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A Guide For Countries Preparing

Third National Reports to the Convention on Biological Diversity

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I: THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines have been developed under the UNDP/GEF Global Project “National Reporting to the CBD: Supporting countries to prepare the Third National Report on Biodiversity” with the assistance of the United Nations University (UNU) Institute of Advanced Studies. Successive drafts have benefited from the review and inputs provided by the GEF Secretariat, the CBD Secretariat and UNDP.

Experience from earlier rounds of GEF funded Biodiversity Enabling Activities, as well as experience in other focal areas, has demonstrated that in addition to financial support, substantive technical support is also needed by countries in meeting convention related obligations. Therefore, in addition to the financial support made available by the GEF to assist countries (see GEF Operational Guidelines in Annex 5), these guidelines aim to provide substantive assistance to countries.

These guidelines have been prepared to help countries with the preparation of the third round of national reports called for under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). They are designed to assist all those agencies, institutions and individuals within a country whose participation and input are needed in order to prepare the third national report in the way envisaged by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD.

As Parties are being asked to report on the steps they have taken to implement the Convention and the effectiveness of these measures, those involved in the preparation of the report will need to be familiar with the objectives and provisions of the Convention and the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, as well as with the CBD Strategic Plan and the 2010 biodiversity targets, since these are the source of the commitments Parties have agreed to and specify the actions they are expected to have taken.

All participants in the reporting process should, if not already familiar with these commitments, be able to access the relevant documentation. Annex 2 provides guidance on how to obtain further information needed. As will be explained below, preparation of the national reports should be a collective process involving representatives of all sectors, organizations and communities who have a part to play in meeting the objectives of the Convention. It is important therefore that all participants are provided with relevant documentation or information on how to obtain it.

These guidelines are part of the background material and should be made available to all participants at the start of the process.

II: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE THIRD NATIONAL REPORTS TO THE CBD

A: Why does my country need to prepare a national report to the CBD?

- Your country is a Contracting Party to the CBD (this means that it has ratified the Convention and agreed to implement its provisions)
- Article 26 of the Convention stipulates that “*Each Contracting Party shall, at intervals to be determined by the Conference of the Parties, present to the Conference of the Parties, reports on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the provisions of this Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this Convention*”.
- At its most recent meeting (COP-7 in February 2004), the COP called for Parties to submit their third national reports and agreed the format, priority information to be included, the deadline for submission and other aspects of these reports (decision VII/25) (see Annex 4)

B: Is the reporting process a formality, an obligation that represents additional work for the country without any corresponding benefit?

No, the reporting process is essential to the proper functioning of the Convention and, when properly carried out, will provide substantial benefits both to the Convention as a whole and to the country concerned. Here are some of the reasons why:

- The Convention is essentially a framework for **national action**. Parties will implement its provisions in accordance with their individual national capacities, circumstances and institutional frameworks.
- **Without a system of national reporting** and access to the information contained in the reports, the Conference of the Parties has **no way of evaluating the state of implementation** of the Convention. It will be unable to identify common problems encountered by Parties, lessons learned that can be made more widely available, or priority issues that need to be addressed by the Convention. The COP has noted that delays in the submission of national reports by Parties may pose difficulties ‘to the assessment of the implementation of the Convention in the absence of an adequate number of national reports’ (decision VII/25).

It is important to bear in mind that the basis for national reporting lies in Article 26 of the Convention. This requires Parties to report on the **measures taken for implementation of the Convention and their effectiveness**. In other words, the focus of the reporting is national implementation and not, for example, information about the biological diversity

of the country.¹ As noted below, the preparation of the national report entails undertaking an assessment of the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CBD. These are important activities in themselves, and should not be regarded simply as tasks required to meet the reporting obligation. The exercise constitutes a stocktaking and assessment of national efforts for the implementation of the three objectives of the CBD and, if properly carried out, will contribute to better biodiversity planning at the national level.

The reporting format has been designed to assist the Secretariat to analyze and synthesize the information as efficiently and comprehensively as possible in order to provide the COP with the information about the state of national implementation that it needs. Ideally the synthesis should be based on a complete set of reports. The greater the number of countries that fail to report, the greater the likelihood that the synthesis will be unreliable or distorted, thereby failing to provide the COP with a secure basis on which to make its decisions. In fact, the danger is that it will be precisely those countries who are encountering most difficulties with implementation of the Convention that will fail to report, thereby preventing the COP from identifying what the problems are and seeking appropriate solutions.

For the country, the process of preparing the national report can bring two major benefits:

- Because the reporting format is comprehensive and designed to provide information about every aspect of implementation, the process of reporting will oblige those responsible for national implementation of the Convention to analyse all these aspects. Those concerned with biodiversity and implementation of the Convention can thereby gain an overall picture of national implementation and identify where the country is on course, as well as gaps and areas of weakness;
- The process of developing the report is intended by the COP to be fully inclusive, involving all those bodies and institutions – governmental or non-governmental – that have an interest or a role to play in implementation of the Convention. The reporting process thus helps to disseminate information among all stakeholders about the objectives and provisions of the Convention, to identify tasks and allocate responsibilities, and to build the familiarity, trust and procedures among the participants of this network that will be essential if the provisions of the Convention are to be implemented in the country as envisaged.

It is often a surprise to countries to learn that their national reports to the CBD are widely consulted via the Convention website. The CBD Secretariat developed an electronic ‘Analyzer’ for the second national reports, enabling the extraction of data from the reports of sets of countries into analytical tables and charts. It is thus possible to generate an instant analysis of, for example, the information given by all Central American Parties about issues relating to alien species or identify the percentage of least developed

¹ Except where such information is explicitly asked for (as in section B of the format) or to the extent that reporting on the effectiveness of the measures taken will involve giving information on the status and trends of biological diversity, or specific components, as a consequence of the measures taken.

countries who reported that the level of available financial resources was limiting or severely limiting their ability to implement the Convention. This tool is extensively used by agencies and individuals concerned with implementation of the Convention or with identifying areas where Parties need support and capacity building.

C: Is the task simply to complete the reporting format that we have received from the CBD Secretariat?

This is true to the extent that reporting has to be done using the common format and that this format involves answering a series of multiple choice questions and then providing additional information and commentaries.

However a considered and realistic answer to any single question will require a collective process of review and evaluation by all the actors involved in the particular issue. These could include: government agencies; scientific, business or community organizations; educational bodies; indigenous and traditional communities; farmers', fishers', or women's organizations; research institutions; campaigning and advocacy groups; and others. Furthermore, each question is likely to need a different combination of these actors working together to reach a frank and realistic assessment of the national picture. These are not simple tasks and will require consultation and consideration.

The COP recognizes this, which is why it has again requested the financial mechanism of the Convention, operated by the GEF, to 'provide the necessary financial support for the preparation of the third national reports by Parties'².

It is important to emphasize however that the task will not be solved simply by obtaining access to GEF funds through GEF Implementing Agencies³; but rather by applying these resources to a well-organized process of preparation of the report, based on the inclusion of all stakeholders.

Furthermore, a well-organized process will involve not just the identification and inclusion of all stakeholders, but also the use of all existing relevant data, the identification of gaps in the information available to respond fully and accurately to the questions in the reporting format, and the identification of gaps and inconsistencies in the national implementation of the different provisions of the CBD and decisions of the COP.

