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PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE GENDER PLAN OF ACTION: UPDATE ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its twelfth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted decision XII/7 containing the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action, which provides a framework for Parties and the Secretariat to integrate gender considerations in all aspects of work to implement the Convention. Decision XII/7 on mainstreaming gender considerations follows previous decisions of the Conference of the Parties emphasizing the importance of addressing gender perspectives. Notably, at its tenth meeting, the Conference of Parties invited Parties to consider gender as a core cross-cutting issue in the implementation of biodiversity-related activities. The importance of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) as an avenue for Parties to mainstream gender at the national, subnational and local levels has been emphasized by the Conference of the Parties.¹

2. At its first meeting, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation considered the issue of gender mainstreaming in the context of actions needed to more effectively mainstream biodiversity into both sectoral and cross-sectoral areas. It prepared a draft decision for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting that included elements related to gender (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2). A report on actions undertaken by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action was provided to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation in an information document.²

3. The present note by the Executive Secretary provides additional information to the Conference of the Parties on the extent of integration of gender considerations in NBSAPs. This is based on an analysis undertaken by the Global Gender Office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to assess the incorporation of gender equality and women's empowerment in NBSAPs submitted by Parties to the Secretariat of the Convention between 1993 and May 2016. A summary of this analysis, including suggested opportunities for improved reflection of gender considerations in NBSAPs, is provided below.³ An analysis of gender integration in national reports is provided in an information document.

* UNEP/CBD/COP/13/1.

¹ Decision IX/8; decision X/19; decision XI/2; decision XII/7.

² UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/INF/14.

³ Results of a separate analysis on gender references included in "post-Nagoya" NBSAPs (from 29 October 2010 to 18 July 2016) are available in UNEP/CBD/COP13/8/Add.1.

4. The analysis was undertaken in conjunction with a project generously supported by the Japan Biodiversity Fund, to build capacity of developing country Parties to integrate gender considerations into their biodiversity policy, plans and programmes. The Convention on Biological Diversity collaborated with IUCN to work with three pilot project countries – Mexico, Uganda and Brazil — to support the integration of gender perspectives into their draft NBSAPs being revised to align with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and reflect the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This work was undertaken between January and June 2016. Representatives of women’s groups and gender and biodiversity experts were brought together to gain an understanding of processes under the Convention on Biological Diversity and review the draft NBSAPs to identify gaps relating to gender issues and provide gender perspectives. National government stakeholders from ministries of environment, ministries responsible for women’s affairs and agencies responsible for biodiversity issues, along with representatives of international and civil society organizations and academia were brought together to further consider relevant issues and review draft input. Each country Party will be taking into account proposed gender considerations in the finalization of their NBSAPs.

II. ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT THEMES INCLUDED IN NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

5. The analysis undertaken by IUCN involved the review of all NBSAPs available through the Convention’s search portal, including 254 NBSAPs from 174 countries, which were submitted between 1993 and May 2016.⁴

6. The analysis involved quantitative and qualitative methods, as part of the IUCN Environment and Gender Information (EGI) portal. Quantitative analysis included a keyword search⁵ following guidelines to reduce duplications and illustrate unique references to gender keywords. NBSAPs containing gender keywords were qualitatively analysed using a variety of topics, from how women are characterized (as vulnerable, beneficiaries, stakeholders and/or agents of change), whether sex-disaggregated data and indicators are used and whether there are funded and monitored activities that explicitly include or empower women.

7. For some questions, a subset of only the most recent NBSAP submitted per country Party was considered, to provide a representative sample of the overall integration of gender in NBSAPs, excluding outdated documents that have since been updated. The timeframe of the “most recent” subset of NBSAPs included those submitted between 1995 and May 2016. Many country Parties have not updated their NBSAP in recent years, leading to a lack of new information; therefore, recent progress in gender and biodiversity is not reflected for those countries.

8. The quantitative assessment of NBSAPs revealed that 56 per cent of all NBSAPs (143 of 254) contain at least one reference to “gender” and/or “women”, while the remaining 44 per cent do not contain any mention of either “gender” or “women”. Overall, consideration of women and gender issues in NBSAPs is limited. Attention to gender and women has fluctuated over time since the first NBSAPs were submitted in 1993.

A. Characterization of the role of women

9. Women were most likely to be characterized as stakeholders (37 per cent of countries), followed by beneficiaries (27 per cent of countries), while 17 per cent of countries identified women as vulnerable. The characterization of women as stakeholders included as implementing partners and participants in planning workshops. However, although many countries suggested women should or will be included as

⁴ Technical limitations prevented the review of documents from 11 countries. These limitations included: lack of access to documents on outdated country websites; primary language of document (review restricted to those available in English, French and Spanish); and errors or inconsistencies in details such as the submission date or version number, which in some cases differed between the Convention’s search portal and the document.

