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OPTIONS FOR ENHANCING SYNERGIES ON NATIONAL REPORTING AMONG BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS AND RIO CONVENTIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. BACKGROUND

1. In decision [14/27](#), paragraph 3 (e), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested the Executive Secretary to identify, in consultation with members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, and on the basis of suggestions from the informal advisory group on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions,¹ concrete actions to advance synergies on reporting, inter alia, through:

- (a) Common indicators, where appropriate;
- (b) Reporting modules on shared issues;
- (c) Interoperability of information management and reporting systems;
- (d) Other options for increasing synergies in national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions.

The Executive Secretary was also requested to assess financial implications of such actions.

2. In paragraph 3 (f) of the same decision, the Executive Secretary was requested to continue to contribute to the monitoring process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² and to explore synergies with the related reporting systems and tools for the Sustainable Development Goals, including with regard to methodological approaches. In paragraph 3 (g), the Executive Secretary was also requested to contribute to the development, testing and promotion of the Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT), in collaboration with the InforMEA Initiative, taking into account the experiences of Parties in preparing their sixth national reports, with a view to facilitating the use of the tool across the biodiversity-related conventions.

3. The present document was prepared with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and in consultation with relevant convention secretariats, and taking into account the document on national reporting prepared for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation ([CBD/SBI/2/12](#)). Section II captures suggestions from the informal advisory group on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions,

* [CBD/SBI/3/1](#).

¹ This informal advisory group was established pursuant to decision [XIII/24](#) of the Conference of the Parties, and its mandate was subsequently extended by decision [14/30](#).

² General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

notes consultations held with related convention secretariats, and provides an overview of related suggestions and views from the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. All these suggestions and views provided a basis for proposing options in the following section. Section III presents options for concrete actions to advance synergies in reporting. Section IV provides a brief analysis of resource implications if all these actions are taken.

II. SUMMARY OF RELEVANT SUGGESTIONS AND VIEWS

A. Advice of the informal advisory group

4. In its report to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting and the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting ([CBD/SBI/2/INF/14](#)), the informal advisory group on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions provided advice relating to this issue (although responding primarily to decision [XIII/24](#)). The relevant advice is as follows:

(a) Taking into consideration work already done and under way on synergies relating to reporting, the Executive Secretary and members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions should seek direction from convention governing bodies to enable implementation of the key action in decision XIII/24 on keeping under review opportunities for cooperation in reporting under conventions, and for ensuring interoperability between reporting systems or platforms;

(b) The informal advisory group could provide advice with regard to ensuring a synergetic approach towards the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, including options for enhancing synergy on national reporting, including with regard to common sets of indicators and modular approaches to reporting. The advisory group also noted that, during development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, work needed to progress in parallel on indicator and reporting processes;

(c) Additional activities identified, relating to avoiding duplication with respect to reporting, information management and indicators, among other things, included involving Parties in developing templates for modular reporting, and identifying where further guidance is needed relating to data management systems in the context of synergies.

5. The report of the informal advisory group also made a number of references to the value of tools for supporting national reporting and associated processes (including data collection, management and use) at the national level, for increasing access to necessary data sets, and for the sharing of information and data arising from national reporting processes.

B. Consultation with other conventions

6. The present document reflects the verbal and written comments received during consultations with members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions in teleconferences held on 30 January 2020 and 4 February 2020, respectively. It is based on the mandate provided by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in its decision 14/27. It should be noted, when considering the options set out below for further developing collaboration and opportunities for synergies, that each of the other biodiversity-related conventions and Rio conventions has its own mandates and processes which need to be followed.

C. Brief synthesis of relevant views from the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

7. In decision [14/34](#), on the process for developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the Conference of the Parties recognized that discussion would need to address “mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing implementation, including through the use of indicators and the alignment of national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols”, and also “means of enhancing coherence and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions, including options for enhancing synergies on national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions, Rio conventions and Sustainable Development Goals” (annex, paragraph 12 (c) and (k)).