Above all, the reporting process presents a country with the opportunity to collectively examine its overall performance in implementation. A collective multi-stakeholder process can provide the opportunity and framework for tackling pending issues, for example the consideration and identification of the set of national goals and targets called for in decision VII/30 (see Annex 7).

² Decision VII/20

³ The GEF Implementing Agencies are UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. Any reference to UNDP in this document should be taken to apply to all three Implementing Agencies.

So the first of the two most important recommendations⁴ to be made is this: **the report should not be the product of a single source, whether this is the National Focal Point, a single government agency or a consultant; it must be the fruit of a broad-based collective assessment.**

Of course a single agency may have the responsibility for coordinating the process and for ensuring that the final report is submitted to the CBD Secretariat, but its role should be one of facilitation and support rather than one of direction or centralization.

D: If we provide objective answers, including indicating where our country has been unable to implement the specific actions requested by COP, does our country run the risks of being compared unfavourably to others or of being criticised or of having technical or financial support withdrawn?

No, quite the opposite! Firstly, within the CBD there is no intention to compare one country's performance with another or of ranking countries in a league table, nor is there any mechanism for doing so.

Secondly, although the provisions of the Convention are implemented nationally, meeting the overall objectives of the Convention is a global concern and a collective responsibility. It is only possible to decide priorities, identify common issues and problems, share information and experience, and develop strategies to better support countries that need assistance if the COP has an accurate picture of the challenges countries are facing and their real-life experiences of attempting to implement the Convention.

Finally, a frank assessment of what a country has and has not been able to fully implement will provide all those involved in implementing the CBD with an accurate picture of the state of implementation in their country that will enable them to agree priorities and plan better. In most cases this will help make best use of scarce resources.

The second of the two most important recommendations is therefore: **be frank and objective.** This will be taken by the COP, the Secretariat, other Parties, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations and others with a mandate to assist as a sign that your country is able to construct an overall picture of its implementation of the Convention and identify the challenges it faces and the assistance it needs.

It is always easier to assist those who are able to articulate their needs on the basis of a thorough and objective analysis involving everyone who needs to be involved, than to try to help those who do not have an overall picture, who cannot identify priorities or who avoid addressing the difficult issues.

Many countries find that the reporting requirement acts as an incentive and a helpful framework for assessing the bigger picture.

⁴ See 'The final word' (page 20) for a summary of the recommendations in this Guide.

E: What categories of information is the COP looking for in these reports and what is the rationale behind the reporting format?

The COP is looking for the following information about the status of your country's implementation of the Convention, organised as follows:

In **section A** of the format:

- Information on the **person with responsibility** for preparing and submitting the national report; and
- **Crucially**, information on the **stakeholders involved** and the supporting material used.

In **section B**:

- Overall information about the **priority your country gives** to the implementation of various articles, provisions and relevant programmes of the work of the Convention. (It is accepted that few countries will give equal priority to implementation of all aspects of the Convention. Depending on national circumstances, some provisions and programmes will be more relevant than others and some may not be at all relevant (for example, the programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity in the case of a landlocked country). The important point to bear in mind is that the reporting process represent an opportunity to decide or reaffirm what national priorities are. If the country has completed its national biodiversity strategy and action plan, this will already have been done; the report will therefore be an opportunity to reaffirm or modify these priorities. If the NBSAP has not been completed, then this can be the moment to advance on both fronts simultaneously. The same argument applies to any priorities previously identified as part of a National Environmental Action plan or similar);
- Overall information about the **challenges and obstacles** to the implementation of the Convention that your country feels it faces. (The COP, and the reporting format, recognize that many countries face, often formidable, challenges and obstacles to implementation. It is important that the COP can identify what these are in order to take whatever appropriate measures it can. For example, remedies for a lack of scientific understanding or appropriate management options can be sought through requests to subsidiary bodies to undertake assessments and provide appropriate advice. A pervasive lack of human, institutional or financial resources will provide an argument for increasing capacity building measures and the availability of financial support. On the other hand, challenges and obstacles such as a lack of political will, resistance on the part of other sectors to mainstreaming biodiversity management, or the need for greater public understanding of the goods and services provided by biodiversity are essentially problems that need to be addressed at the national level. Section 3 of Annex 6 contains the list of obstacles to the implementation of the Convention identified

by the COP in the Strategic Plan (decision VI/26). By making use of this list in the national report, countries can help the COP validate the categories and identify further categories of obstacles, should this be the case) ;

- The progress your country has made in developing and achieving **national goals and targets** to support the global goals and targets of the Convention's Strategic Plan and the 2010 Biodiversity Target (see Annex 6);
- The progress your country has made in developing and achieving **national goals and targets** to support the global goals and targets for each of the focal areas (see Annex 7);
- The extent to which your country has developed national targets within the framework of the **Global Strategy for Plant Conservation** (Annex 8);
- The extent to which your country is **applying the ecosystem approach** as the primary framework for implementation of the Convention (see Annex 9).

In section C:

- How your country is **implementing** the decisions of the COP relating to the provisions of **each of the main articles of the Convention** (article 5 to 20), including decisions relating to issues that have emerged since the entry into force of the Convention – for example biodiversity and climate change, or genetic use restriction technologies (GURTS – see glossary).

In section D:

- How your country is **implementing the thematic programmes of work** of the Convention (marine and coastal biodiversity, agricultural biodiversity, forest biodiversity, inland waters biodiversity, dry and sub-humid lands and mountain biodiversity). (This is the opportunity to consider the development of national goals and targets (see Annex 7).

In section E:

- Information about the experience of your country in **participating in the operations of the Convention**. (This is a broad category that can cover any aspect of your country's participation in the Convention and you should feel free to cover any aspect that you consider relevant. For example:
 - What are your country's experiences of participating in meetings under the Convention?
 - Has it been able to participate in all relevant meetings?
 - Has it received support from the Convention's Trust Fund for travel and subsistence expenses?
 - Has it been able to send a delegation of the size it would ideally like?

- Has all the information necessary for effective participation in meetings or for national implementation been received from the Secretariat and effectively circulated to stakeholders within the country?
- Does your country have views on the operations of the COP or its subsidiary bodies (e.g. SBSTTA)?
- Has your country participated in regional preparatory meetings and, if so, were these useful?
- Has your country participated in any forms of regional or sub-regional cooperation for implementation of the Convention?
- Has your country undertaken activities aimed at promoting synergies between its activities to implement this Convention and other related conventions to which it belongs?
- Other questions that your country considers relevant.

In section F:

- Views your country may have on the **reporting format**.

This section is designed to elicit the views of countries on the reporting format itself. The reporting format is the result of the experiences of the first two rounds of reports, which were learning processes for all involved (COP, the Secretariat, the Parties themselves and the many categories of users of these reports):

- In the **first round of reporting** (1997-1998), the COP asked Parties to provide information on their implementation of Article 6 of the Convention, including information on their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). There was no prescribed format;
- The result was a set of reports of varying lengths (ranging from 6 to 300 pages), containing different sets of information in different formats. It proved very difficult to extract information and prepare a synthesis of the information and key points on which the COP could base its decision making.
- In order to improve the ability of the reporting process to generate useful information capable of being synthesised, the COP agreed a specific format for the **second reports** (due in 2001). This was the current multiple choice format with questions covering all the obligations on Parties deriving from the text of the Convention and from all those recommendations and decisions which identified action to be taken by Parties.
- The format was designed to allow countries to indicate why particular issues may not be a high priority or where any lack of action should be attributed to a lack of resources and not a lack of will. After each set of questions, space was provided for explanation in further detail or other comments the country might have.
- The experience of the second reports revealed the format to have many benefits, allowing (as noted above) both the country to construct an overall picture of its

implementation and the COP to gain a more accurate and useful picture of the situation overall, by issue or by groups of countries.

