

## **Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions**

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Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage  
Convention on Biological Diversity  
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora  
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals  
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat  
International Plant Protection Convention  
International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture  
International Whaling Commission

### **Twelfth meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions 28 September 2017, Rome, Italy**

#### **Chair's Report**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The twelfth ordinary meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions was held on 28 September 2017 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy. The meeting was hosted by the Secretariats of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).
2. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Kent Nnadozie, Secretary Ad-Interim of ITPGRFA. The list of participants is available as annex I of this document.

#### **ITEM 1 OPENING OF THE MEETING AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

3. The Chair invited Mr. René Castro, Assistant Director-General of FAO, Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department, to provide welcoming remarks. Mr. Castro noted the good work of the ITPGRFA and IPPC Secretariats as members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and underlined the commitment and the willingness of FAO to work directly with the Liaison Group and to do more in relation to biodiversity. Mr. Castro introduced his department focusing on the linkages between climate, biodiversity, land and water, as well as the Biodiversity Mainstreaming Platform launched at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with a view to providing a platform for ministries of environment and agriculture to exchange views, together with other stakeholders. He also discussed the importance of sustainable agriculture and biodiversity in addressing challenges posed by a growing world population.
4. The provisional agenda of the meeting was adopted.

#### **ITEM 2 REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF OUTCOMES OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE LIAISON GROUP**

5. Under this item, the meeting reviewed the action points of the minutes of the eleventh meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and adopted the minutes of the eleventh meeting. Actions arising from the eleventh meeting concerning the following action points were noted as remaining ongoing and continuing: bilateral work plans (to be shared with CBD for posting);

coordination of themes of common interest for its work programme; UNEP synergies project (EU funded).

6. The meeting welcomed the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as a member of the Liaison Group.

### **ITEM 3 DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF THEIR RECENT MEETINGS, AND OTHER RELEVANT PROCESSES OR EVENTS**

7. Under this item, through a *tour de table*, members of the Liaison Group provided updates on significant developments under the conventions, in particular those that have bearing on other conventions, including key outcomes of their recent meetings.

8. The Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) reported on the outcomes of the seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP 17) held in September 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa, noting that it was the largest meeting under the Convention, with over 3,500 delegates and visitors. He provided an update of the major discussions, particularly on the inclusion of new species into CITES Appendices and on measures related to trade control in wildlife. He highlighted the collaboration with FAO and the International Tropical Timber Organization on issues related to illegal trade in timber species and other terrestrial species. CITES Secretary-General and the Assistant Director-General of the Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department of FAO, noted that they look forward to further collaboration between CITES and FAO.

9. The Deputy Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) conveyed the apologies of the Executive Secretary who could not attend the meeting due to other engagements. He noted that the Secretariat is preparing for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (COP 12) to be held in Manila, Philippines, from 23 to 28 October 2017. He mentioned that COP 12 documents were approved by the Second Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council in July 2017, and that COP12 Regional Preparatory Workshops were held in four regions in July and August 2017. Ramsar's experience with preparatory meetings was valuable. The Energy Task force met in September 2017 and discussed the impacts of renewable energy on birds and mammals, which will be an important issue for discussion at COP 12. A meeting of the Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean was held in Malta in June 2017 to discuss the migration of birds between Europe and Africa, and a resolution on the illegal killing of birds will be considered by COP 12. Other resolutions will address threats to the marine environment. The Deputy Executive Secretary mentioned that CMS Secretariat worked on practical matters with the CITES Secretariat, in particular on the CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative to be proposed at CMS COP 12.

10. The representative of the World Heritage Centre (WHC) conveyed the apologies of the Director Division for Heritage and UNESCO World Heritage Centre who could not attend the meeting due to other engagements. The representative said that over 2,000 delegates attended the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee of the World Heritage Convention, held in Kraków, Poland from 2 to 12 July 2017. The Committee examined the state of conservation of half of the World Heritage Sites, and reviewed more natural sites than cultural sites. The meeting addressed the issues of conflicts and poaching on World Heritage Sites, and referred to a WWF report that notes that CITES species are harvested in World Heritage Sites. The committee also discussed periodic reporting and welcomed the discussions on synergies among related conventions. In the next public reporting questionnaire, there will be more attention to synergies with other conventions, the Man and Biosphere Programme and on the sites with multiple designations (with other conventions). A new webpage will provide information on synergies.

The 41st session showed an increasing interest from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the work of the Committee. The financial crises and the lack of contributions have had impacts on the work of UNESCO and WHC and the issue of politicisation of the system represents an increasing challenge.

