

BRIEF REPORT ON THE SECOND MEETING OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP (HYDERABAD, INDIA)

As part of the larger business programme held in conjunction with the eleventh Conference of the Parties (COP 11), in Hyderabad, the Second Meeting of the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity was held on Oct 16, 2012 offsite from the main conference centre. Although there was significant interest in the event, a security closure of the area (due to the presence of the Indian Prime Minister) and lower than expected business participation at COP meant that the attendance at the event was somewhat lower than had been hoped for (about 40-50 people). The day saw a large number of presentations by representatives of “national initiatives” involved with the Global Partnership as well as by other partners. This was followed by an active discussion on the structure and future of the Partnership. The discussion illustrated areas where further work needs to be undertaken, and this will be included in follow-up activities.

It was noted at the meeting that the COP 11 business decision did emphasize the importance of the Partnership, and this part of the decision did not undergo a significant revision during the negotiations. This appeared to signify that Parties, and other stakeholders, do see a value in engaging the business sector and see the Partnership as a useful vehicle forwards. It was also very encouraging to see the progress that many of the partners had made, with new initiatives showing increasing levels of interest in the Partnership. In addition, despite some differences in views, it was encouraging to note the interest and commitment to the Partnership from not just the members, but also those who are in the process of forming initiatives. This meeting, despite some of the logistical challenges that faced it, acted as a positive spur to resolve some of the problems seen in the initial formation of the Partnership and helped to create the conditions for a strong organizational structure..

Some of the issues that faced the meeting were as follows:

- There was some confusion about time and venue, particularly between the meetings on October 15th and October 16th. The error was on the Secretariat’s side and steps were taken to ensure that it would not be repeated;
- Having the main meeting offsite of the main conference venue was (in retrospect) somewhat ill-advised (particularly given Hyderabad traffic). In addition, changes to the Indian Prime Minister’s schedule and the resultant lock-down of the conference site played havoc with the attendance and scheduling;
- Another factor was the relatively low turnout of businesses at COP 11. This was, in part, due to Conference fatigue as 2012 saw Rio+20, the IUCN World Congress, CBD COP 11 and the UNFCCC (Climate Change) COP;
- The attempt to replicate the style of the First Global Partnership meeting (Tokyo 2011) under these conditions therefore proved to be difficult. In addition, there are now too many initiatives to allow each one to present themselves as was done in Tokyo. The next meeting will be conducted using a different format;

During the final discussions, several issues emerged which have bearing on the future structure of the Global Partnership:

- Membership: It is necessary that this issue be settled for the Partnership to move forward. This was a fairly contentious part of the overall discussions, and centred on how many initiatives could be in the Partnership from a given country. Several different views were expressed (i.e. opening up the Partnership to all possible members; restricting to one “umbrella” initiative; etc). This issue is to be considered in further detail;

- “Selection” of Initiatives for the Partnership: Related to the discussion on membership, this issue raises a legitimate question. Current thinking on this is as follows: If the Secretariat is approached by, or makes an approach to, an organization regarding workshops or the Global Partnership itself, the Secretariat will check with the government and also see if this group is able and willing to work with other organizations and businesses. Ideally, they and others (backed by the government) will form the nucleus of a national/regional initiative, which will then grow as more member organizations and/or companies join (depending on exactly how it is set-up). Ideally these should ideally leverage existing programmes and not (unless nothing currently exists) create something new. However, it will be necessary for the Partnership itself to decide how best to proceed. The Secretariat will abide by, and provide full service to, whatever set-up is decided. As above, this issue is to be considered more fully by the group;
- The final element of the discussion centred on future goals and directions of the Partnership. Having this made clearer will make it much easier to organize activities and grow/strengthen the Partnership in the future.

The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of next steps for the Partnership. These were as follows:

- In terms of the membership and governance questions, it was suggested getting a small working group together to determine how to proceed and create a document that will help to define the Partnership. Canada agreed to lead a small working group (with Germany, Netherlands, South Africa, Japan and Brazil having indicated interest to participate) to develop the governance document. Work is to start in the fall (2012);
- Next meeting: Canada also offered to host the next Global Partnership meeting in 2013. The initial thinking was that this meeting would combine aspects of previous conferences (i.e. Rio+20 business meetings, First Global Partnership Meeting in Tokyo, and the Third Business and Biodiversity Challenge Conference held in Jakarta, Indonesia (2009)).

The Secretariat will continue to fulfill the COP decision of facilitating and encouraging development of national and regional initiatives, and helping to strengthen the Global Partnership, but with the direction resulting from the decisions to be taken above, this task will hopefully become much easier and clearer.