- However the COP acknowledged that the second reporting round was not wholly satisfactory: the submission rate was unsatisfactory; there was a need to strengthen the capacities of developing country Parties for monitoring, information and data collection, processing and management, which provide a fundamental basis for preparing their national reports; there was a need to ensure timely access by eligible countries to financial resources provided by the GEF, including by exploring new ways to facilitate the preparation of future national reports by Parties.
- There were concerns about the adequacy of information: some countries provided little or no additional information in the spaces provided. It was also apparent that the reports of some countries had been prepared by a single official or within a single agency and were not the product of the multi-stakeholder consultative process that had been recommended.⁵
- The format for the **third national reports** contains some significant improvements: first, questions of a merely administrative nature have been removed.⁶ In addition, many questions have been consolidated and redesigned in order to solicit more substantive information from Parties. To address the inadequacy of information, more requests for additional information have been added. Second, the questions have been designed in a simpler way and the optional answers provided have been more carefully designed, limiting room for different interpretation. Thirdly, and most importantly, the reporting format has been designed to allow Parties to elaborate on the impacts of their actions as well as their links with progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans, achieving the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention as well as the 2010 target. The reporting format also invites Parties to report on the status and trends of various components of biodiversity and to identify the obstacles encountered in implementation.
- COP-8 will consider revisions to the national reporting process, and the Working Group on Review of Implementation has recommended a series of specific changes. These are contained in Annex 10.
- Countries may therefore wish to comment on both the experience of using the present format and on the proposed changes.

⁵ All national reports received by the Secretariat (first, second, third and thematic reports) are available on the Convention website (<http://www.biodiv.org/convention/default.shtml>, then click on ‘National Reports’). Those preparing the national report may wish to look at reports from neighbouring countries, countries facing similar issues in implementation of the Convention or others for examples of how to prepare the report and the procedures that have been adopted in other countries.

⁶ Since they provide little information useful to the COP for assessing implementation of the Convention.

III: SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO APPROACH THE PREPARATION OF THE THIRD NATIONAL REPORT

The way a country approaches the preparation of the third national report will vary according to the specific characteristics of the country. Factors that can influence the design include:

- whether or not there is already an active multi-stakeholder CBD network in existence and, if so, its existing structures, operating procedures and calendars of meetings;
- existing forums for dialogue among the different actors and their levels of mutual familiarity and comfort;
- national cultural traditions and practices regarding meetings, dissemination of information, and promotion of dialogue;
- the size of the country and the logistics of bringing people together for meetings;
- telecommunications infrastructure – whether business can be effectively done by email or telephone conferencing; the level of available resources; levels of access to relevant information;
- national language(s) and the need for translation of material.

The list is potentially endless and each country will need to assess how best to carry out the reporting process in accordance with its own circumstances and resources.

Nevertheless, some general recommendations on how to approach the preparation of the report will be helpful regardless of the specificities of national circumstances.

Getting started

The notification of the requirement to submit the third national report and a copy of the reporting format will have been sent to the National Focal Point by the Secretariat in July 2004. (All National Focal Points are listed on the Convention website).

The National Focal Point should decide who will have overall responsibility for coordinating the preparation of the national report and its submission. In some countries this may be the National Focal Point her/himself, in other case s/he may indicate another person or agency. Section A of the format requires the country to identify both the National Focal Point and the person responsible for preparation of the report.

Ideally, in keeping with the spirit of the recommendation of COP, the person responsible should be assisted by a steering group involving representatives of other agencies and sectors, preferably with prior knowledge of the Convention and the reporting process.

It is important that this steering committee is composed not just of members from a single agency. It is preferable that it is not composed solely of government participants. Nor should it be made up solely of people easily reached because they are in the capital. To the extent possible the steering committee should include representatives of all sectors. What these sectors might be will depend on national circumstances, but could include research and academic bodies, relevant private sector bodies, indigenous and local community organizations, bodies representing the agricultural, forestry, fishing or other sectors, environmental management bodies, non-governmental organizations, women's organizations, bodies and agencies addressing sustainable development and poverty eradication, and others. Again the list is potentially long and each country's list will be different.

This question is developed further in the section 'Identifying participants' below. One important factor to bear in mind, however, is that potential participants should not be conceived of as coming solely from sectors traditionally identified with natural resource management questions (e.g. agriculture, forestry or fisheries). Effort should also be directed towards identifying and involving all those other sectors whose activities impact directly or indirectly on biodiversity. These can include the planning, finance, transport, construction, health or educational sectors, as well as many others.

The first essential task is thus to identify a small but representative group able to manage the process on behalf of the wider universe of biodiversity stakeholders.

Steering committee

The first tasks of this steering committee, once constituted, are to:

- Identify the relevant organizations who need to be involved in responding to each section of the reporting format;
- To consider a preliminary calendar and set of milestones, based on an estimation of the successive stages of developing the report, the methodology to be adopted (face-to-face meetings, circulation of views by email, telephone conferences, etc.), resources available, and planned deadline for completion of the report;
- To invite the organizations identified to participate, at the same time providing them with relevant information, including the reporting format and these guidelines (after having any necessary translations made), and inviting them to review the preliminary calendar and set of milestones;
- Convene a first general meeting or consultation.

Let us look at these tasks in detail:

Identifying participants

The steering committee should go through each block of issues in the format asking the question: ‘who needs to be involved in answering this?’

For example, the conclusion might be that in the case of the section on agricultural biodiversity (questions 161 to 173 and boxes LXV and LXVI) the following range of stakeholders needs to be involved: representatives of the ministry of environment, ministry of agriculture, government agricultural research bodies, government agricultural extension agencies, agricultural colleges or training establishments, the national focal point for FAO-related matters, the national focal point for the International Convention on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, representatives of the agrobiotechnology industry, university or other research bodies, associations of peasants or small farmers, agribusiness associations, indigenous and local community associations, agricultural economists, germplasm and seed bank managers, specialist non-governmental organizations, associations of bee-keepers or other sectors with concerns relating to pollinators, plant and animal breeding bodies, the CBD national focal point for ABS (access to genetic resources and benefit sharing) matters.

To take two other examples: the questions on taxonomy (24 to 32) should involve relevant museum and university bodies, zoological and botanical gardens, herbaria and arboreta, probably the ministries of education and science and technology, professional associations (the national association of biology, botany, zoology or similar) and others; the questions on public education and awareness (91 to 100 and box LII) should involve the ministries of environment and education, media organizations, associations of teachers and educational establishments, non-governmental organizations and others.

The first task therefore is to map the relevant stakeholders by proceeding through the format and identifying who needs to be brought in to the consideration of each substantive block of questions.

Developing a calendar and milestones

As stated above, the complexity of the process will vary from country to country. The smaller the country and the more developed its existing CBD-related network, the easier the task is likely to be. Conversely, the larger the country or the less familiarity and mutual understanding the actors have, the greater the investment of time and levels of consultation that will be needed.

