to undertake a participatory review process in country starting, at the latest, before the end of 2015.

¹ Adapted from Dalal-Clayton, B. (2004) A Proposed Options-Based Methodology for Shared Learning and Peer Review of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSDS). IIED, London.

16. In order to maximize the opportunities for learning from the pilot phase, but recognizing possible capacity, timing and funding limitations, it is proposed that a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 reviews be completed in the pilot phase.

INITIATION OF THE REVIEW FOR EACH PARTY

17. Following the selection of Parties to be reviewed, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on behalf of the voluntary peer-review process, will contact the CBD NFPs to begin development of a joint work programme for the review.

18. This will start with the completion of a scoping exercise of the status of development and/or implementation of the NBSAP, or policy equivalent(s), in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2022 using the proposed template at Annex 1.

SELECTION OF REVIEW TEAM

19. The composition of the review team should be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the size and “complexity” of the country with respect to biodiversity and governance system.. It is likely that the review team will comprise between 3-6 experts, plus Secretariat support. For the pilot phase, reviewers will be drawn from the pilot group Parties themselves, or from specific recommendations made by members of the group. Reviewers could be CBD NFP, NBSAP Coordinators, or suitable experts nominated by a pilot group member.

20. Once the review team has been established a virtual meeting of the team will be required to agree on shared and specific responsibilities for the review.

21. The first step in the review process will be a desk study of the status of NBSAP revision and/or implementation, building on the review undertaken using the template at Annex 1 and focusing especially on barriers to implementation identified in the 5NR. Reviewers and the focus country NFP will agree a list of documents to be provided for the desk study based on the indicative list at Annex 2.

22. The output of the desk study will be a gap analysis of issues to be addressed and a draft programme for the in-country visit. These will be sent to the focus country for comment and dialogue in order to finalise the in-country programme. The desk assessment should be completed well in advance of the in-country visit in order to allow sufficient time for programming to be put in place.

IN COUNTRY VISIT

23. The precise programme for the in-country visit will need to be developed and agreed on a case by case by the review team in collaboration with the NFP, but should take into consideration a guidance document to be developed by the pilot group before its first review starts (see Annex 3).

AFTER IN-COUNTRY VISIT

24. Within two weeks of the end of the in-country visit, each review team member will submit a “zero” draft of their agreed contribution to the final report. The Secretariat will continue to liaise with the review team members to produce a report which will consist of four main components:

- a) recommendations for the focus country to improve NBSAP development and implementation;
- b) possible support tools, including further capacity building and technical support;
- c) reflections on the value of the review process; and
- d) recommendations for the pilot phase group’s future work.

25. The report should be sent to the focus country within 3 months of the end of the in-country visit. The focus country can provide clarifications and corrections for the report before it is posted

to the national CHM website by the focus country and to the CBD Country Profile pages by the Secretariat.

26. After each review is completed, the pilot group members will convene a virtual meeting with the review team members to learn from the experience.

27. The Secretariat will prepare an overall report of the pilot phase for consideration by WGRI/SBI at its next meeting in 2016.

Annex 1: NBSAP Preview Framework

NBSAP PREVIEW FRAMEWORK	
Information and answers to the questions below should be found in the 5NR and NBSAP or equivalent and in consultation with the CBD NFP. The results of the preview will define the scope and focus of the desk assessment and in-country visit.	
QUESTION	OBSERVATIONS and/or COMMENTS
1. Has the implementation success of any prior NBSAPs been assessed and have lessons from the previous NBSAP, and NBSAP development and revision process, been identified and integrated into the revision process?	
2. Has an NBSAP revision steering committee been established and is its composition in the public domain (e.g. CHM)? Have key stakeholder and rights-holders groups for biodiversity-related issues in the country been included in the Steering Committee?	
3. Have key stakeholders and their interests have been clearly identified for the revision process?	
4. Has a fair, inclusive and transparent process been developed for engaging with key stakeholder groups in the NBSAP revision and implementation processes, including vulnerable groups, rural communities, women, and indigenous communities?	
5. What is the current status of the CHM and how was/will this be used in NBSAP revision and implementation?	
6. Is there a national vegetation and land use map, preferably in a Geographical Information System (GIS)? Is any of this information available in time-series?	

