



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/VIII/3
15 June 2006

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Eighth meeting
Curitiba, Brazil, 20-31 March 2006
Agenda item 16

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT ITS EIGHTH MEETING

VIII/3. Global Taxonomy Initiative: in-depth review of the implementation of the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative

The Conference of the Parties

1. *Welcomes* the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative, as reported in the note by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/11/5) on the in-depth review of the implementation of the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative;
2. *Notes with appreciation* the contributions to the Global Taxonomy Initiative made by BioNET-INTERNATIONAL, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, CABI International, the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS) and Species 2000 and *encourages* these organizations and initiatives to continue contributing to the implementation of the Convention;
3. *Notes* that some Parties and other Governments have made significant progress in implementing activities pursuant to the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative;
4. *Notes* that the taxonomic impediment is particularly serious in countries with mega-diversity;
5. *Emphasizes* the need to build and retain capacity to address the taxonomic impediment, and in this context, explore options to ensure the long-term sustainability of the necessary financial support, and *invites* BioNET-INTERNATIONAL and other relevant organizations, in consultation with the Coordination Mechanism for the Global Taxonomy Initiative, to establish a special fund for the Global Taxonomy Initiative, and to report on progress to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting;
6. *Recalling* target 1 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (“A widely accessible working list of known plant species, as a step towards a complete world flora”), *welcomes* the progress made by Species 2000, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and collaborating partners towards the achievement of this target;

7. *Adopts* as a target under operational objective 3 of the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative “A widely accessible checklist of known species, as a step towards a global register of plants, animals, microorganisms and other organisms”, bearing in mind the urgent need for timely provision of scientific names of organisms to support implementation of work under the Convention on Biological Diversity;

8. *Adopts* the planned activities to support implementation of the programmes of work on mountain biological diversity, invasive alien species, protected areas, and island biological diversity contained in the annex to this recommendation as complementary to the programme of work contained in the annex to decision VI/8;

9. *Urges* Parties and other Governments that have not done so to:

(a) Establish national focal points for the Global Taxonomy Initiative so that they can contribute to implementation of the programme of work at national level;

(b) Undertake or complete or update, as a matter of priority, national taxonomic needs assessments, including related technical, technological and capacity needs, and establish priorities for taxonomic work that take into account country-specific circumstances. These assessments should take into account ongoing national biodiversity strategies and action plans as well as regional strategies and initiatives under development, with particular regard to user needs and priorities;

(c) Contribute, as appropriate, to regional and global taxonomic needs assessments;

(d) Contribute, where possible, to the implementation of the planned activities contained in the programme of work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative;

(e) Contribute, as appropriate, to initiatives facilitating the digitization of information on specimens of natural history collections, noting the importance of accessible data to support actions under the Convention;

10. *Invites* Parties, other Governments, and relevant organizations and institutions to:

(a) Use and support existing mechanisms for strengthening collaboration and communication among government agencies, the scientific community, research institutions, universities, collection holders, the private sector and stakeholders in order to improve the response to taxonomic needs for decision-making;

(b) Promote taxonomy and taxonomic products and related research as a cornerstone for inventory and monitoring of biological diversity in the framework of the implementation of the Convention and to achieve its objectives;

(c) Develop and implement strategies to support the taxonomic research necessary to implement the Convention;

(d) Collect and disseminate information on the availability of taxonomic resources with a view to maximising the use of relevant existing resources for the effective implementation of the Global Taxonomy Initiative;

(e) Develop and implement capacity-building activities related to the Global Taxonomy Initiative, such as training in the areas of identification of taxa, information exchange and database management, taking into account national and region-specific needs;

(f) Mobilize financial and technical resources to assist developing countries, in particular least developed and small island developing States, and countries with economies in transition, including those with high levels of biodiversity, to build and maintain systems and significant institutional infrastructure in order to adequately obtain, collate and curate biological specimens as well as to facilitate information exchange, including repatriation of information, on their biodiversity;