A simple methodology would include the following stages:

- Identify actors and invite them to participate

- Propose methodology and milestones
- Hold an initial national meeting or consultation to agree methodology and timetables. Having identified the set of stakeholders that should participate in preparing the answers for each block of questions, this methodology could then involve establishing a series of working groups for each issue. This can be as formal or informal as the participants in each are happy with (resources allowing).
- The important thing is that arrangements are found that allow discussions on each issue to flow freely, that participants in each sub-group can contribute their views and that a mechanism is identified for gathering these views and formulating consensus positions. This can be done through physical meetings of the working group or by mail or email. There will probably need to be a convenor for each sub-group who will report back to the steering committee.
- The intention is to arrive at answers that reflect the views of all participants in the group, and draft text or boxes that reflect an analysis and point of view that all can agree with. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, the matter should be referred back to the second national meeting or consultation (see below); however the fact that diverging views were held can still be recorded in the text box as appropriate.
- When all the sub-groups, working concurrently, have completed their sections, these should all be brought together by the steering committee into a full draft report which should then be circulated to all participants.
- If everyone is in agreement, then the task is complete. More likely however is that there will be outstanding issues and differences of view. It will then be appropriate to reconvene a national meeting or consultation to address the outstanding issues and arrive at a consensus final draft. As noted above, if this proves ultimately impossible then the different views can be recorded in the body of the report.
- The report can then be prepared for submission to the CBD Secretariat.
- It is important that the steering committee propose a realistic timetable for these milestones, allowing sufficient time to allow for unforeseen questions that may slow down the consultation process, whilst remaining attentive to the need to submit the national report as soon as practicable.

Bringing potential participants into the process

Having undertaken the mapping exercise and the draft calendar and methodology, the steering committee should then contact all those organizations and potential actors identified through the mapping process. It should explain the background to the third

national reports under the CBD, provide copies of the format and these guidelines (translated if necessary) and the steering committee's initial estimation of the steps, milestones and operating framework. It should invite the recipients to participate and to respond with their initial views on the composition of the different thematic sub-groups, methodology and timing.

Having received and considered these views, the steering committee should then decide whether a national meeting or consultation is needed, or whether the activities can proceed straight away to getting the thematic sub-groups up and running. It is likely that an initial national meeting or consultation will be felt to be useful. If the decision is made to move directly to the work of the sub-groups, a clear and transparent explanation of who should participate in each needs to be given by the steering committee to all participants.

These allocations of membership should reflect the views received and not be based wholly on the steering committee's initial mapping exercise. Similarly it would be advisable to allow an 'open-door' policy under which any organization who can justify its interest in the issue in question is able to contribute to the discussions of the sub-group. The steering committee will need to be proactive on this point. It should use all existing channels, and actively identify new channels, to invite broad participation. How this is to be done will depend to a large extent on the specific circumstances, traditions and means of communication of each country. These could include holding public meetings and announcing these in newspapers or by radio or television, inviting key sectors and organizations to distribute information and calls for input to their members, posting information on a steering committee or other agency website and emailing all contacts. The decision of the steering committee to be pro-active in inviting participation will be the most important factor.

The decisions on the financial resources available and the possibilities for meeting any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by organizations taking part are ones the steering committee will need to take on the basis of available funds. Given that in all cases dealing with the issue under review forms part of the institutional mission and mandate of the institutions involved, reimbursement of such expenses would not normally be justified. However there may be justifiable exceptions, for example in the case of participating indigenous and community organizations. If national or sub-group meetings are convened which involve participants in meeting travel and subsistence costs, then it would be normal for the project to meet these in the case of participants without internal resources.

All of these decisions are of course decisions that will be taken at the national level, by the national focal point and/or the steering committee, perhaps in consultation with UNDP or another GEF Implementing Agency, and in accordance with national practice and resources.

Answering the questions

There is a standard set of options for the majority of the questions. There are usually four options reflecting the level of implementation of the matter in question – a) ‘no’, b) ‘no, but ...’, c) ‘yes, some/many ...’, and d) ‘yes, comprehensive ...’ or variations on these categories.

As can be seen these are options for answers at a very high level of generalization. As explained, these can be analyzed electronically and allow the construction of very helpful statistical analyses. They do not however permit the capture of the detail behind each answer or allow the transmission of the particular circumstances, advances and obstacles that each country will be able to explain.

For this reason the boxes for additional text are an essential part of the reporting format. As previously noted, these were felt to be inadequately used in the second national reports, thereby hindering a more complete understanding of how implementation of the Convention is proceeding.

As previously noted, if a detailed explanation of the circumstances and experiences that lie behind the responses chosen for the boxes is not given, then it will not be possible to provide the COP with a reliable synthesis of the state of implementation.

It is important therefore that the groups pay particular attention to preparing a succinct statement in each case that is capable of transmitting an objective assessment of the situation able to be understood by readers not necessarily familiar with the institutions or practices of the country. It is likely that the groups will devote a greater degree of time and energy to these summaries than to deciding which category of answer to select.

It is also important to provide information on how the impacts or outcomes of the actions taken are linked to the framework of goals and targets of the Strategic Plan and to the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. In particular, where national goals and targets have been established under the various programmes of work, these should be included in the information submitted. At the end of each section there are sets of specific questions on these linkages.

Pulling it all together

Once drafts of all the sections have been completed, the steering committee should pull them all together into a first complete draft. This should then be circulated to all participants and a date set for a return of views.

Depending on the range of views expressed, the steering committee will need to decide whether to convene a final national meeting or consultation in order to finalize the report.

The important task is to ensure that all agree that the final draft is an accurate reflection of the national situation in respect of each aspect of the implementation of the Convention. The procedure is intended to generate a real consensus among national stakeholders and should not be seen as a means of persuading stakeholders to support and thereby legitimize an ‘official’ report.

The report should then be submitted to the CBD Secretariat in the way called for in the format. Most countries will have established procedures for the submission of national information to inter-governmental bodies. It is important to remember that the national report to the CBD is an official document being submitted by the government to an inter-governmental body and will need to comply with existing national procedures for such submissions. Nevertheless there is no compelling reason why a report developed through a multi-stakeholder process should not be compatible with whatever national procedures are in place under the responsibility of the foreign ministry or other authority.

At the same time, and in line with the recommendation of COP, the completed report should be made widely available in the country. If it has been developed in the way suggested, a comprehensive assessment of national measures to meet the objectives of the Convention will generate much interest among stakeholders, researchers and others, the media and the general public.

The choice of the means for such dissemination is a national decision, but could involve press briefings, briefings in the national parliament, distribution to ‘opinion-formers’, to libraries and educational establishment and to the public. After all, the provisions of the Convention cover all nearly all aspects of economic activities and public policy issues; the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity affect in one way or another all sectors and all citizens. Everyone needs to be brought into the discussion and the race to meet the 2010 target, and the report can prove a useful tool for alerting those not yet engaged that the questions addressed by the Convention are not remote matters under an international legal instrument, but are among the most urgent day to day issues your country faces.

If the country has a national biodiversity clearing-house mechanism or website, the report should be posted here.

IV: PRACTICAL MATTERS

Finally, here's some advice on practical matters.

