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"The first multi-stakeholder expert meeting on elaboration of options for synergies among biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements"

Interlaken, Switzerland, 26-28 August 2014

Background Information: Development of the "MEA synergies" debate, with a particular focus on the biodiversity-related conventions and the International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process

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Introduction

The rapid increase in the number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) in past decades – there are now over 1000¹ – has been accompanied with concern over the potential for fragmentation, conflict and the burden on state capacity to implement numerous environmental obligations simultaneously. The proliferation of international environmental law has also been coupled with concern for the duplication of efforts. Among the biodiversity-related conventions, the existence of a number of MEAs with overlapping mandates has led to wide recognition of the need for enhanced coordination.

The International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process arising from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development was the first to substantially address synergies and cooperation between MEAs with similar focus areas and gave special attention to the biodiversity-related conventions (UNEP-WCMC 2012). The Informal Consultative Process identified weaknesses from institutional complexity and fragmentation among MEAs, including the lack of coherence and a “heavy burden on Member States, particularly in terms of reporting obligations and COP [Conference of the Parties] meetings”; the result was a promotion of cooperation and clustering among MEAs and the rationalization of secretariat activities (Rouassant & Maurer 2007). Of particular relevance was an Environment Management Group (EMG)² report that argued that the best way to improve coherence in the biodiversity agenda was by national level coordination through enhancing coordination among national focal points and integration of national reporting (UNEP 2010). The Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome gave further weight to the synergy argument by encouraging joint delivery of MEA services for increased efficiency (UNEP/GC.26/18). The 2012 UNEP Governing Council Decision SS.XII/3 explicitly recognized "the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions". Key events in the IEG reform process relating to synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions are shown in Figure 1 and discussed in more detail in section 2 of this report.

¹ See the International Environmental Agreement Database, last updated in July 2013:
<http://iea.uoregon.edu/page.php?file=home.htm&query=static>

² The Environment Management Group (EMG) is a UN system-wide coordination body on environment and human settlements. The EMG identifies issues on the international environmental agenda that warrant cooperation, and finds ways of engaging its collective capacity in coherent management responses to those issues. It has established an Issue Management Group on biodiversity. Recent work has included co-ordination of a UN-system wide response to the CBD Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets. It has also issued a number of reports on options to enhance MEA synergies.

The biodiversity-related MEAs themselves have begun taking measures to enhance coordination, mostly on the programmatic level. The governing bodies of all six global biodiversity-related agreements have adopted decisions or resolutions calling for enhanced synergies with other conventions. Furthermore, a range of mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the conventions have been put in place. These provisions and mechanisms are examined in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

A discourse on synergies and coordination has also emerged in the context of academic and grey literature. This discourse has added weight to the call for synergies by arguing that enhancing cooperation between MEAs will reduce overlap and conflicts, capitalize on inherent synergies and generally create more effective environmental governance (United Nations University 1999; Chambers 2008). A snapshot of this discourse is provided in section 5.

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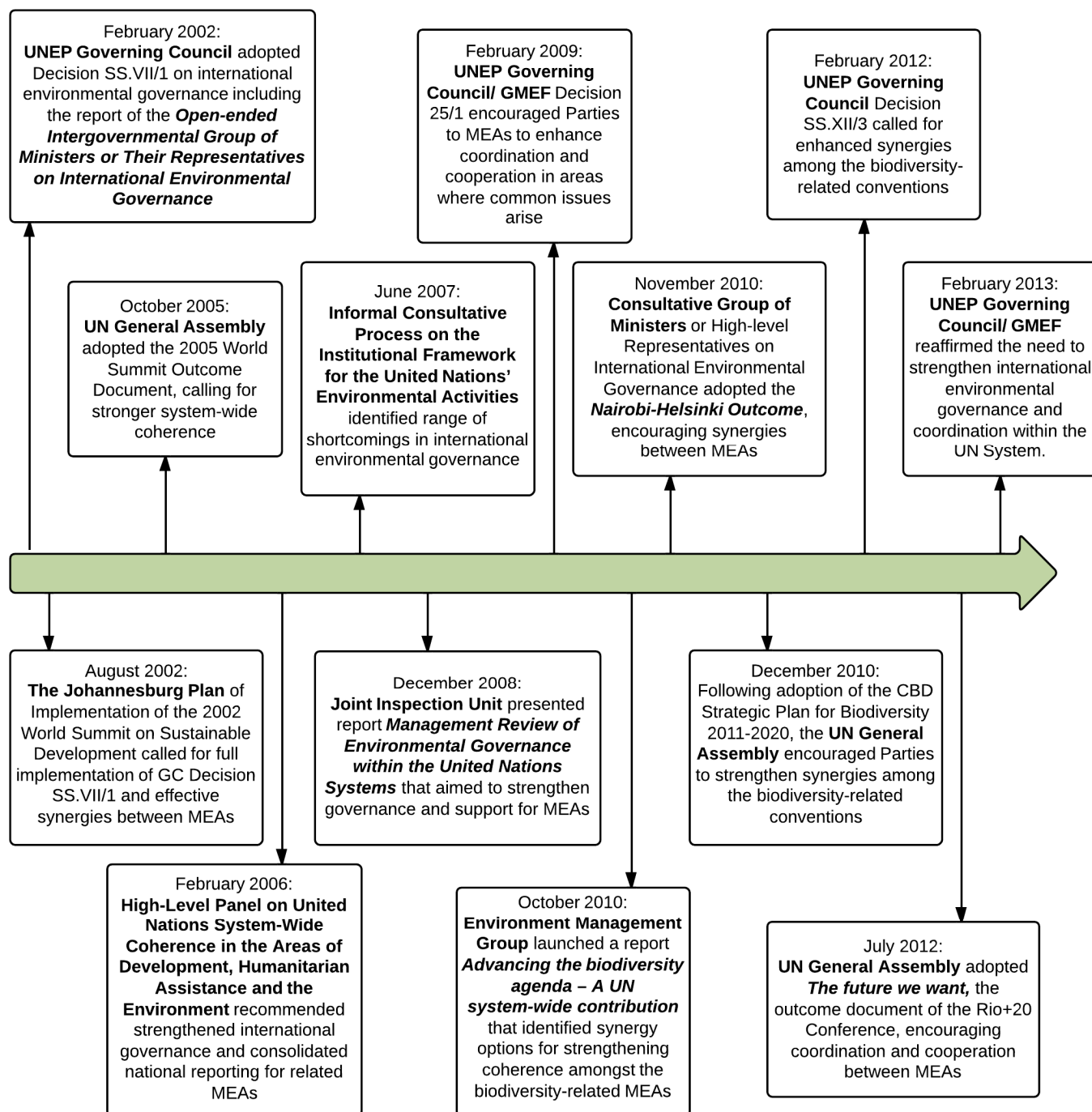


