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Item 20 of the provisional agenda*

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In decisions VI/16, VI/17, VI/18, VI/19, VI/25 and VI/27, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to report on the mechanisms for implementation, including financial resources and mechanism; scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism; communication, education and public awareness; and national reporting. In response to these requests, the Executive Secretary has prepared the present note on the activities that have been carried out by the Division for Implementation and Outreach of the Secretariat. Five addenda to this note provide more detailed information on individual mechanisms for implementation.

2. This note focuses on the Secretariat's activities related to each mechanism for implementation. Section II of the note reports on the activities that have been undertaken to implement decisions VI/16, VI/17 and other relevant previous decisions on financial resources and mechanism. Section III touches upon scientific and technical cooperation through the Secretariat-managed clearing-house mechanism. Information concerning communication, education and public awareness as well as national reporting is contained in sections IV and V respectively. The final section presents several recommendations on library, documentation and publications services for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties in addition to proposed recommendations contained in the five addenda on individual mechanisms for implementation.

II. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MECHANISM

A. *Financial resources*

3. The Secretariat's work on financial resources has evolved from a study on the availability of financial resources other than the Global Environment Facility as requested in decision I/2 to a wide range of activities identified in decisions III/6, IV/12, V/11 and VI/16, including exploration of national funding instruments, identification and monitoring of financial support, promotion of international assistance for

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biological diversity, support to the programme of work of the Convention and engagement of business sectors in the implementation of the Convention. As a result, the role of the Secretariat is gradually moving away from compiling information to providing support and service to the implementation of the Convention. The information concerning global progress made in the implementation of Article 20 is contained in the note by the Executive Secretary on additional financial resources (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/18).

Sources of international assistance

4. One of the Secretariat's ongoing efforts since the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties has been to identify potential sources of international assistance. A comprehensive set of information concerning where and how to access various financial resources was made available on the website of the Convention. Building on these efforts, the Secretariat is preparing a compilation: "*Guide to Sources of International Assistance for Biological Diversity 2003*" in order to make available relevant funding information in a systematic manner. Over 300 entries including brief introduction of each funding source and further information will be included in the Guide. The Guide will be made available as a trial edition electronically on the website of the Convention.

Database of biodiversity-related projects

5. The Secretariat initiated its efforts to compile biodiversity-related project information for the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and has intensified such efforts during this inter-sessional period. Based on project information contained in various reports (national reports, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, as well as submissions) and information available on various funding institutions and development agencies, the Secretariat has now compiled thousands of biodiversity-related projects and made them available on the website of the Convention (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/forums.aspx>). This database has emerged to be a primary source of information on biodiversity-related projects. The information will be presented as a compilation "*Database of Biodiversity-related Projects in Developing Countries*", and made available as a trial edition electronically on the website of the Convention.

Centralized funding information

6. In decision VI/16, the Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat to explore possible cooperation with relevant institutions to address the need for centralizing information on biodiversity-related activities of funding institutions and other donors. Due to rapid advancement of information technology, information concerning biodiversity-related activities of most funding institutions and other donors has become readily available on their website. The Secretariat thus initiated an "Interactive Info-Bulletin on Financing for Biological Diversity" (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/forums.aspx>) as a centralized venue for funding institutions and other donors to publicize their biodiversity-related activities. The Info-Bulletin initially contains the following sections: announcements offering funding opportunities; project proposals seeking financial support; funded biodiversity projects and related information; institutions/projects/individuals seeking/offering technical collaboration and/or expertise; business, banking and biodiversity; debt and biological diversity. The Secretariat has actively promoted wide use of this new internet-based communication tool.

Collaboration with donors and related agencies

7. Since the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat has been exploring opportunities of making international assistance more supportive of the objectives of the Convention, and has undertaken to outreach to funding institutions and development agencies. During the current inter-sessional period, the Secretariat compiled all the relevant provisions of the decisions from the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties addressed to funding institutions and development agencies and

communicated them to all funding institutions and development agencies. In order to promote co-ordination, coherence and synergies in financing for biological diversity, the Secretariat prepared a compilation entitled “*An Introduction to Funding Guidance of the Convention on Biological Diversity*” and posted this document on the website of the Convention (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/guidance.asp>). Through the availability of more in-depth information on the programme of work of the Convention and its funding implications, funding institutions and development agencies are expected to better align their international assistance with the programme of work of the Convention and therefore make their activities more supportive of the objectives of the Convention.

8. In several previous decisions, the Conference of the Parties has mandated the Secretariat to build up and strengthen collaboration with relevant funding institutions and development agencies, including through designation of focal points for the Convention, establishment of reporting relationship, and provision of funding information. Most recently, the Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat to promote co-ordination, coherence and synergies in financing for biological diversity in order to identify gaps in activities as well as to identify necessary activities and funding. In response, the Secretariat published a *CBD News Supplement on financing for biodiversity* as a platform for exchange of information relevant to international assistance. It further held a bilateral meeting with UNDP to discuss possible collaboration on a wide range of thematic topics and cross-cutting issues. A similar effort was also explored with the African Development Bank. Given that the Secretariat has been so far largely policy development-oriented while funding institutions and development agencies are essentially focused on their operational mandates, further collaboration has been constrained by the lack of a more concrete project/programme oriented approach, which would require clear guidance from the Conference of the Parties.

Banking and business sector

9. Two financing side events featured prominently during the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties: the first was “Resourcing Sustainable Biodiversity: Towards implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity” organized by the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC) in cooperation with UNEP Regional Office for Europe, the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, and the Rabobank Netherland. The other was “Sustainable Financing of Biodiversity Conservation - Guide on Innovative Finance Mechanisms and Conservation Finance Alliance: Action Plan” organized by The Nature Conservancy. As a result, the Conference of the Parties decided to explore opportunities of developing a global initiative on banking, business and biodiversity, taking into account the existing mechanism and institutions, and other global and regional initiatives or processes, with a view to increasing funding for biodiversity and mainstreaming biodiversity into the financial sector.

