



CBD



## CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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### CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Sixth meeting

The Hague, 7-19 April 2002

Item 16 of the provisional agenda\*

### THEMATIC PROGRAMMES OF WORK—PROGRESS REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION: BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF INLAND WATERS

*Progress report on the implementation of the River Basin Initiative*

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, a progress report on the implementation of the River Basin Initiative, which is included in the second joint work plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, as endorsed by the Conference of the Parties in paragraph 2 of its decision V/2.
2. The text, which has not been formally edited, is available in English only.

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\* UNEP/CBD/COP/6/1 and Corr.1/Rev.1.

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**JOINT WORK PLAN OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
AND THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (RAMSAR, IRAN, 1971)**  
**PROGRESS REPORT ON RIVER BASIN INITIATIVE (RBI)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The River Basin Initiative (RBI) was formally endorsed in December 1999 by the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and in May 2000 by the Conference of Parties of CBD (COP5) through decision V/2 which states:

*“The Conference of Parties ...Endorses the proposed joint work plan for the period 2000-2001 of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance... which includes a River Basin Initiative, encourages Parties, other Governments and relevant bodies to support and participate in the Initiative....”*

The Initiative operates under the framework of the Joint Work Plan between the two Conventions, to support implementation of convention decisions related to integrated management of inland water ecosystems and associated biodiversity, water resources and wetlands. The Initiative works in partnership with national and international organizations through their on-going and future activities at local and river basin level.

This progress report is prepared by secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and River Basin Initiative Secretariat.

**II. RELATION TO CONVENTIONS DECISIONS**

The Initiative is very closely linked to implementation of CBD Decision IV/4 and the Inland waters programme of work. Some of the key elements of the Programme which are supported by the Initiative are as follows:

CBD Decision IV/4, annex I, part A, (COP IV May 1998) Paragraph 8 indicated that the work Plan [for SBSTTA] should include:

*Compiling case studies of watershed, catchment and river basin management experiences and best practices, to synthesize the lessons that emerge from these studies, and to disseminate information through the clearing house and other appropriate mechanisms.*

Paragraph 9 of the same decision recommends that Parties:

- (i) Encourage the adoption of integrated land and watershed management approaches based on watersheds, catchments and river basins for the protection, use, planning and management of inland water ecosystems;
- (ii) Encourage the adoption of integrated watershed, catchment and river basin management strategies to maintain, restore or improve the quality and supply of inland water resources and the economic, social, hydrological, biological diversity and other functions and values of inland water ecosystems.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Costa Rica, May 1999) adopted Resolution VII.18 “*Guidelines on integrating wetland conservation and wise use into*

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*river basin management". This resolution adopts a set of guidelines and "urges all Contracting Parties to give priority to their application".*

*Resolution VII.18* "further encourages Contracting Parties to develop pilot activities or projects to promote or implement the guidelines in their countries and to report to Ramsar COP8 and other relevant fora (such as the CBD) on the success and lessons learned from these activities and guidelines". This decision of the Parties provided impetus to the development of the River Basin Initiative within the framework of the Joint Work Plan between the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on Wetlands.

### **III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE INITIATIVE**

The Initiative has been developed through three different phases as follows:

- Preparatory Phase (May 1999-May 2000)
- Establishment Phase (June 2000 - July 2001)
- Initial Operational Phase (August 2001 - December 2003)

The development process has involved a number of different steps including Consultation with parties and international partners, a needs and contributions assessment and a design workshop. These steps are described in more details below.