8. The following are views and suggestions that draw on relevant discussions held during the twenty-third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the first and second meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and regional and relevant thematic consultations organized by the Secretariat, including in particular the Thematic Consultation on Transparent Implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Review for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.³ They also draw on views expressed during the first consultation workshop of biodiversity-related conventions on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, held in Bern from 10 to 12 June 2019,⁴ as well as on views expressed in submissions.⁵

9. One of the proposals made during the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group was that explicit reference be made in the framework to further enhancing coherence and synergies of reporting systems under related multilateral environmental agreements. A view had also been expressed at the June 2019 consultation workshop of biodiversity-related conventions that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework should include an accountability framework that enabled coordination among assessments, indicators and national reporting under the various conventions; included the potential for harmonization of data management and reporting; took into account monitoring, reporting and reviewing or transparency mechanisms established under related conventions and their systems for monitoring; and enabled a relevant involvement of non-Party stakeholders.

10. With respect to indicators, views expressed to date include the following:

(a) As a starting point the existing indicators identified in decision [XIII/28](#) should be considered, but these would be supplemented by, among other things, the indicators used for tracking achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and those used by other relevant conventions and processes;

(b) An improved implementation mechanism could include among its key features some indicators common across conventions.

11. With respect to national reporting as part of an integrated process of transparent implementation, monitoring, reporting, and reviewing, views expressed to date include the following:

(a) There is potential to improve consistency and synergy across reporting processes both within and outside the Convention, including through improved collaboration among related conventions for alignment of the timing of reporting, for the development of common reporting frameworks, and modular reporting systems (recognizing that any efforts to address opportunities for reporting processes to be integrated must also recognize the usefulness of each system for its parent convention);

(b) There is potential for improved collaboration on developing and using a common reporting framework and an integrated reporting system among the biodiversity-related conventions (for example the Data Reporting Tool – DaRT) in order to make data available for use under various processes, including the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) In assessing progress in implementing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework there is opportunity to supplement national reports with information from other sources. This might include a global stocktaking of level of commitment and associated implementation, the timing of which could potentially be aligned with the timing of national commitments and global stocktaking under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

³ See [CBD/POST2020/WS/2020/1/3](#). See also www.cbd.int/post2020 for a full list of regional and thematic consultations, and access to the relevant reports.

⁴ See [CBD/POST2020/WS/2019/6/2](#).

⁵ Individual submissions can be found at www.cbd.int/post2020/submissions, and a synthesis of submissions was made by the Secretariat and is available as [CBD/POST2020/PREP/1/INF/2](#).

(d) Strengthening national reporting should include clearer targets and indicators, and conventions and other processes could audit the inclusiveness of implementation and reporting and improve their reporting templates;

(e) At the national level, capacity-building should be provided, with public discussion of the role and process of reporting to the conventions and other intergovernmental processes, which would strengthen the role of national reports.

12. Also relevant are some of the views expressed on national biodiversity strategies and actions plans (NBSAPs), particularly when taken together. These included the need for NBSAPs that reflect the full scope of the targets under the new framework, the possibility for NBSAPs to become broader whole-of-government instruments, the need for synergies with the Rio conventions and biodiversity-related conventions, and the need for stronger alignment of NBSAPs with national reporting.

13. While some feel that there is a need to streamline and synergize national reporting across all biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio conventions, and the monitoring process for the Sustainable Development Goals, there is no shared view on how the national reporting process under the Convention might be redesigned, or on the legal implications of cross-referencing the reports of other processes. However, there has been discussion of the potential to learn lessons from other processes on reporting, reviewing, transparency and responsibility.

14. The suggestion was made during the second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group that the section of the framework on responsibility and transparency should make reference to standardized guidelines and tools for consistency in reporting progress and gaps in the implementation of the framework. This was supplemented by a suggestion from the Thematic Consultation on Transparent Implementation, Monitoring, Reporting and Review for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Rome, 20-22 February 2020) on the need to build/strengthen platforms to enable interoperability of data from various sources/processes.

III. OPTIONS FOR CONCRETE ACTIONS TO ADVANCE SYNERGIES ON REPORTING

15. In paragraph 3 (e) of decision [14/27](#), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to focus on actions relating to common indicators, reporting modules on shared issues, interoperability of information management and reporting systems, and other options for increasing synergies in national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions. These issues had already been addressed at least in part in the note by the Executive Secretary on national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols (CBD/SBI/2/12). The following therefore draws on that document, considering its content in the light of (a) advice from secretariats of the biodiversity-related and Rio conventions during the consultations; (b) advice from the informal advisory group on synergies; (c) views expressed during consultations on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and (d) related submissions from Parties.