Figure 1: Timeline of key events in the IEG process relating to synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions

1. Overview of the synergies debate in the context of the International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process

MEAs are at the heart of environmental governance, and the MEAs addressing the biodiversity crisis are faced with questions about their effectiveness and efficiency, in terms of their functioning and implementation. The **International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process** has highlighted the issue of synergies and has called for increased cooperation and coordination among MEAs as a tool to enhance their effectiveness. This debate has drawn particular attention to the biodiversity-related conventions and has driven the process towards enhanced synergies between the conventions (UNEP-WCMC 2012). This overview highlights the key events in the IEG debate that have occurred under the auspices of the UN.

In 2000, 2001 and 2002, the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF)³ successively adopted the **Malmö Declaration** (UNEP/GCSS.VI/I), the **Nairobi Declaration** (UNEP/GC.21/9) and the **Cartagena Package** (UNEP/GCSS.VII/6) on strengthening environmental governance based on the work of its **Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives (IGM) on IEG**. The Cartagena Package included recommendations for strengthening UNEP's capacity to improve synergies among MEAs through the periodic review of the effectiveness of MEAs by the Governing Council (GC)/GMEF and fostering environmental policy coordination across the United Nations system based on the work of the **EMG**. In the Malmö Declaration, Environment ministers agreed that the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) should review the requirements for a greatly strengthened institutional structure for IEG.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (A.CONF.199/20) urged full implementation of decision GCSS.VII/1 on IEG adopted by the **Seventh Special Session/ GMEF of the UNEP GC in 2002**. This session had adopted the report of the **IGM** (UNEP/GCSS.VII/6). The report concluded that *'the clustering approach to [MEAs] holds some promise, and issues relating to the location of secretariats, meeting agendas and also programmatic cooperation between such bodies and with UNEP should be addressed'* (paragraph 8n). The report included the following recommendations on improving coordination among and effectiveness of MEAs (paragraphs 26+):

³ Established by UNEP GC as envisaged by United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/242 (1998). Its purpose is to institute, at a political level, a process for reviewing important and emerging policy issues in the field of the environment.

- Pilot projects addressing issues such as improvement of national reporting mechanisms among biodiversity-related conventions should be further pursued (paragraph 27).
- UNEP is asked to enhance synergies and linkages on issues related to scientific assessments on matters of common concern, in cooperation with the MEA secretariats (paragraph 27).
- The effectiveness of MEAs should be periodically reviewed; States should have regard for the UNEP guidelines on compliance with and enforcement of MEAs; and capacity-building, technology transfer and the provision of financial resources are regarded as of great importance for the effectiveness of MEAs (paragraph 28).
- *'considerable benefits could accrue from a more coordinated approach to areas such as scheduling and periodicity of meetings of the [COP]; reporting; scientific assessment on matters of common concern, capacity-building, transfer of technology; and enhancing the capacities of developing countries before and after the entry into force of legal agreements to implement and review progress on a regular basis by all parties concerned' (paragraph 29).*
- *'the co-location of future [MEA] secretariats should be encouraged and where possible in developing countries, with a view of enhancing collaboration and effectiveness' (paragraph 29)*
- The requirement of improved coordination of positions concerning MEAs at the national level is highlighted as one aspect of enhanced coordination paragraph 29).

Furthermore, the **Plan for Implementation of the 2002 WSSD** (A.CONF.199/20) called for *'an effective institutional framework for sustainable development'* (paragraph 137) and suggested a number of concrete measures to implement this provision. In addressing biodiversity and the implementation of the CBD, the Plan of Implementation called for actions at all levels to ... *'Encourage effective synergies between the Convention [on Biological Diversity] and other [MEAs], inter alia, through the development of joint plans and programmes, with due regard to their respective mandates, regarding common responsibilities and concerns'* (paragraph 44c).

In a follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, the **General Assembly resolution 60/1** adopted the **2005 World Summit Outcome Document** (A/RES/60/1), which called for a number of measures in support of stronger system-wide coherence. Measures included, among others, exploring the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to address the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, *'including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as the treaty bodies and the specialized agencies'*(paragraph 169).

Another of the **follow-up processes to the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document** was the **Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' Environmental Activities, launched by the General Assembly at its 60th session**. A Co-Chairs' Option Paper (Rouassant & Maurer 2007) identified a range of shortcomings of IEG, including, for MEAs, *'fragmentation and a lack of coherence in the environmental legal framework'* and a *'heavy burden on Member States, particularly in*

terms of reporting obligations and COP meetings'. The paper suggested a number of building blocks for a strengthened IEG, one of which is MEAs, with the following rationale: *'Enhance cooperation and coordination amongst MEAs, promote working in clusters and rationalize secretariat activities'*. Here, the paper suggests initiating the thematic, programmatic and administrative clustering of MEAs in, among others, the area of conservation (including *'biodiversity, forests, Ramsar, species'*). This section of the paper concludes with the call for ensuring *'that any savings resulting from improved coordination and cooperation of MEAs are used to increase implementation activities'*. The **Co-Chairs' options, including those on MEAs, were extensively and sometimes controversially discussed at the General Assembly and various other fora.** As stated in a **report on the Informal Consultative Process** (Maurer & Rouassant 2009) the Co-Chairs *'found themselves in a situation, in which the attempt to move to a decision increased the difficulties in finding consensus'* and concluded that *'a consensus document would likely fail to add value to existing decisions'*. They recommended *'to all interested parties to make the best use of upcoming intergovernmental meetings to remain seized of the matter'*.

Subsequently, in **2006**, the Secretary-General announced the formation of the **High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment**. The report of the Panel, *'Delivering As One'* (A/61/583), undertook a thorough assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations system in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. It found the UN work in the areas of development and the environment fragmented and weak and noted policy incoherence, duplication and operational ineffectiveness due to inefficient and ineffective governance and unpredictable funding. The Panel recommended strengthened IEG and the commission, by the Secretary-General, of an **independent assessment of IEG** within the UN system. It called for efficiencies and substantive coordination between treaty bodies, as pursued by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention secretariats, in particular through stronger efforts *'to reduce costs and reporting burdens and to streamline implementation. National reporting requirements for related MEAs should be consolidated into one comprehensive annual report, to ease the burden on countries and improve coherence'* (paragraph 39). The recommendations continue: *'Governing bodies of [MEAs] should promote administrative efficiencies, reducing the frequency and duration of meetings, moving to joint administrative functions, convening back-to-back or joint meetings of bureaux of related conventions, rationalizing knowledge management and developing a consistent methodological approach to enable measurement of enforcement and compliance'* (paragraph 39).

