



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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CHAIRS OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BODIES OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS

First meeting
Paris, 1 July 2007

OPTIONS FOR ENHANCING COOPERATION AMONG THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BODIES OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The fifth meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions, held on 14 September 2006 in Gland, Switzerland, agreed that a meeting of Chairs of the scientific and technical bodies or advisory bodies of the Conventions together with representatives of the Convention Secretariats and from the United Nations Environment Programme should be organized prior to the twelfth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and that a report of this meeting should be provided to SBSTTA.
2. The present note provides background information on the processes and approaches of the scientific advisory bodies of the Conventions in providing scientific advice and considers strategic issues for future processes and approaches.

II. REVIEW OF PROCESSES AND APPROACHES OF THE CONVENTIONS' SCIENTIFIC BODIES IN PROVIDING SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

3. Several biodiversity-related conventions have recently reviewed, or are in the process of reviewing, the effectiveness of the mechanisms for providing scientific advice and/or the procedures of these bodies. In particular, efforts aim to improve the scientific advice made available to the respective governing bodies. In this context:
 - (a) The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), through decision VIII/10, adopted a consolidated *modus operandi* of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA); organized a meeting of past, present and future Chairs of SBSTTA (Paris, 24-25 July 2006) (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/BRAINSTORMING/1/4); reviewed, in a meeting of the SBSTTA Bureau, the proposals made by past, present and future Chairs of SBSTTA and developed concrete suggestions on how to operationalize the consolidated *modus operandi* (Report of the SBSTTA Bureau on ways and means to improve the effectiveness of the Subsidiary Body contained in document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/6);
 - (b) The Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species considered a range of options for enhanced co-operation among the biodiversity-related conventions (Document Conf. 8.15) including sharing criteria, guidelines and definitions among conventions; sharing scientific information by making information gathered by each convention more widely accessible, and by optimizing information

gathering, e.g., by closer collaboration, including outsourcing of research work, among conventions' subsidiary scientific bodies.

(c) The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora reviewed its scientific committees and reviewed the integration of tasks of the Nomenclature Committee in the terms of reference of the Plants and Animals Committees (see Review of the scientific committees contained in document CoP14 Doc. 12);

(d) The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, through Working Group 7 of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) work plan 2006-2008, considers ways to emphasize the "review" function of the STRP in addressing issues of strategic scientific and technical direction for the Convention, as required by Resolution VIII.45 (Operation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties and the effectiveness of Ramsar Convention);

(e) The World Heritage Convention reviewed performance indicators for its programmes (see WHC-05/29.COM/12 and WHC-06/30.COM/12); developed a result-based management framework and roadmap (WHC-06/30.COM/INF.12); and reviewed the working methods of the World Heritage Committee (WHC-06/30.COM/13);

(f) The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture has postponed a discussion on the need for a scientific advisory body to the second meeting of its Governing Body.

4. At the same time, the Consultative Process Towards an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity (IMoSEB) continues with a set of regional consultations. Consultations were already held for North America (Montreal, 30-31 January 2007), Africa (Yaoundé, 1-3 March 2007) and Europe (Geneva, 26-28 April 2007).

5. Other processes relevant to the discussions on the effectiveness of scientific advice on biodiversity include:

(a) considerations about a follow-up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (see also document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/4 on the implications of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment on the work of the Convention on Biological Diversity);

(b) considerations about increased coherence in biodiversity information management (see section III.3 below);

(c) considerations about increased use of Earth Observation information, e.g. through the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Group on Earth Observation towards a Global Earth Observation System of Systems.

III. STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR FUTURE PROCESSES AND APPROACHES OF THE CONVENTIONS

1. Cooperation on climate change and biodiversity

6. The reports of the Working Groups established under the International Panel on Climate Change have highlighted the need for urgent and decisive action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The impacts of phenomena associated with climate change on biodiversity are becoming increasingly apparent. At the same time, the role of biodiversity in mitigating climate change is progressively gaining recognition.

7. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD therefore requested the Executive Secretary, in paragraph 9 of decision VIII/30 to, through the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), identify mutually supportive activities to be conducted by the secretariats of the Rio Conventions, Parties and relevant organizations. Such options should take into account the options paper for enhanced cooperation issued by the fifth meeting of the JLG and the findings of CBD Technical Series No. 10 and No. 25.

8. The subsidiary bodies of the Conventions have emphasized the need for synergistic activities to be designed in accordance with national circumstances and priorities with a view to achieving sustainable development. As such, options need to take account of the distinct mandates and independent status of each Convention.

9. The seventh meeting of the JLG considered a proposal on options for mutually supportive activities for the secretariats of the Rio Conventions, Parties and relevant organizations (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/12/INF/17). The document includes an indicative list of activities for further enhancing cooperation: at the national and international level (section 1), on issues addressing climate change impacts, adaptation, mitigation, land degradation and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (section 2), and in specific cross-cutting areas (section 3). The list is not exhaustive and may need to be adjusted based on emerging opportunities and needs.

10. The JLG agreed that protecting forest ecosystems and reducing deforestation are key areas for future cooperation given the strong potential for positive synergies for both climate and biodiversity. Accordingly, the JLG agreed to draft an information note on the interlinkages between forests, climate change, desertification and biodiversity, which should be ready before the thirteenth meeting of the COP to the UNFCCC (Bali, December 2007).

2. *The 2010 Biodiversity Target: a coordinated approach for the work beyond 2010*

11. In 2002, the CBD adopted, as the mission statement of its Strategic Plan, the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth. The target has subsequently been endorsed through various fora and processes and, following the proposal by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, was recently incorporated as a new target under Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (“Ensure environmental sustainability”).

12. In Decision VIII/15 (paragraph 2) the Conference of the Parties of the CBD decided to consider at its ninth meeting the process for revising and updating the Strategic Plan with a view to adopting a revised Strategic Plan at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It is expected that a revised Strategic Plan of the CBD for the period beyond 2010 would include a key outcome target or targets similar to the current target "to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth". It is also possible that a longer-term target, e.g. for 2050, would be set. In accordance with the new targets, an assessment framework would also need to be developed.

13. The process of revising the Strategic Plan provides an excellent opportunity for the six biodiversity-related conventions and other conventions addressing issues linked to biodiversity – such as climate change and land degradation – to seek to formulate targets and a framework that would contain elements reflecting central concerns of each of these conventions and would be compatible with their respective processes and objectives. While new targets should fully address the needs of the six biodiversity-related conventions, they should also address central concerns of the other Rio conventions.

14. A note on Input to the Process of Revising the Strategic Plan beyond 2010 (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/INF/6) lists some considerations that should be taken into account when planning the process for revising the strategic plan and considering its contents, including the following:

(a) Given the necessary time for Parties to put in place measures to implement the Plan, and the inertia in biological as well as institutional systems, longer-term targets should be considered alongside shorter-term ones;

(b) The Strategic Plan and framework for assessing progress, post-2010 should build upon the existing Plan and Framework, to allow for continuity with appropriate adjustments to improve clarity and focus;

(c) Greater attention should be given to addressing the indirect and direct drivers of loss of biodiversity (the threats to biodiversity), and reflecting these in the goals and targets;

(d) A corollary of this is that major strategic thrusts of the new Plan should be to promote the integration of biodiversity considerations into sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and programmes (mainstreaming) and to promoting greater awareness among all sectors of society on the role that biodiversity and ecosystem services play in supporting human well-being. In turn this means more effective engagement of all stakeholders. More effective use should be made of the ecosystem approach in planning processes. Development of appropriate economic incentive measures and of methods for accounting for the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services in national accounts is needed;

(e) The revised Plan should provide for Parties to develop national outcome-oriented targets, making use of the revised associated Framework, and for Parties to report on progress towards these targets, which, as far as possible, should be quantitative.