10. The Secretariat has assessed the opportunities of developing a global initiative on banking, business and biodiversity from different perspectives. First, a synthesis of mandates provided in various existing decisions was undertaken to assess the scope of the involvement of the private sector. Second, an assessment of national reports with respect to the private sector was conducted in order to explore opportunities at national level. Third, a research was done on existing international and regional processes that are of relevance to the private sector and biodiversity. The Secretariat organized an exploratory workshop on the global initiative on banking, business and biodiversity in Beijing, China, on 18 October 2002, which discussed a range of issues surrounding the global initiative, including how to define banking, business and biodiversity, and what enabling environment should be created. The summary of the workshop was posted on the website of the Secretariat (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/forum.asp>). The Secretariat also met with several private companies such as Shell Canada to explore further opportunities for developing the global initiative.

External debt and biological diversity

11. In response to the request to work on external debt and biological diversity, the Secretariat has undertaken to collect information on three fronts: relevant discussions at the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development; debt restructuring activities under Paris Club, London Club and the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank; and debt for nature projects and programmes. The information has been made available through the Interactive Info-Bulletin on Financing for Biodiversity and used to support a separate report on additional financial resources for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

Monitoring and reporting

12. The Secretariat continued to collaborate with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) concerning data collection on aid targeting the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In 2002, the OECD Secretariat published "Aid Activities Targeting the Objectives of the Rio Conventions 1998-2000" after a special data collection within the Creditor Reporting System of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). This publication provides detailed information on individual commitments targeting the objectives of the Rio Conventions for the years 1998-2000. Data presented are unique, comparable and consistent with definitions and methodologies of the DAC statistics. For each developing country, transactions are ordered by commitment year and sector, and within each sector, by donor.

13. To complement the information from the OECD Secretariat, the Convention Secretariat also collected project data from the websites of multilateral institutions and regional development banks as well as those of the private sector, such as private grant-making foundations. Where relevant information could not be found on their websites, the Secretariat initiated specific requests to individual institutions. A notification from the Secretariat was also issued to all relevant stakeholders for purposes of verification of project information. All the collected information has been made available on the Interactive Info-Bulletin on Financing for Biological Diversity and updated regularly.

14. However, national reporting remains the primary source of funding information at the Secretariat given the provisions in Article 26. To strengthen the monitoring function, the Secretariat also suggested revisions to the format on financial resources and mechanism for the second national report for purposes of the third national report. The third national report needs to have quantity orientation based on thematic areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention, and thus to provide a sense of the progress made in the implementation of the Convention in general and of the Strategic Plan in particular.

B. Financial mechanism

15. Article 21 of the Convention provides for mechanisms to facilitate financial resources identified in Article 20: designation of an institutional structure operating the financial mechanism of the Convention, and strengthening of existing financial institutions to provide financial resources for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The Convention's work in this respect has been concentrated on the operations of the financial mechanism. The Global Environment Facility has provided as a note by the Executive Secretary, a report on the performance of the financial mechanism (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/9), in accordance to decision III/8, paragraph 3 and the request from the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties contained in decision VI/17.

Communication of guidance of the Conference of the Parties

16. Pursuant to Article 21 of the Convention, and in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Conference of the Parties and the GEF Council, the Conference of the Parties, by decision VI/17, adopted further guidance to the financial mechanism. Immediately after the sixth

meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat communicated to the GEF Secretariat decision VI/17 together with a compilation of all provisions of the decisions of the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties that are of direct or indirect relevance to the GEF. Further communication has been facilitated through the statements of the Secretariat to the meetings of the GEF governing bodies, through regular meetings between the two Secretariats and through statements in meetings such as SBSTTA.

Consultation on implementation of guidance of the Conference of the Parties

17. The Convention Secretariat and the GEF have been in constant contact with respect to the guidance of the Conference of the Parties. One typical example refers to the field of biosafety. Before the entry into force of the Biosafety Protocol, the Secretariat realized the urgent need for capacity to participate in the biosafety clearing-house by all Parties to the Protocol, and discussed with the GEF Secretariat the urgency of financial support to enable such participation. The GEF developed a new project proposal to finance capacity-building for the Biosafety Clearing-House within the framework of the UNEP/GEF biosafety project. To assist the Conference of the Parties in considering further guidance, the Secretariat, in consultation with the GEF, prepared as information document compiling past guidance to the financial mechanism by substantive item of the provisional agenda (see document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/1). The Secretariat further suggested that the GEF provide information in terms of its response to guidance from the Conference of the Parties in its report to the Conference of the Parties. The report is being provided for consideration at the next Conference of the Parties.

18. In accordance with the eligibility criteria adopted by the Conference of the Parties, developing countries Parties to the Convention are eligible for funding from the financial mechanism. As noted in an opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations requested by the Convention Secretariat and dated May 29, 1997, "neither the Convention nor the Conference of the Parties have elaborated a list or definition of developing country Parties." In accordance with the *Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured GEF*, the GEF may also finance projects outside the financial mechanism in countries which are eligible to borrow from the World Bank or are eligible to receive UNDP country technical assistance. In the absence of a list or definition of "developing country Parties", questions have arisen with regard to the eligibility of several higher middle-income countries which are not considered as *developed* countries under the Convention but do not qualify for financial support from the regular operations of the World Bank or United Nations Development Programme (i.e. these countries do not meet the eligibility criteria for financing outside of the financial mechanism). The question is whether these countries qualify as "developing country Parties." The Convention Secretariat and the GEF have held intensive consultations with respect to the implementation of the Convention's eligibility criteria in these instances, and the GEF Secretariat has followed the advice provided by the Convention Secretariat. Nonetheless, as noted in the opinion from the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations, "it is for the Parties to establish the definition of the term 'developing country'. Without such a definition, the Secretariat cannot on its own authority include or exclude countries from eligibility." It is recommended that the Conference of the Parties take steps to clarify the eligibility criteria so as to provide predictability and consistency in applying the eligibility criteria.

