

## **NATIONAL REPORTING**

### **~ Issue Brief ~**

#### **Background**

Article 26 of the Convention requires Parties to submit national reports on measures undertaken for the implementation of the Convention and on their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the Convention. National reports are considered the principal review mechanism under the Convention. The information submitted in national reports allows the Conference of the Parties to keep implementation of the Convention under review. Thus, improvements in the information national reports provide, the use of this information, and the linkages with other elements of review can be important considerations in enhancing review under the Convention.

To date, Parties have been requested to submit six national reports, the last being due in December 2018. Guidelines for the preparation of the national reports have been adopted by COP. In the sixth national reporting cycle, an on-line reporting and visualization tool was introduced. The Secretariat has received between 137 and 192 reports in each cycle.

#### **Main issues for discussion**

Functions and contents of national reports: national reports serve several functions. They provide information for the national and global monitoring and reviewing of progress in the implementation of the Convention. They should also serve as powerful learning and communication tools. The process of developing the national report can also serve to mobilize stakeholders at various levels for actions for and participation in the implementation of the Convention.

The required contents for national reports have varied from one reporting cycle to another. While the last three reports were focused mainly on the implementation of NBSAPs and assessment of progress towards the 2010 and 2020 targets, while earlier reports focused on the implementation of the Articles and provisions of the Convention and related COP decisions.

- What should be the functions of national reports, and how can we ensure that future national reports fulfill these functions?
- What do you think the Parties should report on in their seventh and eighth national reports? (assessment of progress towards goals, targets and means of implementation contained in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?). What else do you think should be included, if anything, and what would be the benefit both for national processes and for global monitoring and reviewing?
- How can we ensure that Parties report on outcomes and impacts achieved in addition to actions taken? How can assessments of effectiveness of measures taken for the implementation of the Convention be strengthened?
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages of having national reports reviewed by independent experts either before or after they are submitted to the Secretariat as is done under other processes?
- How do you think Parties can be encouraged to use relevant indicators proposed in the monitoring framework for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in their national reports?

Format and Comparability: The format of national reports, adopted by COP, has been modified for each cycle based on the experiences in the previous cycle. The format has evolved from a questionnaire-based format to mainly narrative and then to a combination of both. Experience has shown that different formats have their advantages and disadvantages. The questionnaire-based format makes analysis of information contained in national reports easier while compromising substantive content and nuance (multiple-choice questions answered without supporting information provided). The narrative format allows countries the

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flexibility to provide substantive information or analysis, however it poses challenges for statistical analysis. The combined format may have improved on both of the previous formats however overlaps among sections is still a challenge.

In their submissions related to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework as well as in relevant regional and thematic consultations, Parties noted the need for consistency in the format of national reports to better track progress in the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and to facilitate aggregation and comparability of information contained in national reports.

- What format do you think would be best for future reports?
- Should the format for the seventh and eighth national reports be kept consistent to allow for consistent tracking of progress in implementation in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

**Form of reporting:** Besides national reports required under Article 26, Parties were requested to submit financial reports using the financial reporting framework (see decisions XII/3, XIII/20 and 14/22). Parties were also requested to report on progress in the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas (see decision X/31) though this was later integrated as part of the fifth and sixth national reports. Parties have also been invited by COP to submit thematic or voluntary reports on various issues (forest ecosystems, invasive alien species, etc. see decisions V/19 and VIII/14). In its decision 14/29, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties to submit, on a voluntary basis, review reports for testing the Open-ended Forum at the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

- What would be the benefits and drawbacks of integrating all reporting requirements into one national report?
- What would be the benefits and drawbacks of Parties submitting biannual review reports (or updates), on a voluntary basis, in addition to the regular national reports (submitted every four or five years)?

**Periodicity and timely submission of national reports:** Although the periodicity of national reports has generally been at four-year intervals, this is not fixed and could be modified by request of COP. The rate of submission of national reports by the deadlines set by COP meetings has been low (The highest number was 41 for the sixth national reports by 31 December 2018). Reasons for the late or no submission of national reports vary from country to country, mainly including limited technical capacities and human and financial resources, lack of systematic monitoring of implementation at national level, long domestic consultation processes and non-expeditious provision of funds from the Global Environment Facility.