16. In considering the options identified below, it is important to recognize the potential value of a widely recognized and widely owned post-2020 global biodiversity framework in “driving” synergies. A common framework for action also provides a common framework for responsibility and transparency. In this regard, with support from the Government of Finland, UNEP-WCMC undertook a review in 2015 that mapped the articles, decisions and guidance of the biodiversity-related conventions against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, identifying ways in which the conventions related one to another in supporting delivery of the targets,⁶ demonstrating the breadth of the potential contribution.

17. The first possible action to consider is therefore the following:

Action 1 - Alignment of goals and targets: The greatest leverage and impact for enhancing synergies in reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions is at the level of alignment of goals and

⁶ See UNEP-WCMC (2015). [Mapping Multilateral Environmental Agreements to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#). Final report, October 2015.

targets. Adoption of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that is relevant to the mandates of other intergovernmental agreements and processes provides an opportunity for facilitating the alignment of activities that respond to these agreements and processes, and therefore also of their associated reporting. This will necessitate consideration of how actions in support of each of the intergovernmental agreements and processes support implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and vice versa.

18. While an analysis could be done by an independent body identifying how the strategies and actions of all relevant conventions and processes relate to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, it would be far more effective if synergies and alignments were identified by each of the conventions and processes through their own advisory and governance processes, as was done in some cases with respect to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. For example:

(a) Following adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) in 2012 adopted resolution XI.3 which included an appendix illustrating how implementation of the strategies in the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 contributed to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and then when the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 was adopted through resolution XII.2 a table was included showing synergies between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Ramsar Targets;

(b) Following adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the 7th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) adopted resolution 7.2 which sets out their contribution to delivering the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2027 adopted through resolution 7.1 also identifies how it supports their delivery. Resolution 7.2 also requests the Technical Committee to prepare a final assessment of AEWA's contributions to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 for consideration at the 8th session of the Meeting of the Parties;

(c) The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) adopted the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023 through resolution 11.2. The working group established to develop the strategic plan actively considered relationships to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, using the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as a framework. In addition, Annex A to the CMS strategic plan identifies the relationship between the CMS targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

A. Indicators

19. Increased consistency in use of indicators is addressed in paragraphs 27 to 36 of document [CBD/SBI/2/12](#), which reiterated that, in decision XIII/28, the Conference of the Parties had already recognized the advantages of aligning the indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and those of the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant processes (as appropriate). Stated advantages included further supporting the achievement of the three objectives of the Convention and avoiding duplication of data sets and approaches. It is safe to assume that benefits include cost-effectiveness, consistency of messaging and building a shared understanding of biodiversity values in the context of multiple agendas.

20. The annex to decision XIII/28 already identifies which of the listed indicators are also indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Biodiversity Indicators partnership (BIP) website⁷ also provides a cross-mapping of indicators to both the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and Sustainable Development Goals.⁸ In November 2018, UNEP-WCMC published a mapping of current and potential use of biodiversity indicators across intergovernmental processes, with the support of the Government of Finland.⁹ This addressed Aichi Biodiversity Targets, targets under the Sustainable Development Goals, targets in the strategic plans of the Convention on Migratory Species and the Ramsar Convention, and the

⁷ www.biodiversityindicators.net.

⁸ See www.bipindicators.net/system/resources/files/000/002/291/original/Cross_mapping_4pp_A3_WEB.pdf.

⁹ See www.unep-wcmc.org/system/comfy/cms/files/files/000/001/401/original/Cross_mapping_A3_final.pdf.

objectives of the Strategic Vision of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, as well as identifying the relationship to Biodiversity Indicator Partnership indicators and the indicators used by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Official indicators were identified, and also those with potential for future use. Other similar initiatives include that led by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to develop a core set of forest-related indicators.¹⁰

21. The Conference of the Parties has already strongly implied the need to consider indicators at the same time as developing targets (decision 14/34), and the importance of this has also been stressed during the consultations and during the twenty-third meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. The concern is to draw on the experience of using indicators to help in design of effective targets,¹¹ while at the same time ensuring that agreed indicators are available when implementation starts (there was a six-year gap between adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and agreement on the indicators for assessing progress).

