UNEP

Convention on Biological Diversity

AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON
  REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
  CONVENTION
Fifth meeting
Montreal, 16-20 June 2014
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

METHODOLOGIES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT BY PARTIES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Note by the Executive Secretary

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.   In accordance with Article 26 of the Convention, Parties are required to report on the measures taken in implementing the provisions of the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the Convention.

2.   The Conference of the Parties in some of its decisions related to national reporting provided general guidance concerning methods or approaches that countries could use for reviewing the implementation of the Convention. For example, in decision X/10, paragraph 9, the Conference of the Parties requested Parties to provide, in their fifth national reports, quantitative analysis and synthesis on the status of implementation of the Convention, in particular the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and national biodiversity strategies and action plans. In paragraph 7 of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested Parties to use indicators where possible and feasible, including application, as appropriate, of global headline indicators contained in decision VIII/15 and additional indicators that were to be adopted for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets as contained in decision XI/3.

3.   In its decisions related to national biodiversity strategies and action plans or other relevant issues, the Conference of the Parties provided general guidance for reviewing the implementation of the Convention. In the annex to decision VIII/8, the Conference of Parties proposed voluntary guidelines for the review of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, in which some approaches were suggested for evaluating the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). The guidelines suggested that progress in the implementation of NBSAPs should be considered in terms of concrete outcomes, with Parties asking, for each element identified under their national biodiversity strategy and action plan: To what degree has implementation helped to achieve national biodiversity priorities? Options for demonstrating concrete outcomes include, but are not limited to:

---

*   UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/1.

- Using the global framework of indicators adopted by decision VII/30 – and subsequently decision XI/3;

- Using indicators developed nationally, as called for in decision VII/8 – and subsequently X/2 and XI/3;

- Citing specific legislation, regulations or national strategies developed in response to specific elements.

4.   With the commitment by Parties to set national targets in accordance with decision X/2 and to report on progress made towards these targets increasing attention is being paid to the approaches underlying such assessments. For this reason the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, in paragraph 6 (d) of its recommendation XVII/1, requested the Executive Secretary to include in his analysis of the fourth and fifth national reports an analysis of methodologies used in self-assessments of progress towards implementation of the Convention reported in those and other reports and to report to the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation and the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as appropriate.

II.   METHODOLOGIES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

5.   National reporting under the Convention provides an opportunity for all Parties to self-assess the implementation of the Convention at national level and plan for future actions, while contributing to review and decision-making at global level. A review of the 181 fourth and 48 fifth national reports received by 30 April 2014 shows that, where countries provided information on the methodology used, self-assessments were undertaken through a range of approaches.

6.   The approaches used in self-assessments range from the use of indicators and quantitative information to qualitative assessments based on more or less formal ways of expert judgment. A number of countries commissioned independent bodies or organizations to undertake third-party assessments. Furthermore some countries employed a combination of approaches in particular in the case of reviewing NBSAP implementation. Some countries linked the analysis of changes in the status and trends of biodiversity with the analysis of impacts or outcomes resulting from implementation actions, though they noted that such links are difficult to ascertain, considering that changes in the status and trends may not be direct results of implementation actions taken. A number of methodologies or approaches used are summarized below to illustrate the range of options through which countries might undertake these assessments, with selected examples from the fourth and fifth national reports.

Use of indicators

7.   Some countries used indicators, being national, regional or global, to assess the implementation. For example, Canada used a set of indicators linked with the 2010 targets to assess the status and trends of biodiversity as well as progress made in achieving the 2010 targets. China used a considerable number of state, pressure and response indicators to assess the implementation of the 2010 and 2020 targets. Germany used a number of indicators to assess the status of implementation of its National Biodiversity Strategy by determining the current level of implementation (in percentages or values), against the final quantitative targets or values included in the National Biodiversity Strategy for related actions. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland developed and continues using a suite of indicators to assess changes as a result of measures taken and its contributions to global biodiversity targets and to communicate this to a broader audience.[1]

---

[1] Since 2007 the publishes a booklet on UK Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket (http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4229)

Use of national outcome framework for evaluation and reporting

8.   Canada used its Biodiversity Outcomes Framework developed in 2006 to evaluate and report on progress in implementing its national biodiversity strategy and action plan and the 2010 targets. The centrepiece of the framework is a suite of national outcomes and the associated societal benefits. The framework puts forward an "assess, plan, do, track," adaptive management approach aimed at more effective planning and decision-making and continuous learning and improvement.

