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NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS: A META-ANALYSIS OF EARLIER REVIEWS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As of April 2007, 147 Parties, representing 77% of the convention's 190 Parties, had submitted final national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) to the Secretariat or indicated in their third national reports that their NBSAP was completed. Another 24 Parties (13%) have NBSAPs in preparation or have submitted interim or draft versions. Eleven countries have informed the Secretariat that their original NBSAP has been revised.

2. Decision VIII/8 sets out the mandate for an in-depth review of the implementation of goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, where Goal 3 states: "National biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors serve as an effective framework for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention."

3. In preparation for the in-depth review, which will take place at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, decision VIII/8 (paragraph 9) requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a synthesis/analysis of obstacles encountered, lessons learned, effectiveness of policy instruments and strategic priorities for action relating to NBSAPs. Some information is already available to the Secretariat through earlier assessments and reviews undertaken by international organizations and academic researchers.

4. The present document summarizes key findings, drawn from existing information sources, on the obstacles and opportunities related to NBSAP development and implementation, and to mainstreaming biodiversity. Sections II, III and IV summarize the principal obstacles and shortcomings related to NBSAPs and mainstreaming biodiversity concerns, as identified by international organizations, individual Parties, and academic researchers respectively, in documents consulted to date.* The final

* For a full bibliography, see UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/INF/10 *Review of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, Biodiversity Mainstreaming and Implementation of the Convention: A Bibliography* available at <http://www.biodiv.org/meetings/wgri-2/review.shtml>

section summarizes priority actions and best practices suggested by the various reviews for improving the implementation of NBSAPs.

II. REVIEWS BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY, IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

5. Many NBSAPs have been prepared with financial support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as part of biodiversity Enabling Activities projects.[‡] The GEF's Implementing Agencies (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Bank) played a significant role in the projects, assisting countries to access GEF funds, providing technical assistance on request from governments, and ensuring that funds were used as agreed. Since 1996, the GEF has provided 133 grants to assist in the development of NBSAPs, adding up to a total of

6. \$26.7 million.[‡] UNDP has been the most active implementing agency of NBSAPs, overseeing 65% of the projects, with the remaining number split between UNEP (19%) and the World Bank (16%). The average NBSAP grant is \$223,000, ranging from \$25,000 to US \$968,000.

7. The Biodiversity Planning Support Programme (BPSP) established under UNDP-UNEP further served to strengthen countries' abilities to develop and implement NBSAPs, adding, in conjunction with UNEP Biodiversity Country Studies, approximately US \$10.4 million in support[§]. In several countries, IUCN and international non-governmental organizations (World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Fauna and Flora International) provided direct support to NBSAP development.

A. Assessments of Biodiversity Enabling Activities

Interim Assessment of Biodiversity Enabling Activities (GEF 1999)

8. The main purpose of the assessment was to determine "how successful enabling activities have been, analyze the reasons for those that have failed, and consider policy and programmatic responses to the problem."^{**} The assessment was based on interviews and reviews of key documents as well as visits to 12 countries and reviews commissioned for 3 additional countries and 2 regions.^{††} The team reviewed the draft or final NBSAP of each country included in the study but not in detail. Importantly, given that most countries had not even completed their NBSAP at the time of the study, the reviewers could not assess the impacts of Enabling Activities.

Overall findings

9. The overall finding of the assessment was that "most countries seem to have undertaken a worthwhile and cost-effective national biodiversity planning process, or are in the process of doing so." However, the "development and implementation of national biodiversity plans that can make a real difference to current rates of biodiversity loss, and the commitment and capacity to implement such plans, are still some way in the future."

[‡] GEF-financed enabling activity projects for biodiversity conservation have aimed to assist eligible countries both to develop NBSAPs and to complete national reports to the CBD.

[‡] GEF 2004 Biodiversity Program Study, p. 29.

[§] Ibid.

^{**} GEF. 1999. Interim Assessment of Biodiversity Enabling Activities: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Washington D.C.: GEF.

^{††} Countries visited: Argentina, Belize, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Gabon, Kenya, Mexico, Poland, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe. Country reports from: India, Nepal, the Philippines. Regional reports from: the Arab States and the Pacific Island States.

Issues at the GEF-level

10. The Enabling Activities projects were completely new for the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing Agencies, and encountered numerous problems early on. A lack of clear country-eligibility criteria, proposal formats and cost norms resulted in much time and effort wasted as countries were forced to repeatedly revise proposals. Streamlined procedures were then adopted to speed up the review and approval process, which helped to reduce contention within the Implementing Agencies and frustration at the country-level. However with streamlining, the proposals for Enabling Activities became relatively homogeneous leading to similar amounts of time and resources being devoted to Enabling Activities in each country regardless of country context and capacity.

Issues at the country-level

11. The obstacles and shortcomings identified in the assessment are not ascribed to particular countries, but apply generally to “most” or “some” countries as indicated. In general, the NBSAP planning process compared favorably to previous environmental planning initiatives in most countries. Information listed below is excerpted from the assessment (Section 1. ‘Overview and Recommendations’) and organized under the same headings.

- Country motivation.

Although most countries took the preparation of NBSAPs seriously, some viewed the process less as an important step towards biodiversity conservation and more as a means to access available funds and to remain eligible for future GEF-funding (perceived by countries as being contingent on completing an NBSAP).

- Stakeholder involvement

Steering committees and consultation processes often encouraged cooperation between key stakeholders, and many countries would have expanded their local consultation given additional resources. However, in several countries there was a lack of involvement from local communities, indigenous groups or the private sector, and a lack of consideration of gender issues.