In response to the recommendation to conduct an independent assessment of IEG, a report of the commissioned "joint inspection unit" entitled **Management Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations Systems** was presented in **2008** (Inomata 2008). The report's objective was to *'strengthen the governance of and programmatic and administrative support for MEAs by United Nations organizations'*. Following a review of the management framework of IEG, including of global environmental conventions, the report concludes with 12 recommendations for strengthening the

governance of MEAs and the programmatic and administrative support provided by UN organizations, including:

- *'The General Assembly should provide the UNEP Governing Council/ [GMEF] with adequate support through activating its own regular review of the reports of MEAs to enhance GC/GMEF's capacity to fulfill its mandate to review and evaluate, on a regular basis, the implementation of all MEAs administered within the United Nations system, with a view to ensuring coordination and coherence between them in accordance with decision SS.VII/1 and keep the Assembly informed of progress made'* (recommendation 5).
- *'The Secretary-General as Chairman of the Chief Executive Board should encourage the executive heads of the organizations and the MEAs: (a) To develop **a joint system-wide planning framework** for the management and coordination of environmental activities, drawing on the results-based management framework endorsed by General Assembly resolution 60/257, and to this end, (b) to draw up an indicative-planning document serving for joint programming of their activities in the environment sphere'* (recommendation 7).

The review is very critical of IEG in the UN system. One of the main criticisms highlighted by the review is the weakness of IEG caused by institutional fragmentation and **lack of a single strategic planning framework for the entire United Nations system**. The report also calls for UNEP to review the effectiveness of MEAs, in accordance with its mandate under the Cartagena Package⁴. In addition, it suggests a reform of the financial and administrative mechanisms for MEAs hosted by UNEP to improve efficiency and reduce costs. However, one of the suggestions to tackle these issues was to implement universal membership of the UNEP Governing Council which is now (since 2012) in effect, therefore this may have implications for strengthening UNEP's role in reviewing governance issues. The specific issues the report covers that are directly related to MEAs include:

- Proliferation of MEA secretariats since each new MEA has its own independent secretariat
- Lack of a regular mechanism to address incoherencies at the administrative and programmatic levels among MEAs and to review effectiveness of MEAs
- UNEP lacks a database that gives an overview of all environmental programmes, projects, expenses, MoUs and letters of commitment exchanged with other UN agencies and bodies with regard to support to MEAs
- A review should be performed of the adequacy and effectiveness of funding for MEAs provided by existing international funding mechanisms with a focus on the provision of new and additional financial resources
- A set of common guidelines should be developed for the provision and use of administrative, financial and technical support services to enhance synergies between UN system agencies and

⁴ UNEP GC/GMEF decision SS.VII/1 on international environmental governance.

MEAs, as well as among MEAs. Currently the system for providing all types of support to MEA secretariats is complex and inefficient.

A new report of the Joint Inspection Unit is currently under preparation and is likely to bring more insights and recommendations relevant to the MEA synergies agenda. A draft version seen by the project team suggests that many of the recommendations made in the first report are still relevant, with particular emphasis placed on how the institutional arrangements between UNEP and each MEA, the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON) and each MEA and between MEAs, can strengthen IEG. The report did note the increased number of MoUs signed between different actors in the IEG landscape and the power vested in UNEA as positive measures, but also notes that more can be done. Further information will be provided when the report is finalized.

The 63rd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) did not reach a final resolution on IEG. The co-chairs of the informal consultations of the General Assembly on the institutional framework for United Nations environment work reached out to other processes, in particular UNEP, to initiate their own processes to provide fresh ideas to the UNGA.⁵

At its 25th session, the **UNEP GC/ GMEF** in decisions 25/1 and 25/4 of 20 February 2009, took note of the Joint Inspection Unit report and in decision 25/1, encouraged '*contracting parties to other [MEAs] in specific areas where common issues arise to consider ways and means of enhancing cooperation and coordination, drawing upon, as appropriate, the experience of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions*' (paragraph 27). Moreover, Decision 25/4 on IEG established a **regionally-representative, consultative group of ministers or high-level representatives. The group was requested to provide a set of options for improving IEG** to the 11th special session of the UNEP GC/GMEF.

In its work, which has come to be known as the "**Belgrade Process**" (UNEP/GCSS.XI/4), the Consultative Group identified five objectives for IEG:

- (a) Creating a strong, credible and accessible science base and policy interface
- (b) Developing a global authoritative and responsive voice for environmental sustainability
- (c) Achieving effectiveness, efficiency and coherence within the UN system
- (d) Securing sufficient, predictable and coherent funding
- (e) Ensuring a responsive and cohesive approach to meeting country needs

⁵ John Scanlon, *Outcome of the UNEP Belgrade Process on IEG and next steps*, Report from a Nordic Symposium: "Synergies in the biodiversity cluster", held in Helsinki, Finland, 8-9 April 2010.

Objective (c) includes as a key function the efficient and effective administration of MEAs. These core objectives have been used as a set of criteria for researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches for strengthening IEG and coordination among MEA secretariats (e.g. Wehrli 2012).

The Consultative Group recommends that these objectives be achieved through both incremental and broader reforms of the IEG system. In terms of incremental reforms, the Group suggests **considering the recommendations of the report by the Joint Inspection Unit, enhancing synergies between MEAs, inviting the COPs of the biodiversity-related conventions to launch a synergies process and developing a coherent approach to the management of UNEP administered MEAs and facilitating joint activities, including administrative functions** of MEA secretariats, as appropriate. In terms of broader reforms, the Consultative Group suggests five non-mutually exclusive options including:

- i. Enhancing UNEP
- ii. Establishing a new umbrella organization for sustainable development
- iii. Establishing a specialized agency such as a World Environment Organization
- iv. Potential reforms to the UN Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Sustainable Development
- v. Enhanced institutional reforms and streamlining of present structures.