Consultation on operational policy documents

19. The Secretariat has been normally involved in the development of GEF's operational policy documents as related to the Convention. During the inter-sessional period, the Secretariat reviewed the GEF draft paper on climate change adaptation, which proposed a phased synergistic approach to organizing GEF support to climate change adaptation efforts, taking into account potential contributions of the existing GEF operational programmes and activities. The Secretariat provided a compilation of all the existing decisions of the Conference of the Parties, with respect to climate change and relevant guidance given to the financial mechanism, and suggested a consideration of the benefits and costs of retrofitting the GEF project review process and a synergistic approach to its support for enabling activities.

Consultation on biodiversity project proposals

20. The Convention Secretariat regularly received biodiversity project concept papers and project briefs for review from the GEF implementation agencies. Based on the guidance from the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat often provided its comments on these biodiversity project concept papers or project briefs. This included the clearance of 18 enabling activity project proposals, 35 medium-sized projects, and 44 full projects from April 2002 to March 2003. The biodiversity projects approved by the GEF provided a fair coverage of all the ecosystems included under the guidance from the Conference of the Parties (i.e., marine and coastal, inland waters, dry and sub-humid land, mountain, agricultural and forest ecosystems). Many projects contained cross-cutting elements of the guidance as components to address issues such as capacity-building, monitoring and assessing, including taxonomy, sustainable use and tourism, invasive alien species, targeted research, environmental awareness raising public education and communication, incentive measures, the involvement of key stakeholders such as local and indigenous communities, clearing-house mechanism, access and benefit-sharing, national plans and reports. In order for the guidance of the Conference of the Parties to be addressed by a project, it needs to be reflected in the operational policies of the GEF. In addition, considering project concept development and project preparation time, there is a time lag, on average of 1-2 years, between the provision of guidance of the Conference of the Parties and relevant resultant responding project proposals.

21. The Secretariat has been a member of the GEF Executive Operations Committee (Executive GEFOP) since its inception, and attended three teleconferences to review projects for inclusion in the GEF work program, in April 2002, September 2002 and March 2003. These meetings reviewed the status of the overall GEF project portfolio and cleared 44 biodiversity full projects along with other projects.

Meetings of the GEF Council

22. The Secretariat is regularly consulted on the finalization of relevant documents for each meeting of the GEF Council as requested by the GEF Secretariat. Such consultation has been particularly concentrated on the GEF document "Relations with conventions". This document aims at providing the GEF Council with information concerning the status of implementation of all guidance of the Conference of the Parties and proposals for further improvements so that the GEF Council can provide guidance on how to further respond to the guidance of the Conference of the Parties. The Secretariat was consulted on two documents concerning relations with conventions: GEF/C.19/5, GEF/C.21/4 and GEF/C.22/4/Rev.2.

23. The Secretariat has been represented at all meetings of the GEF Council, including nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second meetings during the current inter-sessional period. The Executive Secretary or his representative delivered a statement to each such meeting to provide a brief on recent developments under the Convention and elaborate on relevant guidance of the Conference of the Parties. This is followed by discussions with Council members.

24. To facilitate monitoring of the GEF Council decisions in relation to the guidance of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat prepared a searchable database on the GEF Council decisions by subjects of interest to the Convention and made this tool available on the website of the Convention. The searchable database has been updated after each GEF Council meeting (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/>). Both the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the GEF Secretariats are working on a controlled vocabulary that can be used to search documents from the Convention on Biological Diversity and GEF with a similar searching tool.

The GEF Assembly

25. The GEF Assembly, composed of all participating states, meets every three or four years to assess the GEF's overall direction. The Second Assembly was held in Beijing in October 2002. Representatives of 173 member states adopted the Beijing Declaration calling on the GEF to respond proactively to the

needs of the three Rio conventions. The Executive Secretary delivered a statement to the gathering on behalf of the Convention, and the Secretariat also organized an exhibition of the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to promote awareness of biodiversity issues among funding practitioners.

The GEF third replenishment

26. To follow up the call from the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to substantially replenish the GEF to levels higher than the current one in order to support implementation of the Convention, the Secretariat monitored the third replenishment process of the GEF. The finalization of the third replenishment was a difficult one, but donors managed to successfully conclude the replenishment at US\$3.0 billion. Congratulating the GEF on the conclusion, the Secretariat urged more attention to be given to the financing of biodiversity projects. The biodiversity and climate change focal areas in the GEF still receive the largest amount of funds from the GEF.

Information sharing

27. The Secretariat has also been a point of information concerning the financial mechanism. In this regard, the Secretariat updated three sections of the Handbook on the Convention on Biological Diversity for Articles 20, 21 and 39. It further prepared a compilation of relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties and relevant GEF responses as well as other documents as a Handbook of the Financial Mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity and made this publication available on the website of the Convention (see <http://www.biodiv.org/financial/>).

28. The Secretariat regularly responds to external enquiries concerning the financial mechanism. One of such requests was from the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) concerning “the lessons learned and experience gained from the use of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Global Environment Facility and the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as from the provision of guidance given to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity”. In response, the Secretariat provided an analysis of the experience in using the Memorandum of Understanding paragraph by paragraph, and also a compilation of decisions of the Conference of the Parties with respect to the provision of guidance.

Retirement of decisions

29. In response to decision VI/27 concerning the retirement of decisions, a review of decisions III/5, III/6, III/7, III/8 and IV/11, IV/12, IV/13 was conducted in collaboration with the GEF Secretariat, and a draft section is proposed for inclusion in the documentation of the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism

30. The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties concluded the second review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism, and requested the Executive Secretary and the Global Environment Facility to explore possible synergies between the review processes of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility. The Secretariat has examined all aspects of the past review processes with the GEF Secretariat, and prepared a note on the arrangements for the third review of the effectiveness of the financial mechanism (see UNEP/CBD/COP/7/7/Add.5).

III. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

31. As identified in its strategic plan contained in the information note from by the Executive Secretary on Scientific and Technical Cooperation and the Clearing-House Mechanism (Article 18) (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/INF/3), the clearing-house mechanism focuses upon three primary objectives: cooperation, namely, promotion and facilitation of technical and scientific cooperation; information exchange; and network development. The Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to assume a leadership role in facilitating the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, and also created an informal advisory committee to provide the Executive Secretary with feedback and advice throughout the clearing-house development process.

32. Decision VI/18 focused on a review of the role of the clearing-house mechanism, clearing-house mechanism toolkit, capacity-building workshops and development of communication networks for use by indigenous and local communities. The clearing-house mechanism is also assisting with the technical implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House pursuant to paragraph 1 of Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Its activities during the inter-sessional period are reviewed in depth in the note by the Executive Secretary on scientific and technical cooperation and the Clearing-House Mechanism (Article 18, paragraph 3), (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.1.)

A. Review of the role of the clearing-house mechanism

33. In decision VI/18, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to commission a review to assess the current and potential role of the clearing-house mechanism in promoting technical and scientific cooperation, including its role in facilitating the transfer of technology and know-how and capacity-building to support implementation of the Convention at the national level, and to report on this review to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting. A Memorandum of Understanding was established with UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, within the framework of the Chevening Studentships in Biodiversity, to undertake the review. Its conclusions are provided to the Conference of the Parties in the note by the Executive Secretary on usage analysis of the Clearing-House Mechanism web page (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/11).

34. The Secretariat also undertook an analysis of statistics compiled on access to and retrieval of documents archived on the Convention on Biological Diversity website. This analysis is available in the report of the meeting of the Consultative Group of Experts on Communication, Education and Public Awareness (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/10).

B. Clearing-house mechanism toolkit

35. In decision VI/18, the Conference of the Parties urged the Executive Secretary to update and further develop the clearing-house mechanism toolkit. Divided into six different modules, this new toolkit also offers information on other toolkits, funding and partnership opportunities and technical information related to formats, protocols and standards. The final version of the updated toolkit is available on the Convention's website at: <http://www.biodiv.org/cnm/toolkit>. The clearing-house mechanism capacity-building activities were enhanced through the development of the toolkit, which will enable the Secretariat to further assist Parties to develop and establish clearing-house mechanism national focal points.

C. Capacity-building workshops

36. With regard to capacity-building initiatives, and in response to paragraph 4 of decision VI/18, the Secretariat, with generous financial support from the Government of Belgium, organized three regional meetings on the clearing-house mechanism in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and

Eastern Europe. Of special note is the participation of international thematic focal points and international organizations in these meetings. The Latin American and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe meetings were co-organized and co-funded with the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network and the European Environment Agency respectively. This co-organization offered Parties and Governments of the region to meet with participants from developed regions and with representatives from other international organizations and thematic focal points to develop joint regional work programmes and activities. In many ways, the results of these meetings are indicative of the Secretariat's efforts to catalyse new partnerships and cooperative initiatives through the clearing-house mechanism. Recommendations made at the meetings are contained in the regional reports from the Executive Secretary on the Africa Clearing-House Mechanism (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/3), on the joint Clearing-House Mechanism/IABIN Latin America and Caribbean (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/4), and the joint EC/Clearing-House Mechanism Central and Eastern Europe (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/5) respectively.

D. Communication networks

Meeting on Article 8(j)

37. In response to paragraph 5 of decision VI/18, in which the Conference of the Parties urged the Executive Secretary to assist in the further development of communication networks for use by indigenous and local communities, the clearing-house mechanism participated in the organization of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Traditional Knowledge and the Clearing-House Mechanism, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, from 24 to 26 February 2003. The meeting illustrates explicitly the possible role of the clearing-house mechanism with a Convention related programme area or cross-cutting issue, fosters a collaborative environment between the clearing-house mechanism, stakeholders and Secretariat staff working on Article 8(j) issues, and clarifies how the clearing-house mechanism's initial investment in information exchange protocols and network development can assist in the implementation of programme objectives. Recommendations made at the meeting are contained in the report of meeting (UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/TK-CHM/1/2).

Restricted websites

38. To implement more effective electronic communication and work tools to seed the establishment of global thematic networks, the Secretariat created restricted websites where target groups of experts, stakeholders and/or working groups could have access to draft documents, information resources, expertise, help facilities, and, most important, electronic forums to create the necessary environments for effective dialogue, cooperation and joint work. This tool was first used effectively in discussions leading to the fourth workshop on sustainable use, held in Addis Ababa, from 6 to 8 May 2003. Sixteen restricted virtual spaces have been created for most programme areas and cross-cutting issues, and thirty-three electronic discussion groups (also called Internet Mail Lists or listservs) were created for most programme areas and cross-cutting issues.

Interactive info-bulletin on financing for biological diversity

39. Parallel to the above was the development of an interactive info-bulletin on financing for biological diversity. This electronic communication tool offers a centralized venue for funding practitioners to exchange biodiversity-related funding information, including experience, views and best practices, as well as effectiveness and efficiency in financing for biological diversity. This electronic info-bulletin is in keeping with the Secretariat's communications strategy.

Electronic notification dissemination service

40. To increase transparency and dialogue with the interested public, and in support of the communication, education and public awareness programme, the clearing-house mechanism unit

developed an electronic notification dissemination service, which primarily serves national focal points, but was also made available to the general public. Among the latter, most subscribers are from developing countries, indicating the need for technology-appropriate mechanisms to ensure equitable and timely access to information by all Parties.

Other activities

41. The clearing-house mechanism unit further participated in the elaboration of an electronic joint calendar of events, published by the Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This activity has seeded a number of discussions for possible other activities and projects among the three secretariats, particularly with regard to issues pertaining to information exchange and common formats.

