



# **CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**

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**CBD-UNESCO CONSULTATIVE WORKING GROUP OF  
EXPERTS ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY,  
EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS**

Third meeting  
Bilbao, 13 - 15 September, 2001

## **Discussion paper for the proposed global initiative on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness**

### **I. Background**

1. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP), in its decision V/17 requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to convene a consultative working group of experts, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Commission for Education and Communication of IUCN, the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), representatives of Parties to the Convention and other relevant bodies to further advance and, in particular, to identify priority activities for the proposed global initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness.

2. The CBD-UNESCO Consultative Group of Experts on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness, held two meetings, the first one (EPA-1) from 11 to 13 July 2000 in Paris, France, and the second one (EPA-2) from 19 to 21 November 2000 in Bergen, Norway. The results of both meetings were summarized in two reports.

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### ***A. Discussion paper for EPA-3***

3. For the third meeting (EPA-3) to be held from 13 to 15 September 2001 in Bilbao, Spain, two consultants, Ana Aber (Uruguay) and Elin Kesley, participant in EPA-2, were requested to prepare the following two contributions for a paper to be used as background for the discussions at EPA-3 with the following terms of reference:

(a) A compilation and review of the different elements produced by the Group into a draft document to be used by the Executive Secretary of the Convention in his report to COP-6. This document should preferably consist of a draft programme of work with an outline of priority projects, including recommendations to the Parties for support of the programme. The document will be consistent with relevant decisions of COP and recommendations of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice, as well as with the programme of work of the Strategic Plan of the Convention;

(b) An advice on a strategy to communicate the importance of communication and education instruments to the Parties.

### ***B. Objectives of the discussion***

4. With the background of the reports from EPA-1, EPA-2 and the two papers of the consultants, the CBD-UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness is requested under Agenda item 6 on Thursday 13 September 2001 to give answers to the following questions:

(a) Preliminary questions for consideration by the Group of Experts

1) What will the proposal of the Group exactly cover?

It is necessary to clarify what type of “communication and education” the proposal is aiming at. Different categories should therefore be distinguished, such as:

i. Explaining the concept of biodiversity, i.e., information and explanation through various means. Broad target groups: from the general public to policy-makers.

ii. A public relations marketing plan of the Convention, i.e. contents, organization and work programmes. Target groups, such as policy-makers, staff of relevant institutions and others; the specific relation with the Strategic Plan of the CBD should be noted;

iii. Promotion of communication and education as tools for the implementation of the CBD work programmes, including advice, capacity-building and information. Target groups are: the National Strategic Biodiversity Action Plan (NSBAP)-coordinators, key figures in agencies, Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and others;

iv. Will the proposal specifically target aspects i, ii, and iii or all three aspects?

1) What is a realistic scope for the proposed activities?

i. Should activities within the Global Initiative be of a global nature, therefore in principle targeting each Party?

ii. Which activities and methods could really facilitate Parties on a global level, such as publications, professional networks, electronic databases and others?

iii. Is it appropriate to think in terms of experiments and pilots, e.g. running small-scale activities, which could be broadened, to other countries and/or groups in a later stage?

2) What does the Group consider as a good approach for developing the programme of work?

The Group of Experts may wish to distinguish between categories such as:

i. Feasible key activities to start with immediately;

ii. Further analysis and preparation of promising actions in more detail;

iii. Experimental (regional) activities that could be broadened in a later stage. These categories could be shown in a timetable for 5-10 year.

(b) Expected results of this meeting of the Group of Experts are:

i. Ideas with regard to the finalization of the four Programme elements into activities for the different target audiences;

ii. Suggestions with regard to measurable targets and other expected results,

iii. Advice with regard to the costs and time-frames to be used by the Executive Secretary in his report to COP 6;

iv. Presentation and promotion of the results at COP 6;

v. Additional and complementary actions and activities.

## **II. Draft Programme of Work And Outline of Priority Projects for COP 6. Including Recommendations To The Parties For Support of the Programme.**

**By Dr. Ana Aber**

### **A. Rationale**

1. The rationale for the Global Initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness derives from the following sources:

i. Article 13 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Public Education and Awareness)

Reference is made in Article 13 to the necessity to increase general understanding of the meaning of Biological Diversity through formal and informal education. Parties and Governments should cooperate with other parties and governments in the development of education programs and improvement of public awareness in the area of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It is important to keep in mind, that the various countries have different characteristics and different needs in the above-mentioned disciplines. It is recommended to establish bilateral programs between Governments, to provide technical assistance and possibilities of interchange and training for teachers and students;

ii. Objectives of the Global Initiative, launched at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to develop guidelines and recommendations to parties addressing education and public awareness within national strategies and action plans on biodiversity, in response to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

iii. Reports of the first (Paris, July 2000) and second (Bergen, November 2000) meetings of the CBD-UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts in Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness.

### **B. Situational Analysis/Needs Assessment**

2. According to statements on documents issued from previous meetings, any analysis of the situation must take into account a series of realities that directly or indirectly impinge on the action and results of the proposed activities. These include:

- i. Limited resources (human and financial);
- ii. Lack of knowledge about biodiversity priorities;
- iii. Lack of integration in other policies;
- iv. Conflicting interests; and,
- v. Lack of knowledge of "marketing" of biodiversity.

Among the most urgent needs of the national coordinators, the following have been listed:

- i. Identified biodiversity priorities;
- ii. National networks;
- iii. Solutions for conflicting interests,
- iv. Support for biodiversity from decision makers and stakeholders from other departments/regional governments;
- v. Strategies, methods and media to "market" biodiversity to target groups.