The **11th Special Session of the UNEP GC/GMEF took place directly after the simultaneous extraordinary Conferences of the Parties (ExCOPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, in February 2010** in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia. The work of the consultative group in presenting a set of options for improving IEG was appreciated and the Executive Director was requested to identify all incremental changes in the set of options within the mandate of UNEP that can be implemented in 2010 and 2011, and integrated in the work programme for 2012-2013. Furthermore, the GC invited its President to transmit the set of options to the 64th session of the UNGA and decided to **establish a (second) regionally representative consultative group to continue the work of the first one and to consider a broader reform of the IEG system in preparation for Rio+20**. The group was tasked to present a final report to GC-26/GMEF in anticipation of its contribution in time for the second PrepCom of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, and to the 65th session of the UNGA.

Furthermore, and under the rubric of 'IEG and sustainable development' (Theme I of the 11th special session of UNEP GC/GMEF), the synergies process among the Chemicals and Waste Conventions was said to provide an important example of incremental reform. Lessons learned should be used swiftly for other conventions, in particular for those related to biodiversity, although of course the differences between each convention may mean not all the lessons can be applied fully. In decision SS.XI/9 (**Nusa Dua Declaration**), governments recognized *'the importance of enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives, and encourage the [COPs] to the biodiversity-related [MEAs] to consider strengthening efforts in this regard, taking into account*

relevant experiences'. The COPs of the biodiversity-related conventions were invited to launch a synergies process, taking into account lessons learned from the Chemicals and Waste synergies process.

In **November 2010**, the second **Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on IEG** adopted the '**Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome**' (UNEP/GC.26/18). In the *Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome* the Consultative Group identified a number of potential system-wide responses to the challenges of the current system of IEG including:

1. **Strengthening the science-policy interface** with the full participation of developing countries and building on existing international environmental assessments, scientific panels and information networks
2. Development of a **system-wide strategy for environment** in the UN system to increase effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the UN system
3. **Encouraging synergies between compatible MEAs** and identify guiding elements for realizing such synergies while respecting the autonomy of the [COPs]
4. Widen and deepen the **funding base** for environmental policy making with the goal of securing sufficient, predictable and coherent funding and increase the accessibility, cooperation and coherence among financial mechanisms and funds for the environment
5. Develop a **UN system-wide capacity building framework** for the environment to ensure a response and coherent approach to meeting country needs
6. Strengthen engagement at the **regional level** by increasing the capacity of UNEP regional offices.

In relation to encouraging synergies between compatible MEAs, the Consultative Group suggests that **synergies promote the joint delivery of common MEA services** to make them more efficient and cost-effective. The reduction of administrative costs of secretariats is considered to free up resources for the implementation of MEAs at the national level, including through capacity-building.

The Consultative Group recommended that the options for broader reform suggested in the 'Belgrade Process' be further evaluated. It particularly highlighted: enhancing UNEP, establishing a specialized agency such as a World Environment Organization and enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining of present structures as potential options for strengthening IEG. Participants at a **2011 workshop** in Bern, Switzerland on [IEG]: *Grounding Policy Reform in Rigorous Analysis* however emphasized the disconnection between these proposed institutional options and the six functional responses suggested by the *Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome*. The report of the workshop (Anon 2011) argues that none of the institutional options can address the six functional responses alone and that a combination of several of the institutional options would provide the most feasible and effective approach to strengthening IEG.

In **2010**, the **EMG** launched a **report *Advancing the biodiversity agenda – A UN system-wide contribution*** (UNEP 2010). The report contains a chapter on *Interlinkages and synergies in the implementation of the biodiversity agenda*, which identifies synergy options arising from the post-2010 targets for biodiversity and from the One UN approach. In discussing options at the global convention

level (e.g. joint policy statements, coherent decision-making by governing bodies, joint knowledge management, reducing the reporting burden, coordinated capacity-building), the report concludes that *'perhaps the best means for strengthening coherence among the conventions... is **national level coordination, cooperation and coherence**'* (pg. 104). Options recognized in this regard are improved coordination among national focal points (NFPs) to the conventions and improved integration of national reporting.

Following the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 by CBD COP 10 in **October 2010**, the United Nations **General Assembly**, through **Resolution 65/161** (December 2010) noted *'with appreciation the adoption ... of the updated and revised Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets'* (paragraph 4). It also took note *'of the ongoing work of... the [BLG] and recognized 'the importance of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives'.* It further encouraged *'the [COPs] to the biodiversity-related [MEAs] to consider strengthening efforts in this regard, taking into account relevant experiences and bearing in mind the respective independent legal status and mandates of these instruments'* (paragraph 11).

In **February 2012**, the **UNEP Governing Council** made an important decision that was expected to shape the future of the biodiversity-related MEAs. Decision SS.XII/3 recognizes *"the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognizing their respective mandates, and encourages the [COPs] to those conventions to strengthen efforts further in that regard, taking into account relevant experiences"* and, furthermore, requested *"the Executive Director to explore the opportunities for further synergies in the administrative functions of the [MEA] secretariats administered by the [UNEP] and to provide advice on such opportunities to the governing bodies of those [MEAs]"* (UNEP/GCSS.XII/14).

In the **outcome document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, "The Future we want"** (A/RES/66/288), adopted by UNGA resolution 66/288 in 2012, the General Assembly expressed its commitment to strengthen the role of UNEP and invites the Assembly, at its 67th session, to adopt a resolution strengthening and upgrading the UNEP, including through the establishment of universal membership in the Governing Council (Section C. *Environmental pillar in the context of sustainable development*).

With regard to MEAs, paragraph 89 of the Rio+20 outcome document reads *"We recognize the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the [MEAs]. We acknowledge the work already undertaken to enhance synergies among the three conventions in the chemicals and waste cluster (Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants). We encourage parties to [MEAs] to consider further measures, in these and other clusters, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce*

unnecessary overlap and duplication and enhance coordination and cooperation among the [MEAs], including the three Rio conventions, as well as with the United Nations system in the field."

At the 27th session of the UNEP Governing Council/ GMEF, in February 2013, which was the first universal session of the UNEP GC following the decision of the UNGA to strengthen and upgrade UNEP, as called for in the Rio+20 outcome document, synergies among MEAs was not high on the agenda. Instead the general need to strengthen IEG and coordination within the UN System was reaffirmed and decisions concerned the role of EMG in coordinating activities across the UN system. Furthermore, the GC recommended to UNGA to rename GC to **"United Nations Environment Assembly" of UNEP** and the decision was made to discontinue the GMEF.