42. The clearing-house mechanism unit continues to work with international thematic focal points to assist Parties to implement more effectively obligations under the Convention. Under this broad goal, agreements have been established with international thematic focal points to share information, link data centers to national focal points of the Clearing-House Mechanism, establish joint work plans and develop global networks. It continues to work with the Global Invasive Species Programme in the development and establishment of a global information network on invasive alien species to assist Parties to more effectively manage this problem.

E. The Biosafety Clearing-House

43. Pursuant to Article 20.1 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, a Biosafety Clearing-House was established as part of the clearing-house mechanism in order to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms, and assist the Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centers of origin and centers of genetic diversity. Accordingly, the clearing-house mechanism continues to develop the technical architecture of the Biosafety Clearing-House, particularly in light of the coming into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety on 11 September 2003.

F. Information exchange

Controlled vocabulary

44. The Secretariat continues to invest in information exchange activities, particularly in the use and promotion of formats, protocols and standards in order to promote technical and scientific cooperation. The Secretariat developed a biodiversity-related controlled vocabulary to be used in the creation of metadata. Terms in this controlled vocabulary were taken from official Convention-related documents and other thesauri such as UNEP's ENVOC and the Food and Agriculture Organization's AGROVOC. The controlled vocabulary is available on the Convention's website for use as metadata by Parties. This initiative will assist in making web-based resources easier to search, locate and retrieve, and promote the creation of a global interoperable network of biodiversity information.

45. The Secretariat also developed an inter-face to input metadata derived from the controlled vocabulary directly onto the Convention's website. This initiative opens the door to collaborative projects among other information and portal initiatives, particularly in the context of joint work plans and projects.

Website infrastructure

46. To better support web-based interactive mechanisms and future interoperability projects, the Secretariat further enhanced its website infrastructure with new protocols and standards. This work provides for a robust foundation for future development of new interactive features and procedures, a necessary development in fostering communication and exchange of expertise. Retrieval of website documentation was also enhanced by the development of a new search mechanism which makes it possible to search all Convention-related documents from a single interface.

Databases and tools

47. A number of databases were also developed, including: a database on case-studies and incentive measures, a new roster of experts on access and benefit-sharing, a database on policy measures for access and benefit-sharing, a database on capacity-building projects for access and benefit-sharing, and a database on Global Environment Facility Council meeting decisions. New thematic reports analysers, similar to the second national report analyser, were developed for invasive alien species and protected areas. The analysers offer Parties and stakeholders the ability to search through all reports and compile information in a matter of seconds.

IV. COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

48. In decision VI/19, the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties adopted the Programme of Work for a Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness, as contained in the annex to the decision. The Programme of Work contains three programme elements with among others, operational objectives, proposed actions, partners, a time frame and a budget. The decision also requested the Executive Secretary to undertake a number of activities to facilitate implementation of the Global Initiative. A report on communication, education and public awareness activities during the inter-sessional period is contained in the report on communication, education and public awareness activities (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.4).

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness

49. In response to decision VI/19, the Secretariat established several mechanisms for enhancing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Global Initiative on communication, education and public awareness. The Consultative Working Group on Communication, Education and Public Awareness has continued to be involved in the process through a website established for the Group and a discussion forum set up to facilitate two-way consultations and communication. A meeting with the Expert Group and relevant partners took place on 27-29 October 2003, in Paris, with the generous support of the Government of France and UNESCO. The report of the meeting is available to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/10).

Review of communication, education and public awareness dimensions

50. In decision VI/19, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to review the communication, education and public-awareness dimensions of existing and new cross-cutting issues and thematic areas, and specifically those priorities and action plans established in the Strategic Plan for the Convention. The Secretariat identified all references to communication, education and public awareness contained in the decisions of the Conference of the Parties on thematic areas and cross-cutting issues, and also from the existing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans as well as the second national reports submitted to the Secretariat. The review was intended to facilitate the work of the Secretariat in the implementation of the CEPA programme of work in support of the Convention and the Strategic Plan. Due to the lack of a structured format for reporting on CEPA dimensions in the programmes of work of

the Convention, the review of the NBSAPs and 2nd national reports yielded insufficient consistent information to properly identify common threads and themes. Key issues identified in the review pointed to the need to develop and implement standardized messages and CEPA materials with emphasis on relevance to human experience, incentives for action by the individual and community, all expressed in easy-to-comprehend non-technical language.

Promotion of development and implementation of demonstration projects

51. The Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting requested the Executive Secretary to promote, in collaboration with the relevant agencies, the development and implementation of demonstration projects that can serve as models to initiate similar projects that can be adopted by Parties. To promote biodiversity public education and awareness among future generations, the Secretariat initiated school visits to selected Montreal area schools on the occasion of the International Biodiversity Day for 2003. Staff from the Secretariat showed a short video, followed by presentations tailored to the interests of students ranging in age from 7 to 17 about the importance of biodiversity, explaining the effects that biodiversity loss has on everyday life, and what individuals can do to help preserve the variety of life on Earth. International Biodiversity Day posters were presented to all the classrooms and a list of educational websites related to biodiversity issues were given to the teachers for distribution to the students. The presentations by SCBD staff stimulated lively discussions and the experience generated many ideas for expanded school outreach in the coming year.

52. Building on the success, the Secretariat initiated the first phase of a school outreach effort through the development of linkages with a number of schools and academic institutions primarily focusing exchange of biodiversity information including the provision of online educational tools on biodiversity. This effort entails the development of a well-targeted website, web-based educational resources drawing on the experience and expertise of the BEPA tool developed by IUCN for the Netherlands, and the implementation of discussion forums between designated pilot schools; namely the Kahnawake Survival School in Montreal, Canada, a native aborigine school in Australia; a school in Trinidad & Tobago and another in Palau, these being the two island states that were the first and the fiftieth to ratify the Biosafety Protocol respectively. Two more schools will be identified from the Netherlands and Malaysia as hosts to the sixth meeting and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties respectively. McGill University has been approached to provide technical support in the design and implementation of this effort, which will be delivered through the communication, education and public awareness Portal that is currently under development.