(g) Promote cooperation and networking at national, regional, sub regional and global levels in support of capacity-building activities related to the Global Taxonomy Initiative, in accordance with Articles 18 and 15 of the Convention, by, *inter alia*, making information available through the clearing-house mechanism and other means;

(h) Provide, within the framework of the terms of reference contained in decision V/9, clear guidance to national focal points for the Global Taxonomy Initiative on duties and specific tasks to better communicate and promote the objectives of the Initiative, working in collaboration with other stakeholders and in accordance with country needs;

(i) Facilitate, as appropriate, the integration of taxonomic information on nationally held collections in regional and global databases and information systems;

11. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to:

(a) Consult with relevant organizations and funding agencies regarding the global taxonomic needs assessment called for in planned activity 3 of the programme of work for Global Taxonomy Initiative, in order to consider, *inter alia*, the scope of the assessment, options for methodology, and potential implementing agencies, with a view to completing the assessment as soon as possible, taking into account users' needs;

(b) Continue collaborating with relevant conventions, organizations and institutions, and to foster synergies between relevant processes and programmes, in order to make available taxonomic information, expertise and relevant technologies needed to achieve the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, noting in particular, taxonomic priorities at national, regional and global levels;

(c) Continue collaborating with existing initiatives, including the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the Integrated Taxonomic Information System and Species 2000, to develop the Electronic Catalogue of Names of Known Organisms and the Catalogue of Life;

(d) Continue collaborating with existing initiatives, including those of BioNET-INTERNATIONAL, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, IUCN, and CAB International, to develop the human capacities, tools and infrastructure needed to support implementation of the programme of work on the Global Taxonomy Initiative;

(e) Undertake, as part of the Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness programme and in collaboration with relevant partners, activities demonstrating the importance of taxonomy for the general public, including information on products, lessons learned, and accomplishments of taxonomy-related projects, and activities encouraging public participation, recognizing the importance of volunteer naturalists and local and indigenous people as a source of expertise;

(f) Develop, in consultation with the Coordination Mechanism of the Global Taxonomy Initiative, other relevant consultative bodies, stakeholders and organizations, for each of the planned activities of the programme of work on the Global Taxonomy Initiative, specific taxonomic, outcome-oriented deliverables to be considered as additions under "(ii) Outputs" with a timeline for possible consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting;

(g) Report to the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties on progress made towards the target for the programme of work as specified in paragraph 7 above;

(h) Include the Global Taxonomy Initiative in the joint work plan between the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Plant Protection Convention, with a view to exploring synergies in the work under the two conventions, with particular regard to invasive alien species;

(i) Facilitate networking and collaboration among national focal points for the Global Taxonomy Initiative through, *inter alia*, the Global Taxonomy Initiative portal;

(j) Complete and publish the Guide to the Global Taxonomy Initiative;

12. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility to continue to support the implementation of the planned activities contained in the programme of work on the Global Taxonomy Initiative, including taxonomic needs assessments, projects with a taxonomic focus or clearly identified taxonomic components, and regional activities on taxonomic capacity development and access to technology;

13. *Further requests* the Global Environment Facility to provide financial resources to developing countries, in particular the small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition, for projects which help to establish and operationalize their national focal points for the Global Taxonomy Initiative, as well as financial resources to support capacity-building activities such as, *inter alia*, taxonomic training related to specific taxa and information technologies;

14. *Requests* the secretariats of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility to conduct a joint analysis of funded GTI-related projects and relevant project information contained in national reports, including analysis of the resources directed specifically to capacity-building, with a view to extracting best practices and sharing information and experience in promoting financial support for the Initiative;

15. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to convene, with support from relevant organizations and donors, a project-development seminar aimed primarily for those countries that have already identified taxonomic needs or that have submitted proposals for pilot projects under the Global Taxonomy Initiative, to promote formulation of country-driven projects based on identified taxonomic needs and to explore potential benefits of developing new, and enhancing existing, regional or global projects to address common taxonomic needs that have already been identified.