3. *Management of information and knowledge: towards a coherent system for biodiversity information management*

15. Data and information on biodiversity are fragmented, dispersed, and inaccessible. They are of varying accuracy, precision and reliability. They are stored in variety of ways and formats. They have different owners and are sometimes protected by copyright. Therefore, although the data needed to answer a specific question related to status and trends of biodiversity might have been collected, they cannot be used because they are inaccessible and/or incompatible. For this reason, data are frequently re-collected at great expense or decisions are being made without relying on existing data.

16. To address this problem, the COP to the CBD, through paragraph 3 of decision VIII/11, invited Parties and other Governments, as appropriate, to provide free and open access to all past, present and future public-good research results, assessments, maps and databases on biodiversity, in accordance with national and international legislation.

17. While a great amount of research is funded publicly, it would be desirable to also capture research carried out by volunteer networks (i.e. essentially unfunded) and privately-funded research carried out in the public interest (e.g. research by conservation NGOs) as well as other research that can be made available to the public domain.

18. An initiative to provide free and open access to all past, present and future public-good research results would likely be an attractive start and yield interest by various actors to contribute information. However, there is to date no mechanism to submit this type of information and to share it in such a way that analyses across datasets would be feasible.

19. To implement provisions under relevant biodiversity-related conventions and to facilitate decision-making at all levels, it would be desirable to ensure the coherence and compatibility of ongoing efforts and processes working towards coherent and inclusive systems with regard to data architecture, scales and standards, observatory network planning and strategic planning.

20. A common message from the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions through the respective governing bodies could promote and facilitate the coherence and compatibility of such efforts and ensure that funding would be made available to establish and sustain a global biodiversity information management system.

4. *Scientific and technical guidance: consideration of complementarities and gaps in guidance developed under the Conventions*

21. Cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions is taking place both at national and secretariat levels. Examples include:

- (a) Implementation of joint workplans;
- (b) Joint workshops on synergies and cooperation;

- (c) Efforts on harmonizing reporting;
- (d) Development and implementation of issue-based modules for the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions;
- (e) Promotion of coherence of national biodiversity strategies with respect to the implementation of biodiversity-related conventions;
- (f) Development of interoperability of databases and calendars of biodiversity-related conventions; and
- (g) Joint development, promotion and implementation of guidance developed under the conventions.

22. Table 1 lists guidelines developed under the CBD, sometimes jointly with partner conventions, and indicates which sets of guidelines are also in use or of relevance to other conventions.

Table 1. Guidelines developed by the CBD and adopted, endorsed and/or used by other biodiversity-related conventions

CBD guidelines	Ramsar	CITES	CMS	WHC	ITPGRFA
Description, Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Ecosystem Approach	√		√		
Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization					√
Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity	√	√	√		√
Guiding Principles on Invasive Alien Species	√			√	
Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines for the Conduct of Cultural, Environmental, and Social Impact Assessment regarding Developments Proposed to Take Place on, or which are Likely to Impact on, Sacred Sites and on Lands and Waters Traditionally Occupied or Used by Indigenous and Local Communities					
Guidelines for Incorporating Biodiversity-related Issues into Environmental Impact Assessment Legislation	√		√		

CBD guidelines	Ramsar	CITES	CMS	WHC	ITPGRFA
and/or Processes and in Strategic Environmental Assessment					
Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development			√	√	
Proposals for the Design and Implementation of Incentive Measures					
Proposals for the Application of Ways and Means to Remove or Mitigate Perverse Incentives					
Guidelines on Rapid Assessment of Biological Diversity of Inland Water Ecosystems	√				
Guidelines on Rapid Assessment of Biological Diversity of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems	√				
Guidelines for the Development, Revision and Updating of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans			√		

23. Increased efforts to collaborate in the development of guidelines and to address specific issues of concern of partner conventions could facilitate a more coherent implementation of these provisions.