Case-studies

53. In response to decision VI/19, the Secretariat issued a notification to all national focal points of the Convention to seek the submission of relevant case-studies on biodiversity communication, education and public awareness. In addition, a review of the available 2nd national reports, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan (NBSAPs), interim reports and relevant project papers were particularly valuable as sources of information on relevant case-studies and best-practices. Additional case-studies were also obtained from relevant websites of a number of international organizations active in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development initiatives around the world.

54. The case-studies and best-practices assembled by the Secretariat identified a wide range of effective activities undertaken by the Parties and other partners. Available documentation on the Internet is extensive, with many excellent websites featuring best-practices and case-studies of biodiversity and sustainable development CEPA activities, especially in all levels of education and community-based initiatives that reflect a high degree of success in public awareness activities. A common thread is the successful initiation of partnerships with non-governmental and community-based organizations, suggesting that in some cases, it would be preferable to create alliances with practitioners to build on existing initiatives rather than attempting to emulate them. The Secretariat is currently cataloguing CEPA

related case-studies and best-practices to be entered into an online compendium, which will be presented on the Convention's website. At a later date, Parties will be invited to contribute their own projects to the database and make them available through the Clearing-House Mechanism.

Corporate communication strategy for the Secretariat

55. In response to paragraph 4 of decision VI/19, and decision VI/26, particularly its appendix (*Obstacles to the Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity*), the Secretariat developed a draft corporate communication strategy which addresses specific measures needed to increase awareness about the Convention and outlines actions required to improve communication between the Secretariat and Parties, stakeholders and the general public. The strategy lists key objectives and mechanisms to improve communication and priorities within those mechanisms, and also targets specific audiences and behaviors. It also proposes a plan to maximize involvement of potential partners and actors, and identifies specific actions and initiatives required to meet general objectives. It discusses the modalities, timeframes and actors with respect to the relevant specific initiatives along with the reasons justifying their importance, value and potential contribution. This was followed by a process of consultation with the consultative working group of experts on communication, education and public awareness comprising representatives of UNESCO, the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, WWF, UNEP and others.

V. LIBRARY, DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLICATIONS SERVICES

56. To provide the Secretariat and relevant stakeholders with necessary information on biological diversity, the Secretariat has evolved rapidly from a single focus on record-keeping and documentation services to a multi-faceted information centre with responsibilities for selecting, collecting, preserving and providing access to information; organizing the physical production and distribution of the SCBD's publications which include reports from the Conference of the Parties in six languages, News from the Convention on Biological Diversity, brochures, booklets, leaflets and CD-ROMs; and typesetting copy and preparing the final page layout and design, as well as overseeing production. In decision VI/19, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the significant increase in the number of variety of publications prepared by the Secretariat, and requested the Executive Secretary to develop partnerships, establish liaison with schools of environmental education, and make publications available in the six official United Nations languages and promote the translation of publications in the languages of indigenous and local communities.

Partnership for the exchange of publications related to biodiversity

57. By decision VI/19, paragraph 12 (b), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to develop appropriate partnerships with public and private research and academic institutions for the exchange of publications related to biodiversity. The Secretariat contacted a wide range of public institutions around the world, and received a great number of publications from many of them. A total of 1185 documents have been entered in the bibliographic database. A database has been developed to maintain stock and record distribution. Additionally, the database will be used to generate reports regarding types of publication requested, organizations, provenance of the requests, etc., and provide better management of resources.

Liaison with schools of environment education

58. The sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to examine the possibility of establishing formal liaison with schools of environmental education to further disseminate decisions of the Conference of the Parties to future specialists. A virtual library on the Internet to help facilitate access to information pertaining to biodiversity is being developed. An interface to facilitate a global and integrated access to documents of the Convention has also been implemented on

the Secretariat website. Its objective is to provide the web users with a central search page for the following type of information items relating to the Convention on Biological Diversity: documents of the meetings, national reports, case-studies, library books, and articles on the Convention. It offers the following search criteria: type of information, thematic area, meeting, country, language, year, or keywords.

Publications and promotion of translation

59. In response to paragraph 12(c) of decision VI/19, the Secretariat has intensified its efforts on publication and translation. The following publications have been produced in 2002-2003: a leaflet on the role of science in six languages; four issues of *News from the Convention on Biological Diversity* including a special issue on sustainable development and biological diversity; five issues of CBD Technical Series ; the Bonn Guidelines in six languages; the Handbook (hard copy and CD-ROM); a booklet of decision adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 6 languages; a booklet on incentives measures; a CD-ROM “CBD information package” containing all SCBD publications on PDF format; a poster for the International Day for Biological Diversity, supplement on Biosafety; CBD Technical Series No.9 (climate change and biodiversity); CBD Technical Series 10 (SBSTTA book of abstracts); a monograph on the negotiation history of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Library is also processing all Convention documents including case-studies and national reports.

60. An archives management programme was developed to ensure preservation of the permanent value of the archives of the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity and to implement an efficient system in the creation, maintenance, storage, retrieval and disposal of these archives. In this regard a collection of documents on the history of the Convention is also under development. A webpage is also being implemented to facilitate access to this historical information.

Handbook on the Convention on Biological Diversity

61. In response to decision VI/27, the Secretariat produced the second edition of the Handbook on the Convention on Biological Diversity in time for distribution at the eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. This second edition incorporated decisions from the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

62. A survey was conducted on overall opinions and suggestions of its audience. The result of the survey demonstrated that the Handbook has become a most useful reference material in the Convention process and should be continued after each and every meeting of the Conference of the Parties. However, the survey did not show any preference of whether the Handbook should contain only a compilation of decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties or continue to expand on the introductory text. It did not clarify either whether it should be published in one or two volumes. This issue is becoming increasingly pressing as the number of decisions of the Conference of the Parties multiplies. In case a two-volume approach is adopted, the first would probably contain only the decisions of the Conference of the Parties, whereas the second would contain an introduction to each thematic area and cross-cutting issue, if this is judged necessary by the Conference of the Parties.