Annex

ADDITIONAL PLANNED ACTIVITIES

I. PLANNED ACTIVITY: MOUNTAIN BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

(i) *Rationale*

1. The taxonomic composition of mountain biodiversity varies with the biogeographic region, the latitude and the altitude of the mountain as well as with the relief. In some cases, mountains provide a necessary seasonal resource for organisms at other times found in lowland biomes. Furthermore most groups of organisms have representatives in the lowland as well as in montane region, and so a vast range of groups of organisms is encountered rather than a few taxonomic groups. Consequently, montane regions are often hot spots of biodiversity, which renders their full taxonomic treatment a challenge and requires many actors and experts for different organisms.

2. As most mountain ranges extend over considerable length and area, a regional approach to mountain biodiversity is of paramount importance, and relevant information is available in many different databases and inventories. Therefore, the Global Taxonomy Initiative can contribute to the mountain biodiversity programme of work in several ways, including collating relevant information and expertise.

(ii) *Outputs*

3. An increased knowledge of the species composition of mountains through national taxonomic studies and inventories. The Global Taxonomy Initiative could aid the programme of work on mountain biological diversity through:

(a) *Working lists of organisms* - assembling working lists of organisms occurring in montane areas including their vernacular names, with reference to altitude and relief;

(b) *Working identification keys* – producing identification keys in printed and electronic form useful for the conservation, monitoring and sustainable use of organisms in montane areas;

(c) *Dissemination of data* – distributing the working lists and keys as widely as possible to increase their usefulness;

(d) *Human resources* – address and support taxonomic experts to encourage their participation in relevant training programmes, and supporting the establishment of local reference and data collections of montane biota;

(e) *Hot spots and protected areas* – providing relevant taxonomic information, infrastructure and human resources to identify hot spots of mountain biodiversity and to establish and monitor protected areas.

(iii) *Timing*

4. As current knowledge of mountain biodiversity is still inadequate, the Global Taxonomy Initiative will make an ongoing effort to develop and improve working lists and working identification keys for montane organisms. Within the next three years, it will attempt to develop taxonomic guides, computerized lists of montane organisms, and identification keys in consultation with appropriate national taxonomy and management agencies.

(iv) *Actors*

5. The mountain biodiversity programme of work identified many relevant actors, such as Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) of DIVERSITAS, Mountain Partnership, Mountain Forum, BioNET-INTERNATIONAL (to organize regional LOOPs), the FAO for agricultural aspects, the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and national funding bodies for financial support, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) (for plants), national organizations, nature conservation agencies and programmes including relevant non-governmental organizations, local communities, and many others.

6. The scientific community with past and current research programmes on mountain biodiversity and the natural history museums with specimens collected over decades hold a key role in providing the expertise and relevant information and should actively be included.

(v) *Mechanisms*

7. Existing mechanisms, such as the clearing-house mechanism and Coordination Mechanism of the Global Taxonomy Initiative, Mountain Partnership, and Mountain Forum, and GBIF could be used to coordinate and promote the efforts.

(vi) *Financial, human resources and other capacity requirements*

8. Financial, human resource and capacity building require funds to be identified within existing and new projects, as well as additional resources to be made available to increase technical capacity in developing countries.

(vii) *Pilot projects*

9. Pilot projects could be built on information for a number of montane regions of the world, such as the Alps, the Andes, the Himalayas, the Eastern Arc to produce the outputs in short term and to evaluate their usefulness. The Global Taxonomy Initiative could address, *inter alia*, the needs of local and regional capacity-building by coordinating workshops in collaboration with mountain partnership, Mountain Forum and DIVERSITAS, focussing on mountain biodiversity conservation and monitoring.