11. The Chair remarked on the importance of and opportunities arising from co-implementation of the conventions and related initiatives, in this regard noting overlap of World Heritage Sites and Ramsar Sites and close relation to FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). He also remarked that the participation of non-governmental organizations in the negotiations under the conventions represents both a challenge and a benefit. A brief discussion was held on experience gained and procedures adopted under some of the conventions, for example with regard balance between NGO/observers and Parties in contact groups.

12. The Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention said that in her new role as Secretary General she has been asked to strengthen alignment of the Convention in five areas: 1/ the capacity of the Secretariat to implement decisions of the governing bodies and to balance the role of observer organizations; 2/ to position wetlands in the policy agenda, including by working with other biodiversity-related conventions and linking wetlands to the SDG and climate change agendas; 3/ to enhance the visibility of wetlands and make them better known to the public; 4/ to enhance implementation, through regional entities and other means; 5/ to make the secretariat more efficient through restructuring. The Secretariat has a new management team, as well as new Deputy Secretary General, head of science/policy, head of resource mobilization and outreach, and finance officer. She noted that the 20th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel in February 2017 worked on the state of the world's wetlands reports (Global Wetland Outlook: State of the World's Wetlands and their Services to People (GWO: SoWWS)), and the second draft will be circulated shortly with a view to launching the report at COP 13 in October 2018. The Secretary General said that some of the convention secretariats supported the development of the report which, together with other products, will demonstrate the multiple benefits of wetlands. She added that the 53rd meeting of the Standing Committee discussed synergies and CBD decision XIII/24 and requested the Secretariat to identify which actions are relevant to Ramsar's Strategic Plan 2016-2024, which is very much aligned to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The meeting also looked at the SDGs, particularly indicator 6.6.1, and requested the Secretariat to look at ways to avoid duplication of efforts in reporting. The Standing Committee also requested the Secretariat to identify alignment of GEF priorities with Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Secretary General said that the meeting also put in place a process to review the effectiveness of the Convention. **She invited members of the Liaison Group to share challenges and best practices on such processes.** She also mentioned that she personally engaged in the UN Oceans Conference to talk about SDG 14 and the links between marine and coastal and freshwater ecosystems.

13. The Secretary of IPPC welcomed the Group. The Secretary reported on five main outcomes of the twelfth meeting of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures held from 5 to 11 April 2017: 1/ the annual theme for 2017 "Plant Health & Trade Facilitation", and several events related to e-commerce and trade; 2/ adoption of 15 International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures; 3/ establishment of a new committee for Implementation and Capacity (IC) as well as a task force for containers; 4/ initialization of the process of strategic planning for 2020-2030, and 5/ endorsement of the International Year of Plant Health 2020. The Secretary added that 2017 is the 65th anniversary of the Convention.

14. A representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) outlined some of the highlights of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, noting that the Group received a more extensive briefing in January 2017 by teleconference and letter from the former Executive Secretary. Important decisions included: decision XIII/1 on enhancing efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and preparation for the follow-up to that plan, and; decision XIII/2 on mainstreaming biodiversity into other processes and sectors, in particular

agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism. He noted that at its next meeting, the COP will continue to address mainstreaming in additional sectors; and that the establishment at FAO of the friends of biodiversity by a group of member states as well as the Mainstreaming Biodiversity Platform under FAO will contribute to further advancing the mainstreaming agenda in the lead to COP 14. COP 13 adopted the Short Term Action Plan on Ecosystem Restoration, and follow-up activities are taking place in the area of ecosystem restoration. Following decision XIII/4, the Secretariat is developing voluntary guidelines for the design and effective implementation of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Another outcome of COP 13 was the selection of the host countries for COP 14, COP 15 and COP 16. Other issues of interest to Parties, industry and civil society included synthetic biology and digital sequence information, which were discussed in contact groups. The participation of civil society organizations in the meeting has increased. Modalities of involvement and management of observers in the negotiations will be further considered for COP 14. The Global Youth Biodiversity Network was very active at COP 13, and since then, a number of CBD national focal points have worked with the network on the organization of regional capacity-building workshops in Colombia, Singapore and South Africa.

