Donald Hobern, GBIF – Managing and sharing biodiversity information in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan

In order to respond together to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and to the Aichi Targets, we need to understand the state of biodiversity today and to assess changes in biodiversity patterns and processes through time. Aichi Target 19 specifically addresses our need for improved knowledge of biodiversity, but implementation for all of the Targets will depend on access to the best possible data on the past and present state of biodiversity, and these data will need to be organised in accessible and appropriate digital formats.

A vast wealth of relevant data exists, although much of it is not yet digitally accessible. We receive ever-increasing volumes of new observations and measurements from remote sensing, local monitoring activities and citizen science. In recent decades, many countries have collaborated to start sharing and organising these data. GBIF, GEO BON and other standing initiatives are in place with tools and processes to support international efforts to deliver comprehensive data sets.

Representatives of the biodiversity informatics community met last year in Copenhagen to develop a roadmap and framework to coordinate and accelerate these activities. Their recommendations are presented here as a Global Biodiversity Informatics Outlook. This document offers an achievable approach to build upon existing successful approaches and to deliver fundamental data for biodiversity in all parts of the world.

The need for global collaboration is shown by the map projected here. It shows the volumes of biodiversity data already shared through the GBIF network. Some regions have access today to significant data, but mobilisation has been slower for many of the biodiversity-rich countries. The challenges here are not primarily technical. We need to increase capacity in all countries, particularly to support observation and monitoring in biodiversity-rich regions. We also need to increase efforts to repatriate data from the world's historical collections.

This report is offered as a roadmap for us all. We urge governments and funding bodies to support the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity by investing resources in mobilising biodiversity information as part of a globally coordinated activity. The most critical need is for governments to legislate and provide incentives for all stakeholders to contribute their biodiversity data as part of a shared knowledgebase from which we all can benefit.

The report has been provided as Information Document 4 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/INF/4) and hard copies are outside the plenary area. We will be holding a side event on Wednesday to discuss it further.