- The COP has asked for countries to submit their reports in two formats: a signed hard copy sent by mail and an electronic version sent by email or on diskette. The hard copy (and any diskette) should be sent to the Secretariat at the address shown on page 3 of the format (and also in Annex 1). The electronic version should be sent to the Secretariat's email address (also shown on page 3 of the format and in Annex 1).
- If you download the format from the Convention website remember to download the MS Word version. This is the version that you will be able to type text into. Note that the text boxes will automatically expand to accommodate as much information as you feel is required (remembering the Secretariat's request that all additional information is relevant to the issues addressed in that section of the format and that it is succinct).
- Use only a single cross (X) and nothing else in the answer boxes; other symbols cannot be read electronically and will require a member of the Secretariat to manually enter all the answers into the database.
- Do not modify the format in any way. A country that modifies the format or adopts its own reporting format (as has happened) obliges the Secretariat to manually transfer the data into the correct format so that it can be analysed.
- Some questions from previous reporting rounds (the second reports or some thematic reports) are repeated and marked with the symbol . If your country has already answered these questions in previous reports, the question should still be answered and the current situation reported on. Revisit the question and considered whether the situation has changed. Do not automatically repeat the previous answer. This will allow for the establishment of historical series on specific implementation issues and thus their trends over time.
- The reporting format is available in all six official languages of the Convention (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). Your report needs to be submitted in one of these languages. If your national language(s) is/are not one of the official languages and the full range of participants in the reporting process is unlikely to feel comfortable or to be fully productive in a language other than the national language, the format should be translated at the beginning of the process so that all involved can work in the national language. The completed report will then need to be translated back into one of the official languages. You should make provision for this when developing the application for financial assistance.
- In a similar fashion, all participants should have access to these guidelines at the start of the process. If this involves translation into a national language, then the

resources and time need for the translation should be allowed for at the planning and budgeting stages.

- Some countries have already completed and submitted their third national reports to the Secretariat. These are immediately posted on the Convention website. You may find it useful to access these and see how other countries have prepared their reports. If you cannot access the Internet or download these reports, ask the local UNDP office to help by providing you with printed or electronic copies.
- Finally, anticipating a question that many will ask: given that COP asked that the third national reports be submitted by 15 May 2005, we have clearly missed that deadline. Is it therefore still a useful exercise? The answer is clearly yes. For all the reasons noted in the preceding sections, your report will be useful. Even if your report is not available until after COP-8 in March 2006, it will still be useful and contribute to the assessment of the implementation of the Convention and the priorities and decisions that flow from such assessment. It will still be posted on the Convention website and made available for consultation. If you are able to submit your report by the end of 2005, so much the better. Not only will it be available at COP-8, but it may still be possible for the information it contains to be included in the synthesis reports that the Secretariat will prepare for the COP.

The final word

Remember:

- This **should not be a single person or single agency exercise**, but should actively involve representatives of all those who have a role to play in implementing the multiple commitments your country has taken on as a Contracting Party.
- Be **frank and objective**. You will not be criticised or given a 'low mark'. On the contrary you will be seen to be helping the COP, and those agencies that can assist you, to identify issues of common concern, set priorities and target resources.
- Above all, going through the full reporting exercise allows you to **develop a comprehensive and objective picture of implementation** of the Convention. The primary beneficiary will be your country and the stakeholders involved in meeting the triple objectives of the Convention.
- More than that, a fully inclusive process now means that you will have started **building the national multi-sectoral alliance** that is needed if the Convention is to be fully implemented and its objectives met.

Although the reporting format is long and looks complicated, and although there may well be real questions of resources, time, logistics and other constraints, the real task in hand is actually quite straightforward, though often the most difficult to put into practice. This is to develop a conversation – a conversation between all those agencies, bodies, institutions and communities who are involved in, or should be involved in, working to fulfil the triple objectives of the Convention in your country.

The point of this conversation, or better this series of conversations, is to discuss where your country stands on each of the questions addressed in the reporting format. There will probably be different combinations of participants for each block of issues. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers; there should be no prior selection of ‘correct’ answers. What needs to emerge in each case is an agreement among stakeholders on which of the possible answers is the most appropriate for your country in the present circumstances, together with a consensus on what appropriate additional information should be included.

Sometimes starting a conversation is the most difficult step of all. Having to deal with different perspectives and conclusions, having to allow time for consensus to emerge or having to facilitate an acceptable consensus, not being sure of the outcome, all these can seem daunting, time-consuming and (let’s be frank) politically risky to a hard-pressed official with other demands piling up on his or her desk.

Yet a quick, restricted desk job is not what is needed. The nature of the biodiversity crisis and the complexity and inter-connectedness of the issues covered by the Convention demand nothing less than a committed network of stakeholders who have reason to believe that working together is the only way to see results. The text of the Convention itself and the multiple decisions of the COP make it clear that implementation of this convention, probably more than any other international agreement to which your country is party, has to be a collective multi-agency, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder enterprise.

A country that can mobilise such a network has not only made a large step towards preparing a useful and objective report, but more importantly has also taken a major step forward in implementing the objectives of the Convention.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Glossary of terms in the reporting format or these guidelines

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, education and public awareness
CHM	Clearing-house mechanism (of the CBD)
COP	Conference of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GTI	Global Taxonomy Initiative
GURTS	Genetic use restriction technologies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
NBSAP	National biodiversity strategy and action plan
NFP	National Focal Point (person n nominated by the country to act as liaison with the Secretariat)
Secretariat	The CBD Secretariat, located in Montreal, Canada
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Annex 2: Information sources

These guidelines, and the format for the third national reports that you will need to follow, will refer throughout to CBD decisions and documents. If you do not already have access to these, you can obtain them as follows:

- **If you have easy Internet access**, you will be able to find everything on the CBD website (www.biodiv.org). The site has pages in English, French and Spanish and most of the official documents (including COP decisions) is available in the six official languages of the CBD (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian)
- The menu at the top of the home page will take you directly to the decisions, documents and meetings; the side bar menu provides access to major themes, including national reports
- You will also be able to download the ‘Handbook of the Convention on Biological Diversity’ from the site. This contains a compilation of key CBD material, including explanatory sections on each Article and all COP decisions in full. (The Handbook is a large document of 1,500 pages and the electronic file is over 7MB in size, although it can be downloaded in sections.)
- **If you do not have easy Internet access**, you can ask the CBD Secretariat to send you by email or by post the Handbook, compilations of the decisions from each meeting of the COP or any other document you need. Write to the Secretariat at secretariat@biodiv.org, fax +1-514-288-6588, or 413 St-Jacques Street, Office 800, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2Y 1N9.
- You can also **ask your local UNDP, UNEP or World Bank office** for help in providing you with copies of CBD documents and decisions.

For details of some of the information you may find useful in deciding how to answer particular sections of the reporting format, see the annex to these guidelines.

Annex 3: Objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity

In accordance with Article 1 of the CBD, its objectives are:

1. The conservation of biological diversity;
2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The COP has reaffirmed that each of the three objectives is of equal importance.