3. In developing National Strategies for conservation and sustainable use of Biological Diversity (Article 6 of the Convention), Uruguay for example, considered involvement and participation of the whole society as one of the issues of its strategy concerning "Article 13: Education and Public Awareness"

4. Scarcity of information and the lack of public awareness about the importance of biological diversity, including its relevance in daily life, the benefits arising from the use of its components and the consequences of the loss of biological diversity, are important social needs that must be resolved if the efforts concerning the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity will succeed. This will be possible whenever and adequate understanding of the topic is achieved, using the communication media and the educational programmes. The formal, non-formal and informal education are presented as essential tools to supply a greater understanding from the public about the interrelations of the biological diversity with different aspects of the daily life.

5. The global strategy for biological diversity suggests that, in association with teachers, social communicators, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and national organizations of education and environment, national programmes must be developed to emphasize the contributions of biological diversity to the health and welfare of the communities and ecosystems, achieving an interaction of the ecological, economical and social issues.

6. Formal education constitutes the area by excellence to acquire environmental and ethical commitments. But there are limitations which hamper the accomplishment of the educational objectives of the general plan, and consequently, the environmental education objectives in particular. As the main objective, environmental education entails to defend, protect, preserve and improve the environment and its quality, enabling the harmony with nature and to restore the different ecosystems at ecosystem, species and genetic levels. This could be achieved through the awareness of the students, through observation, understanding and study of the environmental challenges. New moral principles could be developed with values and attitudes, integrating behaviour at the human and technical levels.

7. In Primary Education, where work is holistic, environmental education can be the core of the curricular contents. In Secondary Education, the contents of the programmes among the different issues and the fragmentary curricula make it difficult to practise the environmental education principles proposed by UNESCO

(APB, 1995). In this respect, the environmental perspective of educational claims for a treatment of the teachers who educate the students to understand the relations with the environment in which they are immersed it is important to give answers to the environmental challenges in a participating and reliable way, in the close and local environment as well at the national and international level (Lucini, 1993).

8. The means of communication fundamentally act in the area of informal education, as its activities often generate educational effects, although no pedagogical objectives are pursued. In fact, they exert a very strong influence on the population. Its contribution to the formation of a public awareness regarding issues of the conservation of biological diversity is steadily increasing. This does not mean that it is a planned and systematic process, on the contrary, it is characterized as irregular and periodic; consequently, there is a great need for improving its scientific rigour.

9. The task of the means of communication on this issue must get a high priority, particularly taking into account the implementation of the national strategy on biological diversity, the public understanding and the internalization of the issue; it is essential for the success of future actions to be performed. In this case, non-formal and informal education could be used on the experience of formal education in a complementary way, encouraging and promoting the existing mechanisms of informal education with the purpose of increasing the public education and awareness on biological diversity. The interaction with the private sector facilitates the access to the publicity media, and communication in general, making the development of the different proposed programmes more feasible.

### **C. Brief analysis of the national situation**

10. The national Environmental Study (1992) considers education (formal and informal) as the basis of the management system for the protection of the environment.

11. "In Uruguay, problems that prevent the normal working of the curriculum, such as the atomized presentation of the knowledge, the excessive academic approach, educational programmes rigid and overcharging of contents, diminution of the scholar time and diminution of the teaching training have been detected" (Birabén, 1994).

12. The human and technical resources for achieving a good development of the environmental thematic areas and cross-cutting issues in the educational system are available at the national level. However, the following problems, hampering the implementation at the general level, have been detected:

- i. There is scarce specialized teaching training on environmental issues and, especially, on the issue of biological diversity;

- ii. Environmental education is not an organic part in the study programmes and when this is the case, it is not given the proper and adequate priority;

iii. There is a lack of specialized didactic resources. The teacher does not have adequate information and suitable materials regarding the national environment. Even if some advances on this issue have been achieved, the teachers continue to depend partly on the case studies and examples from other countries, which not always possess the same characteristics in the field of biological diversity as Uruguay;

iv. The research results on the issues of biological diversity do not have always the adequate diffusion in reaching the teacher in his classroom.

The projects with regard to the training of teachers on these issues, are mostly of an extra-curricular character, not compensated and predominantly optional, although they contain a high degree of creativity and implementation.

13. With regard to the non-formal environmental education, it is obvious that much has been done, specifically in the area of the NGO's, as a result of multiple initiatives proceeding from the community itself. What has been lacking is the discussion of general objectives and procedures which guide the efforts towards common interests, as well as a coordination capable of improving human and material resources. However, it has to be admitted, that the non-formal sector proposed concrete operational connections in a flexible and easy way with the formal and informal sectors, especially through numerous projects of environmental education initiated by national NGO's.

#### **D. Means of communication**

14. The population in general, is not adequately informed about the different issues related to biological diversity, mainly because of lack of adequate and sufficient diffusion of the issue with a large outreach in understandable language.

15. The main problems observed on this issue are:

- i. Scarce interest of the media on the issue of biological diversity;
- ii. The need for a greater interest of the journalists on this issue;
- iii. Lack of effective communication among those who work on the issue at a scientific-technical level and lack of the means of communication.
- iv. Lack of public interest on these issues;
- v. Necessity of a larger quantity of specific materials about this issue at the national level; the production and elaboration and production of these materials is still scarce, mainly because of the lack of economic support.



vi. Scarce availability and/or access to the information by the journalists, professionals and public in general.

16. However, it must also be noted, that the means of communication over the last years have significantly increased the attention of issues related to the conservation of biological diversity; however, still the following is recommended:

- i. A greater scientific rigour;
- ii. A systematic and regular covering of the issue;
- iii. A local, national and regional approach of the challenges.

17. These requirements help to increase the knowledge on the issue among the public in general, especially at the decision-making levels affecting the present and future of biological diversity.

### **E. The proposed strategy**

- a) To give a higher priority to the formal education of environmental thematic areas and, in particular, the biological diversity issues at all levels;
- b) To promote and support all the institutions on communication and to participate and to diffuse the issues of national biological diversity in the broadest sense.