15. The CBD Secretariat has also sought to strengthen its work with the World Tourism Organization and launched the “Guidelines for tourism partnerships and concessions for protected areas: Generating sustainable revenues for conservation and development”. The Secretariat also participated in the meetings of the preparatory committee for the development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, the Ocean Conference and the 4th International Marine Protected Areas Congress. More recently, the Executive Secretary participated in the 23rd Meeting of the Senior Officials of the Environment Management Group (EMG). The meeting agreed to convene an EMG Nexus Dialogue on Biodiversity in 2018 and to consider ways to collaborate on the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

16. The Secretary a.i. of ITPGRFA mentioned that the upcoming Seventh Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty (GB 7) will decide on the appointment of the Secretary, the functioning of the Secretariat, and on the review of the Multilateral System and its Standard Material Transfer Agreement. He reported that other committees under the Treaty had been working on compliance and on the Funding strategy. The Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol had collaborated on the organization of joint workshops involving the national focal points of the respective instruments, bringing them together for the first time. Other issues of importance included digital sequence information/genomic sequence data and its application to agriculture and how this could impact on the access and benefit-sharing of the Multilateral System. Joint studies had been undertaken to avoid duplication and maximize the benefits of expertise of each secretariat. The Secretary a.i. also mentioned that digital object identifiers for crop germplasm are being developed under the Treaty.

17. The Assistant Director-General of FAO, Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department provided final comments related to financing. He mentioned that FAO is supporting countries in developing large transformational projects under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) related to climate and forest, livestock, fisheries, etc. and expects the first set of these to be approved by the GCF in October. He noted also a major initiative being supported by FAO with Small Islands Developing States for the development of seafood and aquaculture, involving investments through the issue of bonds, which will be announced at COP 23 of UNFCCC. The aim is to attract greater investment from the private sector. Members of the Group were invited to collaborate in this project. Ramsar Secretary-General expressed an interest in working with FAO in particular on risk management and carbon neutrality for the restoration and conservation of marine and coastal wetlands.

#### **ITEM 4 PREPARATIONS FOR FORTHCOMING MEETINGS OF THE CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING MEETINGS OF THEIR GOVERNING BODIES AND INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS**

18. This item of the agenda allowed the members to present and discuss preparations for forthcoming meetings of the governing bodies of their respective conventions. Members were invited to highlight relevant issues that will be considered by upcoming meetings, including activities in preparation towards such meetings.

19. CITES Secretary-General noted that the 69th meeting of the Standing Committee will take place in Geneva, Switzerland from 27 November to 1 December 2017. Discussions will address the rules of procedure to the participation of countries and observers from civil society organizations, and the rules on conflict of interest. Local communities and youth engagement will be on the agenda. Regarding synergies, Parties would like to see concrete and practical synergies, similar to the collaboration between CITES and CMS. Other issues of importance will include traceability and the list of species on the Appendices.

20. CMS Deputy Executive Secretary gave a presentation on the upcoming twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to Convention, that will be held under the theme “Their Future is Our Future – Sustainable Development for Wildlife & People”. A Leadership Dialogue Breakfast, a High Level Panel on the role of wildlife conservation in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and an Award ceremony under the Migratory Species Champion Programme (Champion Night) will be held on 22 October 2017. COP 12 will discuss recommendations on species proposals, underwater noise, including the CMS Family Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessments for Marine Noise-generating Activities, marine debris, important marine mammals, vultures, including a multi-species action plan for the conservation for African-Eurasian vultures, preventing poisoning with a focus on lead, conservation of African lions and carnivores with the CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative and the review process under CMS. Over 1,000 participants are expected at the meeting, including numerous civil society organizations. The Secretary-General of CITES and Executive Secretary of CBD both noted that they would participate at the CMS COP 12.

21. The WHC representative said that the 21st session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention in Paris, France, from 14 to 15 November 2017, during which new members of the Standing Committee will be elected and the budget will be decided. The next ordinary meeting of the Standing Committee will be held in June or July 2018 and will discuss inscription of new sites and sites on endangered lists, as well as the development of a compendium of policies currently spread across 1,000 decisions. The representative invited the Group to share any experiences on such compendiums. He added that the 21st General Assembly will be held during the 39th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, during which the new Director-General will be elected.

22. The Ramsar Secretary General said that thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) will take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 21 to 29 October 2018, under the theme “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”. The Secretariat is also organizing regional preparatory meetings in February and March 2018 and the 54th Meeting of the Standing Committee from 23 to 27 April 2018. Two of the major highlights of COP 13 will be the launch of the Wetlands Outlook and the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2016-2024. Resolutions to be discussed include synergies, carbon sequestration, coastal ecosystems, gender and women empowerment, agriculture, and site accreditation mechanism. The Ramsar Awards will recognize wetland innovations and youth and wetlands. The Secretariat will share the call for application for the Awards. The Secretary General discussed the need to link biodiversity with climate change and the SDGs and said that wetlands provide an opportunity to do so. She mentioned the possibility of organizing a pavilion in the margins of COP 13 to help raise

awareness on wetlands for biodiversity and invited all members to work together on this. She added that the joint work plan on fresh water with the CBD Secretariat should be revitalized since wetlands are the ecosystems that are disappearing faster than any other. The Global Wetlands Outlook, which is about all wetlands (beyond Ramsar sites), and SDG indicator 6.6.1 also provide opportunities to communicate about water-related ecosystems. Ramsar Secretariat will be participating in the different meetings of the biodiversity-related conventions to better support the conventions' common objectives.

