



# CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL  
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Item 4.3.1 of the provisional agenda\*

## ESTABLISHMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR THE SECOND NATIONAL REPORTS, INCLUDING INDICATORS AND INCENTIVE MEASURES

Assessing the state of implementation of the Convention: report of a project  
to develop and test a mechanism for preliminary assessment

### Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The present document, which is being submitted for the information of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) at its fifth meeting is the report of a project carried out by the Secretariat, with the technical support of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) and the collaboration of nine Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Canada, Ecuador, Finland, Indonesia, Malawi, Norway, Seychelles, Slovenia and the United Kingdom). The project was financially supported through voluntary contributions from the Governments of Canada, Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

2. The project was conceived in response to the request from the Conference of the Parties, contained in paragraph 3 of its decision IV/14, for advice on the nature of the information needed from Parties in order to assess the state of implementation of the Convention. It was hoped that the conclusions of the project would assist SBSTTA at its fifth meeting with preparation of the advice requested by the Conference of the Parties. A key output from the project has been its contribution to the development of the note by the Executive Secretary on mechanisms for implementation: establishment of guidelines for the second national reports (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/14) that has been prepared for the fifth meeting of the Subsidiary Body.

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## I. AIM OF THE PROJECT

3. The aim of the project was to develop and test a mechanism for the assessment of the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was intended that this mechanism would:

- (a) Be of value at national level, providing a framework for information management and reporting;
- (b) Be of value internationally, providing a framework for assessing implementation;
- (c) Help to focus attention on areas where further international support is required; and
- (d) Be built on over time.

## II. PROJECT MANDATE

4. The mandate for the project derives from decisions II/17 and IV/14 of the Conference of the Parties, as follows:

(a) Paragraph 9 of decision II/17 requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a report based on the synthesis of information contained in national reports and other relevant information and containing also suggested next steps, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Paragraph 2 of decision IV/14 requests the Executive Secretary to prepare, in time for the fourth meeting of SBSTTA, a revised version of the report referred to in decision II/17 on the basis of national reports received and other relevant information. It has since been decided that this issue will be dealt with at the fifth meeting of SBSTTA;

(c) Paragraph 3 of decision IV/14 requests SBSTTA to consider the report of the Executive Secretary and to provide the Conference of the Parties, at its fifth meeting, with advice on the intervals and form of future national reports, taking into account the elements contained in the annex to the present decision. This advice should cover:

- (i) The nature of the information needed from Parties in order to assess the state of implementation of the Convention;
- (ii) Recommendations on improving the reporting process, through guidelines on format, style, length and treatment with a view to ensuring comparability between national reports; and
- (iii) Identification of ways and means to further facilitate national implementation of the Convention.

5. The Executive Secretary sought views on ways to develop a methodology for undertaking a preliminary assessment of the state of implementation of the Convention. The proposal was discussed informally with various Parties, and the pilot project entitled "Assessing the state of implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity" was developed. A group of nine Parties, covering all regions and listed in paragraph 1 above, participated in the project and WCMC provided technical support.

## III. PROBLEM THE PROJECT AIMS TO ADDRESS

6. There are now 176 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Four meetings of the Conference of the Parties and four meetings of SBSTTA

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have been held. The Conference of the Parties has adopted 70 decisions relating to implementation of the Convention, resulting from consideration of related matters at its meetings, at the meetings of SBSTTA, and at other regional and thematic meetings held under the Convention.

7. The clearing-house mechanism has been established to provide a mechanism for promoting and facilitating technical and scientific cooperation; national reports should have been submitted by each Party to provide the basis for review of implementation of the Convention; and the Conference of the Parties has issued requests to Parties and other bodies for specific types of information relating to implementation of the Convention to be made available to the Executive Secretary. Nevertheless, little comprehensive, systematically arranged information on implementation of the Convention is currently available.

#### Reporting

8. Contracting Parties were asked to prepare reports by the end of 1997. Sixteen reports were received by the initial deadline (9 per cent), and 107 by the end of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (60 per cent). By the revised deadline of the end of 1998, three further reports had been received. By December 1999, two years after the original deadline, 111 reports have been received (63 per cent).

#### Synthesis of reports

9. The reports are variable in content and format, making comparison difficult. The lack of indicators and targets in most of the reports also means that review of progress over time will be difficult to achieve. This also presents difficulties for the preparation of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, which the Conference of the Parties intended to be based on the information contained in national reports.

#### Origin of information

10. Parties have indicated that reviews of implementation should be based on information provided in the national reports or on other information formally submitted by Governments to the Executive Secretary. Assisting all Parties to provide appropriate information on measures taken to implement the full range of the provisions of the Convention is therefore essential if the Conference of the Parties is to be able to conduct an overall assessment of the state of implementation of the Convention.