### **F. Instruments**

18. The following suggestions are most relevant:

- i. To carry out specialized courses on environmental issues with emphasis on biological diversity and to train teachers at the initial stage, as well as the ones already in service;
- ii. To include the topic of “National Biological Diversity” in the Curricula of Primary, Secondary and Technical and Professional education;
- iii. To support and multiply the educational experiences carried out by the different institutions related to the study and conservation of the biological diversity, such as the Botanical Gardens;
- iv. To develop programmes of education and the interpretation of nature in protected areas;
- v. To support and encourage the development of education and participative projects of local communities, specifically in issues, such as eco-tourism;

vi. to work together with the municipal Governments in the training of their technicians and the promotion of educational projects in conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;

vii. to promote the elaboration of written, audio-visual and information materials concerning the issues of national biological diversity, outreach, particularly through the mass media of communication;

viii. to propose and support institutions of specialization at different levels (Seminars, Workshops, Courses, Post-grades, and others), to train communicators (journalists, publishers, communication managers, and others) and students as well as active professionals, at both at the national and regional levels, (especially MERCOSUR).

ix. to promote and support the extension of time and attention attached to these thematic areas, in the means of communication, written and audio-visuals, as well as by information means (for example by creating a fund of resources, to allow the funding of the reservation of time and attention);

x. to look for new mechanisms to improve the access to information, particularly with regard to the official sources and the productive and academic sectors.

to define a general strategy for the systematic covering of the issues of conservation of biological diversity of interest for Uruguay in the media.

**G. Relevant aspects on education and public awareness in the different programmes of work of the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention Inland**

**1) Waters Biodiversity (IV/4)**

19. The COP recommends the parties to strengthen the education and awareness programmes, recognizing that a responsible environmental stewardship requires an informed public. Inland waters pose both a challenge and an opportunity to educate the public and policy-makers about the need to take an ecosystem-based approach to management. Environmental education should be built into school curricula and should emphasize integration using inland waters as a model subject to teach problem-solving (see IV/4, annex I. A, para 9 (i)).

## **2) Marine and Coastal Biodiversity (V/3)**

20. The COP and SBSTTA have consistently recognized the importance of developing public education and awareness in their consideration of marine and coastal biological diversity aspects of the Convention.

21. The programme of work on the marine and coastal biological diversity – coral bleaching - encourages to build stakeholder partnerships, community participation programmes and public education campaigns and information products that address the causes and consequences of coral bleaching (V/3). Public awareness and education are required to build support for effective research, monitoring, and management programmes, as well as policy measures.

## **3) Forest Biodiversity (IV/7)**

22. In meetings of the COP it has been noticed subsequently that the implementation of policies of conservation and sustainable use of forestry, depends, *inter alia*, on the level of public awareness and policies outside the forest sector, (Decision III/12, introduction); the attention should also focus more on the increase of the public awareness and the understanding of the biodiversity through educative programs and information (Decision III/19, par 12). However, the education and the public awareness do not appear explicitly in the programme of work on forest biological diversity adopted in Decision IV/7 of the COP. It is known that in SBSTTA 7, to be held in Montreal, Canada in November 2001, the thematic area of forest biological diversity gets a high priority;

## **4) Agricultural-Biodiversity (V/5)**

23. COP has recognized that a successful implementation of policies for the purpose of sustainable use of the elements of agricultural biological diversity, depends largely on the degree of public awareness and understanding of its importance for society. Hence, it has been recommended that Parties establish or enhance mechanisms for information and education, including the use of the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), specific to groups of concern at the national, regional and international levels.(Decision III/11, para 13)

24. Decision V/5 requests Parties, Governments and related organizations to support measures to increase public awareness for agriculture and food production systems that maintain biological diversity as a way to sustain productivity by organizations of producers, cooperatives, agricultural enterprises and consumers in order to promote favourable responsible agricultural practises.

## **5) Ecosystems (V/6)**

25. Parties, Governments and relevant organizations are invited to propose monographic studies and experimental projects, and to organize as convenient practical courses at the regional, national and local levels with the purpose of creating awareness, to interchange experiences even through the mechanism of facilitating and strengthening regional and national capacity with regard to ecosystems.

## **6) Alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species (V/8)**

26. Parties are urged to adopt effective measures of education and training on public awareness, and also to inform on the different aspects of this subject, including the risks posed by alien invasive species (Para 9). Parties and Governments, the Global Invasive Species Program (PMEI) and other relevant bodies, are requested to disseminate available public information, including databases on alien invasive species, through CHM.

27. Guiding principle 6: Education and public awareness. States should facilitate education and public awareness of the risks associated with the introduction of alien species. When mitigation measures are required, education and public awareness – oriented programmes should set in motion so as to inform local communities and appropriate sector groups on how to support such measures. The principles issued by SBSTTA 6 should be taken into account as well as the decision of making an inquiry among the parties for the adoption of possible new suggestions.

## **7) Global Taxonomy Initiative: implementation and further advance for suggestions for Action (V/9)**

28. Parties and consortia of eligible parties are requested to seek resources for the priority measures, and that they request of the financing mechanism to continue promoting awareness of the Global Taxonomy Initiative in its outreach activities of divulgation, such as the Capacity Development Initiative and the Country Dialogue Workshops, and to investigate ways both within and outside its operational programme structure to facilitate capacity-building in taxonomy, and the implementation of short-term activities.

## **8) Further Guidance to the Financial Mechanism (V/13)**

29. The Global Environment Facility, as the institutional structure operating the financing mechanism, should support capacity development for education, public

awareness and communication in biological diversity at the national and regional levels, in accordance with decision V/17.