Quantitative assessment of the level of NBSAP implementation

9.   Some Parties assessed the level of implementation of their national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAP) quantitatively, while reviews by most Parties were qualitative. A few examples of quantitative assessments from the fourth and fifth national reports reviewed, based on scoring the progress in implementing activities related to specific targets or strategic objectives, include:

  a.   Djibouti reports that 30% of the projects identified in the NBSAP have been carried out;

  b.   France reports that 32% of actions identified in the NBSAP have been completed, an additional 54% have been initiated, while 14% have yet to be launched;

  c.   Kyrgyzstan reports that 30% of the strategic components of its NBSAP have been successfully implemented;

  d.   Togo reports that 40% of the 119 priority actions in its NBSAP have been implemented;

  e.   Turkmenistan reported that 49% of the objectives and activities in its NBSAP have been implemented;

  f.   Namibia reports that 42% of targets included in its NBSAP have been fully achieved and 38% of targets partially achieved;

  g.   St. Lucia reports that 19 of 22 (86%) of NBSAP projects have been completed;

  h.   Samoa reports that 73% of actions included in its NBSAPs have been completed;

  i.   South Africa (in its 5NR) reports that overall 27% of the activities in the NBSAP 2005 have been fully achieved, another 27% substantially achieved, 37% achieved to a limited extent, and 6% not achieved (3% found not applicable).

Combination of approaches for reviewing NBSAPs

10.   Australia reported in its fourth national report on the process and approaches employed for a second five-year review undertaken of its NBS in 2006. A task force composed of representatives from levels of government and research communities was set up to reflect on the effectiveness of NBS through consultations with levels of governments and local communities. Research was commissioned to identify the community's understanding of the importance of biodiversity issues and a separate consultancy undertaken to identify consistency between the NBS and the state and territory biodiversity strategies.

11.   Lao PDR,[2] while updating its NBSAP, adopted a sector-based approach used for reviewing its old NBSAP by assigning reviews of relevant programmes to relevant departments or sectors and presenting sectoral reviews to a Steering Committee which will identify gaps in implementation and propose future priorities based on these reviews.

12.   Poland evaluated the implementation of its NBSAP 2007-2013 on the basis of two independent surveys. The first survey covered each of the 134 tasks listed in the 2007-2013 Action Plan. Answers were submitted by entities identified as responsible for or co-operating in the implementation of

---

[2] Lao DPR submitted a stand-alone NBSAP review report.

individual objectives and measures. The second survey focused on the effects and scope of actions taken not only by entities specified in the 2007-2013 Action Plan, but by a broadest possible range of stakeholders acting directly and indirectly for the broad field of biodiversity conservation.

13. The Finnish Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, Transport and Communications, and Foreign Affairs jointly commissioned a major evaluation of the country's first National Biodiversity Action Plan (1997 – 2005) to inform its revision. The evaluation, conducted in 2004-5 by an independent team of researchers drawn from a number of Finnish research institutes and led by the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), used 75 indicators and assessed: the state and trends of biodiversity in Finland; the effectiveness of the Action Plan and its impacts on these trends; prospects for reaching the 2010 target and new measures needed. The assessment looked at the specific policies adopted to halt the loss of biodiversity as well as the state of biodiversity and the broader societal forces driving biodiversity changes.

14. In its assessment of the implementation of its NBSAP, Ireland in its fourth national report cited a ruling from the European Court of Justice concerning biodiversity conservation in Ireland, findings from an independent review and its own review by identifying areas where good, some and little progress has been made.

15. Japan performed an inspection of the implementation status (as of September 2013) of its National Biodiversity Strategy for 2020. Part of the inspection results were included in Japan's fifth national report as in the following table:

Achievement status concerning numerical indicators in the national strategy (partial extract)

Items	Target		Inspection		Initial		Rate of progress
	Target value	Year	Inspection value	Year	Initial value	Year	
Number of implementation plans for nature restoration projects	35	FY2015	35	FY2013	26	End of FY2011	100.0%
The Japanese crested ibis returned to the wild (wild population on Sado-ga-shima, including eastern Kosado)	About 60 birds	Around 2015	98 birds (including 1 on Honshu)	Sept. 2013	50 birds	July 2012	480.0%
Preservation of the seeds of threatened plants	15% of threatened species	By 2020	16.0%	March 2013	12.9%	March 2012	147.6%
	(253 species)		285 species		218 species		191.4%
Number of regions for which ecosystem preservation and restoration project plans have been formulated	9 regions	FY2020	8 regions	FY2013	6 regions	End FY2011	66.7%
Ratio of surface production eligible for Aquaculture Improvement Plans accounting for seawater culture production	90%	By 2022	85%	Jan. 2013	70% range	2010	75.0%

Case-based review of NBSAP implementation

16. A few countries cited assessments of the management effectiveness of the protected areas as one case to illustrate the effectiveness of NBSAP implementation. For example, Brazil, in its fourth national report, and South Africa and Namibia in their fifth national reports, indicated that they had used specific

/…

tools to assess protected area management effectiveness. Brazil used a Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Areas Management method (RAPPAM) to assess protected area management effectiveness. Namibia assessed the management effectiveness of protected areas by scoring each protected area based on the analysis of a set of criteria determined using questionnaires including the drafting of regular work plans; research; resource management; staff training; education and awareness programmes; traditional authority involvement; economic benefits to communities; monitoring and evaluation; condition assessment; and law enforcement. Namibia also used a tool developed through the project of NACOMA (Namibian Coast Management and Conservation Project) to assess the management effectiveness of marine protected areas. South Africa has adapted the global Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) for the national context. The resulting METT-SA is intended to track progress over time rather than to compare protected areas or conservation authorities.