22. Possible actions to consider are the following:

Action 2 – Identify and facilitate use of indicators for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework: It is clear that Parties wish to identify and review available baselines and indicators as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is developed, drawing on the indicators identified in decision XIII/28 and supplementing these, as appropriate, with indicators used by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and by other intergovernmental processes in particular. This will inform development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and hopefully the monitoring framework including indicators will be published at the same time as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework is adopted. However, development of further guidance for use of these indicators at all appropriate levels is likely to be necessary, and for further work will almost certainly need to be done to address gaps, or areas where current indicators are inadequate. Consistent with decision XIII/28, this list of indicators should also be kept under review, which will also require ongoing action;

Action 3 – Cross-map indicators used by related conventions and processes: Develop a cross-mapping of the indicators used and being considered by all biodiversity-relevant conventions and processes, including all members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group, the Sustainable Development Goals, forest-related indicators, regional seas conventions and programmes, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, etc. Identify how the indicators relate one to another and to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and how they might more effectively be used to convey common messages. This might also include looking more closely at what each convention and process is monitoring with the use of indicators, to see how this can be built upon. Maintain this resource as new indicators are developed, and make it available to all bodies for use to track biodiversity-related issues;

Action 4 – Review existing indicators and related processes to identify gaps: Carry out a review of the indicators used by biodiversity relevant conventions and processes (including the Sustainable Development Goals) to identify gaps and further opportunities. This would include reviewing and communicating gaps identified by the different processes and identifying possible options for addressing the gaps, identifying those indicators where extrapolation is possible (or potentially possible), and identifying those indicators that can be disaggregated for use at different levels. It would also identify any processes under way to address gaps and opportunities identified. Each of these actions will help to increase the use and usefulness of indicators, in the context of the overall package of indicators;

Action 5 – Increase the use of biodiversity-related indicators at the national level: Investigate opportunities for further improving the use of biodiversity-related indicators at the national level in an integrated manner, where this is necessary and appropriate, and for more effectively embedding

¹⁰ See for example E/CN.18/2019/3 at <https://undocs.org/E/CN.18/2019/3> and www.cpfweb.org/96344.

¹¹ See for example CBD/COP/14/INF/40 at www.cbd.int/doc/c/7217/00d0/a9328110a490b7a8957a0cd9/cop-14-inf-40-en.pdf.

biodiversity-related indicators and metrics into the suites of indicators and metrics managed by national statistics offices and programmes. This might include review of the ways that indicators are referenced and used in national plans, commitments and reports relating to the implementation of a range of related intergovernmental agreements and processes.

23. Key partners in carrying out and supporting this work would include UNEP-WCMC and members of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Consultative Partnership on Forests, and the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. As appropriate, this might also include liaison with the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, the secretariat for which is provided by the United Nations Statistics Division.

B. Reporting modules on shared issues

24. The issue of modular reporting on shared issues is addressed in paragraphs 37 to 41 of document [CBD/SBI/2/12](#), which identified the purpose of exploring options for addressing the issue as being to obviate multiple reporting by countries on the same information. However, the real value goes further, as a common approach to reporting on shared issues also serves to further highlight where issues may be relevant to multiple agendas, thereby also potentially highlighting the value of more coherent approaches to implementation and associated information management and reporting.

25. The potential for modular reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions has been discussed numerous times over the past 20 years, in particular in workshops led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNEP-WCMC,¹² and most recently in the workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions convened in Geneva in February 2016 by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.¹³ In parallel, discussions have also taken place on streamlining forest-related reporting, undertaken by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.¹⁴ This latter example serves to underline the point that the conventions and processes that might choose to be involved would vary depending on the topic being addressed.