#### **9) Scientific and technical cooperation and the CHM (Article 18) (V/14)**

30. Parties, Governments and other relevant organizations are invited to organize expert meetings, workshops and seminars, as well as training, educational and public awareness programmes and exchange programmes, and carry out pilot environmental impact assessment projects, in order to promote the development of local expertise in methodologies, techniques and procedures (V/16, I, e)

#### **10) Article 8(J) and related provisions(V/16)**

31. Urges Parties and Governments and, as appropriate, international organizations, and organizations representing indigenous and local communities, to facilitate the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities in the implementation of the Convention and *inter alia*:

i. Strengthen and build capacity for communication among indigenous and local communities, and between indigenous and local communities and Governments, at local, national, regional and international levels, including with the Secretariat of the Convention, with direct participation and responsibility of indigenous and local communities through their appropriate focal points;

ii. Use other means of communication in addition to the Internet, such as newspapers, bulletins, and radio, and increasing the use of local languages.

#### **Annex II. Tasks of the first stage of the program of work; Element 5. Exchange and dissemination of information**

**Task 8.** Identification of a focal point within the clearing-house mechanism to liaise with indigenous and local communities.

#### **Annex III. Tasks of the second stage of the program of work; Element 5. Exchange and dissemination of information.**

**Task 16:** The Executive Secretary to identify, compile and analyse, with the participation of indigenous and local communities, existing and customary codes of ethical conduct to guide the development of models for codes of ethical conduct for research, access to, use, exchange and management of information concerning traditional knowledge, innovations and practices for the conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity.

## **11) Education and public awareness (V/17)**

### **32. The Conference of the Parties:**

- i. Takes note of the information provided by the Executive Secretary with regard to education and public awareness (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/13, section IV);
- ii. Requests the Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, to convene a consultative working group of experts including the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Commission for Education and Communication of the UICN, the World Fund for Nature, representatives of Parties and other relevant bodies to further advance and, in particular, to identify priority activities for the proposed global initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness.
- iii. Decides that the working group should take into priorities developed by the Conference of the Parts for its work programme, and, when approved by the Conference of the Parts, priorities identified in the strategic plan for the Convention;
- iv. Invites UNESCO, through its educational programmes, to actively integrate biological diversity into all levels of formal education systems as a component of the development of the global initiative;
- v. Endorses paragraph 7 of recommendation IV/1 A of the subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, which states that education and public awareness be included in the discussions on the work programmes on thematic issues;
- vi. Invites Parties, Governments, organizations and institutions to support capacity-building for education and communication in biological diversity as part of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, taking into account the global initiative;
- vii. Requests the Executive Secretary to:
  - a) Further develop the public information and outreach activities of the Secretariat, including through the use of the clearing-house mechanism to raise awareness of biological diversity issues amongst all sectors of society, including indigenous and local communities;
  - b) Designate a theme each year for the International Day of Biological Diversity, and prepare background information to be placed on the clearing-house mechanism;
  - c) Consult the United Nations Secretariat on the feasibility of changing May the designated date of the International Day for Biological Diversity to 22 May and provide advice on this matter to the Parties by February 2001;

d) Report on progress achieved in developing the global initiative to the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting.

*As the date for the International Day of Biological Diversity has been changed to May 22, starting in 2001 with the special focus on invasive alien species, it is also suggested to promote a postage stamp in all countries for this date with the CBD logo*

## **12. Impact assessment, liability and redress (V/18)**

33. **I. Impact Assessment:** Parties, Governments and other relevant organizations are invited *inter alia*: e) to organize expert meetings, workshops and seminars, as well as training, educational and public awareness programmes and exchange programmes, and carry out pilot environmental impact assessment projects in order to promote the development of local expertise in methodologies, techniques and procedures at national, regional and global level.

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The objectives and activities included in chapter 15 of Section II of Agenda 21, are intended to support the Convention on Biological Diversity. Already in 1992 it is recommended that "National studies should be started in order to implement an inventory of biological resources, to improve the scientific and economic importance and the function of biological diversity, and to suggest priorities of action. The economical and social consequences of the protection of biodiversity, and the benefits derived from the latter should be evaluated. A world-wide net should periodically supervise, actualize and make known this information.

Rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems and species in danger of extinction should be promoted. Practice of sustainable use of resources should be encouraged also in protected areas.

Technical and scientific cooperation should be promoted, with special attention to transfer of technology, to professional training and to the support the services of research and educational institutions, such as herbaria, musea, gene-banks and laboratoria.

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## **Strategic Plan**

The draft Strategic Plan aims in its vision for 2010 that:

- i. Current trends in the loss of biodiversity are effectively reversed at the global and national level;
- ii. The incidence and impacts of unsustainable use are considerably reduced;

iii. The benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge are shared equitably.

In this Strategic Plan under C. Operational Goals, item 4. Cross-cutting operational goals, special attention is dedicated to education and public awareness, *inter alia*:

4.4. Key actors effecting implementation of the Convention have increased awareness and are actively supporting and involved in implementation;

4.4.2. Identify at the national level who are key players and promote and support their involvement in the CBD/UNESCO Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness Initiative;

4.4.3. Establish measures to promote awareness at national level, including education in order to ensure actors, in particular relevant political support, to implement the Convention;

4.4.4. Identify the key actors, their motivations/interests, and develop a tailored communication programme to increase their understanding.

### **Proposed Plan of Action**

The following actions on the issue of biological diversity education and public awareness are proposed:

i. To create a list of education and communication networks contact addresses, including indigenous groups (CD-Rom and Web-based);

ii. To compose a list of education and communications experts, organizations and networks (governmental; non-governmental, indigenous, religious, sectoral-business and industry, agriculture, forests, tourism; media);

iii. To develop information systems at all levels;

iv. To promote and support all the stages of communication and participation of the public for the dissemination of information with regard to all the thematic areas of the Convention;

v. To prioritise the environmental thematic areas of the Convention at all levels of formal and informal education.



