

Aide Memoire

Informal Brainstorming session among members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners on scientific and technical cooperation for the Convention on Biological Diversity

Tuesday, 17 April 2012, Panama City.

On the occasion of the second session of a plenary meeting to determine the modalities and institutional arrangements for the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), Panama, 16-21 April 2012, the CBD Executive Secretary convened an informal brainstorming discussion over dinner on Tuesday April 17th to discuss how the members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners could contribute to enhanced scientific and technical cooperation in support of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The following persons, participants in the IPBES meeting, participated in the discussion: Hesiquio Benitez (CONABIO-*Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad*, Mexico), Jin-Han Kim (National Institute of Biological Resources, Korea), Christoph Häuser (*Museum für Naturkunde – Leibniz Institute for Research on Evolution and Biodiversity of Berlin*, Germany), Horst Korn (The international Academy of Nature of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), Carmel Mbizvo (South African National Biodiversity Institute), Jean-Patrick Le Duc (*Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle*, France), Juana Marino (Humboldt Institute, Colombia), Cristián Samper (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, USA), José Sarukhán K (CONABIO, Mexico), Hendrik Segers (The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences), Braulio Dias (CBD) and David Cooper (CBD).

The following points emerged from the discussion¹:

1. The Consortium was established at COP-8 to provide technical and scientific support to Parties in implementing the Convention. The original concept was limited to three developed country organizations with global reach (Kew, NMNH-France and Smithsonian) but at COP-8 and since membership had expanded to include institutions with a range of profiles and purposes. While there is a need to clarify procedures and criteria for membership, those present emphasized their flexibility in responding to the needs of the Convention.
2. While there have been some useful activities under the Consortium (including training sessions at SBSTTA meetings and participation in events during the International year for Biodiversity), there is a widespread feeling that the Consortium has not met its full potential. All felt that there was a need and an opportunity to revitalize the work of the Consortium and its members.
3. Those present noted that there are unique opportunities for the Consortium and its members: there is substantial capacity among the organizations represented; and this capacity could be mobilized in support of the Convention.
4. The Consortium and its members could contribute in the following broad areas:
 - (a) Knowledge management, sharing information, support to monitoring, bioinformatics;
 - (b) Training and capacity building; and
 - (c) Outreach and communication (particularly, museums, botanic gardens and zoos).
5. The consortium could act collectively, but also individually or in small groups. Not all – and perhaps only a few – of its activities would need to involve all members. Given that the Consortium comprised different types of organizations, some activities may be pursued by groups of similar organizations acting together.
6. The work of the Consortium should be guided by a common vision (the development of which may be facilitated by the Secretariat, with inputs from members), but should also allow for bottom-up initiatives of members.

¹ Note that these points are the result of an informal discussion; they do not necessarily represent a consensus view among the participants and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the organizations concerned. This note has been compiled by the CBD Secretariat and has not been reviewed by the participants.

7. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, provide the overall vision for the work of the Consortium.
8. The Consortium and its members could make a substantial contribution to enhancing technical and scientific cooperation among Parties and help to realize the mission of the Clearing House Mechanism envisaged in Article 18 of the Convention. (The draft recommendations for WGRI-4 envisages a concerted approach along these lines). This would involve South-South as well as North-South and triangular cooperation and could build upon related activities under the CHM, the Biodiversity Technology Initiative etc.
9. There is a potential to build on the experience of national institutions that provide technical and scientific support to decision making in their countries. For example, CONABIO, Humboldt, INBIO and SANBI have all played a major role in compiling and organizing biodiversity relevant information and making available in support of decision makers (at various levels of government, and the private sector) to support the conservation and use of biodiversity (“knowledge brokering”). There has been some cooperation beyond hosting countries to date (for example, CONABIO has provided support to some Latin American countries and to Kenya. SANBI has provided support to other countries in Southern Africa.
10. Regional or thematic initiatives could be developed building on this experience. For example, CONABIO-INBIO-Humboldt could provide an axis of institutions to support Meso-America/Andes. There would need to be mobilization of the necessary funding of an enabling political environment, through the involvement for example of regional organizations.
11. The Consortium could also help the development, over time, of similar institutions in more countries.
12. Potential links with IPBES and the proposed BesNET (discussed at a side event at the IPBES plenary) were noted.
13. Training programmes could also be provided through other organizations such as the Vilm International Academy for Nature.
14. Many members of the Consortium have a strong role in bioinformatics and contribute to the GBIF network. One potential niche is to provide the infrastructure to facilitate the work of individual institutions through standards, bioinformatics, methodologies. There is a need to maintain data after funding runs out, through, for example, an electronic repository.
15. Some Consortium members could contribute to the mobilization of Citizen Science in support of the Convention, including through observations and monitoring.
16. Some Consortium members could contribute through initiatives such as the Encyclopaedia of Life. With CBD Secretariat involvement
17. Links with GSPC were noted, including the partial overlap of membership.
18. The need for changes in the operations of SBSTTA was also raised. Noting that SBSTTA is an interface of science and policy makers, it was suggested that there needs more open and technical discussions. (In this respect, it was suggested that the drafting of recommendations in the pre-sessional documents tended to limit the scope of discussions to these draft recommendations). There is also a need for a more dynamic intersessional process, beyond peer-review of pre-sessional documents and studies. There is a need for greater interaction among SBSTTA focal points and with the Secretariat between sessions.

At the end of the session the Executive Secretary expressed his satisfaction with the discussion, thanked the participants for their contributions, and looked forward to an enhanced phase of implementation.