26. UNEP-WCMC and NatureConsult, with support from the Government of Switzerland, carried out a review of “elements for a modular reporting against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”.¹⁵ The study found that a modular approach to reporting could foster synergies at the national, regional and global levels by highlighting interlinkages among different processes, taking advantage of similarities and overlaps in the information submitted through separate reporting processes, and by organizing the activities and information required, into a series of modules of relevance to several processes, so as to avoid having to reproduce the same information in several reports. Following a detailed review of the reporting processes and guidelines/formats of all the biodiversity-related conventions, the study noted that national reports of all the biodiversity-related conventions would contribute information to assessment of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

27. In the past, Parties have been asked to provide voluntary thematic reports on specific issues in order to inform in-depth discussion of those issues.¹⁶

28. Possible actions to consider:

Action 6 – Identify thematic areas or issues of common interest to a number of conventions and processes: Review how different international agreements and processes and their reporting frameworks relate to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and its implementation, with the aim of identifying

¹² See, for example, UNEP, [Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-related Conventions](#), March 2016.

¹³ For meeting documentation, see <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/BRCWS-2016-01>.

¹⁴ See <http://www.cpfweb.org/96344/en/>.

¹⁵ UNEP-WCMC and NatureConsult, “Elements for a modular reporting against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”, Final report – August 2016 (issued for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as [UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/24](#)).

¹⁶ See <https://www.cbd.int/reports/thematic.shtml>.

where there is reporting on thematic areas or issues of common interest, and therefore where common guidance, approaches and definitions might prove effective and increase efficiency, and potentially lead in the future to a more integrated approach to information management and reporting. This may also have a value in identifying areas where increased coherence may be beneficial at the national level, leading to possible synergies in implementation;

Action 7 – Pilot test a modular reporting approach on one or more identified issues: There are some issues that are of interest across multiple conventions and processes. As a result, there is potential for developing common reporting formats whereby a single report can be made that is relevant to all these conventions and processes. This may also then contribute to more integrated information management and reporting procedures with respect to those issues at national and international levels, and hopefully also more integrated approaches to implementation and action. Examples might include forests, inland waters and so on. One or more themes could be identified, with subsequent collaboration among interested organizations and Parties (to the various conventions) to develop report formats, and to trial them.

29. Key partners in carrying out and supporting this work would include UNEP-WCMC, and organizations working on specific themes such as members of the Consultative Partnership on Forests and the Consultative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management for their respective themes; the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Nagoya Protocol, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and CGIAR Research Centres for genetic resources; the Ramsar Convention and Wetlands International for inland waters, and so on.

C. Interoperability of information management and reporting systems

30. This issue is addressed in document [CBD/SBI/2/12](#), paragraphs 42 to 47, in which the purpose of promoting interoperability of data sets and reporting systems is identified as being to facilitate the reuse of information entered in one place. Increasing interoperability of data and information concerns the steps taken in order to ensure that the data and information can be readily shared, including through its ready integration into other information systems. At both national and international levels, increased focus on interoperability has the potential to lead to the more effective management and use of information, streamlining of reporting processes, and increased opportunity to draw on reported information. It also justifies investing in more complex analytical tools that combine information from multiple sources. Interoperable reporting systems, shared indicators, and increased opportunity to access data and information also have the potential to facilitate review of progress.

31. InforMEA (www.informe.org) is the visible “face” of a software programme that actively encourages and supports secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems for the benefit of Parties and the environment community at large. The initiative is facilitated by UNEP and now comprises 31 global and 55 regional treaties and protocols across a number of clusters, including biodiversity. The primary focus is on information managed by multiple agreements (such as decisions, contacts, events, reports), and facilitation of increased access to that information. At present, this facilitates location of national reports and access to them, but the intention in the future is also to improve access to report contents, facilitating enhanced use of reported information. This could include tagging of reported information to particular goals and targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and any goals and targets in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

32. The Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT)¹⁷ currently being developed by UNEP aims to provide national “working spaces” that will help those responsible for reporting to conventions to organize, share and maintain documentation and links to information used in reporting. The aim is for the tool to facilitate access to the necessary data and information, including to previous report contents, thereby reducing reporting effort while at the same time fostering communication and cooperation at the national level. This is still work in progress, but it is hoped that active engagement of secretariats and Parties to multilateral environmental agreements in rollout and testing will help ensure its practical value.

¹⁷Development of DaRT is being led by UNEP as part of InforMEA, with the financial support of Switzerland and the European Union.