## Instruments

- i. To increase, through Governments, the public awareness on biological diversity through the educational media;
- ii. To develop capacity-building in all areas of the Convention as a relevant part of its implementation;
- iii. To create institutes of specialization through national Governments. These could be implemented at different levels (seminars, workshops, courses, post-grades), for the formation of communicators (journalists, publicists, executives in communication, etc.). Also for the training of teachers of different levels and other professionals in the various activities. This action is proposed at a national regional and international level;
- iv. To support mechanisms for facilitation (UNESCO, CHM) for interacting on a national and regional basis;
- v. To promote for SBSTTA 7, a panel of experts in education and communication;
- vi. To include in SBSTTA experts in education/communication as well as in the meetings of the COP's;
- vii. To develop national positions on thematic programmes of work;
- viii. To create an ad-hoc commission as a liaison between the Parties and the SCBD, with the purpose of integrating the educational experience in the programmes of work of CBD;
- ix. To develop capacity in biodiversity and human health with reference to the design and/or implementation of adequate contingency plans;
- x. To focus on the decision-makers;
- xi. To raise community awareness;
- xii. To promote the importance of awareness with regard to education, by means of capacity building of teachers and extension agents in biological diversity; including the thematic areas of biodiversity at all levels of the educational systems either official or private at national, regional or international levels;
- xiii. To urge Parties to include in their national legislation the concept, implementation and outreach of biological diversity and its reference to the commitment assumed by their ratifying the CBD;

xiv. To promote and support all the institutions of communication and participation of the public to extend the message on the issues of biological diversity from national governments to the sectors most involved in the thematic areas of biological diversity;

xv. To support through the CBD national focal points, the local projects on biodiversity, with reference to capacity-building and public awareness;

xvi. To formulate messages adaptable to different regions, sectors of the society and audiences, taking into account that perceptions of the concept of biological diversity may be different in the various parts of the world, according to local characteristics and needs. In this way, the local sense of biological diversity is to be apprehended to adapt the messages to different ethnical groups and cultures, including those of the indigenous and local communities;

xvii. To urge Parties to promote courses, meetings, workshops on the issue of biological diversity with support from SCBD;

xviii. To urge Parties to elaborate manuals, brochures, booklets to support the capacity-building efforts and increase public awareness on biological diversity;

xix. To use simple messages that emphasize the importance of biological diversity, including its economic and social value, and stressing the urgency to reverse the loss of biodiversity;

xx. To support formal and informal education as tools to make that the public discovers relations between biological diversity and everyday life. In this way a better understanding could be obtained, which stimulates awareness, resulting to adequate changes in attitudes and actions;

xxi. To elaborate the basis for a national prize on biological diversity, related to education and public awareness (manuals, books, paintings, etc.) coordinated by the Parties and supported by SCBD;

xxii. To designate a special theme for the International Day of Biological Diversity, to be promoted and communicated by the Clearing House Mechanism, and to promote in all countries the issue of a commemorative postage stamp for this day;

xxiii. To obtain the support of GEF for the implementation of activities of capacity-building and public awareness on biological diversity (art. 13 of CBD);

xxiv. To identify and communicate to all competent organizations, the need for development of capacity-building, requiring funds and outside support;

xxv. Other ideas could be suggested and discussed by the group.

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## **Conveying the Importance of Communication and Education Instruments to the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

### **A report submitted on behalf of the CBD-UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness**

**Prepared by Elin Kelsey, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>**

#### **A. OBJECTIVE**

To provide recommendations for a strategy to communicate the importance of communication and education instruments to the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

#### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Communicate the importance of education and communication instruments to the Parties by demonstrating their value in a key priority project – the CBD Strategic Plan;
- ii. Conceptualize the education and communications instruments that will be used in the [implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan as elements within a more comprehensive global communications plan for the CBD;
- iii. Prioritize the CBD itself as the primary focus of a global initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness;
- iv. Focus key messages on the CBD's core competency: the integration of its three key objectives – conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing;
- v. Initially target key stakeholders within the CBD process. A strategy to reach the public at large should be pursued at a later stage;
- vi. Secure funds and resources to assemble a small team of education and communication experts (E & C Expert Team) with professional experience in the international environmental arena. The E & C Expert Team should be tasked with creating and implementing comprehensive education and communication strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank Désirée M. McGraw, a specialist in the field of international environmental negotiations and communications, for her substantive input in developing this report.

## B. BACKGROUND

Article 13 of **the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) formally recognizes the importance of education and public involvement.** Indeed, the CBD was the first global environmental agreement to include a specific article dealing with public education and awareness. Article 13 reflects a commitment to education and communication that has been continuously voiced since the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched its first global environmental education initiative twenty-five years ago.

In response to paragraph 2 of decision V/17, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD requested the Executive Secretary of the Convention, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to convene a consultative working group of experts (consultative group) to further advance and, in particular, to identify priority activities for a proposed global initiative on biological diversity education and public awareness. Furthermore, the CBD Strategic Plan specifically identifies the importance of education and communications in accomplishing its strategic objectives.<sup>2</sup>

Yet despite positive statements about their importance, the consultative group concludes that **education and communications instruments fail to be effectively utilized in the development and implementation of CBD work programmes and national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Moreover, education and communications instruments lack appropriate levels of funding and are rarely informed by relevant professional expertise.**

The recommendations described in this report seek to resolve the discrepancy between the stated commitment to education and communications instruments on the one hand and the current condition of ineffective use on the other.

## C. STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

### 1. Education and communications are erroneously equated with information dissemination

The challenge of gaining support for and practical use of education and communication instruments from the Parties is made more difficult by the pervasive but erroneous assumption that education and communications are synonymous with information dissemination. Consequently, biodiversity education and communications projects tend to be narrowly framed as information management problems in which emphasis is placed on gathering expert information, organizing it, and re-packaging it for easier public consumption. **Education expertise and communications expertise are not recognized because information transmission is perceived to be simply a matter of putting the right information in, storing it, and making it easily accessible.** As a result, emphasis is placed on dissemination mechanisms with the

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<sup>2</sup> UNEP/CBD/WS-StratPlan/5 tabled 11 June 2001

greatest public reach; specifically the mass media and electronic forms of communication such as the Internet. **This simplistic framework falsely assumes that education is a “success without effort system”.**<sup>3</sup> The role of the educational expert and the role of the learner are thus trivialized.