#### **A. Consultations**

The following list gives some of the important consultation activities, which have taken place in 2000 and 2001

- February 2000. Workshop on RBI at SBSTTA 5
- March 2000, The Hague. Meeting with international organization partners at World Water Forum
- May 2000, Nairobi. Workshop for delegates to CBD COP5.
- March 2001, Montreal. Meeting of international organization partners of the RBI
- March 2001, Montreal. Workshop on the RBI for delegates to the CBD SBSTTA meeting
- May 2001, The Netherlands. RBI Design Workshop
- July 2001, Malaysia. Workshop on RBI and Community Involvement
- August 2001, Sweden. Working Group on RBI at Global Water Partnership Meeting
- August 2001, Malaysia. Presentation on RBI at Asian Wetland Symposium
- November 2001, Netherlands. Presentation on RBI at the Board meeting of Wetlands International
- December 2001, Germany. Presentation on RBI at the International Conference on Freshwater

#### **B. Needs and Contributions Assessment**

A Needs and Contributions Assessment (to guide the implementation of the Initiative) was conducted amongst parties to the CBD and Ramsar Convention starting in mid-March 2001. CBD Secretariat posted a notification on the web requesting inputs from all the national focal points in April 2001. The notification is available at: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/notifications/default.asp?year=2001&thm=RBI>. More than 150 questionnaires from 90 countries were received primarily from the conventions focal points. Respondents were relatively evenly distributed in all major regions: North America, Latin America and Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. A breakdown of responses from governments (CBD or Ramsar focal points) by region is contained in Annex I to this report.

The major conclusions of the report were that 97% of respondents agreed that there was a need for better integration of management of wetlands, biodiversity and river basins and that improved provision of

information materials and guidance would support such efforts. The top priority topics for information sharing were: Community involvement in river basin or water resources management; planning procedures and mechanisms; monitoring and research; policies and legal instruments; and management interventions. Web sites, manuals and email were identified as key tools to supplement country-based training programmes.

More than 90% of countries agreed to share information on their countries experiences through the framework of the River Basin Initiative. Respondents also gave key information the ways in which they could share information with other countries including case studies, arranging study tours and site visits, hosting training courses, and provision of publications.

A number of slight differences were determined between different regions, but the broad trends were similar. The main differences related to the value of the web, email and printed materials as well as the relative importance of information exchange on monitoring and management interventions.

The recommendations as a result of the analysis included:

- Focus on priority topics for initial information exchange
- Build on the strong willingness to contribute of many countries and international organizations
- Be flexible to regional differences in need
- consider support for regional or country information dissemination mechanisms

A summary of the analysis report of the needs and contributions assessment is contained in annex II.

### C. Design Workshop

A design workshop for the Initiative was held in May 2001 and brought together representatives from international organizations and countries to advance the design of the initiative and to review linkages to other activities. It was attended by 43 participants including 17 from international organizations and 24 experts and organisation representatives from countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America. The workshop reviewed the proposed mode of operation and mechanisms for the RBI. It supported the main elements of the RBI but made a number of suggestion of changes such as extending the timeframe for the operation of the Initiative to ten years, enhancing the focus on working with country partners and integrating some of the activities with ongoing programmes of international partners.

## IV. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

### A. Management framework

The Initiative is currently managed through a Management Committee comprising representatives of the CBD Secretariat and the Ramsar Convention Bureau and the RBI Secretariat. Meetings have been held in February and May 2000, January, March, August, and November 2001. An Advisory Group has been established including representatives of the International organization partners. An annual Advisory Group meeting is planned starting in 2002. Preparatory meetings with international partners have been held in March 2000 and March 2001.

### B. Secretariat

The Secretariat for the RBI is in Malaysia hosted by the Global Environment Center. It currently has one full time and three part time staff with additional staffing expected in the next few months. The secretariat will provide overall coordination services but most of the proposed activities will be undertaken through partner organizations.

### C. Resources

Funds have been provided for the preparatory activities by the following organizations:

- Canadian International Development Agency
- Danish Cooperation for Environment and Development (DANCED)
- Department For International Development (UK)
- Directorate General for International Cooperation (Netherlands)
- Ramsar Convention Bureau
- UNEP-GEF
- UNDP-GEF
- Wetlands International

Funding proposals for the Initial operational Phase have been submitted to UNDP-GEF and the Netherlands government. The Ramsar Bureau provided a grant in October 2001 to support some of the initial operation activities of the RBI such as information exchange and development of the partnerships with national and international organizations

### D. Country Involvement

Based on the responses to the questionnaires through official CBD/SBSTTA Focal Points or Ramsar Administrative Authorities, the following 81 countries have agreed to share their experience through the River Basin Initiative:

Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Republic of Guinea, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, The FYR of Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Romania, Samoa, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, Sudan, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, The Bahamas, The Netherlands, The Philippines, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zambia.