⁵ Keyword list included, in English, French and Spanish, the words: a. Gender(s); b. Sex(es); c. Women, woman, girl(s), female(s); d. Men, man, boy(s), male(s); e. Gender equality and; f. Gender equity.

stakeholders, few countries clarified measures taken to support women's involvement. Well-known barriers to women's involvement can include time poverty, childcare responsibilities and access to transit. Notably, in its first NBSAP, Austria identified the need to provide balanced mobility support for disadvantaged groups (including women and others) who do not own vehicles to participate in environmental programmes.

10. With respect to women as beneficiaries, it was found that many NBSAPs refer to equitable distribution of benefits from biodiversity without clarification of what those benefits are or who those beneficiaries should be. Most countries that suggest the distribution of benefits should be equitable do not include an explanation of how that will be achieved or have indicators to measure this outcome.

11. In 17 per cent of countries, women were identified as vulnerable in at least one of the NBSAPs, pointing to common national trends, such as women's higher rates of poverty and women's greater dependence on subsistence agriculture. Yet, reference to women's vulnerability does not always lead a country to plan actions to reduce that vulnerability. NBSAPs largely do not contain detailed information on gender-differentiated resource use and dependence; incorporating such information would support gender-responsive resource management.

12. Only seven countries (4 per cent) identify women as agents of change in at least one version of their NBSAPs. These references relate to women's influence on biodiversity as leaders of social networks, as gatekeepers and communicators, as conscientious consumers or as entrepreneurs. However, the original document analysis template⁶ did not include two important themes raised by a number of countries – women as keepers of traditional ecological knowledge and women as stewards of the environment. References to women as keepers of traditional ecological knowledge relate to their roles as farmers, fishers and elders of indigenous communities. They are also linked to women's heavy dependence on natural resources, livelihood opportunities and agricultural productivity. These references point to the need for an understanding of gender-differentiated knowledge of natural resources to manage biodiversity effectively. A total of 40 countries reference women as stewards of the environment, in some cases documenting women's relationship with specific species, for example with regard to beekeeping and collection of various natural resources. This understanding of gendered roles and relationships with respect to natural resource management can be used particularly to direct resources to women who already have significant expertise in food production.

B. Inclusion of gender consideration

13. Focusing on the subset of the most recent NBSAP for each country (1995 to 2016), the analysis examined how gender considerations were included. In 14 per cent of countries, gender equality is identified as a guiding principle, and 7 per cent of countries explicitly state gender equality or women's empowerment as a main objective, while 18 per cent of countries include gender equality or women's empowerment as one aspect of a larger objective, target or goal. Countries also identify women's organizations or ministries as implementing partners or involved in the development of their most recent NBSAP. Of the 24 countries that identified gender as a guiding principle, 6 did not mention women or gender at all in the rest of the NBSAP. This indicates a clear need for gender mainstreaming and the involvement of gender equality specialists in NBSAP development to ensure that the intention to address gender issues is fully articulated in the document, thus supporting gender-responsive outcomes.

14. In terms of objectives, overall, NBSAPs are more likely to have gender equality integrated within an objective than to have a specific gender equality objective. Typically, gender equality may be integrated into just one objective for an NBSAP and is not integrated into every objective listed in an NBSAP. In a number of cases, the objectives mirrored the Aichi Targets, including Aichi Target 14, which specifically takes into account the needs of women in the restoration and safeguarding of ecosystems that provide essential services.

⁶ Document analysis template based on standard methodology used in the IUCN Environment and Gender Information portal.

15. The analysis found that roughly a quarter of countries have at least one activity explicitly to address gender equality or women's empowerment in their latest NBSAP. Of the NBSAPs in which gender- or women-focused activities were identified, a variety of activities were included, such as gender analysis, educational and outreach communications to teach women about biodiversity and capacity-building training for women. In some countries, the activities for women focus only on sexual reproduction and public health. While these examples point to a country's awareness of population growth and natural resource limitations, they do not reflect women's inclusion directly in natural resource management activities. The tendency of countries to integrate gender in biodiversity activities by focusing solely on providing education for women about the environment or sexual reproduction limits opportunities to engage women in sustainable resource management.

16. While some countries put forward activities that contribute to closing gender gaps, they do not include accountability mechanisms such as monitoring and evaluation plans. Without monitoring and evaluation of activities addressing gender or women's issues, it will be difficult to determine how these interventions support gender equitable outcomes. In 11 per cent of countries, monitoring and evaluation for gender- or women-focused activities were identified, while only 9 per cent of countries have a budget allocated to gender- or women-focused activities. The types of budgeted activities include access to credit schemes, capacity-building and education or outreach programmes. Allocated budgets vary widely, from US\$ 10,000 to US\$ 500,000, with implementation timeframes between 3 and 15 years. Without clear budget allocations and accountability mechanisms, it is unclear what biodiversity funding reaches women or contributes to gender-equitable outcomes.