#### Clearing-house mechanism

11. The clearing-house mechanism can have an important role to play in making available information on implementation and lessons learned, as part of its role to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. For this to be done effectively, however, information needs to be organized in accordance with the different obligations established by the Convention or by decisions of the Conference of the Parties, in a way that allows for comparability between reports.

Decisions of the Conference of the Parties

12. There is no mechanism in place for systematically tracking implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties, particularly those that call on action to be taken by Parties themselves. However, the current development of the handbook of decisions and other material requested in decision IV/16 means that there will be a basis against which implementation can be assessed.

13. The current lack of consistent, systematically arranged information on implementation of the Convention makes accurate assessment of progress difficult, and this in turn affects the ability of the Conference of the Parties to identify lessons learned, current constraints to implementation and, therefore, priorities for future action.

14. A key need is for the development of processes and mechanisms that systematically review progress in implementing the Convention. As far as possible these processes and mechanisms should incorporate and build on existing activities, including coordination of implementation at national level, the preparation and synthesis of national reports, development of a Global Biodiversity Outlook and the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism.

15. The importance of assessment has already been acknowledged by Parties, and is being undertaken in one form or another by many. However information arising from these processes is not being made available internationally in a consistent format, largely because there is no clear definition of what is required. A programme of assessment based on the compilation of a defined set of achievements and indicators would build on the national efforts that already exist, and promote them where they do not. Wide circulation of the information arising from this assessment in a graphical and user-friendly manner would significantly raise the profile of efforts to implement the objectives of the Convention.

16. A review of progress requires two types of assessment, and while these are linked, there are clear differences between them. In both cases, these activities should already be under way at the national level, as part of the measures taken by Parties to implement their obligations:

(a) Periodic assessment of the status of biological diversity. This type of assessment takes account of the biological diversity present within a country or region, its distribution, status and trends, and threats to biological diversity. It provides a basis for prioritization of action at national and international levels, and for identifying changing status over time which can itself be used in assessing progress in achieving targets set by, inter alia, national strategies and action plans;

(b) Ongoing assessment of the status of implementation of the Convention. This form of assessment takes account of the actions being taken by Parties and others to implement the Convention, and is therefore closely tied to: all the articles of the Convention; development and implementation of national strategies and action plans; and implementation of decisions taken by the Conference of Parties. It provides a basis for managing implementation of the Convention at national level and therefore also for reporting progress to the Conference of the Parties and for sharing experience. At the international level it provides the basis for assessing

progress in implementing the Convention and can be used to identify where exchange of experience may be useful.

17. The project under review addresses the second type of assessment: the assessment of the status of implementation of the Convention.

#### IV. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

18. The following sections identify the main activities undertaken in implementing the project, and the major outputs. Each of the documents mentioned is available for review, and a more detailed list of relevant documents is provided in annex I below.

##### A. Initial discussion of approach

19. Following the development of initial ideas on how the project would be developed, and the preparation of a project description and planning document, discussions took place during the fourth meeting of SBSTTA between the Secretariat, the nine Parties who had expressed interest in participating in a pilot project to test the approach, and WCMC. This was followed by a lunch-time presentation to delegations. On both occasions, the general approach was endorsed and expressions of interest in considering the results of the project at the fifth meeting of SBSTTA were made.

##### B. Identifying obligations on Contracting Parties

20. To be relevant and acceptable to Parties, mechanisms to assess the status of implementation of the Convention must be based on the obligations already established. These obligations are defined in the articles of the Convention and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

21. The text of the Convention and all the decisions were therefore reviewed, and a list of all resulting actions required of or expected from Parties was drawn up. These actions were organized by article of the Convention, so that relevant elements from each decision were associated with the appropriate article. This material is available as the report entitled "Summary of national commitments implied by the articles of the Convention and the decisions of the Conference of Parties". Annex II provides an example of such a list of obligations.

##### C. Identify and test simple measures of progress

22. In order to derive an overall picture of the implementation of a very complex series of actions, simple measures of progress need to be identified. This is also important for ensuring that the resulting reports are sufficiently consistent. It was decided to achieve this through the development of a series of questions based on the list of obligations already identified. Each of these questions would be answered using a series of "tick" boxes. Annex III provides an example of such a list of questions.

23. A document containing these questions was made available to each of the nine collaborating Parties, with the request that they try to apply the method in accordance with their national circumstances. Each of the Parties was asked to provide comments on the adequacy of the questions and difficulties they encountered in completing the questions, together with any further recommendations on how the work could be improved.

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24. Comments were received from all nine Parties, and representatives of the national focal points of these Parties participated in a telephone conference to analyse results. A summary of all the comments received during the project (including those made during at the initial presentation at the fourth meeting of SBSTTA) is available in the report entitled "Comments on the trial of the measures of achievement". The revised questions are available in the report entitled "Measures of achievement".