Global Biodiversity Outlook

63. At its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties, by paragraph 6 of its decision VI/25, welcomed the publication of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) report and decided that the Global Biodiversity Outlook should continue to be prepared as a periodic report on biological diversity and implementation of the Convention, and be made available in all official United Nations languages.

64. In paragraph 7 of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties decided, *inter alia*, that the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-2) should be prepared for publication in 2004.

In response to this decision, the Secretariat formulated a draft operational plan for the production process of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and convened a scoping meeting of the GBO Advisory Group to discuss and agree on major production items to guide the Secretariat in the production and launch of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

65. The outcome of the meeting was a series of concrete recommendations focusing on the following key production issues:

(a) Objectives of producing the second edition of GBO in the first instance and subsequent GBO report series

(b) The focus of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook particularly with respect to decision making processes, status and trends, issues and options (looking into the future), integrated in terms of issues, sectors and recommended action, corporate outreach, presenting positive messages, and linkages to the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals

(c) The intended primary audience but also including other key targeted groups

(d) Content and approach (message, format, language, size, timeframe, presentation)

(e) Analytical framework for presentation of the content under the identified priority categories (context and issues, status and trends, impacts of the convention process on biodiversity as well as outlook or scenarios).

(f) Chapter outline

(g) Participatory approach at various stages in the productions process

(h) Family of other products to be generated from the process

(i) Comprehensive outreach strategy for effective dissemination, communication and marketing of the report of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and associated products to maximize their reception and impacts on the readership.

66. On the basis of these recommendations, the Secretariat developed a more comprehensive production plan which also incorporated the outcome of the 2010 biodiversity target meeting “2010 – The Global Biodiversity Challenge” which was held in London in May 2003. In addition, the revised production plan took into consideration the on-going efforts to address biodiversity and its potential contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

67. Paragraph 7 of decision VI/25 calls on the production of the second edition to the GBO to draw upon information contained in the second national reports, the thematic reports on the items for in-depth consideration at its sixth and seventh meetings, and on the review of progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan to be undertaken in 2003. In pursuit of this call, the production process of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook has faced considerable delays due to a number of related constraints and considerations, which merit special mention in this note.

(a) *National and thematic reports:* As of end June 2003 (i.e. over 2 years after the deadline for submission of 15 May 2001), 97 second national reports out of a possible 187 had been submitted. It was felt unlikely that this figure would rise dramatically during the remaining half of 2003. With regard to submission of thematic reports, as of end June 2003, the Secretariat had received 33 reports on mountain ecosystems (deadline 31 Oct 2002), 33 on protected areas and 14 on technology transfer and technological cooperation (both of which had submission deadlines of 30 March 2003). It was also felt that there was a likelihood that these numbers could increase during the last half of 2003, but were unlikely to do so significantly. Clearly, these numbers were too few to permit any meaningful analysis of status and trends and thus provide substantive inputs in the drafting of the report content of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. In addition, a review of the format and the quality of the

information contained in the national and thematic reports revealed that this information is largely qualitative and to some extent subjective. Further the report formats do not make provisions for the submission of quantitative time series data and measurable indicators that would enable presentation of trends for incorporation in the report of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. In light of the foregoing and contrary to the requirements of decision VI/25 to use national and thematic reports as sources of information for the report of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, it became fairly evident that the production process of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook would have to look to other sources to obtain more substantial information for incorporation in the report;

(b) *Progress in implementing the Strategic Plan*: It is not yet clear when a systematic review of progress in the implementation of the strategic plan will be initiated and completed, nor what form it will take. In addition, progress in the development and adoption of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) as one of the main mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategic Plan has also been slow. As of June 2003, the number of NBSAPs submitted to the Secretariat in final form stood at 91. This number taken together with the lack of information on the extent and level of implementation of the NBSAPs, clearly makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive assessment of progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan. This shortcoming in itself places a significant constraint on the production process of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and thus serves to highlight the need to evaluate and make the necessary adjustments in the planning process in order to overcome the weaknesses evident in the recommended potential sources of content for the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. The note prepared by the Executive Secretary for the Open-ended Intersessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties Up to 2010 (UNEP/CBD/MYPOW/2) of 10 January 2003 provides a number of proposals on the future evaluation of the progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan and thus could provide valuable inputs in the planning process for the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook;

(c) *The 2010 biodiversity target*: The 2010 target meeting, “2010 – The Global Biodiversity Challenge”, which was held in London in May 2003 provided some useful guidelines with respect to specific areas of focus for reporting on the progress towards achieving the 2010 target. The proposed reporting mechanisms for this target would considerably strengthen the production process of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and make the GBO report series a key authoritative source of information on progress in achieving the 2010 target;

(d) *SBSTTA-9 recommendations*: The ninth meeting of SBSTTA, in its consideration of the issue of integration of outcome-oriented targets into the programmes of work of the Convention, called on Parties and Governments to develop and incorporate national and/or regional goals and targets, into relevant plans, programmes and initiatives, including national biodiversity strategies and action plans. SBSTTA further recommended that periodic reports of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and other reports should make use of these goals, targets and indicators in analysing progress towards the 2010 target. This recommendation provides further justification for rescheduling the production process for the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook particularly from the standpoint of using the content of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook to serve as a baseline for analyzing progress towards the achievement of the 2010 target in subsequent GBO reports;

(e) *Time scales*: The time scale for the production of the second edition of the GBO report is short and no budget has yet been identified. It will therefore be difficult to undertake major new analyses as well as incorporate the participation of a wide range of stakeholders to engender a sense of ownership of the report content. It is important therefore, that the second edition of the report is not seen to be simply a re-hash of generalities from other sources;

(f) *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*: It is unlikely that significant use can be made of work currently being undertaken by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (including the scenario working

group) as the expected outputs of the Millennium Assessment process will be undergoing their first major review during the period from December 2003 to January 2004, which is exactly the time at which the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook was originally scheduled to go through its final review. Besides, the Millennium Assessment may be reluctant to release for publication any major findings before the reports of these findings are themselves published in 2005.