23. The IPPC Secretary introduced five major updates under the Convention: 1/ organization of the 13th session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures to be held from 16 to 20 April 2018, under the theme "Plant Health and Environment Protection", with a special session with scientists and governments, and a side-event with the European Union on the same topic; 2/ promotion of standard setting, with the celebration of the adoption of 10 more standards in 2018, many of them related to trade and environment; 3/ promotion of the Action Plan for Plant Health and Trade Facilitation, focusing on phyto safe containers, e-commerce and trade facilitation including through an agreement with the World Trade Organization; 4/ implementation of the Action Plan for Plant Health and Trade Facilitation 2018-2020 including through a joint work plan with the CBD Secretariat, to be signed in the margins of this meeting, and; 5/ a proposal on the adoption of the International Year of Plant Health and Environment for the year 2020 by the General Assembly.

24. The Executive Secretary of the CBD said that the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD and concurrent meetings of the Protocols will take place in Egypt in November 2018, and will be preceded by a two-day High-level Segment. The host country will organize a one-day African summit on ecosystem degradation and restoration. **She invited all members to participate in the meeting.** In continuity of the COP 13 theme, COP 14 will consider the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the sectors of energy and mining; infrastructure; manufacturing and processing industry; and health. Support to these mainstreaming objectives at the national level would benefit from strengthened partnerships with relevant UN agencies, such as that provided by FAO and the Mainstreaming Biodiversity Platform. The meeting will also agree the process for the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. To prepare for COP 14, the twenty-first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions will take place in December 2017, and the twenty second meeting of SBSTTA and second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation will take place in July 2018. The Executive Secretary mentioned that regarding synergies, the Secretariats need to continue working closely with Parties to better coordinate requests from the governing bodies, and to generate and sustain synergies on the ground. She expressed interest for the CBD to collaborate on the CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative. She noted that she looked forward to working more closely with Ramsar following the recruitment of the CBD programme officer for inland waters biodiversity.

25. ITPGRFA: Emphasizing the urgency of implementing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the opportunity for the Liaison Group to be involved in the preparation of the post-2020 biodiversity framework and for the respective governing bodies of the respective conventions to be brought into this, the Chair noted that the Seventh Session of the Governing Body of the Treaty will be held in Kigali, Rwanda from 30 October to 3 November 2017. He noted that this will be a very significant session. The meeting will consider amending the Treaty, which could have implications for the Nagoya Protocol. The Funding Strategy and mechanism will be addressed including collaboration with CBD on funding from the Global Environment Facility whose programming directions recognize the relationship of the Nagoya Protocol and the Treaty. The relationship with the CBD is a standing issue on the agenda, including in relation to synergies and to the post-2020 framework. The meeting will also discuss compliance and other issues. He informed the Group that the theme of the meeting is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the contribution of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

## ITEM 5 PREPARATIONS AND INPUTS TO OTHER RELEVANT INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS

26. The Chair introduced the item and invited discussion on participation and inputs to other intergovernmental meetings.

27. CBD Executive Secretary mentioned that she will participate in the forthcoming UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 3), including as a panelist in a Leadership Dialogue on pollution. She noted that there is a possibility that biodiversity may be chosen as the theme of the next UN Environment Assembly in 2019 and that the Liaison Group could reflect on that as a potential opportunity to raise the profile of biodiversity. She noted the importance of COP 15 in China in 2020, where the post-2020 framework will be launched, and that between now and 2020 there will be a number of events that can be used to build momentum for this landmark meeting. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), to be held in New York in July 2018 will review SDG 6 on water and SDG 15 on biodiversity and terrestrial ecosystems, among others, which represents an opportunity to work together at organizing a joint event. The Environment Management Group (EMG) Dialogue on the Biodiversity Nexus planned for 2018 also represents an opportunity for the Liaison Group to work together. She noted that the Secretariat would share information on the CBD's planned presence at the 2018 HLPF as well as information on the development of the Nexus Dialogue as this arises.