II. PLANNED ACTIVITY: INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

(i) *Rationale*

10. Prevention and mitigation of the impacts of invasive alien species often relies on timely access to taxonomic expertise, and to taxonomic resources such as identification tools, information on species names, and biological reference collections. For many pathways of introductions for invasive alien species, effective prevention and mitigation may depend on detection and monitoring activities that are undertaken at subregional, regional or even global levels. Consequently, taxonomic capacities and information need to be accessible to all countries in order to support effective prevention and mitigation of potential impacts of invasive alien species. Better characterization of species through research can be key to prediction, early detection and monitoring of invasions. Better baseline taxonomic information on biological diversity in areas that are exposed or vulnerable to key invasion pathways (e.g., marine ports) can facilitate early detection of changes in species composition that may result from invasive alien species. In addition, taxonomic expertise can be important in the development of biological control measures which may be considered by decision-makers for addressing invasive alien species in particular cases.

(ii) *Outputs*

11. Outputs should comprise:

(a) Databases of invasive alien species and occurrences of invasions, developed and/or expanded, and made widely available;

(b) Working identification keys for known invasive alien species associated with key invasion pathways produced and disseminated;

(c) Working lists of organisms in areas that are exposed or susceptible to key invasion pathways produced and utilized by local monitoring authorities.

(iii) *Timing*

12. Databases further developed and/or expanded and made widely available within two years. Working identification keys for known invasive alien species produced and disseminated within three years. Working lists of organisms in areas that are exposed or susceptible to key invasion pathways produced and utilized within three years.

(iv) *Actors*

13. Database development – IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Invasive Species Specialist Group, Global Invasive Species Information Network, clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, ITIS, IABIN, GBIF, Species 2000, BioNET-INTERNATIONAL. Identification keys – scientific community, national Governments, natural history museums and programmes. Working lists of organisms in areas that are exposed or susceptible to key invasion pathways – national governments, national and regional organizations including non-governmental organizations.

(v) *Mechanisms*

14. Coordinated efforts at the national and global levels by the actors identified above will be an important mechanism. In addition, existing mechanisms, such as the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention and the GBIF can function as information portals.

(vi) *Financial and human resources and other capacity requirements*

15. Financial, human-resource and capacity building require resources to be identified within existing and new projects, as well as additional resources to be made available to increase technical capacity in developing countries. GEF and national funding organizations would be important sources of financial support.

III. PLANNED ACTIVITY: PROTECTED AREAS

(i) *Rationale*

16. Taxonomic expertise and information constitute key requirements for conservation planning and sustainable natural resource management. This is especially true in the case of protected areas, which are established with the goal to conserve a significant part of natural biodiversity, but usually based on limited knowledge or available information about the biodiversity they actually contain. With no complete species inventory currently available for any existing or planned larger protected area and relevant taxonomic, distributional and biological information about many taxa with high conservation value still missing, it will be difficult to achieve meaningful conservation planning. The objective of the programme of work on protected areas is to support the establishment of ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas. Activity 1.1.2 of the programme of work specifically calls for establishing protected areas in any large, intact or highly irreplaceable natural areas, as well as areas securing the most threatened species, and activity 1.1.5 requests that gap analyses at national and regional levels of the representativeness of the protected area system be undertaken (by 2006). The Global Taxonomy Initiative could play an important role particularly for the identification, establishment and management of protected areas (decision VII/28, annex, programme element 1) through focusing on biodiversity inventories and gap analysis of existing inventories, and in the development of standards for managing and monitoring protected areas (decision VII/28, annex, programme element 4) through facilitating assessments and comparisons of different taxonomic components of biodiversity covered and sustained through the existing network of protected areas. In light of threats to protected areas through climate change and invasive alien species, it is important to understand current constraints on species and populations, and how these would determine distribution under changing conditions. Access to accurate information on current distributions and ability to model these is important for appropriate management and policy development.