Contemporary academic literature challenges the belief that facts speak for themselves and, instead, emphasizes the active role of the learner and the contextual nature of learning. Furthermore, **information transfer approaches serve to undermine the CBD's goals of public involvement and community-level capacity building** by neglecting the crucial human ability and necessity to construct knowledge. **By relegating the role of the public to merely information recipient, public agency is denied.** This situation leads to what Farrell and Goodnight (1998: 97) conceptualize as “the accidental public”: an audience extrinsic to the real work of environmental problem solving.<sup>4</sup> Rather than promoting more effective means for *engaging* the public in environmental activities, this approach focuses on simplifying technical information for consumption by a public that is assumed to be “ignorant”. The conceptualization of the public as ignorant grossly misrepresents the diversity of relevant knowledge present in civil society and robs environmental decision-making processes of information that resides in the realm of the public. This is a costly mistake.

Case-study research reveals that the interaction of the public with expert knowledge is rarely, if ever, a narrowly cognitive one based simply on information.<sup>5 6 7 8 9</sup> Importance is given to the source of the information, and particularly to the extent to which it could be judged trustworthy and reflective of understanding of their

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<sup>3</sup> Reddy, M. J. (1993). The Conduit Metaphor - A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language. In A. Ortony (Ed.), Metaphor and Thought, (2nd ed., pp. 164-201). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Farrell, T., B. & Goodnight, T. (1998). Accidental Rhetoric: The Root Metaphors of Three Mile Island. In C. Waddell (Ed.), Landmark Essays on Rhetoric and the Environment, (pp. 75-105). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. (Original essay published in 1981 in Communication Monographs, 48, 271-300).

<sup>5</sup> Wynne, B. (1991). Knowledges in Context. Science, Technology and Human Values, 16(1), 111-21.

<sup>6</sup> Layton, D., Jenkins, E., Macgill, S., & Davey, A. (1993). Inarticulate Science? Perspectives on the Public Understanding of Science and Some Implications for Science Education. Nafferton: Studies in Education Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> Irwin, A. (1995). Citizen science: a study of people, expertise and sustainable development. London: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> Irwin, A., & Wynne, B. (Ed.). (1996). Misunderstanding science?: The public reconstruction of science and technology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Wynne, B. (1996). May the Sheep Safely Graze? A Reflexive View of the Expert-Lay Knowledge Divide. In S. Lash, B. Szerszynski & B. Wynne (Eds.). (1996). Risk, environment and modernity: towards a new ecology. London: Sage.

situation. **The way in which a message is conveyed, and who conveys it, is as important as what is being said.**<sup>10 11</sup>

**Hence, education and communications are *not* simple acts of transferring information.** Recognition of the failure of information transfer and the complexity of educational and communicative processes, in turn, underscores the need for education and communications expertise. Therefore, just as the expertise of biologists, diplomats, economists, lawyers and taxonomists are already brought to bear on various aspects of the CBD decision-making process, so too should individuals with professional knowledge of education and communications be involved in the CBD policy cycle. Education and communications professionals each hold distinct fields of expertise as evidenced by the fact that separate university faculties, departments, degrees and entire literatures are devoted to these disciplines

## **2. Due to its comprehensiveness and complexity, the biodiversity issue-area poses particular communications challenges<sup>12</sup>**

The CBD reached its peak in popularity when the U.S. announced it would not sign in Rio. Since that time, the Convention has received negligible coverage in the mainstream media – especially when compared to its ozone and climate change counterparts.<sup>13</sup> If the CBD is indeed perceived as less popular and less prestigious than these other agreements, it is in part due to the nature of the issue-area itself: both the breadth and depth of biodiversity make it difficult to define a clear *problématique*. In essence, biodiversity lacks ‘issue salience’ (a trait derived from an issue’s simplicity, clarity and/or familiarity). Concretely, biodiversity does not offer an uncomplicated formula that advocates can explain to policy-makers in straightforward terms and that journalists can encapsulate in headlines for public consumption.

Whereas the impacts of atmospheric change, such as ozone depletion and global warming, are quickly grasped by the average person, comprehending the ‘web of life’ – from microscopic organisms to entire ecosystems – is more elusive. Moreover, the biodiversity cause has yet to be championed by a popular group: environmental lawyers and taxonomists can hardly be said to capture the public’s imagination. The

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<sup>10</sup> Howlett, M. (1991). Policy instruments, policy styles, and policy implementation: national approaches to the theory of instrument choice. *Policy Studies Journal*, 19(2), 1-21.

<sup>11</sup> Weiss, J.A. & Tschirhart, M. (1994). Public information campaigns as policy instruments. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 13(1), 82-119.

<sup>12</sup> The analysis contained in this second point is provided by Désirée M. McGraw on the basis of her forthcoming publication (2002) “The Story of the Biodiversity Convention: Origins, Characteristics and Implications for Implementation” in Philippe Le Prestre (ed.) *The CBD and the Construction of a New International Biological Order* London: Ashgate Publications.

<sup>13</sup> A systematic collection and content analysis of media coverage of the CBD since its adoption should be conducted as a part of any formal communications strategy vis-à-vis the Convention.

species- and site-specific treaties, which pre-dated the CBD, made it easier for the public to embrace ‘charismatic animals’ such as the panda and to envision ‘exotic sites’ such as the rainforests of Borneo and Brazil.