68. In view of the foregoing, the need to secure the necessary background materials from a wide variety of sources, and the need to incorporate key elements of the recommended actions from the 2010 target meeting and recommendations from the ninth meeting of SBSTTA, the Secretariat will identify appropriate expertise to work with the Secretariat in elaborating the first draft of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook for wide review by the GBO Advisory Group, key partners and other experts from national, regional and international organizations. The proposed expertise will draw on the relevant on-going work of some of the key partner organizations in biodiversity conservation at various levels taking into account the reporting requirements for the 2010 target, linkage with the outcome of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) as well as the contribution of biodiversity in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

69. The quality and scope of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and the efforts required to elaborate the first draft version will of necessity entail substantial costs for which the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties did not make the necessary budgetary allocations. The Secretariat will therefore endeavor to leverage the necessary funding support if the report is to be published in sufficient quantities for distribution to and use by the Parties and other partners, make a significant contribution to the reporting processes on the 2010 target, the millennium development goals and also inform the Parties on the status of implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan. It is anticipated that a draft of the report of the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will be released for the consideration of the tenth meeting of SBSTTA and a final published version will then be launched on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity in May 2005.

VI. NATIONAL REPORTING

70. In decision VI/25, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to (i) analyse the second national reports; (ii) analyse the reasons for Parties not being able to complete their national reports; (iii) prepare a draft format for the third national report; and (iv) explore innovative modalities for facilitating preparation of future national reports and thematic reports.

Analysis of the second national reports

71. In response to decision VI/25, the Secretariat prepared two documents for consideration by the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties: summary of the analysis of information contained in second national reports (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.3) and a detailed analysis of information contained in second national reports (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/2). Building upon the earlier assessment prepared for the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF/10 and 11), the current analysis attempts to identify status and trends, progress of, and impediments to, the implementation of the programme of work of the Convention. In accordance with decision VI/27 A, the Secretariat presented this information to the Inter-sessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work for the Conference of the Parties up to 2010, which was held in Montreal from 17 to 21 March 2003. The meeting made a number of specific recommendations concerning national reporting processes for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/5).

72. The Secretariat also undertook to assess the information contained in the thematic reports in order to facilitate the work in their respective areas. A synthesis of the information contained in the thematic reports on mountain ecosystems was presented to the eighth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/8/INF/9), and a synthesis of

information contained in the thematic report on protected areas was presented to the ninth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. A synthesis of information contained in thematic reports on transfer of technology and technology cooperation was also prepared.

Reasons for Parties not being able to complete their national reports

73. As of 30 September 2003, the Secretariat had received 133 first national reports and 103 second national reports, as well as 39 thematic reports on mountain ecosystems, 46 thematic reports on protected areas and 24 thematic reports on transfer of technology and technology cooperation.

74. In decision VI/25, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to continue to identify and analyse the reasons for Parties not being able to complete their national reports, with a view to facilitating the preparation of the third national report. The Secretariat issued a number of notifications and reminders and received several responses from developing country Parties. Lack of timely financial and technical assistance to prepare national reports was identified as a primary reason for Parties not being able to complete their national reports. Personnel change at the national focal point and coordination at the national level also caused delay in preparation of national reports in a few countries.

Draft format for the third national reports

75. In accordance with decision VI/25, the Secretariat prepared draft guidelines for the third national report for consideration by the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which are contained in the note by the Executive Secretary on the same subject (UNEP/CBD/COP/17/Add.2). The draft guidelines have taken into consideration not only the requirements of decision VI/25 but also the recommendations from the Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work held in Montreal, from 17 to 20 March 2003. All national focal points were invited to provide comments on the early draft format for the third national report, and a number of countries kindly provided comments and proposals.

Funding modalities for facilitating the preparation of future national reports and thematic reports

76. At the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, certain Parties referred to the difficulty experienced in accessing funding for preparing their second national reports. As a result, the Conference of the Parties in decision VI/25 requested the Executive Secretary and the Global Environment Facility to explore innovative funding modalities for facilitating the preparation of future national reports and thematic reports. The two secretariats held a meeting to discuss how to best facilitate national reporting through the GEF funding modules, and the GEF Secretariat agreed to make specific projects for national reporting. The discussions showed clearly that innovations are needed to ensure that available funding reach beneficiaries allowing for a higher level of compliance with the obligation to report.

Harmonization of environmental reporting

77. The Secretariat has been actively participating in the activities coordinated by the United Nations Environment Programme to harmonize and streamline national reporting with other biodiversity-related conventions. Inputs were provided by the Secretariat to the draft action plan formulated by the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre for this purpose. In response to decision VI/22, the Secretariat has also been working with the United Nations Forest Forum, Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant forums and organizations to streamline forest-related reporting.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

78. Based on the foregoing progress report on the mechanisms for implementation, the Conference of the Parties may wish to provide guidance to further strengthen the mechanisms for implementation. Specific proposed recommendations on individual mechanisms are contained in relevant addenda to this document, and the following recommendations are only focused on library and documentation and publications service. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

(a) *Take note* of the progress report on the mechanisms for implementation (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17);

(b) *Request* the Parties to contribute and make available financial support towards the cost of the production of the second edition of the global biodiversity outlook report for release in May 2005;

(c) *Request* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of funding, to publish the third edition of the Handbook on the Convention on Biological Diversity, including the decisions of the Conference of the Parties up to its seventh meeting;