(ii) Outputs

17. Improved and augmented biodiversity inventories of protected areas of all kinds, also to be expanded into monitoring efforts to record changes of species and populations over time. Taxonomic guides for key invertebrate organisms, lower plants and microorganisms, economically important and threatened species. Information on current distribution and occurrence of important species in protected areas, including population trends. Identification of habitats and priority setting for establishing new protected areas, through plotting distributions of species at local, national and regional levels. Mobilization and augmentation of specimen and observational-level data pertaining to species to allow modelling of current distributions and distributions under different models of climate change and of other biotic and a biotic changes (e.g. land-use change, invasive species).

(iii) Timing

18. The target date for activity 1.1.5, on conducting gap analysis is 2006. The target date for goal 4.3 (to assess and monitor protected area status and trends) and goal 4.4 (to ensure that scientific knowledge contributes to the establishment and effectiveness of protected areas) of the programme of work is 2010. Hence, outputs need to be produced within the next four years, but efforts will need to be ongoing.

(iv) Actors

19. National agencies and local authorities concerned with protected area administration and management in concert with taxonomic institutions, especially natural history museums, biosystematics units at universities and other research institutions, botanic gardens and culture collections, and the IUCN Species Survival Commission, together with nature conservation agencies including international non-governmental organizations such as Conservation International, BirdLife International, Flora and Fauna International, WWF, the World Resources Institute (WRI), and local communities. Parataxonomists could also play an important role. Other actors include the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention and GBIF (as data portals), GEF and national funding organizations for financial support, and BioNET-INTERNATIONAL (to organize regional LOOPs). Other biodiversity conventions, including the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) biosphere reserve programme could also play an important role. Direct linkages to relevant ongoing or planned taxonomy-related, capacity building projects should also be implemented, e.g., the International Pollinator Initiative (IPI), the Census of Marine Life (CoML), the Botanical/Zoological Network for Eastern Africa, the Partnerships of Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy (PEET), and the recently proposed European Distributed Institute for Taxonomy (EDIT).

(v) Mechanisms

20. Coordinated effort at national and global levels by the actors identified above will be an important mechanism. Mobilization of extant data and their presentation in an appropriate manner, with the development of the analytical tools, is required. The need for identification keys, inventories and primary data must be communicated effectively to the key agencies and funding bodies, with an indication of priority.

(vi) Financial, human resources and other capacity requirements

21. Insofar as the requirements need a focus cutting across traditional work processes and patterns of the data providers, funding will be required that is focussed at meeting the identified needs.

(vii) *Pilot projects*

22. Stimulate and undertake efforts to carry out All-Taxon Biodiversity Inventories (ATBIs) in existing or planned protected areas. Gap analyses of representative taxa found in protected areas, in the context of the distribution and presence of those taxa at other sites nationally and regionally, demonstrating the development and use of such analyses in protected area selection and management. Mobilization of primary occurrence data of species in a protected area, provision of these data to country of origin, and analysis of distributions using a niche modelling system.

IV. ISLAND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

23. As noted in SBSTTA recommendation X/1, paragraph 6, islands incorporate all the thematic areas (coastal and marine biological diversity, forest biological diversity, inland water biological diversity, dry and sub humid land biological diversity, mountain biological diversity and agricultural al biological diversity) considered under the Convention. Thus, the planned activities already identified under operational objectives 4 (on thematic programmes of work) and 5 (relating to work on cross-cutting issues) in the GTI programme of work (decision VI/8, annex, planned activities 8-18) already identified for thematic and cross cutting programmes of work could also be considered to generate taxonomic information needed for the conservation of island biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from its use.

However, recognizing the current alarming rate of loss of island biological diversity in both biodiversity 'hot' and 'cool' spots; that due to their isolation, island environments are witnessing a unique evolution of often endemic and characteristic flora and fauna; that islands are microcosms of their continental counterparts; that vulnerability of small islands require not only special but urgent attention, special support is needed to islands, in particular small islands, to implement, as a matter of urgency, the planned activities 8 to 18 of the GTI programme of work. In addition, for small islands in particular, regional approaches to meeting taxonomic needs and building capacity should be emphasized.
