



Protected Areas

Press Brief

Why is this important?

Protected areas are the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation; they maintain key habitats, provide refugia, allow for species migration and movement, and ensure the maintenance of natural processes across the landscape.

Not only do protected areas secure biodiversity conservation, they also secure the well-being of humanity itself. Protected areas provide livelihoods for nearly 1.1 billion people, are the primary source of drinking water for over a third of the world's largest cities and are a major factor in ensuring global food security by protecting fisheries, wild crop relatives, and the ecosystems services upon which agriculture depends.

Well managed protected areas harbouring participatory and equitable governance mechanisms yield significant benefits far beyond their boundaries, which can be translated into cumulative advantages across a national economy and contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development including achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As the detrimental impact of climate change threatens the planet, protected areas provide a convenient solution to an inconvenient truth. Better managed, better connected, better governed and better financed protected areas are recognized as the key to both mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change.

In February 2004, the CBD Parties made the most comprehensive and specific protected area commitments ever made by the international community by adopting the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). The PoWPA enshrines development of participatory, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas, where necessary stretching across national boundaries.

From designation to management, the PoWPA can be considered as a defining framework or "blueprint" for protected areas for the coming decades. It is a framework for cooperation between Governments, donors, NGOs and local communities. Without such collaboration, programmes cannot be successful and sustainable over the long-term.

To date, there are many signs of progress and there is much to celebrate. Political will and commitments are clearly being catalyzed. A recent summary of global implementation found that since 2004, nearly 6,000 new protected areas have been established, covering more than 60 million hectares. There are now about 130,000 protected areas, covering nearly 13% of the world's terrestrial surface, and over 6% of territorial marine areas.

However, there are still some areas that are lagging behind. The social costs and benefits of protected areas, the effective participation of indigenous and local communities and the diversification of various governance types need more commitment and resolute actions. The evaluation and improvement of management effectiveness, and the development and implementation of sustainable finance plans with diversified portfolios of traditional and innovative financial mechanisms need enhanced measures. Climate change considerations for both mitigation and adaptation responses need to be incorporated.

Strengthening implementation of PoWPA will require concerted efforts and the combined strength of all sectors of society, as well as alliances at national, regional and international levels between policy makers, civil society, indigenous and local communities and business and the private sector.



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What news to expect in Nagoya?

The COP decided in 2004 to review implementation of the PoWPA at each COP until 2010. This year the review has generated recommendations from SBSTTA 14 that can create a landmark decision at COP 10. The recommendations are tailored to directly address barriers to implementation in a practical manner.

Examples of decisions that could be adopted would lead to practical actions such as:

- Completion of national action plans for implementing the PoWPA involving all relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, integrating these plans into NBSAPs, using them to access funding from the Global Environmental Facility and others so that actions and funding are not done piecemeal, and reporting back on them to COP 11;
- Building on many successes at regional level, formation of regional initiatives and regional action plans including creation of transboundary protected areas;
- On sustainable financing – completion of national sustainable financing plans by 2012 and implementation of these plans;
- To better face climate change, integration of protected areas into wider landscapes and seascapes and sectors (i.e. target 1.2 of the PoWPA) by 2015, and restoration of degraded areas in order to improve the resilience of ecosystems;
- National assessments of management effectiveness of 60% of the total area of protected areas by 2015, incorporating governance, social impacts and benefits of protected areas, and climate change, and then the implementation of these assessments;
- Improvement in the design and extent of marine protected area networks in order to achieve the 2012 marine protected area target and the improvement of coverage of inland water protected areas
- Increased attention to governance, participation and equity including recognition and support for community conserved areas
- Building on the The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study, improved measuring of the values, costs and benefits of protected areas,
- A simple reporting framework which is user friendly and facilitates periodic online updates by the Parties

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