However, one of the information documents to the session dealt with the ***"Relationship between the [UNEP] and [MEAs]"*** (UNEP/GC.27/INF/20). The secretariats of CITES, CMS and the CBD took the opportunity to comment on an internal UNEP report distributed to MEAs in January 2013. The report summarizes the institutional linkages between UNEP and MEAs hosted by UNEP and provides an update on the handling of issues of the accountability and financial and administrative arrangements in response to decisions 26/9 and SS.XII/2 of the UNEP GC (UNEP/GC.27/6).

In their comments, the three secretariats of the biodiversity-related MEAs generally welcomed the opportunity to comment on the report and in particular the CITES and CMS Secretariats pointed out how their Parties have addressed the issues of cooperation and synergies among Conventions in several resolutions and decisions. At the same time the CITES Secretariat points out that there appear to be *"some internal differences and possible inconsistencies within the UNEP Report regarding how MEA Secretariats are perceived and described"*. In particular one statement (paragraph 32 (d)) could lead to confusion between the administrative support function fulfilled by UNEP in relation to conventions and any programmatic cooperation between UNEP and conventions. In this regard the secretariat further states *"These are separate and distinct matters and directly connecting the two in this manner has been a cause of tension between UNEP and the MEAs and their Secretariats... The CITES Secretariat suggests that the administrative relationship between UNEP and some MEAs not be used as a vehicle for pursuing programmatic cooperation, which is a separate matter for the Parties."* The CBD Secretariat associated itself with all of these comments.

The first UN Environmental Assembly of UNEP (UNEA) from 23-27th June 2014, adopted a draft resolution on "Coordination across the United Nations system in the field of the environment, including the EMG" in which it reiterates Paragraph 3 of the Governing Council decision 27/5 , and *"requests the Executive Director, mainly through the Environmental Management Group and in line with paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "the future we want" to develop system-wide strategies on the environment and to invite the engagement of the Secretary-General and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to facilitate broad ownership in the United Nations at all levels."* The resolution also requested the Executive

Director to identify possible measures to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the EMG and to submit recommendations to UNEA for consideration at its second session.

An information paper to the first UNEA outlined a number of areas UNEA could usefully support the process of increasing coherence and harmonisation in the implementation of MEAs (UNEP/EA.1/INF/8). These included reviewing UNEP's relationship with MEAs, exploring opportunities for UNEP's assessment and programme coordination functions to support MEAs, and supporting the integration of MEA priorities into regional and national environment and development strategies (such as UNDAF).

2. Convention provisions on synergies

The governing bodies of all six global biodiversity-related MEAs have adopted **decisions or resolutions** calling for enhanced synergies with other conventions, while the **strategic planning documents** of CBD, CITES, CMS and Ramsar Convention also carry provisions for implementing synergies (UNEP-WCMC 2012). Table 1 below outlines the most recent decisions or resolutions taken by the biodiversity-related agreements to encourage synergies among the conventions at the global level. Decisions have also been taken to foster synergies at the sub-national, national and regional levels, but these are not discussed further here.

Table 1: Recent decisions of the biodiversity-related conventions relating to synergies

Convention	Decision/ Resolution	Text
CBD	XI/6 (2012)	<p><i>'stresses the need to strengthen synergistic processes among the biodiversity-related conventions, building on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as the central pillar, in close collaboration with the [UNEP], the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, aiming for further development of tools and procedures enabling harmonized implementation of the conventions, learning from other relevant processes, including the process within the chemicals and waste cluster;'</i></p> <p>COP mandates the Executive Secretary of the CBD to: <i>'In consultation with other convention secretariats, draft suggestions for the [COPs] on improving efficiency and reducing unnecessary overlap and duplication at all relevant levels among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions'</i></p>
	X/2 (2010)	<p>Requests the Executive Secretary to <i>'To develop, for consideration by the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention at its fourth meeting, options for the further enhancement of implementation of the Convention, including through the further development of capacity-building programmes, partnerships and the strengthening of synergies among Conventions and other international processes'</i></p> <p>WGRI 4 responded to this decision by suggesting that the COP request the Executive Secretary to:</p> <p>a) Provide a report on the implementation of the modus operandi</p>

		<p>adopted by the BLG</p> <p>b) In consultation with other convention secretariats, draft suggestions for increasing the involvement of Parties in the work of the BLG</p> <p>These suggestions were adopted by CBD COP 11 in decision XI/6. These suggestions and the others included in decision XI/6 that focus on fostering synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the subnational, national and regional levels illustrate the desire of the CBD COP to encourage a Party-driven synergies process.</p>
CITES	16.4 (2013)	<i>'ENCOURAGES Parties to consider further opportunities to strengthen the cooperation, coordination and synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at all relevant levels.'</i>
	16.11	Mandates the Standing Committee to <i>'explore further options to strengthen cooperation, collaboration and synergies between CITES and the other biodiversity-related conventions at all relevant levels, including through their respective programmes of work and secretariats.'</i>
CMS	10.21 (2011)	<i>'Requests the Secretariat as far as possible to avoid duplication of work on the same issues between MEAs dedicated to nature protection issues, and invites the [BLG] to address at its future meetings options for enhanced cooperation with regard to work on cross-cutting issues, such as climate change, bushmeat and invasive alien species, including through exploring the possibility of identifying lead MEAs in a manner consistent with their mandates, governance arrangements and agreed programmes.'</i>
Ramsar	X.11	<p><i>'Invites the Secretariat to develop cooperative relations with UN agencies such as UNEP, UNESCO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)...</i></p> <p><i>'Requests the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), subject to the availability of time and resources, to exchange information and coordinate activities with the equivalent subsidiary bodies of other MEAs'</i></p>
ITPGRFA	6/2013	<i>'Requests the Secretary to continue to explore areas of cooperation with other relevant international organizations to further develop synergies'</i>

3. Existing mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions

A range of mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the biodiversity-related conventions already exists. **Generic mechanisms and bodies** include the EMG as well as the following:

- **The Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG)**, comprising the heads of the secretariats of the six conventions, meets at least annually to explore opportunities for synergistic activities and increased coordination, and to exchange information. Initiatives led through this group have included:
 - co-operation on financing, including, for example, how to help countries access GEF funding to implement projects that harness synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions;
 - IPBES (Inter-governmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)- including the need for a coordinated approach within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 to develop requests to IPBES;
 - the Post-2015 sustainable development framework and the SDGs;
 - harmonization of reporting, and;
 - a number of thematic collaborations.
- **The Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB)**- have collaborated in areas including exploring opportunities related to IPBES, collaborative (thematic) activities related to ecosystem restoration and to sustainable use, and work to harmonize nomenclature (CITES/CMS). The group also aims to carry out some horizon scanning and the joint identification of emerging issues of concern.
- **The MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative** seeks to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems in support of knowledge management activities among MEAs. Its most recent work has included development of e-learning tools; reviewing the InforMEA website, and; advancing on-line reporting
 - **InforMEA** is an initiative of the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative that harvests and presents information such as COP decisions, news, meetings, membership, national focal points and reports from all the MEAs in a harmonized format.