Annex 4: Decision VII/25 (National Reporting)

The elements of this decision directly relevant to developing country Parties and countries with economies in transition for the preparation of their third national reports **are highlighted**:

A. National reporting

The Conference of the Parties

1. *Takes note* of the analysis of the information contained in the second national reports as contained in the relevant documents prepared by the Executive Secretary for the consideration of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.3 and UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/2);
2. *Expresses concern* over the delay in the submission of national reports by some Parties, and *takes note* of the difficulty that this delay may pose to the assessment of the implementation of the Convention in the absence of an adequate number of national reports;
3. **Requests Parties to facilitate the preparation of the third and future national reports and endeavour to submit national reports in time;**
4. *Encourages* Parties, Governments, relevant bilateral, regional and multilateral organizations to collaborate to strengthen the various capacities of Parties, particularly developing country Parties and countries with economies in transition, to prepare their future national and thematic reports;
5. *Further encourages* Parties, Governments, relevant bilateral, regional and multilateral organizations, to analyse the progress of Parties, particularly developing country Parties and countries with economies in transition, in implementing the Convention, in relation to those areas identified as a priority by those countries, in order to *inter alia* assist them in the preparation of their future national reports;
6. **Requests Parties to submit as much information and data as available to improve the adequacy of information for the evaluation of the implementation of the Convention, the Strategic Plan of the Convention and the progress towards the 2010 target, particularly focusing on:**
 - (a) **Status and trends of biodiversity and its various components;**
 - (b) **Impacts of national actions on the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, the goals and objectives identified in the Strategic Plan of the Convention and the 2010 target;**
 - (c) **Implementation of priority actions in national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and**
 - (d) **Constraints or impediments encountered in the implementation of the Convention;**
7. *Requests* the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and other bodies established under the Convention to take into account, where appropriate, the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the second national reports when addressing relevant programmes of work, cross-cutting and other issues under the Convention.

B. Guidelines for the third national report

The Conference of the Parties

1. *Endorses* the format for the third national report, as contained in the annex to the note by the Executive Secretary on guidelines for the third national report (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.2), as amended, with respect to the questionnaire on forest biological diversity, by annexes I and II of the note by the Executive Secretary on proposals for the review of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.7);
2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to further develop this format to incorporate the views expressed by Parties and further questions arising from the decisions of its seventh meeting and to make the revised format available to Parties no later than July 2004;

3. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to revise the existing national reporting formats to make them more concise and better targeted to reduce the reporting burden placed on Parties, and to better contribute to the assessment of progress towards achieving the mission of the Strategic Plan and the 2010 target, and the identification of obstacles to implementation. The revision of the reporting formats should address the matters in decision VI/25, paragraph 3, and:
- (a) The need to include reporting on all the four goals of the Strategic Plan;
 - (b) The need to allow Parties to incorporate the results of indicators (where available) to enable Parties to provide a more comprehensive assessment of progress;
 - (c) The need to include available factual data on the outcomes and impacts of measures taken to achieve the objectives of the Convention (including status and trends of biodiversity);
4. ***Invites Parties to promote wide stakeholder involvement, as well as that of indigenous and local communities, in the preparation of national reports, or in related processes that will inform national-report preparation, to ensure a more accurate and comprehensive reflection of the views and priorities of national stakeholders;***
5. *Invites* developed country Parties to continue to provide support in the form of technical capacity development and financial resources to developing country Parties, Parties with economies in transition and small island developing States, as appropriate, to facilitate these Parties to meet their reporting obligations;
6. *Encourages* the Executive Secretary to continue to participate in the ongoing efforts to harmonize and streamline the national reporting processes of the Convention with those of other biodiversity-related conventions and processes with a view to reduce reporting burdens on Parties and increase synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, without impeding progress on improvements to the national reporting process to meet the needs of Parties to the Convention, and to strengthen the inter-sessional efforts to promote the submission of national reports;
7. *Decides* to further reduce the reporting burden on Parties by, wherever possible, using other means to gather information to allow evaluation of implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan;
8. ***Requests Parties to submit their third national reports:***
- (a) **By 15 May 2005;**
 - (b) **In an official language of the United Nations;**
 - (c) **In both hard copy and electronic format;**
9. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to prepare an analysis of the information contained in the third national reports for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting, and make it available through the clearing-house mechanism;

Annex 5:

Global Environment Facility

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR THE EXPEDITED FINANCING OF NATIONAL REPORTS FROM ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

1. The seventh meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in February 2004 invited the Global Environment Facility to provide the necessary financial support to facilitate the preparation of the third national reports by the Parties through its decision VII/20.
2. At the same meeting the COP endorsed a format for the third national report, as contained in the annex to the note by the Executive Secretary on guidelines for the third national report. On request of the COP, the CBD Secretariat further developed this format based on the views expressed by the Parties and is made available to the Parties.
3. In October 2000 the GEF issued the “*Revised Guidelines for Additional Funding of Biodiversity Enabling Activities (Expedited Procedures)*”. Based on these revised guidelines and taking into account experience in providing support for the preparation of first and second reports and the content of the third national reports as approved by COP-7, additional funding would be available to eligible Parties for preparing their third national reports.

SCOPE AND CONTENT OF NATIONAL REPORTS

4. The format approved by the COP-7 for the preparation of third national reports will form the basis for funding of proposals from eligible Parties as described in the October 2000 revised guidelines.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

5. Parties may submit a letter of request from the GEF operational focal point to one of the GEF Implementing Agency (UNDP, UNEP or the World Bank). In recognition of the continuity of the process of preparing national reports emphasized by the COP, countries that have received GEF support for previous national reports are strongly encouraged to work with the same Implementing Agency through which they received earlier support.
6. Projects are expected to follow good practices, and observe established guidelines for tools and methodologies, whenever available.
7. There are two ways in which countries may request the additional funding for the preparation of the Third National Reports:

- a) For countries that are preparing to seek GEF assistance to prepare their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, or have yet to request Additional funding for an Add-on phase to undertake specific capacity building needs assessments or develop the CHM, the preparation of the Third National Report may be included as a specific activity within the overall proposal. The GEF's existing operational criteria⁷ for expedited biodiversity enabling activities should be applied as usual in preparing a proposal for additional funding, along with reference to these supplemental guidelines for the Third National Report. The funding for the Third National Report will be approved as part of the overall proposal, which will be submitted by the IA to GEF for approval as per existing procedures.
- b) For countries where Enabling Activity or Add-on phases have been already completed or are presently ongoing, assistance may be provided in an expedited manner by submitting a summary proposal briefly describing the following (a) previous assistance received by the country under the GEF's expedited funding for enabling activities and Add-on phases and status of activities undertaken, (b) specific activities to be carried out for the preparation of the Third National Report, (c) the implementation arrangements, (d) a work plan and time frame, (e) budget breakdown, and (f) a letter of request from the GEF Operational Focal Point for additional funding of the Third National Report. The format for such a request will not exceed 3-4 pages and will be provided by the relevant IA. Such stand-alone funding for the Third National Report will be approved directly by the IA upon receipt of a satisfactory request without need for GEF Secretariat approval for individual requests.
8. A summary table is provided for recording the overall level of assistance provided to countries under the expedited financing for enabling activities and additional funding requests. All countries requesting assistance for preparation of Third National Reports should complete this table and attach it to their request.

Time frame

9. Parties that are eligible to receive financing are required to submit their third national reports within a time-frame agreed with the GEF Implementing Agency.

Review of Proposals

10. Proposals that do not exceed US\$ 20,000 (per country in the case of regional projects) and have been prepared in accordance with these operational procedures will be recommended for expedited approval. Proposals that exceed this amount (or this amount per country in the case of regional projects) will be processed in accordance with the GEF's normal project cycle and require approval by the GEF CEO as for previous enabling activities.

⁷ These are contained in GEF's existing Operational Criteria for biodiversity enabling activities. The IA concerned will be able to discuss these criteria with country officials during project preparation.