33. Increasing use is being made of online reporting systems, whether using generic tools, such as the online reporting system developed by UNEP-WCMC together with the Convention on Migratory Species and its daughter agreements,¹⁸ or custom tools such as the online reporting tool developed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the sixth national report.¹⁹ Meanwhile the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is initiating development of a new interactive geospatial data management platform for reporting. Online reporting systems have the potential to increase interoperability through increasing standardization and the ability to more easily categorize and tag the submitted information.

34. In decision [XIII/31](#) on key scientific and technical needs related to implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties and relevant organizations to promote open access to biodiversity-related data, and provided voluntary guidance to improve the accessibility of biodiversity-related data and information. In decision XIII/24 on cooperation with other conventions and international organizations, provision of guidance on national databases, data access and use was identified as a “key action” for “enhancing management of and avoiding duplication related to information and knowledge, national reporting, monitoring and indicators”. Sharing of data and information, and increased interoperability, are essential components of integrated information management in support of implementation and reporting for multiple conventions.

35. Possible actions to consider are the following:

Action 8 – Promote the use of common standards and ontologies: Identify areas where common definitions, classification systems, and standards would further facilitate the sharing of reported data and information, promoting their use where they already exist, and undertaking exploratory work on what it would take to build acceptance of common definitions, classification systems and standards where they do not, and making recommendations on options for a way forward;

Action 9 – Strengthen the implementation of InforMEA: Continue to support the InforMEA programme through the engagement of secretariats, Parties and relevant organizations in development and testing of information services to increase the sharing of data and information managed by secretariats, including by facilitating access to national reports and communications and the information that they contain. As part of this, ensure that the information services meet the needs of secretariats and Parties, and that the initiative continues to promote the sharing of experience among secretariat staff working on information management and use;

Action 10 – Implement the Data and Reporting Tool (DaRT): Continue to roll out the DaRT tool and encourage its use by national reporting teams, further developing and testing it to respond to the identified needs of Parties and secretariats, including through considering links to other tools such as Bioland and the UN Biodiversity Lab. As appropriate, convene workshops and develop training materials, guidance and case examples;

Action 11 – Increase interoperability among online reporting tools: Steps could be taken to increase the interoperability among online reporting systems so as to promote and sustain the use of shared reporting applications and software with customized reporting options. As part of this, interoperability with third-party data aggregation systems such as DaRT should be increased. These actions will facilitate reporting and the sharing of data and information at both national and international levels. Increased use of online reporting tools, and increased focus on interoperability among the tools, will also help facilitate implementation of common standards and ontologies;

Action 12 – Increase access to relevant guidance: The Compendium of guidance for capturing, managing and using data and information and the Compendium of guidance on key global databases

¹⁸ www.ors.ngo.

¹⁹ <https://chm.cbd.int/>.

*related to biodiversity-related conventions*²⁰ were both developed in response to decision XIII/24 on cooperation, in order to support Parties in enhancing information management and reporting relevant to a range of conventions. Access to such guidance could be increased, both through increasing communication on the guidance documents themselves, and through development of a living resource online. The next step might be to explore opportunities to use the existing guidance as a basis for increased capacity-building in the area of data and information management and use, linking implementation and reporting. This could also explore opportunities for working through the clearing-house mechanism.

36. Key partners in carrying out and supporting this work would include UNEP and UNEP-WCMC, working together with InforMEA and its donors and collaborating conventions, and with the Group on Earth Observations Biodiversity Observation Network (GEO BON) on a number of the suggested actions. With respect to particular common standards and ontologies, it will be important to work with appropriate professional communities.

D. Other options for increasing synergies in national reporting

37. Other possible actions to consider:

Action 13 – Liaison among secretariats on national reporting and national communications: Periodically convene meetings of those secretariat staff of biodiversity-related and Rio conventions responsible for national reports and national communications, in order to share experience and discuss work plans. This will also provide opportunity for identifying areas where reporting can be mutually supportive, and for planning joint activities;

Action 14 – Strengthen coordination mechanisms at the national level: In decision XIII/24 and decision 14/27, the Conference of the Parties encouraged coordination mechanisms at the national level that would include facilitating a national coordination process related to national reporting to the various biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions in order to, among other things, align data collection and reporting (for example through modular reporting); link focal points and institutions to assist each other in meeting reporting requirements; and foster quality control and consistency of reporting of similar information across conventions where appropriate. Further promotion of such mechanisms, and where appropriate provision of guidance and support, will themselves lead to improvements in reporting processes, building, as appropriate, on existing experiences and advice;²¹