The Aichi Target task force is implemented through a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC), signed on 21st September 2011, between the CBD Secretariat and 27 international agencies, organizations and

environmental conventions, aiming to achieve and implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It provides a platform for agencies to coordinate their activities in support of implementation of the Strategic Plan and its targets at global and national levels during the UN Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020). In response to this, other biodiversity conventions have taken steps to align their strategies with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 for example the new *Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2015-2023* (CMS) presents sixteen targets grouped under five strategic goals aligned with those of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Indicators to track progress towards achievement of the targets have been based on those devised for the corresponding Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The recently revised CITES Strategic Vision extends to 2020 and refers to the Aichi Targets.

A Task Team on the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between MEAs had its first meeting on 3 February 2014 (UNEP/EA.1/INF/8). Consisting of representatives from relevant MEA secretariats and offices of the UNEP secretariat, this task team has initiated separate consultations on administrative arrangements – such as joint legal advice, conference services etc – and on programmatic cooperation – undertaking joint work programs where mandates overlap.

Thematic mechanisms of cooperation include the Inter-Agency Liaison Group on Invasive Alien Species, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, all with participation of some of the biodiversity-related conventions. The biodiversity-related conventions have established a range of bilateral or multilateral **Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation** as well as joint work plans or programmes with other conventions which are outlined in the table below. Subsets of the conventions also cooperate on a range of **thematic issues** through joint initiatives such as bushmeat, environmental impact assessment or site-based conservation, among others (UNEP-WCMC 2012). Table 2 shows the most recent Memorandums of Cooperation (MoC), Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and Joint Work Programmes (JWP) between the biodiversity-related conventions.

Co-operation has also included a number of **joint workshops** on particular issues including Synergies, such as the CBD/CITES: "Expert Workshop Promoting CITES-CBD Cooperation and Synergy", Vilm, Germany, 20-24 April 2004; and workshops on the mutually supportive implementation of the Treaty and the Nagoya Protocol (organized by the ABS Capacity Development Initiative and Biodiversity International in cooperation with the Secretariats of the CBD and the Treaty) in Rome, 29-31 January 2013 and 3-6 June 2014. The CBD, CMS and Ramsar have also collaborated in regional joint preparatory meetings for their respective COPs. The joint CBD/UNFCCC/UNCCD SBSTTA session held in June 2011 was an example of what might be also achieved for the biodiversity-related conventions.

Interlaken, Switzerland, 26-28 August 2014

Table 2: Memorandums of Cooperation (MoC), Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and Joint Work Programmes (JWP)

	CBD				
CMS	MoC 1996 JWP 2012-2014	CMS			
CITES	MoC 1996, amended 2000/2001	MoU 2002 JWP 2012-2014	CITES		
Ramsar	MoC 2011 JWP 2011-2020	MoU 1997 MoC 2012 JWP 2012-2014	N/A	Ramsar	
WHC	JWP 2010-20	UNESCO and CMS MoU 2002	N/A	MoU 1999 MAB Joint Programme of Work 2002	WHC
ITPGRFA	MoC 2010 FAO/CBD JWP 2011-2020	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

4. Synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs in the literature – a snapshot from 1999 until today

The failure of IEG is a reoccurring subject in grey and academic literature. While the need for reform and the call for enhancing “synergies” among MEAs are generally shared, authors often highlight that a better understanding of the current structure of IEG is a necessary prerequisite to understand the current shortcomings to help to identify options towards enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of biodiversity-related MEAs.

The synergy discourse started in earnest with the 1999 United Nations University Conference on ‘Interlinkages: Synergies and Coordination between MEAs’, based on the assumption that the global environment, composed of inter-related ecosystems, is naturally synergistic and that more effective environmental management results from harnessing these synergies by coordination (United Nations University 1999). The idea of natural synergies built upon earlier UNEP work on linkages among global environmental issues and advanced the idea that coordination could improve MEA effectiveness, by promoting the coherence of norms and ensuring that the desired impact of one regime would not undermine that of another.

With regard to potential options, **Moltke** remarked in **2001** that *“there remains a remarkable scarcity of realistic proposals on measures that can be adopted”* and – referring to the adoption of decision 21/21 on IEG at the 21st session of the Governing Council of UNEP/GMEF, held in Nairobi in February 2001 – focused on the potential of **clustering MEAs** (Moltke 2001). According to Moltke’s definition, clustering can refer to *“a variety of institutional and organizational arrangements short of merger that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing agreements without requiring elaborate changes in legal or administrative arrangements”*. His analysis is not restricted to thematic clustering (e.g. conservation), as the various “tools” for clustering range from financial matters to electronic clusters. Regional clustering approaches are contrasted to the thematic clustering approach that is usually referred to in today’s general linguistic use of the term (e.g. biodiversity or Chemical and Waste cluster). **Moltke** concludes that similar to all international negotiations, the clustering process needs “champions”, countries that have an interest in promoting a certain outcome and are willing to invest some political capital in achieving it. Therefore the essential first step in clustering is the identification of champions for various clusters.

Instead of focusing on potential measures or tools that should be adopted or implemented, **Le Prestre et. al.** pointed out in **2004** that the IEG reform debate has concentrated on the criticism and identification of failures of the current system while overlooking its advantages and achievements and exaggerating potential advantages of the reforms proposed (Le Prestre & Martimort-Asso 2004). **The authors observe that fragmentation is not necessarily negative** and underline the importance to

recognise that ***"the diversity of institutions not only reflects the diversity of environmental challenges, but also the diversity of points of view and interests, the commitment of actors having more to do with the nature of the problems than the distributions of powers"***. Furthermore, two shortcomings of existing analyses of IEG are highlighted. The first is the poor empirical basis of the problems identified (and the justifications for the corrective solutions put forward); the second is the failure to show how existing achievements could be kept while seeking to strengthen the system.

