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Item 3.4 of the provisional agenda*

EXPERIENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the fourteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, a note on experiences in the development of national biodiversity indicators.
2. This report has been prepared by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) on the basis of experiences gathered through the UNEP project to build capacity for national biodiversity indicators.
3. The document is circulated in the form and language in which it was received by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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Experiences in the development of national biodiversity indicators to inform considerations of the revision and updating of the Strategic Plan of the CBD for the post-2010 period.

Prepared by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)¹

I. Messages to the CBD from eastern and southern African biodiversity indicator developers

From 2008 to 2010 institutions in six countries in eastern Africa and seven countries in southern Africa have been working to produce national biodiversity indicators and to build their capacity in the process. This work is designed around the framework presented in Annex 1 of steps that promote the long-term production of biodiversity indicators. The project has been implemented through a series of three regional workshops and work by country teams to develop a few biodiversity indicators that meet national needs and for which there is some suitable data. The regional workshops serve to build capacity, to share and develop results, and identify lessons learnt. The national teams include environmental management authorities, wildlife and biodiversity agencies, national statistical offices, biodiversity conservation NGOs, and academic institutes.

The following messages to the CBD SBSTTA were produced in the third regional workshop for the eastern Africa region in April 2010 (presented in italic text, with some subsequent elaboration). They are the result of an analysis of the countries' progress after one year to develop national biodiversity indicators following the steps in the framework in Annex 1. Most of the countries had advanced to the step of calculation of some indicators, although these still had to be communicated and refined with stakeholders, along with the development of monitoring and reporting systems. In the southern Africa region the project has not yet reached the stage of indicator calculation, but some recommendations to the CBD SBSTTA from their experience so far are included in this document.

1. The importance of national biodiversity indicators

The countries participating in the BICSAfrica project have demonstrated that national biodiversity indicators are vital for effective conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of biodiversity resources. Their role includes raising understanding of how biodiversity is part of addressing priority development issues such as poverty reduction and climate change.

¹ This information paper has been prepared as a contribution to the discussions for the CBD SBSTTA-14 agenda item 3.4:

“Examination of the outcome-oriented goals and targets, and associated indicators, and consideration of their possible adjustments for the period beyond 2010”.

The views expressed in this document include key messages to the CBD identified by participants from thirteen eastern and southern Africa countries in a UNEP project to build capacity for national biodiversity indicators. This project is known as BICSAfrica and is implemented by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and UNEP, with funding by the UN Development Account, and is conducted as part of the 2010 BIP. Additional considerations to support national and global biodiversity indicator development are based on the experience of UNEP-WCMC staff, who have co-ordinated the implementation of the UNEP-GEF projects “Biodiversity Indicators for National Use”, the “2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership” (2010 BIP www.twentyten.net) and the UNEP capacity building project in Africa. The 2010 BIP has conducted regional capacity building workshops on biodiversity indicators involving over 35 countries in south-east Asia, the Caribbean, Central America and eastern and southern Africa. Information on these projects and resources to support national biodiversity indicator development in all UN languages and Japanese are available at the 2010 BIP's companion website www.bipnational.net

The participants in the project have recognised that they cannot achieve their mandates or objectives without relevant and accessible information on biodiversity. This includes being able to communicate the importance of biodiversity in sustaining development and its inclusion in development policies.

Indicators have been produced for populations of key mammals and birds that are important for wildlife tourism, are threatened species, are important for achieving protected area objectives, and as indicators of the status of biodiversity and the environment at the national level. Indicators are also being developed on the coverage of important habitats and ecosystems, coverage of conservation areas, harvest levels of fish stocks, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife diseases, invasive alien species, and other topics.

2. Challenges in producing national biodiversity indicators

It has been noticed that there is very little awareness or use of biodiversity indicators at all levels (technical, scientific, and policy).

The participating countries in the BICSAfrica project have shown that some relevant national biodiversity indicators can be produced, but there is frequently inadequate or inaccessible data for biodiversity indicators to answer priority national questions for policy and monitoring.