Submission of output

11. Each country is requested to submit the electronic versions of the outputs of the activities financed by the GEF, including the finalized draft of the national report to the CBD Secretariat and to the supporting Implementing Agency, which will transmit such outputs to the GEF Secretariat.

SUMMARY OF SUPPORT FOR RELEVANT ACTIVITIES FUNDED UNDER
BIODIVERSITY ENABLING ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	TOTAL (US \$ 000)
ORIGINAL ENABLING ACTIVITY	
• Original EA, less costs of CHM activities	
• CHM support (provided through add-on module or project itself)	
Total support for EA:	
ADDITIONAL REQUEST	
1. Assessment of Capacity-building needs for ⁸ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of measures for in-situ and ex-situ conservation and sustainable use • methodologies to evaluate and mitigate specific threats to biodiversity components • Biosafety⁹ • Initial assessment and monitoring programs, including taxonomy • Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity important for agriculture • Incentive measures • Access to genetic resources, benefit-sharing and formulation of mechanisms for these purposes • Preservation/ maintenance of biodiversity related knowledge of indigenous and local communities with traditional lifestyles 	
2. Country-driven project for participation in the CHM	
3. Consultations for the preparation of a second national report	
Sub-total Additional Funding Phase:	
REQUEST FOR THIRD NATIONAL REPORT	
• Preparation of the Third National Report	< 20
TOTAL	

⁸ Cost estimates for each line item (for which funding has been or is requested) to be indicated.

⁹ In light of paragraph 4 (c) of the Revised Guidelines for Additional Funding of Biodiversity Enabling Activities (Expedited Procedures) of October 2000.

Annex 6: The CBD Strategic Plan and the 2010 Biodiversity Target

1: The 2010 Biodiversity Target

Under the Strategic Plan adopted at COP-6, Parties committed themselves **to achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth.** This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

2: The goals of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan comprises four goals (decision VI/26):

Goal 1: The Convention is fulfilling its leadership role in international biodiversity issues.

Goal 2: Parties have improved financial, human, scientific, technical, and technological capacity to implement the Convention.

Goal 3: National biodiversity strategies and action plans and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors serve as an effective framework for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention.

Goal 4: There is a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity and of the Convention, and this has led to broader engagement across society in implementation.

3: Obstacles to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The appendix to decision VI26 contains a list of obstacles to implementation identified by the COP:

1. Political/societal obstacles
 - a. Lack of political will and support to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity
 - b. Limited public participation and stakeholder involvement
 - c. Lack of mainstreaming and integration of biodiversity issues into other sectors, including use of tools such as environmental impact assessments
 - d. Political instability
 - e. Lack of precautionary and proactive measures, causing reactive policies.
2. Institutional, technical and capacity-related obstacles
 - a. Inadequate capacity to act, caused by institutional weaknesses
 - b. Lack of human resources
 - c. Lack of transfer of technology and expertise
 - d. Loss of traditional knowledge
 - e. Lack of adequate scientific research capacities to support all the objectives.
3. Lack of accessible knowledge/information
 - a. Loss of biodiversity and the corresponding goods and services it provides not properly understood and documented
 - b. Existing scientific and traditional knowledge not fully utilized.
 - c. Dissemination of information on international and national level not efficient
 - d. Lack of public education and awareness at all levels.
4. Economic policy and financial resources
 - a. Lack of financial and human resources
 - b. Fragmentation of GEF financing
 - c. Lack of economic incentive measures

- d. Lack of benefit-sharing.
- 5. Collaboration/cooperation
 - a. Lack of synergies at the national and international levels
 - b. Lack of horizontal cooperation among stakeholders
 - c. Lack of effective partnerships
 - d. Lack of engagement of scientific community.
- 6. Legal/juridical impediments
 - a. Lack of appropriate policies and laws
- 7. Socio-economic factors
 - a. Poverty
 - b. Population pressure
 - c. Unsustainable consumption and production patterns
 - d. Lack of capacities for local communities.
- 8. Natural phenomena and environmental change
 - a. Climate change
 - b. Natural disasters.

4: Framework for assessing progress towards the 2010 target

At COP-7 the COP adopted a **framework** to facilitate the assessment of progress towards 2010 and communication of this assessment, to promote coherence among the programmes of work of the Convention and to provide a flexible framework within which national and regional targets may be set, and indicators identified. The framework includes **seven focal areas**:

- a) Status and trends of the components of biodiversity, including: (i) biomes, habitats and ecosystems; (ii) species and populations; and (iii) genetic diversity;
- (b) Promoting sustainable use of biodiversity;
- (c) Addressing the major threats to biodiversity, including those arising from invasive alien species, climate change, pollution, and habitat change;
- (d) Maintaining ecosystem integrity, and the provision of goods and services provided by biodiversity in ecosystems, in support of human well-being;
- (e) Protecting traditional knowledge, innovations and practices;
- (f) Ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources; and
- (g) Mobilizing financial and technical resources, especially for developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition, for implementing the Convention and the Strategic Plan.

Parties have been invited to establish their own targets and identify indicators, within this flexible framework (see Annex 7).

Annex 7: 2010 goals and sub-targets

As explained in Annex 6, the COP has established goals and sub- targets for each of the **focal areas** to clarify the 2010 global biodiversity target and promote coherence among the programmes of work of the Convention and invited Parties to establish their own targets and identify indicators, within this framework:

Protect the components of biodiversity

Goal 1. Promote the conservation of the biological diversity of ecosystems, habitats and biomes

Target 1.1: At least 10% of each of the world's ecological regions effectively conserved.

Target 1.2: Areas of particular importance to biodiversity protected

Goal 2. Promote the conservation of species diversity

Target 2.1: Restore, maintain, or reduce the decline of populations of species of selected taxonomic groups

Target 2.2: Status of threatened species improved.

Goal 3. Promote the conservation of genetic diversity

Target 3.1: Genetic diversity of crops, livestock, and of harvested species of trees, fish and wildlife and other valuable species conserved, and associated indigenous and local knowledge maintained.

Promote sustainable use

Goal 4. Promote sustainable use and consumption.

Target 4.1: Biodiversity-based products derived from sources that are sustainably managed, and Production areas managed consistent with the conservation of biodiversity.

Target 4.2 Unsustainable consumption, of biological resources, or that impacts upon biodiversity, reduced

Target 4.3: No species of wild flora or fauna endangered by international trade

Address threats to biodiversity

Goal 5. Pressures from habitat loss, land use change and degradation, and unsustainable water use, reduced.

Target 5.1: Rate of loss and degradation of natural habitats decreased

Goal 6. Control threats from invasive alien species

Target 6.1: Pathways for major potential alien invasive species controlled.

Target 6. 2: Management plans in place for major alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats or species.

Goal 7. Address challenges to biodiversity from climate change, and pollution

Target 7.1: Maintain and enhance resilience of the components of biodiversity to adapt to climate change

Target 7.2: Reduce pollution and its impacts on biodiversity

Maintain goods and services from biodiversity to support human well-being

Goal 8. Maintain capacity of ecosystems to deliver goods and services and support livelihoods

Target 8.1: Capacity of ecosystems to deliver goods and services maintained.