28. Ramsar Secretary General said that she looks forward to working in collaboration with others in preparation for the 2018 HLPF and EMG Dialogue on Biodiversity Nexus. She noted that given its review of SDG 6 on water, the 2018 HLPF also provides opportunity for strengthening political/economic understanding of the connection between water security and water-related ecosystems. Mainstreaming and infrastructure are also important issues to Ramsar and its COP 13 will be addressing the link with urban infrastructure. She said that the World Water Forum in Brazil in March 2018 could be another important opportunity for the Group.

29. CITES Secretary-General mentioned that the resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife adopted by the UN General Assembly reinforced the role of CITES and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and referred to several conventions. He suggested that the CBD Secretariat could take the lead in preparing the Liaison Group's participation in the HLPF. He noted that SDG 15.7 is about poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and that CITES and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are responsible for its indicator. The Secretary-General said that activities under the EMG can provide an opportunity to bring UN agencies on board in preparation for the post-2020 framework and gain political buy-in.

30. CBD Executive Secretary confirmed that the **CBD Secretariat can take the lead in coordinating participation of the Liaison Group in the HLPF and organizing a joint side-event. The Secretariat would also prepare a list of important events and meetings in 2018 to 2020.**

31. CMS Deputy Executive Secretary drew attention to the forthcoming COP 23 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), noting that CMS would contribute to some side-events. The CBD Executive Secretary said that it is important to bring biodiversity closer to the climate change agenda; it is a key solution to climate change not so well reflected in climate change policy.

## **ITEM 6 ELEVATING THE GLOBAL VISIBILITY AND POLITICAL ATTENTION GIVEN TO BIODIVERSITY**

32. Under this item, CBD Executive Secretary shared her views on the need to raise the global visibility of biodiversity and the political attention given to biodiversity and ways to achieve this, including through events in the international calendar between now and 2020. The group discussed this and shared views, including on how the conventions, their secretariats and relevant organizations could be involved.

33. CBD Executive Secretary said that raising the profile of biodiversity is an issue of common interest to the biodiversity-related conventions that requires greater political attention and that should reach beyond the “biodiversity community” and the strategic plans under the conventions. It should not be isolated from other issues like climate change and it should be communicated in a more meaningful way. This can be done by having a strong presence in meetings and events under the UNFCCC, at the Climate Summit in December 2017 in Paris, the High Level Climate Summit in New York in 2018 and the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, also in 2018. It could also be done by working together on common initiatives. The message about biodiversity could be linked with issues like soil, wetlands and it could refer to the impacts of biodiversity protection (or non protection) on human well-being. The Executive Secretary said that the members could also collaborate towards the G7 Summit in Canada in 2018, as well as the next G20 Summit and the World Economic Forum. The Executive Secretary mentioned the possibility of holding a biodiversity summit at the level of heads of states. She said that these events are just a few elements of a possible road towards 2020 and COP 15 in China, during which the post-2020 framework will be launched. The 2020 meeting could be as important for biodiversity as the Paris meeting was for climate change. The Executive secretary said that the Secretariat looks forward to working closely with other colleagues in agencies and treaties towards 2020 and invited the Group to share ideas and practical initiatives and projects that could bring biodiversity outside of the conservation agenda and closer to sustainable development agenda.

34. Ramsar Secretary General said that visibility is key for the conventions. She noted that biodiversity is not recognized sufficiently and that raising awareness on wetlands represents an even greater challenge. She added that the 2030 Agenda and water-related SDGs and targets provide an opportunity to increase awareness on wetlands. Demonstrating the social benefits of wetlands and their linkages with climate change is also key, since wetlands have great potential for mitigation and restoration. The Secretary General said that the biodiversity community is not only about forests, and that there is a common agenda between two important processes; wetland conservation and climate change. Increasing the visibility can be done by working together, further engaging contracting Parties and the private sector, getting involved in the G7 and G20 Summits and working with special partners, for example IUCN, Birdlife and WWF and others. She noted that industry is interested in carbon-neutral activities and is willing to invest, and that water crisis is top global risk according to the World Economic Forum. She added that Ramsar will be willing to work at the level of heads of states.

35. The CBD Executive Secretary and Ramsar Secretary General noted the potential links between CBD COP 14 (November 2018), which will include mainstreaming biodiversity in infrastructure, climate change and the theme of Ramsar COP 13 (October 2018) “Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future”.

36. The Chair mentioned that it will be important to involve heads of states, possibly under the leadership of one or two champions, for example from regional groups like Africa or Latin America and the Caribbean.