The lack of awareness of biodiversity indicators is often partly due to limited understanding of the topic of biodiversity amongst many sectors of society, and can also be due to a wider limited use of science-based information in decision-making.

The challenge of a lack of data is universally identified as a major limitation in the production of biodiversity indicators. Capacity building assistance can help to convert existing data into useful indicators, but the basic lack of data and monitoring systems designed to support priority decision-making issues is a fundamental constraint to progress.

3. Institutionalisation of national biodiversity indicators

Biodiversity indicators need to be developed to address national biodiversity and development priorities, including NBSAPs.

Countries need to have an effective national institution to co-ordinate their national biodiversity indicators.

Whilst reporting on progress towards international targets and agreements is important this was viewed as a secondary priority to addressing national priorities. Examples of national priorities include the maintenance of protected area systems, inclusion of biodiversity concerns in land use policies for investment in biofuels, sustainable fisheries management, and land degradation. The long-term investment in the production of biodiversity indicators can only be sustained if they are seen to be useful and in demand to meet national priorities.

In many developing countries the gathering and communication of biodiversity information is on an *ad hoc* and fragmented basis, such as for periodic reporting requirements. The capacity to have biodiversity indicators and other information available for effective decision-making requires the existence of a responsible institution for this. It is not necessary for one institution to conduct all the activities of collection of data, calculation of indicators, and their communication to users. Agreements between government agencies, NGOs and academic institutions can fulfil many of these roles. However, the existence of one national co-ordinating institution is essential.

National statistical offices have a key leadership role in the institutionalisation of biodiversity indicators, as they can validate and provide credibility to the indicators for non-environmental sectors of government and wider society.

4. Capacity Building needed for national biodiversity indicators

Developing countries need financial and technical support to institutionalise and operationalise biodiversity indicators.

Without additional financial and technical support it is likely that the reasons will remain for a lack of biodiversity indicators in decision-making by government and the rest of society in developing countries.

5. Networking and collaboration for biodiversity indicators

Networking and collaboration by government institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders within countries and regions significantly strengthens progress in national indicator development and use.

The organisation of regional workshops and the multi-stakeholder collaborations have been a very effective means of capacity building and a stimulation of results within countries. The use of a common framework (Annex 1) to guide the design of indicator development and learning has greatly aided progress.

II. **Strengthening global and national indicator development linkages**

Experience suggests that there are currently only weak linkages between biodiversity indicator production and use at the global and national scales. From the evidence of many 4th National Reports to the CBD, most developing countries do not have national biodiversity indicators that are produced on more than an *ad-hoc* basis. The exceptions to this situation are usually relatively well-resourced countries which have a designated national biodiversity information institution. To date many developing countries have not sought to develop national biodiversity indicators consistent with the CBD 2010 Target global indicator framework.

One reason for the weak linkages between global and national biodiversity indicators is that they are often intended for different users and purposes. The motivations for global-scale indicators are usually to provide information and understanding:

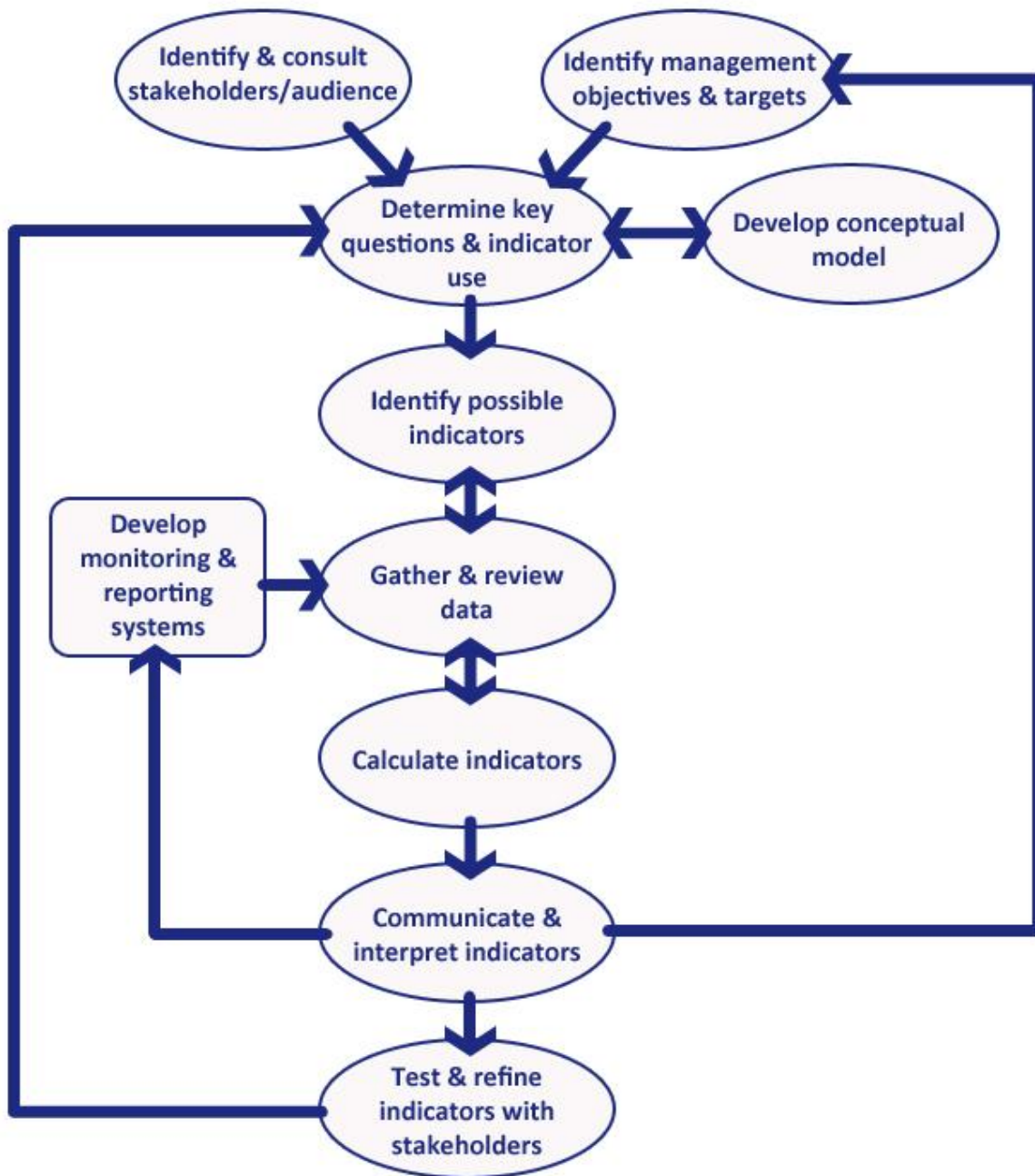
- for reporting on global targets and implementation (e.g. CBD, MDGs);
- as a communication tool to raise awareness of important issues (e.g. IUCN Red List Index for threatened species);
- to support global-scale strategic planning and prioritisation (eg. GEF).

The aims of national-scale indicator development commonly include:

- to aid the design and monitoring of conservation strategies (e.g. NBSAPs, protected area systems);
- to assist the development of policies and management plans for commercially important biodiversity (e.g. timber production, fisheries, wildlife tourism);
- to raise awareness and actions for topics of importance to interest groups, including NGOs and academia, (e.g. threatened species or sites, pollution problems, compliance with international agreements).

The continued development of global headline indicators for the CBD is also an opportunity to strengthen the development of national biodiversity indicators. The development of global indicator methods and reporting systems can inform national indicator development. Equally, many global indicators can be strengthened with increased data from national and regional scales. At all of these scales there is a requirement for indicator 'champion' institutions and the development of biodiversity information management systems to guide the process from data collection to use.

Annex 1. Biodiversity Indicator Development Framework.



Explanation of this framework and resources to support national biodiversity indicator development can be found at www.bipnational.net