7. Is there a map of the extent and spatial distribution of areas where extractive and economic sectors are the dominant land use?	
8. Is there a map of the extent of species-level knowledge available for biodiversity planning?	
9. Is there a map of the key biodiversity areas (e.g., protected and proposed protected areas, important bird areas, zero extinction areas) identified?	
9. Have an ecosystems services framework and the economic value of biodiversity been incorporated into biodiversity planning and national accounts?	
10. Has the status of agro-biodiversity, including distribution, conservation, and sustainable use of genetic diversity, including cultivated plants, farmed and domesticated animals, and wild crop relatives been assessed?	
11. To what extent has the NBSAP and its components been linked to other planning processes in the environmental and other sectors (such as poverty reduction, national development, sustainable development, land use, agricultural development, forestry, water, coastal management, climate change, disaster risk reduction)?	
12. To what extent have key policy, laws and regulations been assessed for their impact (positive and negative) on biodiversity and biodiversity planning?	
13. To what extent have key institutions, institutional structures and institutional capacities that facilitate and/or inhibit biodiversity planning been identified and assessed?	
14. To what extent have national expenditures on biodiversity-related actions, including by public and private actors, and environmentally positive and	

harmful incentives/subsidies, been assessed?	
15. Does the NBSAP include a clearly articulated national vision, including key principles and goals for biodiversity?	
16. The NBSAP includes a set of SMART national targets and indicators, clearly linked NBSAP priorities, strategies and actions and cross-mapped to the global Aichi Biodiversity Targets.	
17. To what extent does the NBSAP have a clear strategic framework, linked to its vision, principles and goals and objectives on the one hand, and to a clear and adequate set of actions on the other?	
18. Is the Action Plan clearly linked to national targets and to a set of indicators for which appropriate national level data is available?	
19. Does the NBSAP include a summary for policy makers and decision makers, highlighting key results, findings, strategies and priorities?	
20. Is there a comprehensive, well-organized implementation plan that identifies priorities, actors, responsibilities and timelines for each strategy; and support for both national and local actions?	
21. Is there a plan for strengthening the capacities required to implement the NBSAP?	
22. Are there strategies and actions for integrating traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities into implementation of the NBSAP and ensuring effective participation?	
23. Are there strategies and actions for communicating the values, functioning, status and trends of biodiversity and the consequences of its loss?	

25. Is there a clear, realistic costing associated with each strategy within the NBSAP, including key assumptions, unit costs, and estimated cost ranges.	
26. Is there a plan for mobilizing resources, including an analysis of key financial actors, opportunities and mechanisms for each strategy?	

Annex 2: Indicative list of documents to be used for desk assessment

- 5th national report;
- Previous /existing NBSAP or Biodiversity Policy or equivalents;
- Advanced draft of NBSAP if still under revision;
- List of major biodiversity projects under implementation including GEF projects, etc.;
- National constitution;
- National economic and development plan, National Sustainable Development Strategy, Five or Ten-year Development Plan;
- Poverty Reduction Strategy, plans to meet the Millennium Development Goals; national education and social plan (including gender related plans);
- National Macro Planning Documents;
- National Land Use Planning Policy and Maps;
- Government Organigram;
- Biodiversity Governance Flowchart;
- ToR and composition of National Biodiversity Council/Committee or equivalent;
- Legislative Framework for Environment, Biodiversity and relevant sectors;
- Relevant sector policies/strategies/plans (i.e. Wetland Policy, Forestry Policy, etc.);
- Decentralized plans;
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation plans / Disaster Risk reduction plans;
- Trade policies;
- UNDAF, International cooperation policies, Country Assistance Strategies/Plans, General Budget Support arrangements (thematic and sector working groups, technical working group on budget, performance assessment framework).

Annex 3: Indicative checklist of steps for in-county visit

1. Agree with host country the national stakeholders to be contacted during the in country visit and the modalities of the contacts – group meeting, separate interviews, etc.;
 2. Where possible conduct initial communication with main stakeholders via teleconference to consolidate the preview and desk assessment;
 3. Prepare a travel plan and a visit programme in coordination with host country;
 4. Determine if field visit to any implementation locations is needed;
 5. Determine number of required days in country.
 6. Agree a budget and secure funding;
 7. Agree a national coordinator for the in-country who arranges and confirms meetings in advance. This should be the CBD NFP or higher office;
 8. On arrival, convene an internal team meeting upon arrival to fine-tune approach and distribution of tasks, including selection of a team coordinator who will introduce the team and facilitate group discussions/interviews, but the team could split up where necessary and meet again where needed, especially to consolidate experiences (this coordination role could be performed by the Secretariat or a team member);
 9. Agree on internal reporting system to facilitate later inputs to the final report;
 10. Hold interviews and report back internally. Check same issues with different players. Internal meeting preferably on a daily basis to discuss findings and streamline and refine approach if needed based on intermediate findings;
 11. A final de-briefing meeting should be held with the CBD NFP, or higher office, before departure.
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