Linking analysis of NBSAP implementation with the analysis of changes in the status and trends of biodiversity

17. A number of Parties linked the analysis of outcomes of NBSAP implementation with the analysis of changes in the status and trends of biodiversity, though some of them noted that such links are difficult to ascertain. For example, the European Community in its fourth report to the CBD used a study on the impact of the EU-wide Species Action Plans after 10 years of implementation as an example to demonstrate progress in achieving objective 1 of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan (To safeguard the EU's most important habitats and species). The study concluded that significant progress had been made in implementing 18 of the 23 plans and that the long and medium targets had already been met for 11 of them. It also found that the majority of the species had increased in number or expanded in range during that time. Amongst the most successful were the Dalmatian pelican, Imperial eagle and Zino's Petrel whose populations increased by 20% or more.

Literature review

18. In addition to using data or information from monitoring or in the absence of comprehensive monitoring results, many countries had reviewed a considerable amount of relevant literature in particular academic papers on the implementation of domestic laws, strategies, policies and plans related to biodiversity. For example, the Ministry of the Environment of Brazil, while a monitoring system is yet to be established, supported an inventory of peer-reviewed scientific research and published papers on the implementation of the National Biodiversity Policy (NBP) and its various components. In preparing its fourth national report, Brazil reviewed over 400 relevant documents from this inventory to assist with the analysis of the effectiveness of the NBP.

Ways of reviewing progress towards the 2010 and 2020 targets

19. In assessing progress towards the 2010 Biodiversity Target and national targets corresponding to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, most countries pooled together information from NBSAP implementation and mainstreaming of biodiversity, complemented by relevant additional information, and linked them to the 2010 targets from decision VII/30 and 2020 targets of decision X/2 respectively, by highlighting the actions taken and outcomes achieved. Some countries rated the level of progress by using symbols, arrows or traffic lights, with the rating based on the use of indicators in some cases and on expert assessment in others.

20. The majority of reports did not specify which particular method of assessment was used. However many countries illustrated the outcomes in the form of table and graphics, thereby providing snapshot overviews of the assessment that are suitable for communication to a wider audience. For example, the United Kingdom in its fourth national report used a table to summarize its assessment of progress towards each of the 2010 targets, including the degree of confidence in the statements made. The table covered the national targets, their contribution to global targets, relevant measures and assessments

of change for each measure (since 2000 and in the long term), summary of changes as a result of measures taken, relevant indicators used for measurement and an overall assessment of progress made. Such tables are effective in presenting a summary assessment with key information highlighted, in particular what has been done and how much progress has been made toward each target. Many other countries have provided quick overviews of progress towards the targets in tables that follow a range of formats.

III.   CONCLUSION

21.   A review of the fourth and fifth national reports, received by 30 April 2014, was undertaken with regard to the methodologies used in self-assessments of progress towards implementation of the Convention. In their reports Parties rarely specified which specific approach or methodology was used to arrive at the assessment of progress and consequently how much confidence they have in the assessment.

22.   Though many Parties used quantitative or qualitative indicators for assessing progress, few of them elaborated on how the underlying datasets and methodologies. Some countries reported on difficulties in using suitable and time-sensitive indicators to guide policies and future actions, in some cases due to lack of adequate data and in some cases due to the inertia of the natural system and hence the long time can take for the results of actions to manifest themselves through measurable outcomes.

23.   Most NBSAP used assessments based on a wide range of sources of information combined with expert assessment. Only a few countries reported on results obtained through a monitoring and reporting system on the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. For example, the United Kingdom has established a biodiversity action reporting system (http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/) which uses the targets to facilitate guidance to action and reporting at both smaller and larger geographic scales.

24.   To promote the reporting on the methodologies used in self-assessments, and where appropriate third-party assessments, and to facilitate more quantitative indicator-based assessments it would be useful to include specific questions to that effect in the format of future national reports. The online reporting tool already requests Parties to specify the basis for the self-assessment. It is anticipated that this will enable enhanced technical and scientific cooperation on monitoring and indicators and promote the harmonization of indicators and their underlying methodologies and the sharing of data to the benefit both of individual Parties and the review of progress at global level.