### E. International Organisation Partners

Invitations were sent to various International organizations inviting them to participate in the activities of the RBI as international organization partners. The following organizations have confirmed their involvement to date:

- Global Water Partnership (GWP)
- The World Fish Center ICLARM
- International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
- Organization of American States (OAS)
- UNESCO
- Wetlands International
- World Conservation Union (IUCN)
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

Discussions with a number of other international organizations are ongoing.

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## V. ACTIVITIES AT INITIAL OPERATIONAL PHASE

### A. RBI-Net

RBI Net was established in October 2001 as a moderated group that aims to provide a means for discussion and sharing of information on development of the Initiative, case studies, guidelines and projects related to integrated river basin management and related biodiversity and wetland issues. Currently there are over 250 members from about 70 countries.

### B. Newsletter

Electronic and hard copy newsletters are being developed which will be sent to CBD and Ramsar Convention focal points, international and country partners and other interested people every quarter starting in 2002. Articles related to river basin management and news updates.

### C. Activities at the International Conference on Freshwater, Bonn December 2001

RBI secretariat represented by CBD and the Ramsar Convention at the International Conference on freshwater held in Bonn from 3-7 December. A side event was organised on the 4<sup>th</sup> December on the RBI involving presentations by the Government of Japan on River Restoration in Japan and from The Lakenet secretariat on Integrating biodiversity and lake Management. Input was given to the deliberations of the conference and into the draft conference decision. Final declarations and recommendations of the conference will be presented to the preparatory meetings for the WSSD. In addition, input was provided to a number of other linked events including a design meeting for the Dialogue on Water Food and the Environment and a workshop for the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative.

### D. RBI Portal

The main information sharing tool for the River Basin Initiative is an internet portal which is currently under development and is expected to be operational by January 2001. This portal is being developed using community portal software which will enable decentralized management of the information by different partners and also user friendly tools to enable anyone at country or organisation level to upload information to share through the portal (subject to approval by the network of editors). Reference materials such as articles, reports, manuals, guidelines and case studies are being uploaded onto the portal for members to view. From early 2002, the portal will also incorporate the RBI Net and enable easy formation of subportals or specialist electronic discussion groups.

#### *Promotional Event for RBI in January 2002:*

A promotional event for the River Basin Initiative was organised in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002 – to provide information of the RBI and its support services to government, non-government, and research agencies in Malaysia as well as representatives of international organisations attending the Board Meeting of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The seminar was attended by more than 60 senior agency representatives as well as members of the press. During the opening ceremony of the event a “soft launch” of the RBI Internet Portal was undertaken officiated by Delmar Blasco, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention and Jan plesnik, Chairman of the CBD SBSTTA, representing the Executive Secretary of CBD. Following the soft launch, access to the Portal is being provided to all Parties to CBD to contribute their experience and information for inclusion in the portal.

#### *Proposed Full Launch of the RBI Portal:*

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It is proposed that the formal launch of the RBI portal populated with information provided by convention parties and international organisations will be undertaken at the time of the COP6 of the CBD in April 2002 in the Netherlands.

#### E. Collation and distribution of manuals and guidelines

A number of manuals and guidelines related to integrated wetland, biodiversity and river/water resource management already exist. These are being collated and made available on-line with limited copies for hard copy distribution to developing countries. by request.

#### F. Anticipated contribution of the RBI to the Third World Water Forum

RBI has set up an online workshop on the Virtual Water Forum associated with the Third World Water Forum to be held in March 2003 in Kyoto, Japan. This will enable on-line interaction with the many on-line participants in this event (currently over 1200).