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

25. There has been a very positive response to this project both by the Parties involved in the testing of the methodology, and others who have been briefed during the course of the project. The early feedback was that the approach was correct, but that modifications were required in the introductory text, the questions, and the options provided as possible answers.

26. This feedback was analysed and the recommendations made were largely incorporated into the reporting matrix. This matrix in its final form, incorporating suggestions made by the participating Parties during the final consultation, constitutes the annex to the note by the Executive Secretary establishment of guidelines for the second national reports (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/14), which will be considered at the present meeting. It is hoped that the results of this project will assist SBSTTA to identify the standard reporting format requested by the Conference of the Parties in decision IV/14, as this matrix would:

(a) Elicit the full range of information required to assess the state of implementation of the Convention;

(b) Allow comparability and permit countries to respond in accordance with national conditions and capacities, through the question-and-answer format and the option to provide additional information;

(c) Allow Parties to signal decisions to concentrate efforts on certain sets of obligations which constitute priority areas for national implementation or to indicate where implementation is constrained by factors for the elimination of which support is required;

(d) Provide a framework for reporting progress on the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, lessons learnt, gaps in national capacity, technical and financial requirements, and nationally developed indicators;

(e) Avoid the need for countries to devote time and resources to identifying the scope of their report or otherwise deciding how to interpret the reporting guidelines.

27. As noted above, the project resulted in the development of a matrix which succinctly summarizes progress in implementation of the Convention article by article, taking account of decisions relevant to those articles. This matrix is based on building a meaningful series of measures of achievement (or milestones) rather than subjective assessments or complex indices.

28. The matrix has the potential to be used at the national level by those responsible for coordinating implementation of the Convention, thereby helping them to better organize the information they need in order to assess national implementation, and providing a framework which assists both national reporting to the Convention and reporting to Ministers and senior civil servants in other sectors of Government.

29. Compilation of information from the matrix at international level, and presentation of this information in summary formats using appropriate graphics, tables and maps, will facilitate realistic assessment of the implementation of the Convention globally and regionally, thereby supporting the identification of required international support and action. There remains a need to design graphical, tabular and map-based products based on the compilation and aggregation, or the distillation of information from these nationally completed matrices. It is hoped to do this as a next stage of the project.

#### VI. RELATIONSHIP WITH NATIONAL-LEVEL REPORTING AND ASSESSMENT PROCESSES

30. As an example of the potential of this approach, delegates may find the following information of interest.

31. Prior to the start of this project, the Government of the United Kingdom commissioned a review of its implementation of the Convention. The aim was to assess the action taken to date, in order to assess whether the United Kingdom is meeting its obligations, to make adjustments accordingly, and to be able to report on action taken.

32. The review was carried out by compiling a matrix of the activities underway and planned, related to the obligations on Parties implied or explicitly stated in the articles of the Convention and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties. A summary report describing the approach and providing examples of the resulting tables is available as the "Summary of the review of national implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity carried out by the Government of the United Kingdom".

33. The list of obligations used as the basis for this national review is the same as that used in the development of the measures of achievement questions described above, so the potential link between the two approaches is clear. Where Parties have already compiled for domestic use the information required to assess and monitor their progress towards fulfilling each of the identified obligations, then completion of the list of measures of achievement for the purposes of reporting under the Convention should be straightforward.

34. The same approach is now being considered by Regional Office for Europe of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its support to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and to the Central Asian countries for implementation of the Convention.

Annex I

## ANNOTATED LIST OF PROJECT REPORTS AND OTHER RELEVANT PAPERS

A description of the project and copies of all relevant documents can be found on the Internet at the following address

<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cbd/measures/>

Project description and planning document (Version 1.1 - 18 June 1999)
· <i>Describes the project, the activities that were planned, and the timetable for the work. Most of the introductory paragraphs are also included in this report.</i>
Summary of national commitments implied by the Articles of the Convention and the Decisions of the Conference of the Parties (Version 1.0 - 14 June 1999)
· <i>List of obligations and/or expectations of national action implied by either the Articles of the Convention or the Decisions of the four Conferences of the Parties.</i>
Measures of achievement (Version 2.0 - 10 August 1999)
· <i>Draft series of questions and tick boxes for review by the nine Contracting Parties and others</i>
Comments on the trial of the Measures of Achievement (Version 2.1 - 12 October 1999)
· <i>Comments made by the nine Contracting Parties and others on the proposed measures of achievement and the methodology.</i>
Mechanisms for implementation: Establishment of guidelines for the second national reports, Note by the Executive Secretary, UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/14 (22 October 1999)
· <i>This is the SBSTTA document that incorporates the result of the pilot project and makes recommendations on the future of national reporting.</i>
Measures of achievement - as contained in the Note of the Executive Secretary to SBSTTA (Version 3.1 - 12 October 1999)
· <i>The final series of questions and tick boxes following review and discussion with the nine contracting parties involved in the project.</i>
Summary of the review of national implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity carried out by the Government of the United Kingdom (Version 1.2 - 23 June 1999)
· <i>Summary of the more detailed review of implementation of the Convention carried out by the Government of the United Kingdom</i>



Annex II

EXAMPLE OF NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

**Article 11. Incentive Measures**

- ✓ Adopt economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity.