- What would be the ideal periodicity for national reporting for the post 2020 global biodiversity framework?
- How can we ensure that Parties will submit their future national reports by the deadline set by COP so that they may be relied on for review of implementation?
- Should any mechanism be put in place to hold Parties accountable for not submitting national reports?

**Synchronization of reporting to the Convention and its Protocols** In decision 14/27, COP decided that synchronization of reporting to the Convention and its Protocols would start in 2023. The same decision requested the Executive Secretary to identify implications and options for aligned reporting when preparing documentation related to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

- Should Parties to the Convention and its Protocols (where appropriate) submit one report instead of three national reports after 2023, while taking into consideration the fact that the Convention and the Protocols are distinctive legal instruments with different reporting requirements?
- How to use the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to make synchronization of reporting to the Convention and its Protocols possible?

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Increasing synergies in reporting among related Conventions: In various decisions (see decisions X/10, XIII/27 and 14/27) countries were requested to increase synergies in reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions at national level, and the Secretariat was requested to work with relevant Convention Secretariats and other partners to identify options for increasing synergies in reporting (decision 14/34 Annex D Section also contained such request when preparing documentation on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework).

- How do you think modular reporting on common issues addressed by the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions could be pilot tested in future national reports, as a step towards increasing synergies in reporting??
- What mechanisms do you think could be put in place to increase national coordination to enhance synergies in reporting?

Use of on-line reporting tool: In decision XIII/29, the Conference of the Parties encouraged Parties to use on a voluntary basis the online reporting tool to submit their sixth national report. So far 85 out of 150 countries have submitted their sixth national reports. The Conference of the Parties also recommended increasing harmonization of reporting systems used by different Conventions in order to increase synergies in reporting.

- What have been the advantages and disadvantages of online reporting and should the use of the online reporting tool remain voluntary?
- How can synergies in reporting to different Conventions be enhanced through harmonization in online reporting tools?

## **Key Mandates**

### Article 26 of the Convention

States that each Contracting Party shall, present to the Conference of the Parties, reports on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention and their effectiveness.

### Article 23 of the Convention

States that the Conference of the Parties shall keep the implementation of the Convention under review, and, for this purpose, shall establish the form and the intervals for reports, and will consider these reports as well as reports submitted by any subsidiary body.

### COP decisions II/17, V/19, VII/25, VIII/14, X/10, XIII/27

National reporting

### COP decision X/2

The COP requested Parties to monitor and review the implementation of their NBSAPs and national targets using the set of indicators developed for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, and to report to COP through their fifth and sixth national reports and other means.

## **Some resources and documents for further background**

- CDB website on National Reports: <https://www.cbd.int/reports/>.
- CBD/COP/13/21: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/official/cop-13-21-en.pdf>.
- CBD/SBI/2/12: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/e3c3/2809/b52265e64971be877d09c052/sbi-02-12-en.pdf>.
- CBD/SBI/1/11: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbi/sbi-01/official/sbi-01-11-en.pdf>.
- CBD/WGRI/5/INF.20: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/wgri/wgri-05/information/wgri-05-inf-20-en.pdf>.
- CBD/SBSTTA/21/7: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-21/official/sbstta-21-07-en.pdf>.

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- “Elements for a modular reporting against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets” (FOEN, UNEP-WCMC, NatureConsult, 2016) ([UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/24](https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/information/cop-13-inf-24-en.pdf)): <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/cop/cop-13/information/cop-13-inf-24-en.pdf>.
  - “Promoting synergies within the cluster of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements”, prepared by UNEP-WCMC (2012):  
[https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/Promoting\\_synergies\\_in\\_the\\_biodiversity\\_cluster.pdf](https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/Promoting_synergies_in_the_biodiversity_cluster.pdf).
  - “Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (FNR\_Rio) (UNEP, 2016): [https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/fnr\\_rio.pdf](https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/fnr_rio.pdf).
  - CBD/POST2020/WS/6/INF.3:  
<https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/8b3b/0efb/e7476910c5226b4e912b8993/post2020-ws-2019-06-inf-03-en.pdf>.
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