Four separate meetings have been held with members of the WWF3 secretariat since December 2000 and a number of areas of linkage have been identified:

- RBI is currently chairing an on-line workshop on the WWF3 Virtual Water Forum and will chair a second one later in 2002.
- RBI will co-organise a regional technical workshop on river restoration in Asia in Mid 2002.
- RBI will organise a Technical session at the WWF3 on River basin management together with different partners
- RBI is discussing the option to organise several joint promotion activities with the WWF3 secretariat

#### G. Country level activities

Discussions have been held with several countries in order to start or support activities linked to the Initiative. These discussions are linked to the follow-up to the offers from 81 countries to share their information and experience through the initiative. It is expected in the first phase that a selection of countries from each of the different geographic regions will be involved in pilot information exchange, awareness and demonstration activities.

### **VI. OPTIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT**

Organisations operating at the local, country or international levels are encouraged to contact the secretariat if they would like to:

- receive further information on the Initiative
- sign up for the Knowledge Sharing Network
- promote or share information on their activities or experiences
- become partners in implementing the Initiative
- provide funds or technical assistance to support the Initiative
- ask for advice in river basin management problems

**Annex I- Breakdown of responses from governments (CBD or Ramsar focal points) by region to the questionnaire sent to focal points in April 2001**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Regions</b>						<b>Total</b>
	Africa	Asia Pacific	& Western Europe & North America	Eastern Europe	Latin America		
Total no. of Countries who were sent Questionnaires	55	48	23	22	35	<b>183</b>	
Total no. of Countries Responded	25	15	7	14	19	<b>80</b>	
Percentage of Countries Responded	45%	31%	30%	64%	54%	<b>44%</b>	
<b>RESPONSES</b>							
CBD Focal Points/ SBSTTA Reps.	17	15	5	10	12	59	
Ramsar Administrative Authorities	17	12	6	9	13	57	
Both Ramsar & CBD Focal Points	4	5	1	4	4	18	
<b>Total Response Questionnaire Received</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>101</b>	

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## Annex II- A Summary of the Report on Analysis of River Basin Initiative Needs and Contributions Assessment

The Needs and Contributions Assessment for the River Basin Initiative was undertaken by the formal distribution of questionnaires by the Executive Secretary of the CBD and the Secretary General of the Ramsar convention to the respective focal points and administrative authorities of the conventions. Some additional questionnaires were circulated by the secretariat of the Initiative to selected organisations and projects who had expressed interest in the Initiative. The questionnaires were circulated starting in mid-March 2001 meeting and questionnaires continued to be received by the RBI secretariat till December 2001. A total of over 150 questionnaires have been received from 86 countries distributed relatively evenly between all major regions: North America, Latin America and Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific.

### I. Results and discussions

The key feedback given through the questionnaires is given below according to the different questions in the questionnaire.

#### A. Need for Integrated Management

**Question 1** Do you agree that there is a need for better integration of the management of biodiversity, wetlands and river basins/water resources in your country?

More than 98% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the need for better integration in the management of biodiversity, wetlands and river basins activities.

**Question 2** Would provision of easily accessible information materials, supplemented by training and awareness activities, support work in integrating biodiversity, wetlands and river basins/water resources in your country?

The responses to this question were positive. A total of nearly 97% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed (55.8% *strongly agreed* and 41.1% *agreed*). This indicates that there is strong support for the basic objective of the RBI – that of enhanced information exchange.

#### B. Priority Information Topics

**Question 3** What is your country's priority for information on each of the following topics, relating to the work of integrating biodiversity, wetlands and river basins?

In order to assist with the focusing of information exchange activities, countries were asked to indicate which of seven topics were of high medium or low priority. The topics were selected based on issues identified in earlier convention decisions. Table 1 shows the ranking of the different topics.