**Decision III/18. Incentive measures**

- ✓ Encourages Parties to review their existing legislation and economic policies, to identify and promote incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity
- ✓ Encourages Parties to ensure adequate incorporation of the market and non-market values of biological diversity into plans, policies and programmes and other relevant areas
- ✓ Encourages Parties to develop training and capacity-building programmes to implement incentive measures and promote private-sector initiatives in this regard
- ✓ Encourages Parties to incorporate biological diversity considerations into impact assessments as a step in the design and implementation of incentive measures
- ✓ Invites Parties to share experiences on incentive measures and make relevant case studies available to the Secretariat

**Decision IV/10. Measures for implementing the Convention [PART]**

- ✓ Encourages Parties to promote design and implementation of appropriate incentive measures
- ✓ Encourages Parties to identify threats to biological diversity and underlying causes of biodiversity loss, including the relevant actors, as a stage in designing incentive measures
- ✓ Encourages Parties to take into account economic, social, cultural and ethical valuation in the development of relevant incentive measures
- ✓ Encourages Parties to develop supportive legal and policy frameworks for the design and implementation of incentive measures
- ✓ Encourages Parties to carry out consultative processes to define clear target-oriented incentive measures to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss
- ✓ Encourages Parties to identify and consider neutralizing perverse incentives
- ✓ Encourages Parties to prepare case-studies
- ✓ Encourages Parties to undertake value addition of naturally occurring genetic resources based on the participatory approach to work as incentives for their conservation and sustainable use
- ✓ Requests Parties to include information on the design and implementation of incentive measures in their second national reports

Annex III

## EXAMPLE OF MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT QUESTIONS

**Article 11 Incentive measures**

1. Are programmes in place to identify and ensure the adoption of economically and socially sound measures that act as incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	
c) advanced stages of development	
d) programmes in place	
e) review of implementation available	

**Decision III/18. Incentive measures**

2. Has your country reviewed legislation and economic policies to identify and promote incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity?	
a) no	
b) reviews in progress	
c) as far as practically possible	
3. Has your country ensured the development of mechanisms or approaches to ensure adequate incorporation of both market and non-market values of biological diversity into plans, policies and programmes and other relevant areas, <i>inter alia</i> , national accounting systems and investment strategies?	
a) no	
b) early stages of identifying mechanisms	
c) advanced stages of identifying mechanisms	
d) mechanisms in place	
e) review of impact of mechanisms available	
4. Has your country developed training and capacity building programmes to implement incentive measures and promote private-sector initiatives?	
a) no	
b) planned	
c) some	
d) many	
5. Has your country incorporated biological diversity considerations into impact assessments as a step in the design and implementation of incentive measures?	
a) no	
b) yes	
6. Has your country shared experience on incentive measures with other Contracting Parties, including making relevant case studies available to the Secretariat?	
a) no	
b) yes - previous national report	
c) yes - case studies	
d) yes - other means (please give details below)	

**Decision IV/10. Measures for implementing the Convention [part]**

7. Is your country actively designing and implementing incentive measures?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	
c) advanced stages of development	
d) measures in place	
e) review of implementation available	
8. Has your country identified threats to biological diversity and underlying causes of biodiversity loss, including the relevant actors, as a stage in designing incentive measures?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	
c) advanced stages of development	
d) measures in place	
e) review of implementation available	
9. Do the existing incentive measures take account of economic, social, cultural and ethical valuation of biological diversity?	
a) no	
b) yes - limited extent	
c) yes - significant extent	
10. Has your country developed legal and policy frameworks for the design and implementation of incentive measures?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	
c) advanced stages of development	
d) frameworks in place	
e) review of implementation available	
11. Does your country carry out consultative processes to define clear target-oriented incentive measures to address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss?	
a) no	
b) early stages of development	
c) advanced stages of development	
d) processes in place	
12. Has your country identified and considered neutralizing perverse incentives?	
a) no	
b) identification programme under way	
c) identified but not all neutralized	
d) identified and neutralized	

**Further comments on implementation of this Article**

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