37. CITES Secretary-General mentioned that raising the profile of biodiversity is a challenge because it is a broad concept, and that the convention secretariats can help promote “slices of the cake”



corresponding to their particular niche. He gave the example of illegal wildlife trade, for which the language needs to be tailored to the audience, whether it is industries, NGOs, UN or other organizations. For biodiversity, the message could also be carried piece by piece because the niches are important. The members of the Group could be looking at their key messages or niches and identify possible intersections. He noted that the issue of countering corruption was discussed at the G7 Summit in Germany and it could be done in Canada as well. Regarding a biodiversity summit at the level of heads of states, he suggested that it could take place in the margins of the UN General Assembly. He supported the idea of linking biodiversity and the climate change agendas.

38. The meeting further discussed ways to develop a coherent narrative and try and simplify ways to communicate about biodiversity including by further exploring the linkages between biodiversity and climate change: climate change is a threat to migratory species (habitat loss, poaching, etc.); wetlands and peatlands can serve as measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation; wetlands can contribute to disaster risk reduction; World Heritage Sites are affected by coral bleaching (with the example of the Australian coral reefs).

39. The CBD Executive Secretary and Ramsar Secretary General proposed for BLG to develop a plan towards 2020 that would bring the different events and priorities to converge towards a combined message. **Members were invited to share their calendars of events.**

40. IPPC Secretary said that it is time to increase awareness on the importance of biodiversity to sustainable development in the lead to 2030. He added that that climate change has important impacts on biodiversity. Plant health, movements of pests and invasive alien species are related to biodiversity and climate change and IPPC will be working a lot on these issues in the coming year.

41. A representative of CBD Secretariat outlined the Framework for a communications strategy, as requested by the Conference of the Parties in decision XIII/22. Another representative of CBD Secretariat mentioned that it is important to make the case for biodiversity at the World Economic Forum.

42. Ramsar Secretary General mentioned that the Secretariat prepared a mapping of the contribution of wetlands to the SDGs **and invited inputs and comments from the members of the Group.**

43. As ITPGRFA Secretary a.i., the Chair mentioned that the Treaty's communication strategy will take into account the communication work undertaken by the CBD Secretariat.

#### **ITEM 7 FOLLOW-UP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY 2011-2020: PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK**

44. A representative of the CBD Secretariat introduced this item and said that the preparations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework represent an opportunity for the conventions to work together in order to ensure a framework relevant to each of the conventions. He noted that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 was taken into account in the SDGs and that the timeframes are aligned, which can facilitate alignment of the plans in the next decade. The representative **invited BLG members to provide inputs to the development of the process**, as described in CBD notification 2017-052, which will be discussed in the upcoming intersessional meetings and at COP 14. The representative discussed about the timelines of the conventions' strategic plans and of the major meetings of the conventions' governing bodies that will be integrated in the consultation process. **The CBD Secretariat will share the information on the process with the governing bodies for example by organizing side-events on the process in the margins of their meetings. The CBD Secretariat will share the documents about the timelines with BLG members.**

45. CITES Secretary-General noted that CITES' next strategic vision will start in 2020 and will take into account the post-2020 biodiversity framework. CITES Secretariat will share information about its process as well.

46. Ramsar Secretary General noted that the Global Wetlands Outlook will be launched in 2018, in time to contribute to the post-2020 biodiversity process.

47. BLG members discussed the advantages and challenges of having different strategic plans under the conventions, noting that the governing bodies are responsible for making decisions regarding the plans. The group pointed out that some plans are currently under preparation and others go beyond 2020. A member said that scales are different and that each plan can be nested while being coherent with the biodiversity plan. A member said that the SDGs can contribute to aligning the plans and that cross-referencing the plans can contribute to reducing the reporting burden on Parties.

48. BLG members further discussed about the content of the post-2020 framework, noting that it is not possible to prejudge the outcomes of the consultation process. A member noted that it is important to reflect on why the Aichi Biodiversity Targets cannot be achieved in order to decide if the current targets need to be changed or if continuity would be preferable. A member agreed that the deadlines for the targets could simply be extended, noting that the technical language could be adjusted, and that an overarching, measurable and aspirational target could be added to help make the business case and provide more efficient means of implementation. Different assessments will serve inputs to the process such as the fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook, IPBES assessments, Global Wetlands Outlook and FAO's State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture. A member said that the secretariats should try and connect the plans and the SDGs.

## **ITEM 8 COOPERATION AND SYNERGIES AMONG THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS, INCLUDING IMPLEMENTATION OF CBD COP 13 DECISION XIII/24**

49. Under this item, the group discussed a collective approach to cooperation and synergies and shared views on ongoing work. The Chair said that CBD decision XIII/24 includes a road map to enhance synergies and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions elaborated by Parties to seven conventions that will serve as inputs for future work.