Table 1: Ranking of priority topics by respondents

Topics	Mean score	Ranking
Community involvement in river basin or water resources management, e.g. local participation in planning, monitoring and management	0.76	1

<b>Planning procedures</b> and mechanisms for promoting ecosystem approach to integrated river basin or water resources management. Examples include strategic impact assessment, development project impact assessment, protected area management strategies.	0.75	2
<b>Monitoring and research</b> , e.g. methods for rapid assessment of biodiversity or hydrology, development of criteria and indicators	0.73	3
<b>Policies and legal instruments</b> towards integrated Biodiversity, Wetlands and/or River Basin Management, e.g. river basin policies, use of incentive measures	0.72	4
<b>Management interventions</b> demonstrations and guidance e.g. wetland or river restoration, flood control with wetlands, control of introduced/invasive species, mitigation measures of the impacts of water related projects	0.70	5
<b>Trans-boundary/International Cooperation</b> , e.g. multinational river basin commissions; information exchange; networks for migratory species.	0.65	6
<b>Institutional arrangements</b> , e.g. establishment of river basin management authorities, benefit sharing mechanisms	0.61	7

Almost all of the topics were ranked as of medium to high priority with the top priority placed on Community involvement and planning procedures.

### C. Specific Needs

**Question 4** Please describe below any specific needs or problems that your country or organisation is facing where the River Basin Initiative may be able to provide some assistance.

Several countries pointed out that they do have specific needs. This information varied from country to country and included examples such as training/workshops to explore effective community approach to river basin management; or support of a basic project on the biodiversity of the wetlands and their conservation. Such specific needs will be followed up on an individual basis.

### D. Methods of Information Sharing

**Question 5** How useful in accessing better information to meet your country needs would be the provision of information in each of the following formats?

**Table 2: Ranking in order of preferences of information provision methods**

<b>Information Provision Methods</b>	<b>Mean score</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Training Courses	0.81	1
Workshops	0.80	2
Printed Manuals/Reference Materials	0.76	3
Web Sites	0.74	4
Study Tours or visits to Demonstration Sites	0.73	5
E-mails, e.g. list servers	0.71	6
CD-ROMs	0.61	7
Printed Newsletters	0.59	8

The preference for different information sharing tools was probed through Question 5. An overall view of the results indicates that most of the methods proposed were considered either useful or very useful. More than 98% of respondents indicated that training courses, workshops, web sites, emails, manuals and study tours were either useful or very useful.

The results indicate that when given a choice most countries prefer face-to face information sharing through workshops and training courses. Following closely in preference were web sites, emails and printed manuals and reference materials. The least valued methods for provision of information were printed newsletters and CD-ROMs.

The implications of these results for the RBI are that the proposed core information exchange tools – ie web sites and emails are useful for all countries. However, where possible these should be supplemented with printed manuals and reference materials as well as training courses and workshops.

#### **E. Contribution of Experiences to The River Basin Initiative**

**Question 6** Would you be willing to share your country's experiences on integrating Wetlands, Biodiversity and River Basin Management with others through the River Basin Initiative?

89% of the respondents and 95% of countries indicated a willingness to share information on their countries experiences through RBI. Those countries that declined tended to be countries for which the concept of integrated river basin management was new – hence a perceived lack of experience to share.

**Question 6a** If Yes, please indicate the topics on which you could provide information and/or experience.

The following are the most commonly proposed information sharing topics suggested by respondents:

1. Community involvement and participation
2. Preparation of River Basin Management Plans/Action Plans
3. Restoration of riverine ecosystems
4. Water resource management/Integrated river basin management
5. Environmental impact experience/assessment
6. Policy and legislation
7. Decision support/planning system
8. Institutional arrangement
9. Co-operation experience
10. Wetlands/biodiversity conservation practices/experience

**Question 6b** How you could share such experience?

Most respondents recommended that they are able to:

- Provide Publications ( 61 respondents),
- Arrange Study Tours and Site Visits (58 respondents),
- Share Case Studies (49 respondents), and
- Host Training Courses (45 respondents),

Other ways suggested they could share the information:

- Providing postgraduate training,
- Sharing environmental/project data, and
- Linking to/retrieving information from their websites

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**Question 7** Are there other agencies or organisations in your country that you recommend that we contact for more information on needs and possible contributions?