17. Overall there is a lack of inclusion of sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive indicators and gender analysis within NBSAPs. The scope of gender analysis varies between countries, for example, as Cameroon intends to address gender analysis across sectors, and Sierra Leone intends to focus analysis on the fishery sector. Overall, little detail is provided about the gender analyses that some of the countries intend to perform, and the analyses generally do not have defined outputs or objectives. Only 13 countries have both sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. Most of the sex-disaggregated data is related to background information and demographics for the country. Examples of sex-disaggregated data related to natural resources include women's land ownership, their agricultural productivity and their representation in the agricultural workforce.

18. Sub-Saharan Africa stands out as the leading region integrating gender equality in NBSAPs, mentioning gender and women over twice as frequently as any other region. The performance of the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is notably low by comparison with every other region, according to the most recent NBSAPs.

C. Opportunities

19. While the findings of this analysis indicate a clear need for greater attention to integrating gender in NBSAPs, they also highlight a number of opportunities to better address gender considerations:

(a) *Increase understanding of gender-differentiated connections to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use to support more sustainable outcomes.* While many countries identify women as particularly vulnerable, few NBSAPs clearly relate the loss of biodiversity to a gender-differentiated dependence on natural resources. Providing more detailed information on how men and women use, manage and value natural resources differently is an important means to strengthen women's roles in maintaining traditional ecological knowledge and as stewards of the environment, among others;

(b) *Outline the steps related to gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure desired outcomes are achieved.* References to women and gender issues in many NBSAPs are not addressed in a comprehensive way that clearly leads to achieving gender-equitable outcomes. Where women are identified as stakeholders, there may be no efforts identified to explicitly include them in biodiversity management. Similarly, gender equality may be identified as a guiding principle or cross-cutting issue without any further reference in the rest of the document;

(c) *Increase accountability mechanisms to monitor and evaluate measures to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality, such as sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive indicators and gender analysis.* In 80 per cent of countries, the most recently submitted NBSAPs do not include sex-disaggregated data;

(d) *Reflect learning and progress towards gender equality in updated NBSAPs.* Some countries that have submitted one or more revised versions following their first NBSAP retained the same text on gender and women's issues in each version. This suggests a missed opportunity for updated NBSAPs to address changing policies that impact women, such as access to land and water rights, and reflect learning and progress towards gender equality;

(e) *Share examples of sector-specific initiatives to support learning by other countries.* Countries with sector-specific capacity-building programmes for women fishers, farmers and environmental managers can provide excellent examples from which other countries can learn. This approach is also encouraged to ensure that the inclusion of gender issues extends beyond population and reproduction to identify opportunities for women within natural resource management;

(f) *Identify opportunities for women that make use of their biodiversity knowledge.* One of the primary activities for women across many countries places women as recipients of education on the value of biodiversity. While gender-sensitive education and awareness efforts are indeed important for women, women's existing knowledge can and should be respected and promoted for innovative solutions;

(g) *Reinforce efforts to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.* The incorporation of gender equality and women's empowerment issues in NBSAPs and their implementation provides an opportunity to work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, for which the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective is considered crucial. Involvement by those tasked with the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) also offers an important opportunity to perform cross-sectoral work.

III. CONCLUSIONS

20. Over half of all NBSAPs contain gender keywords that point to some implementation of gender equality commitments made by Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Roughly a quarter of countries have at least one activity explicitly to address gender equality or women's empowerment in their most recently submitted in NBSAPs. While these figures indicate that gender equality is considered as an issue of relevance to national-level biodiversity policy and planning, there is still further to go to ensure gender is effectively mainstreamed in NBSAPs and their implementation. This is particularly evident in cases where gender equality is identified as a guiding principle for a country's NBSAP, but the strategies and actions to apply gender considerations are not elaborated.

21. It is important to note that one of the proposed objectives for Parties under the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action is to "ensure that there is political will for mainstreaming gender in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity". Such commitment is necessary to ensure that gender issues are reflected in a comprehensive way not only in NBSAPs but also in their implementation and in biodiversity-related activities carried out by Parties. Without this level of commitment, the objectives of the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action may not be reached. Furthermore, without mainstreaming of gender considerations in biodiversity-related activities undertaken by Parties, there is a risk that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets may not be fully and effectively implemented. At the same time, as indicated above, the incorporation of gender and women's issues into NBSAPs and their implementation offers an opportunity for countries to work towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, as well as other Sustainable Development Goals that have relevant gender elements. Thus, more particular attention should be paid to identifying and addressing relevant gender and biodiversity linkages at the national level.