Target 8.2: biological resources that support sustainable livelihoods, local food security and health care, especially of poor people maintained

Protect traditional knowledge, innovations and practices

Goal 9 Maintain socio-cultural diversity of indigenous and local communities

Target 9.1 Protect traditional knowledge, innovations and practices

Target 9.2: Protect the rights of indigenous and local communities over their traditional knowledge, innovations and practices, including their rights to benefit sharing

Ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources

Goal 10. Ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources

Target 10.1: All transfers of genetic resources are in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and other applicable agreements.

Target 10.2: Benefits arising from the commercial and other utilization of genetic resources shared with the countries providing such resources

Focal Area: Ensure provision of adequate resources

Goal 11: Parties have improved financial, human, scientific, technical and technological capacity to implement the Convention

Target 11.1: New and additional financial resources are transferred to developing country Parties, to allow for the effective implementation of their commitments under the Convention, in accordance with Article 20.

Target 11.2: Technology is transferred to developing country Parties, to allow for the effective implementation of their commitments under the Convention, in accordance with its Article 20, paragraph 4.

These goals and sub-targets are to be integrated into the Programmes of Work of the Convention.

The Goals and sub-targets provide a flexible framework within which national and/or regional targets may be developed.

Boxes III to XXIII of section B of the format allow countries to provide information on the establishment of relevant national targets, targets for the CBD programmes of work and their incorporation into relevant national plans, programmes and strategies.

Annex 8: Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

In 2002, the COP adopted the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation with the ultimate and long-term objective of halting the current and continuing loss of plant diversity. The Strategy also considers issues of sustainable use and benefit-sharing, and aims to contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

The Strategy includes 16 outcome-oriented global targets set for 2010:

Understanding and documenting plant diversity:

- A widely accessible working list of known plant species, as a step towards a complete world flora;
- A preliminary assessment of the conservation status of all known plant species, at national, regional and international levels;
- Development of models with protocols for plant conservation and sustainable use, based on research and practical experience;

Conserving plant diversity:

- At least 10 per cent of each of the world's ecological regions effectively conserved;
- Protection of 50 per cent of the most important areas for plant diversity assured;
- At least 30 per cent of production lands managed consistent with the conservation of plant diversity;
- 60 per cent of the world's threatened species conserved in situ;
- 60 per cent of threatened plant species in accessible ex situ collections, preferably in the country of origin, and 10 per cent of them included in recovery and restoration programmes;
- 70 per cent of the genetic diversity of crops and other major socio-economically valuable plant species conserved, and associated indigenous and local knowledge maintained;
- Management plans in place for at least 100 major alien species that threaten plants, plant communities and associated habitats and ecosystems;

Using plant diversity sustainably:

- No species of wild flora endangered by international trade;
- 30 per cent of plant-based products derived from sources that are sustainably managed;
- The decline of plant resources, and associated indigenous and local knowledge, innovations and practices that support sustainable livelihoods, local food security and health care, halted;

Promoting education and awareness about plant diversity:

- The importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation incorporated into communication, educational and public -awareness programmes;

Building capacity for the conservation of plant diversity:

- The number of trained people working with appropriate facilities in plant conservation increased, according to national needs, to achieve the targets of this Strategy;
- Networks for plant conservation activities established or strengthened at national, regional and international levels.

These targets provide a framework for policy formulation and a basis for monitoring. National targets developed within this framework may vary from country to country, according to national priorities and capacities taking into account differences in plant diversity.

Annex 9: The Ecosystem Approach

The ecosystem approach is the primary framework for action under the Convention. The Conference of the Parties, at its Fifth Meeting, endorsed the description of the ecosystem approach and operational guidance and recommended the application of the principles and other guidance on the Ecosystem Approach (decision V/6). The seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties agreed that the priority at this time should be on facilitating implementation of the ecosystem approach and welcomed additional guidelines to this effect (decision VII/11).

The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. Thus, the application of the ecosystem approach will help to reach a balance of the three objectives of the Convention: conservation; sustainable use; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

An ecosystem approach is based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies focused on levels of biological organization, which encompass the essential structure, processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of many ecosystems.

This focus on structure, processes, functions and interactions is consistent with the definition of "ecosystem" provided in Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

"'Ecosystem' means a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit."

This definition does not specify any particular spatial unit or scale, in contrast to the Convention definition of "habitat". Thus, the term "ecosystem" does not, necessarily, correspond to the terms "biome" or "ecological zone", but can refer to any functioning unit at any scale. Indeed, the scale of analysis and action should be determined by the problem being addressed. It could, for example, be a grain of soil, a pond, a forest, a biome or the entire biosphere.

The ecosystem approach requires adaptive management to deal with the complex and dynamic nature of ecosystems and the absence of complete knowledge or understanding of their functioning. Ecosystem processes are often non-linear, and the outcome of such processes often shows time-lags. The result is discontinuities, leading to surprise and uncertainty. Management must be adaptive in order to be able to respond to such uncertainties and contain elements of "learning-by-doing" or research feedback. Measures may need to be taken even when some cause-and-effect relationships are not yet fully established scientifically.

The ecosystem approach does not preclude other management and conservation approaches, such as biosphere reserves, protected areas, and single-species conservation programmes, as well as other approaches carried out under existing national policy and legislative frameworks, but could, rather, integrate all these approaches and other methodologies to deal with complex situations. There is no single way to implement the ecosystem approach, as it depends on local, provincial, national, regional or global conditions. Indeed, there are many ways in which ecosystem approaches may be used as the framework for delivering the objectives of the Convention in practice.

Annex 10: Proposed changes to the reporting format

Suggested Principles and Elements to be Taken into Account in Developing the Guidelines for the Fourth National Report¹⁰

- 1) National reports should:
 - a) Use the goals, targets and indicators of the global framework in decision VII/30, where they are nationally relevant;
 - b) Be outcome-oriented;
 - c) Present results of monitoring designed to describe national trends;
 - d) Relate to national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
 - e) Report on the 2010 target;
 - f) Assess and facilitate national implementation of the Convention rather than making comparisons among countries;
 - g) Facilitate self-assessment;
 - h) Serve multiple communication purposes;
 - i) Be useful to the decision-making processes of the Convention and lend themselves to synthesis;
 - j) Facilitate the involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention;
 - k) Facilitate harmonized reporting, where possible, by using joint reporting modules with biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant processes.

- 2) National reports should allow Parties to provide information on:
 - a) The status and trends of biodiversity, with a focus on the outcomes of actions taken to achieve the 2010 target and the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan;
 - b) Progress and effectiveness of the measures implemented towards achieving the 2010 target and the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan and priority actions in national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
 - c) The current status of national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
 - d) The results of efforts to mainstream biodiversity into relevant sectors;
 - e) Success stories in implementation, drawing on, *inter alia*, case-studies;
 - f) Obstacles and challenges, taking into account but not limited to the appendix to the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

- 3) The guidelines should:
 - a) Be short, simple, use clear language, and avoid repetition;
 - b) Use the structure of the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan and the framework for assessing progress in implementing the Convention as in decision VII/30;
 - c) Explain the purpose of the reporting exercise and what use will be made of the reported information;
 - d) Identify which of the reporting requests are used by other biodiversity-related conventions or processes;
 - e) Use a modular approach to facilitate multiple uses of the same information;
 - f) Provide cross references between information being requested and the multi-year programme of work of the Conference of the Parties.

¹⁰ Annex II to WGRI recommendation I/9 (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/4)