Action 15 – Provide guidance on the preparation of reports and communications: Intergovernmental conventions and processes can themselves facilitate alignment in reporting through the guidance that they provide their Parties on the preparation of reports and communications. For example, the “Resource manual for the sixth national report”²² identifies where relevant information might be found in national reports to other biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio conventions, the United Nations Forum on Forests and a number of other reporting processes. This draws on a study undertaken by UNEP-WCMC and NatureConsult, with the support of the Government of Switzerland.²³ Such efforts incidentally not only help reporting processes, but also highlight areas with potential for increased coherence in implementation. This action might be facilitated by a review of guidance on reporting provided by intergovernmental conventions and processes;

²⁰ UNEP-WCMC led the preparation of both documents, working with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and with UNEP, with financial support from the Governments of Finland and Switzerland, and from the European Union. They can be found at www.unep-wcmc.org/resources-and-data/biodiversitysynergies.

²¹ A number of different coordination mechanisms used by Parties are highlighted as examples in the UNEP *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions at national and regional levels*, developed by UNEP-WCMC with the support of the European Union and the Government of Switzerland (www.wcmc.io/sourcebook-web).

²² See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/nr-06/cop-13-21-en-rev.pdf>.

²³ UNEP-WCMC and NatureConsult, “Elements for a modular reporting against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”, Final report – August 2016 (issued for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as [UNEP/CBD/COP13/INF/24](http://www.unep.org/CBD/COP13/INF/24)).

Action 16 – Promote an increased focus on biodiversity in voluntary national reviews: Voluntary national reviews are reviews of progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The extent to which biodiversity and ecosystem services are addressed within voluntary national reviews prepared for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development varies considerably, as does reference to the biodiversity-related conventions. Following adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, the existing “Draft Guidance for Reporting Progress on Biodiversity to the High-level Political Forum” ([CBD/COP/14/INF/26](#)) should be revised as necessary, including integrating the role of all biodiversity-related conventions and biodiversity-related aspects of implementing the other Rio conventions. Use of this guidance would then be promoted through appropriate channels.

38. With respect to other possible actions, paragraphs 52 and 53 of [CBD/SBI/2/12](#) are concerned with possible development of a joint reporting template. It seems unlikely that this would get much traction, and it has not been included as an “option for action”; however, views on whether to address this or not would be welcomed. For example, should a document be developed reviewing what has been proposed and tested to date, recognizing that this has been pilot tested in two regions (Pacific and Caribbean), and additionally by projects supported by UNEP for the biodiversity-related conventions and by the Global Environment Facility for the Rio conventions?

IV. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

39. The previous sections outline a series of options for action for enhancing synergy on national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and Rio conventions. The ultimate aim is to increase the efficiency with which data, information and knowledge are used in supporting the implementation of all these conventions, and in associated reporting and review, including support for implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

40. Carrying out any or all these actions will have resource implications. In some cases, the actions proposed concern further review to explore the proposed options for action and develop a road map of possible activities. In many cases, the actions proposed require the involvement of other organizations. Most options for action involve reaching out to the secretariats of other conventions, and, ultimately, may require the support of the advisory and governance processes of these other conventions.

41. At the national level, resource implications will include strengthening national biodiversity data collection, data sharing and integration, as well as enhanced collaboration among focal points of the different conventions. In this the implications relate closely to resource implications for national reporting and review under the Convention, including use of indicators, and to actions already recommended with regard to collaboration (for example decision XIII/24). As previously indicated (see [CBD/SBI/3/11](#)), the investment in monitoring and review should be broader than the government entities responsible for implementation of the Convention and should include national statistical systems and national research institutions.

42. Because of the breadth of the options for action, the number of organizations potentially involved, and the implications for other intergovernmental conventions and processes, the resource implications have not yet been fully addressed. Resource implications will be considered following discussion by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation in preparation for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. While the proposed actions will potentially have some significant cost implications, the costs are expected to be relatively low in the context of implementing multiple conventions, and are expected to lead to increased cost-effectiveness in reporting and reviewing.