50. CBD Executive Secretary noted a few areas of ongoing collaboration with other conventions such as the joint programme with IPPC to be signed at the end of this meeting; the involvement of the CBD Secretariat in the development of a "Joint Programme on Biodiversity in Agriculture for sustainable use of PGRFA" and its participation at the seventh session of ITPGRFA governing body; the contributions of CITES and CMS to the draft guidance for better governance towards a sustainable, participatory and inclusive wild meat sector; participation of the CBD Secretariat at CMS COP 21, and; sharing of information regarding the post-2020 process in the margins of CMS COP 21. Regarding decision XIII/24, CBD Executive Secretary noted that she appreciated that this decision comes specifically from the CBD governing body but that she looks forward to collaborating with other secretariats and to hearing views on cooperating towards its implementation at a practical level.

51. A representative of the CBD Secretariat updated the Group on steps taken by the Secretariat to implement decision XIII/24 since January 2017, when the decision was introduced to the Group by teleconference on outcomes of COP 13. There are two main elements to that decision, which emanated from a party-led process and a workshop held in February 2016 that gathered Party representatives of each of the conventions. One element of the decision focuses on actions that could be taken at national level to improve cooperation and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions at the national level. The most important feature towards this is the establishment of better means of coordination and

communication at country level across conventions on various thematic areas. Some countries have started to implement such models or multisectoral coordination mechanisms. The SDGs are also catalyzing the establishment of coordinating mechanisms at national level. The decision invites the governing bodies of the conventions to consider implementing such actions.

52. The representative said that the second element of the decision presents a series of actions at the international level for the period 2017-2020 with an important principle that there are a number of actions at international level that can enhance activities undertaken at national level. The decision invites the CBD Secretariat and other secretariats to undertake these actions in the coming years. To assist this and to maintain the Party-led process, the decision requested the Executive Secretary to establish an informal advisory group on synergies to provide advice to the CBD Secretariat, the COP Bureau and the BLG on the prioritization and implementation of these actions. The advisory group is in the process of being established, following an invitation for nominations by CBD Parties issued in August 2017. A meeting of the advisory group is planned to be held in Montreal in December 2017 in association with the open-ended intersessional meetings of the CBD. Members of the group will represent countries that are Parties to multiple conventions and will have experience working on more than one convention. In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties invited the BLG to strengthen its work with relevant international organizations in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its follow-up. The Secretariat was requested to further develop the road map presented in annex II of the decision and circulate to the BLG for comments. **The Secretariat will transmit the road map and encourage members to contribute to its completion.** Furthermore, the COP requested the Secretariat to transmit the road map to the governing bodies of the other conventions for their consideration. The Secretariat is grateful to ITPGRFA Secretariat for including the decision in the agenda and pre-session documents of the seventh session of the governing body.

53. Ramsar Secretary General noted that Ramsar Secretariat followed and contributed to the discussions at CBD COP 13 and will provide further input to the analysis provided by CBD Secretariat. She said that the Standing Committee paid attention to the process under the CBD and that decision XIII/24 will also be brought to the attention of Ramsar COP 13. She noted that Ramsar has a joint programme with CMS and CBD and is working with WHC on sites of multiple designations and science policy interface. She noted that InforMEA is an important joint initiative, and that communication and visibility are also common objectives. Other areas that could be addressed in the future are capacity-building, indicators (6.6.1 under SDG, and Aichi Biodiversity Target 5) and resource mobilization.

54. The representative of WHC said that the World Heritage Committee welcomed efforts related to synergies under decision XIII/24. WHC has a new web page on synergies, is working on linking the databases of World Heritage Sites and Ramsar sites and launched a study, “Managing MIDAS: harmonizing the management of Multi-Internationally Designated Areas: Ramsar Sites, World Heritage sites, Biosphere Reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks”. WHC publishes the World Heritage Review, a magazine issued four times per year. The next issue is on trafficking in terms of culture and wildlife, and next year there will be an issue on wetlands. The Committee also adopted a specific decision to enhance cooperation with CITES on targeted species in natural heritage sites. He made note of joint missions of the two conventions on species in world heritage sites. UNESCO WHC and the World Tourism Organization will have a joint meeting in December in Oman to discuss sustainable tourism and cultural sites. There is also potential to increase collaboration across conventions in specific heritage sites (Botswana is an example, one of the new sites), and to bring the focal points to communicate with other focal points at the national level. He noted that a limitation to advancing synergies is the limited staffing level to deal with synergies. At the national level he noted that the national focal point for the World Heritage Convention often lies in the Ministry of Culture, which may not have good working relations with the Ministry of Environment.