**Thus, although the comprehensive manner in which the CBD addresses the biodiversity issue-area may be laudable from a substantive or scientific point of view, it also serves to magnify the issue’s complexity and, consequently, to diminish both the Convention’s general appeal and the political will necessary for its implementation.** The remedy, however, is not necessarily to return to the traditional ways of conveying the importance of biodiversity. Indeed, conservation campaigns focusing on specific sites and species are best left to well-established conservation organizations.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this approach rests on the misguided view of the CBD as an umbrella conservation convention (one that consolidates pre-existing biodiversity agreements) rather than as a framework sustainable development convention (which overlaps with agreements beyond the environmental domain).

On this basis a global initiative on biodiversity education and public awareness should focus first and foremost on the CBD itself. An effective biodiversity communications campaign would not only first focus on the CBD, it would address the Convention’s unique nature or “core competency” (in management terms): the integration of its three key objectives of conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing. Indeed, because the CBD addresses socio-economic issues, it is much more than an environmental treaty: its cutting-edge approach to biodiversity has implications for intellectual property rights, trade, technology, human health and culture. Such a cross-cutting focus would allow for involvement by a broader range of relevant, institutions, instruments and expertise beyond biodiversity conservation *per se*.

Finally, the current lead-up to **the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development presents an ideal opportunity to showcase the CBD.** As one of two legally binding agreements to emerge from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the CBD is well-positioned to serve as a global focal point for measuring progress since Rio. Rather than attempt to compete with its better-known climate change counterpart, the CBD’s standing as a sister agreement to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (and its subsequent Kyoto Protocol) should be emphasized. **Clearly identifying and creating linkages with other issues that rank high on domestic agendas (such as health) as well international agendas (such as trade and security) would go a long way toward enhancing the CBD’s political and public profile.** (See Step 8 below regarding developing key communications messages.)

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<sup>14</sup> The World Conservation Union (IUCN) report on “Effective Communication of Nature & Biological Diversity to an Uninterested Public” represents a case in point: it interprets biodiversity education solely in terms of nature conservation and management. Such an approach is understandable given the IUCN’s mission but remains inadequate from a CBD communications perspective.



### **3. Key stakeholders lack sufficient understanding to effectively implement the CBD**

The complexity and scope of the CBD along with the contentious nature of many of the implementation decisions create the current scenario in which key stakeholders lack sufficient understanding of the CBD structure and priorities to proceed. The results of a preliminary study presented at the second meeting of the consultative group confirm that National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP) Co-ordinators (the people at the national level who can reach out locally) lack knowledge about CBD priorities, and hence, have difficulty “interpreting” the CBD for other key stakeholders in agriculture, business, government, science, and the public.<sup>15</sup> (See Annex 1).

What NBSAP Co-ordinators most need, according to the preliminary report, is:

- i. Identification of CBD priorities;
- ii. National networks for implementation, solutions for conflicting interests;
- iii. Support from decision-makers and stakeholders at all levels and sectors of activity.

**Given the complex and controversial nature of the CBD, it is clearly unrealistic to try to reach a global public with a simplified message.** Instead, education and communications instruments must focus on building the capacity of the NBSAP Co-ordinators and other key stakeholders to understand and implement the strategic priorities of the CBD in their respective contexts. At the international level, the focus should be placed on the exchange of regional knowledge and experience in order to stimulate co-operation between neighbouring countries.

### **4. Based on further consultations with the CBD Secretariat and key stakeholders, the E & C Expert Team should elaborate the following:**

- i. Strategic premise to be able to effect action plan;
- ii. Rationale for game plan;
- iii. History (where we are now: current needs, future challenges);
- iv. Strengths and accomplishments to date (maintain these) and key problems/priorities for future.

## **D. COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES**

Note: A complimentary list of education objectives must also be determined. Such a list is not included here as it was beyond the scope of this contract.

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<sup>15</sup> CBD-UNESCO/EPA/2/INF/2 report tabled 16 October 2000

Given the above background and analysis, the following key objectives must be met:

- i. Conduct an inventory and analysis of existing education and communication initiatives related to the CBD (at the national level, any such initiatives could be highlighted in national reports);
- ii. Identify and contact key target groups (internal and external audiences, constituencies, partners, stakeholders);
- iii. Build increased understanding and support for the CBD among all target groups;
- iv. Establish strategic partnerships with key individuals and institutions – local, national and international – in academia, business, government, media and science;
- v. Identify and cultivate CBD "champions" or "ambassadors" in key sectors, such as youth, business and politics. Develop the capacity of these representatives to communicate to and for their respective sectors.

## E. ACTION PLAN

Note: Communicating the importance of education and communication instruments to the Parties needs to be done in a manner that reflects the more sophisticated notions of communication and education described in the previous section. It must model how education and communication instruments can be used to advance a real priority area for the Parties – notably the CBD Strategic Plan. At the same time, the approach adopted should facilitate open discussions about why certain education and communications instruments were chosen over others, and how such instruments might be tailored to other issues Parties encounter in national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

The above objectives can be met by implementing the following action plan:

**Step 1: Immediately secure funds and resources to assemble a small team of education and communication experts (E & C Expert Team)** with professional experience in the international environmental arena. The E & C Expert Team would lead the action steps described below.

**Step 2: Develop comprehensive global communications plans for the CBD**

Some of the steps outlined below (such as steps 3, 6 and 7) represent components of such a plan. Professional communications expertise should be sought from the non-profit and private sectors – independent specialist consultants and/or global public relations/communications firms. Opportunities for pro-bono assistance from consulting firms working in the international and/or environmental arena should be actively pursued.<sup>16</sup>

**Step 3: Consult with key individuals responsible for the CBD Strategic Plan to develop a joint strategic approach for maximizing the use of education and communication instruments** in achieving the Strategic Plan's objectives. The strategic approach should be set within the context of a broader, more comprehensive global communications plan for the CBD.

**Step 4: Identify and justify key targets.** The NBSAP Co-ordinators are recognized as key targets based on their pivotal role in national implementation. Other key targets to be identified through this process.