Most respondents (79%) were enthusiastic to recommend the Initiative Secretariat to contact additional projects/organisations. This is a good indication that the RBI network will be able to expand based on recommendations.

**Question 8** Do you wish to be kept informed of future developments of the River Basin Initiative?

96% of the respondents confirmed that they would like to stay informed about the development of the River Basin Initiative. The Secretariat intends to support these requests by inviting respondents to join the existing River Basin Initiative Network - an electronic mailing group.

## F. Sub-Group Analysis

Countries were divided into smaller sub-groups and a simple analysis was carried out. The sub-groups consist of Africa & Arab States, Asia & Pacific Western Europe & North America, Eastern Europe, Latin America, IGOs/NGOs/Others and Small Islands Developing States.

Significant differences among sub-groups and important issues noted:

- Africa and Arab States: High priority given to policies and legal instruments and community involvement in river basin management topics. Websites and E-mails are useful to all respondents from the region.
- Asia and Pacific: Top information needs were Management interventions, monitoring and community involvement. The higher preference for management and monitoring compared to other regions may be related to the more advanced state of development (and pollution).
- Western Europe and North America Region: The general level of priority for information topics and exchange mechanisms was lower than the norm - probably reflecting the better current access to information of agencies in this region.
- Eastern Europe: Top priority for information exchange was for Planning Procedures and web sites were recognized as one of the most effective information tools.
- Latin America and Caribbean: Strong support to improve integrated management and also to access various information in support of such practices. Transboundary/ International Cooperation was one of the lower scoring topics perhaps due to the number of island state countries in the region
- The IGO/NGO/Others: Did not have extreme preferences on any particular topic that are different than the norm of the main data pool except that a higher proportion of them felt that printed newsletters were not important.
- Small Island Development States: Had the least number of respondents (9). Transboundary Cooperation was ranked a low priority. High priority given to workshops, training courses and printed materials, although websites and email were considered useful by most.

## II. CONCLUSIONS

### A. Needs

- There was a confirmed need worldwide for better integration of the management of biodiversity, wetlands and river basins.
- There was strong agreement that the provision and exchange of information materials would support integrated river basin and biodiversity management.

- The top priority topics for information sharing were: Community involvement in river basin or water resources management; planning procedures and mechanisms; monitoring and research; policies and legal instruments; and management interventions; the relative balance between the priorities varied between the regions.
- The most preferred methods for information provision and dissemination were Workshops and Training Courses followed by printed materials, web sites and e-mail. The weightage varied slightly between regions but the order remained the same.

## **B. Contributions**

- A high proportion (over 90%) of both developed and developing countries agreed to share their experience through the River Basin Initiative.
- The subject areas identified for sharing experience were broad and covered most of the topics identified as priority needs
- The main mechanisms to share information proposed were: Case Studies, arranging Study Tours and Site Visits, Hosting Training Courses, and provision of publications.

## **C. Promotion and Involvement**

- 96% of the respondents wished to be kept informed on the progress of the River Basin Initiative
- 80% recommended other agencies to be involved.

## **D. Regional Differences**

- A number of slight differences were determined between different regions, but the broad trends were similar. The main differences related to the value of the web, email and printed materials as well as the relative importance of information exchange on monitoring and management interventions.

## **E. Recommendations**

The main recommendations to the RBI as a result of the analysis are as follows:

- The overall goal of the RBI to promote the integrated management of biodiversity, wetlands and river basins is supported by the responses and should be maintained.
- The intention of using internet for RBI information dissemination and exchange is useful for all countries, but should be complemented by holding workshops, training courses and providing reference materials
- The initial focus of the information exchange should be on those topics identified as of priority by the different sub-regions.
- The RBI should draw actively on the strong willingness to contribute as expressed by countries and international organizations
- There should be some flexibility for implementation of information sharing through the Initiative to adapt to regional differences and preferences of users
- Noting the differences between the regions the RBI should look at the option to support regional or country information dissemination centers to complement global centers or mechanisms.

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