55. CMS Deputy Executive Secretary noted the close collaboration between CMS and CITES secretariats supported by a shared staff member. He noted also the joint work programmes between CMS and Ramsar secretariats and between CMS and CBD secretariats. He noted that the cooperation was less so at the national level and that the CMS Secretariat would like to focus on improving collaboration at the national level.

56. The representative of CITES Secretariat said that Annex II of decision XIII/24 (the roadmap) will be brought to the attention of the Standing Committee at its meeting in November 2017. He said that CITES would have less interest in additional processes but that focus should be on practical actions in areas of interest at the national level.

57. A representative of the CBD Secretariat added that the roadmap for actions at the international level sets out a number of practical actions to be undertaken by relevant institutions that would support efforts at the national level, and can serve as a collective action plan. Some actions are already underway and others will enhance existing mechanisms. Some nationally-targeted guidance material already exist but are not well known or used at the national level. The government of Finland has provided financial support for a number of activities that will be coordinated by the CBD Secretariat in collaboration with the World Conservation Monitoring Centre in consultation with other secretariats. One of the next steps will be to prioritize actions in the table.

58. CBD Executive Secretary said that the table includes several ideas and suggestions for collaboration in relation to data collection and reporting but few actions related to visibility, which is something that could be strengthened. A web page or website could feature the work of the Liaison Group and could be used by all conventions.

59. A representative of IPPC said that decision XIII/24 was presented to the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures. She noted that the joint work plan between IPPC and CBD includes a component on communication (about the International Year of Plan Health and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020). The work on synergies under decision XIII/24 will help identify priorities for extended cooperation of IPPC with CBD and the Liaison Group, commensurate to the availability of resources.

60. The representative of WHC and CBD Executive Secretary said that greater collaboration and consultation at the national level is needed. The representative of WHC said that WHC will continue to promote the creation of national committees that meet at least once a year. He added that good experience exists in this regard and could be used to encourage replication and practical action at the national level.

61. The Chair in his capacity as ITPGRFA Secretary a.i. said that the Treaty has a standing agenda item on cooperation with the CBD (Nagoya Protocol) and that there is strong collaboration between the two secretariats, in the context of which he had previously been seconded to the CBD Secretariat for eighteen months. The Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol held regional workshops jointly and brought national focal points of the two instruments to work together, and will continue to do so next year in Latin American and the Caribbean.

## **ITEM 9 NEXT MEETINGS OF THE LIAISON GROUP**

62. Under this item, the Group agreed on an indicative schedule for the rotation of the Chair and location of future meetings of the Liaison Group. The World Heritage Centre confirmed its interest to host the next meeting in Paris, France, and proposed to hold at its margins a short meeting with UNESCO Cultural Conventions Liaison Group, which was modeled on the BLG.

63. Some consideration was given to possible dates for the meeting but it was agreed that this would be further discussed and agreed by members by e-mail.

#### ITEM 10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

64. Under this item, the Chair proposed that the BLG modus operandi Group be updated to reflect current membership and any other recent relevant developments. **The CBD Secretariat will prepare a draft updated version in track changes and circulate it to the members.**

#### ITEM 11 CLOSING

65. In closing the meeting, the Chair said that the **CBD Secretariat will provide a report of the meeting including a list of actions.** He suggested that in addition to the comprehensive report, a summary report with key action points could be prepared for web posting.

66. The Chair thanked the members of the Liaison Group for their active participation. The meeting was closed at 5.00 p.m.

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## **Annex 1**

### **Twelfth meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions 28 September 2017, Rome, Italy**

#### **List of participants**

Cristiana Paşca Palmer, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Bert Lenten, Deputy Executive Secretary, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

John Scanlon, Secretary General, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Jingyuan Xia, Secretary, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC)

Kent Nnadozie, Secretary a.i., International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)

Martha Rojas-Urrego, Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Guy Debonnet, World Heritage Centre

Francisco Lopez, Technical Officer, ITPGRFA Secretariat

Afshaan Shafi, Consultant, Communications and Liaison, ITPGRFA Secretariat

Celine Germain, Consultant, IPPC Secretariat

David Morgan, Chief, Governing Bodies and Meeting Services, CITES Secretariat

Neil Pratt, Senior Environmental Affairs Officer, CBD Secretariat

Erie Tamale, Senior Programme Officer, Capacity-building and Outreach, CBD Secretariat

Chantal Robichaud, Associate Programme Management Officer, CBD Secretariat

#### **Opening session**

*FAO*

René Castro, Assistant Director-General, Climate, Biodiversity, Land and Water Department, FAO