**Step 5: Build database and distribution list of key stakeholders, partners, targets, etc.**

**Step 6: Develop and implement mechanisms to work collaboratively with NBSAP Co-ordinators and other key stakeholders** to 1) identify significant barriers to the understanding of CBD uniqueness and procedures, and the

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<sup>16</sup> A notable precedent includes the report produced by the global accounting firm *Touche Ross* in costing out UNCED's Agenda 21.

implementation of national action plans; and, 2) develop education and communications instruments to address these barriers.

**Step 7: Conduct a systematic collection and content analysis of media coverage of the CBD** since its adoption as a first step in developing any formal communications strategy. Comparative SWOT analysis of climate change coverage may highlight relative “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats” of communications strategies surrounding both the CBD and the UNFCCC (which have generally evolved in parallel to one another).

**Step 8: Devise key communications messages** to reflect the CBD’s relevance to current affairs and everyday life such as:

- i. Biodiversity loss (particularly in the form of forests, which serve as carbon sinks) may contribute to global warming. Climate change in turn impacts biodiversity;
- ii. Biodiversity provides the raw material for multi-national, multi-billion dollar industries (such as pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and agriculture) which provide products we rely on everyday;
- iii. Biodiversity – like stem cells – may provide the basis for cures for countless diseases that continue to plague humanity;
- iv. The Biosafety Protocol (a sub-agreement of the CBD) represents the first global agreement to touch on trade in GMOs which may impact food choices.

Communications experts with an understanding of scientific and diplomatic language will be essential to translating the often-cumbersome language of inter-governmental reports into messages that are tailored according to the target audience(s).

**Step 9: Present the results of the preceding steps at a panel presentation at COP6.** Presentation to emphasize the tangible benefits to the Parties of using education and communications instruments and the negative consequences of failing to do so.

**Step 10: Secure long-term financial and other resources for implementation and evaluation.** For example, request COP to instruct GEF to provide funds and resources to build the capacity of NBSAP Co-ordinators (and other key stakeholders) to tailor the education and communications instruments developed in Steps 2, 3 and 6 to national and other (e.g. youth, indigenous, etc.) contexts. The E & C Expert Team should be retained to provide continuity and specialist support, and serve as a liaison to national education and communication experts through this process. Request Parties to fund the inclusion of education and communications instruments in their National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans.

**Step 11: Create education and communication for a** through which NBSAP Co-ordinators and other key stakeholders can effectively **share national and other experiences and foster co-operative regional initiatives.**

**Step 12: Implement an on-going system of evaluation and re-development** to ensure that the strategic objectives the education and communication instruments are designed to address are being met.

**Additional Steps:**

The following steps should be executed concurrently with those outlined above:<sup>17</sup>

- i. Establish a formal route for integration of education and communications experts into CBD decision-making processes. This would include formal representation in the COP and relevant subsidiary bodies and processes; in the development of national action plans; in the development of thematic programmes of work; and, in the development of a global communications plan for the CBD;
- ii. Establish an international roster of education and communications experts drawn from the private and public sector as well as independent consultants. The importance of their role will determine the in/formality of the selection process (for example, whether such experts would be appointed by Parties or the SCBD).<sup>18</sup>
- iii. Collaborate with international education and communications organizations and agencies to establish professional standards and systems of accreditation for education and communications expertise. [Secure funding and support for the establishment of a research program to inform the ongoing development of education and communication instruments for international environmental and sustainable development policies;
- iv. Encourage the development of a strong lobby to champion the inclusion of education and communications expertise in international policy arenas (environmental, economic or otherwise) which are relevant to the CBD.

**F. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Funding must be secured to implement the recommendations included in this report. The Consultative Group advises that the recommendations outlined above be funded through the CBD Strategic Plan. It further recommends that the COP instruct the GEF to fund education and communication instruments in a broader manner by both:

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<sup>17</sup> These steps should be harmonized with recommendations of the *Global Initiative* currently being developed by the CBD-UNESCO Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biological Diversity Education and Public Awareness.

<sup>18</sup> The IUCN-CEC has recently created a "Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness" website that includes a listing of professionals working in this field. This site could be elaborated to fulfil an aspect of the international roster. It should be noted that such self-identification would only be effective if the roster has no formal advisory capacity.

- i. Including education and communications instruments in capacity-building;
- ii. Ensuring that education and communications instruments are included in every CBD work plan and programme.

**A significant result of the recommendations described here would be the provision for education and communications funding – both in terms of separate initiatives for implementing the action plan as well as institutionalising education and communications instruments as a basic element of all funding mechanisms on biological diversity.**

Furthermore, this report calls for formal consideration by the COP of **a Program Officer position responsible for Education and Communication** within the Implementation and Outreach division of the CBD Secretariat.<sup>19</sup> The position would serve as a liaison within the Secretariat to work with the current Consultative Group as well as the proposed E& C Expert Team, the international roster of experts and professional consultants as well as to oversee ongoing education and communications activities.

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<sup>19</sup> Whereas all the other programs listed under this division (notably Financial Resources, Clearing-House Mechanism, National Reports, Library and Documentation Services) each have at least one dedicated position, Education and Public Awareness does not.

# **ANNEX 1: MATRIX OF TARGET GROUPS BY SECTOR AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITY**

Note: The contents of the matrix will be developed in tandem with the database and distribution list outlined in Step 5 above.

<b>SCOPE (Level &amp; Focus of Activity)</b>  <b>SECTOR (Stakeholders, Partners &amp; Audiences)</b>	<b>Local/Provincial</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>International/Global</b>
<b>Academia &amp; Research</b>			
<b>Advocacy &amp; Policy NGOs</b>			
<b>Business &amp; Industry</b>			
<b>Formal Education</b>			
<b>Informal Education</b>			
<b>Media</b>			
<b>Government</b>  <u>(Inter- and Intra-)</u>			
<u>Civil society</u>			
<u>Indigenous peoples</u>			