In 2006 ***Najam et. al.*** come to a similar conclusion by stating that *"while five interrelated concerns are often identified as parts of the MEA proliferation problem (treaty congestion; institutional fragmentation; states' struggle to meet institutional demands; duplication and conflicting agendas in global environmental governance (GEG); and the diminishing role of science in GEG), there are also some positive aspects of proliferation and fragmentation that also need to be acknowledged"* (Najam et al. 2006). The authors further elaborate that **the central issue in the debate should be whether environmental protection at the international and national levels is supported or undermined by the multiplicity of institutions**. They thus identify the following questions as the key question for the debate: *"To what extent does the diversity of GEG instruments and fragmentation of its institutions help countries address their national environmental priorities by allowing them multiple opportunities to benefit from the GEG system?"* and *"Does this diversity help the system respond to global environmental problems?"* The authors conclude that from this perspective, proliferation of MEAs and fragmentation of GEG should be addressed because they significantly undermine countries' interests and, by extension, the whole GEG system.

With regard to the lack of cooperation and coordination among international organizations, ***Najam et. al.*** further point out that the **main task is to create an incentive structure so that the key agencies see it in their own interest to coordinate with other institutions**. They also highlight that **it has to be driven by member states**. The authors call for the GMEF to become the principal high-level forum for political decision-making on strategic issues – while highlighting that whoever is given the responsibility to coordinate should also be given the means to coordinate. Another recommendation is for donors to encourage MEA collaboration and clustering by providing a financial incentive (additional funding) for those who pursue it. Thereby the authors also see a need to identify the key areas in which coordination is desirable and feasible.

With regard to efforts to combat MEA proliferation ***Najam et. al.*** also support clustering activities and outline respective future activities. In particular, they suggest that both the duration and the frequency of COPs could be streamlined by making the high-level segments less frequent so that more focus can be placed on implementation and performance. Another idea put forward is enabling the secretariats to focus on their role as facilitators of the negotiation processes by outsourcing, for example, activities related to science, capacity building and conference services.

In their **2008** article "*A Non-institutional proposal to strengthen [IEG]*", *Perrez & Ziegerer* (2008) acknowledge important achievements of the IEG process, but nevertheless point out that the different proposals and initiatives have not yet proven sufficient to allow the emergence of a comprehensive, coherent, effective and efficient international environmental regime. **A major reason for this failure is seen in the fact that efforts so far have focused primarily on institutional aspects of IEG.** Taking into account that the systemic and institutional deficiencies are not sufficient to explain the shortcomings of the current regime and current policies, institutional measures for strengthening IEG therefore have to be complemented by other approaches. As a way forward *Perrez and Ziegerer* present the proposal for Global Environmental Goals that could consist of the gist of previously agreed global commitments to safeguard the environment and therefore would not have to be negotiated by the international community.

Bradnee Chambers' 2008 book "*Interlinkages and the effectiveness of [MEAs]*" represents one of the few academic accounts to investigate the impact of enhanced MEA coordination on treaty effectiveness. Chambers' case study of the CBD and ITPGRFA illustrates that cooperation between these treaties has improved the meeting of their primary objectives, the compliance with and monitoring of their obligations and their supporting provisions.

In **2009**, the *Global Environmental Governance Forum: Reflecting on the Past, Moving into the Future* gathered together several generations of environmental leaders, including all the Executive Directors of UNEP since its creation in 1972, to discuss IEG in Glion, Switzerland (Global Environmental Governance Project 2009). In particular, the Forum focused on the role of UNEP as a central pillar in the environmental governance system, acknowledging both its successes and failures. **The forum reaffirmed the need to strengthen the "form follows function" principle in environmental governance processes.** It stated the need for more substantial research into the successes, failures and potentials of existing environmental governance structures to properly understand how the principle can be integrated into IEG reform. This suggestion echoes similar comments in the literature on the lack of a substantial analytical foundation for environmental governance reform. Undertaking such research and establishing a framework to evaluate performance would strengthen the MEA secretariat coordination role of UNEP. In addition, the forum suggested an issue-based cooperation mechanism that could be applied to MEAs and institutional organizations should be developed to strengthen connectivity among MEA secretariats and UNEP. The forum also mentioned "*institutional clustering, consolidation or elimination*" as a potential solution to increase the capacity of UNEP as an environmental coordination mechanism.

In **preparation for the Nordic Symposium on "Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster"** held in Helsinki Finland in April 2010, *Niko Urho* outlined "**Possibilities of enhancing co-operation and co-ordination among MEAs in the biodiversity cluster**" (Urho 2009). With regard to current activities for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs, Urho observes that they have been undertaken "*in a fairly ad hoc fashion and with no particular coordinated approach in mind*" and that they can probably not even be characterized as truly synergistic. Furthermore in his opinion the step-by-step approach to

clustering is being introduced as one way of enhancing the IEG process, because a dramatic restructuring of IEG in the new future is unlikely. Nevertheless, he sees it as a promising approach since it will enable the building up of a more coherent IEG where national needs are addressed and where form follows function.

Urho's key recommendation is that **the contracting Parties should assume a greater role in creating synergies among MEAs**. By limiting cooperation to the secretariat level – which he acknowledges as well developed, in particular through the BLG and bilateral arrangements – the conventions have not been able to effectively enhance synergies between the MEAs or even properly coordinate existing activities. Drawing on lessons learned from the Chemicals and Waste cluster and in particular the work of the Ad Hoc Joint Working Group on enhancing co-operation and co-ordination between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (AHJWG), Urho advocates the **transformation of the BLG into a forum that would also include the Contracting Parties**. The author nevertheless acknowledges that the AHJWG model cannot be directly applied to the biodiversity cluster, since in regard to scope and number of MEAs, it is much larger. Urho also considers harmonization of national reporting as a key area to facilitate national implementation that governments need to be involved in. Another important recommendation is to **develop and strengthen the GEF** by including more focal areas and more treaty-specific services for the MEAs in the biodiversity cluster, as apart from the CBD, the MEAs in the biodiversity cluster do not have a financial mechanism.

The report **of the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster** concludes that **enhancing synergies in respect of financing** is a potential tool to achieve more with less, while the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol could be explored as a model for a financial mechanism for the biodiversity cluster (Anon 2010). Participants nevertheless highlight that experience has shown that enhancing cooperation and coordination does not necessarily lead to immediate cost savings. Instead, the potential exists to increase efficiency by redirecting resources from administration to implementation; the reallocation of resources to facilitate national implementation is likely to provide benefits in the long term. Furthermore, the participants highlighted:

- the importance of **the human factor in the "synergy debate"** and that efforts to bring about greater cooperation and coordination can provoke anxiety among parties and secretariats regarding equity, autonomy, influence and availability and distribution of resources;
- the importance of a **flexible approach** to synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs so that synergistic benefits could also be achieved in sub-clusters on substantive issues and that links to other biodiversity-relevant sectors can be created.

The participants also concluded that the focus of an MEA synergies process should be primarily on enhancing synergies on issues of substance, rather than on administrative issues. It identified the following programmatic areas as possible areas for joint action: the science-policy interface (e.g. an IPBES); harmonization of reporting; streamlining of meeting agendas; joint information management

and awareness raising; and capacity building, compliance, funding and review mechanisms. The participants also generally called for a thematic approach to synergies.

As a next step participants pointed to the **identification of national needs** to be addressed in the synergies process and called for the development of a mechanism for identifying such needs. The participants also noted that the interplay between efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination among biodiversity-related MEAs and the discussions under way on IEG should be carefully managed to avoid politicizing the former, which should be fundamentally a substantive process.

Prior to the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Jóhannsdóttir et al. 2010 came to the conclusion that synergies between international biodiversity MEAs have developed, but weakly. The authors find little evidence to show that such synergies have led to improved biodiversity outcomes. They thus argue that the existing international biodiversity conservation tools are not working for the future of biodiversity; or worse, are providing a false sense of security. With regard to existing biodiversity targets the authors acknowledge that they do provide some moral persuasion on parties to comply, but due to lack of definitive legal status, with no penalty imposed for failure, and with ineffectual or absent reporting, are mostly likely to continue to fail to achieve positive biodiversity outcomes. Jóhannsdóttir et. al. recommend **merging all existing MEAs relating to biodiversity by developing them into distinct protocols under the CBD**. The authors identify UNEP's GMEF, with the support of the EMG, as the only appropriate vehicle to make the necessary changes, despite its lack of real progress so far.

[IEG]: A Legal Analysis of Selected Options (Fauchald 2010) provides a comprehensive evaluation of the legal issues that arise in the context of reforms of the environmental pillar of sustainable development and outlines the legal implications for MEAs of strengthening UNEP. **The feasibility of options for strengthening UNEP depends on whether the options can be implemented within the mandates of MEA COPs.** In particular, it may be challenging to incorporate the WHC and ITPGRFA into some of the reforms suggested as UNEP is not their host institution. The report also considers the legal implications of enhancing cooperation and coordination among clusters of MEAs, including the biodiversity-related conventions, in the context of strengthening the functions of UNEP. Several options are evaluated including coordination of COPs, establishing joint bodies for implementation, compliance, scientific assessments or funding as well as coordination of activities and establishing common secretariat functions or joint services. Again, the heterogeneity of the MEAs, in particular the ITPGRFA and WHC renders their full inclusion in such reforms challenging but still possible.

In June 2011, a **workshop on [IEG]: Grounding Policy Reform in Rigorous Analysis** was held in Bern, Switzerland to start a dialogue between researchers and policymakers and provide input to the negotiations on institutional reform of environmental governance in the run up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (Anon 2011). In response to discussions on the disconnection between the objectives of IEG and the suggested options for institutional reform outlined in the *Nairobi-*

Helsinki Outcome (UNEP/GC.26/18), **participants suggested a set of core criteria to guide future assessments of options for institutional reform.** These include:

- **Authority:** reform options should facilitate the consolidation and increase in authority of global environmental institutions
- **Implementation:** reform options need to enable environmental institutions to implement rules and standards, including by engaging with other NGOs, government organizations and the private sector
- **Solid science-policy interface:** reforms should strengthen the science-policy interface since environmental decision making requires a strong scientific foundation
- **Stable and predictable funding:** is a source of institutional authority and effectiveness
- **Accountability:** is a crucial component of governance but is currently lacking in most reform options currently under consideration
- **Ability to reach out and engage with non-government actors:** these actors play a role in environmental degradation and therefore must be engaged as part of sustainable development
- **Ability to keep the conversation going:** continuous dialogue with all stakeholders is crucial for enabling continuous reform.

As a result of the workshop, a series of issue briefs on governance and sustainability issues were published by the Center for Governance and Sustainability and the University of Massachusetts Boston. Issue Brief 3 ***Clustering Assessment: Enhancing Synergies among [MEAs]*** by Judith Wehrli (2012) outlines MEA clustering as an approach for generating synergies and enhancing IEG. Wehrli draws on a case study of clustering among the Chemicals and Waste Conventions to illustrate how clustering can enhance efficiency and effectiveness of MEAs. The brief highlights the flexibility of the clustering approach since it can be adapted to suit various institutional frameworks and is compatible with other measures for strengthening UNEP and IEG. It concludes that **clustering offers significant potential to strengthen the key functions of IEG outlined in the Belgrade Process.**

In 2012, UNEP-WCMC's report ***Promoting synergies within the cluster of biodiversity-related [MEAs], written by Peter Herkenrath***, analysed the potential for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions and **developed a set of options for realizing synergies in four key thematic areas** at the global level. These areas include: a) the science-policy interface, b) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, c) national reporting and d) capacity-building. **The report highlights the need for a step-by-step, party-driven process to enhance coordination among MEAs.** It also presents a range approaches for generating synergies at growing levels of ambition from enhancing synergies through existing secretariat level cooperation (business as usual) to a fundamental reorganization of MEAs under a World Environment Organisation or United Nations Environment Organization.

5. Conclusions

The call for synergies and the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions have been emphasized in policy and academic discussions since the early 2000s. The overview of IEG and academic debates illustrates the agreement that exists on this and the potential options that have already been put forward for how this could be achieved. Key decisions such as UNEP Governing Council decision SS.XII/3 in 2012 calling for enhanced synergies among the biodiversity-related MEAs, the potential new impetus through UNEA and the new report of the Joint Inspection Unit will help to shape the future of the conventions, including the synergies between them. Existing efforts, including the alignment of strategy and objectives around the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets, have made some good progress and there are real opportunities to build on these efforts. It is hoped that the first expert meeting on "Elaboration of options for synergies among biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements" in Interlaken, Switzerland, 26-28 August 2014 can help to draw out lessons learnt from existing efforts to enhance collaboration and coordination across biodiversity MEAs and other clusters, and elaborate a number of options to build on these.

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