- Public support

In most countries, the constituency supporting biodiversity conservation is too narrow, and very rarely able to have a significant impact on key decisions affecting biodiversity. However, preparing NBSAPs and national reports appears to have raised awareness among government officials of key biodiversity issues.

- Links with related initiatives

In several countries, NBSAP preparation has not been linked or coordinated effectively with other, concurrent, donor-sponsored planning initiatives, limiting prospects for effective implementation where priorities of different plans prove incompatible. As well, some countries appear to be suffering from environmental planning fatigue (from earlier processes) with little to show in terms of implementation.

- Action plans

Action plans are not addressing the politically sensitive root causes of biodiversity loss. Many plans are little more than unprioritized lists of projects for international funding, aimed more at international donors than a national audience. Very few action plans emphasize domestic resource mobilization. The majority aim to conserve biodiversity through a project-based approach, rather than proposing national policy and institutional changes. Transboundary issues are largely ignored, even where significant. Many countries seem likely to end up with a document but little more in terms of enhanced institutional capacity. Teams preparing NBSAPs generally consisted mainly of consultants, and were temporary in nature. Most Enabling Activities were executed by ministries or

departments of the environment, where many of these agencies are not often in a strong position to address intersectoral issues with high political support. Also, many environment ministries have limited implementation experience. Finally, when government officials responsible for implementation realized that the GEF would not be funding NBSAP implementation, they usually had no alternative strategy in mind.

- Issues emphasized by the Conference of the Parties
NBSAPs have focused on biodiversity conservation, with the other two major objectives of the CBD – sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing – receiving much less attention.

- Intersectoral issues (Mainstreaming)

Most countries have not seriously addressed intersectoral issues, with little involvement of key sectoral agencies in NBSAP preparation. The main reasons seemed to be:

- Lack of biodiversity knowledge and awareness outside the traditional biodiversity constituency;
- Inadequate institutional arrangements and instability;
- Lack of methodologies or guidelines; and most seriously,
- An unwillingness to address the real and politically difficult tradeoffs necessary to reduce current rates of biodiversity loss.

12. The study also notes that delegation of biodiversity planning below the national level seems likely to emerge as a high priority for future planning efforts, and especially for the implementation of action plans.^{‡‡}

Revisiting the 1999 Assessment

13. In March 2006, UNEP prepared an informal review and analysis of biodiversity enabling activities^{§§}, to spark discussion about potential future activities in this area. The document is largely based on a desk study, and outlines the major achievements, gaps and omissions of earlier biodiversity EAs. In considering EA shortcomings, the document focuses primarily on those issues raised by the 1999 GEF assessment that have yet to be adequately addressed, identified as:

- Lack of mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations (in government budgets and planning, and in production landscapes)

14. When NBSAPs are prepared more or less in “isolation” within the ministry of environment or equivalent, with limited participation from other sectors through select “invited stakeholders,” political buy-in is limited, and the NBSAP can suffer lack of recognition within budgeting processes. This shortcoming, the report points out, hampers the implementation of Article 6b of the CBD as well as efforts to fully link biodiversity planning, and in particular the ecosystem approach, to poverty alleviation and the MDGs.

- Inadequate action plans, consisting of unprioritized lists of projects for international funding
Rather, projects should emanate from policies. Action plans should focus on “fundamental issues such as policies and sub-policies, legislative measures, and related issues” that can move the biodiversity agenda in a unified manner. Related to this shortcoming, is a challenge identified by the GEF Interim Assessment (1999) is that a majority of stakeholders participating in NBSAP development are actors without mandates to address many of the issues outlined in the action plan.

^{‡‡} GEF. 1999. Interim Assessment of Biodiversity Enabling Activities: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Washington D.C.: GEF, p. 40.

^{§§} UNEP / GEF. 2006. *Analysis on Biodiversity Enabling Activities*. Draft Report prepared by UNEP Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination (DGEF), Nairobi, Kenya: DGEF.

- Limited mobilization of domestic resources

The GEF Interim Assessment (1999) noted that few action plans emphasize domestic resource mobilization. According to the 2006 report, this remains the case. In government approval of NBSAPs, practical financing mechanisms should be identified and put in place, such as market-based instruments like user fees, tax incentives, trust funds etc.

- Limited public awareness and support to NBSAPs

In general, communication and public awareness has been approached in an ad-hoc fashion. The report stressed the importance of developing strategic communication strategies with budgets.

- Incomplete and outdated NBSAPs

The report suggests that revisions should include

- endorsements from Parliaments
- address mainstreaming of biodiversity in production landscapes
- revision of action plans to reflect policy and legislative issues rather than projects
- inclusion of work done by Add-ons and National Capacity Self Assessments (NCSAs)
- inclusion of 2010 targets and country plans for these targets

15. In addition, the UNEP paper notes shortcomings from the GEF and CBD side that need to be resolved. These are as follows:

- Some 11 developing countries party to the CBD have never applied for Enabling Activities;
- There is no mechanism for the GEF to monitor whether outputs of the enabling activities are being employed to implement NBSAPs;
- Guidance and documentation from the Conference of the Parties are too complicated for Parties to translate into NBSAPs; and
- Parties lack guidance on how to integrate the 2010 targets into NBSAPs.

B. Other GEF evaluations

16. The *GEF Biodiversity Program Study 2004*, in its assessment of how the GEF Biodiversity Program is performing, briefly considers Enabling Activities (with specific attention to progress made in the implementation of NBSAPs) as well as mainstreaming of biodiversity. The study notes that the rate of preparation of NBSAPs has been slower than expected, but does not consider this issue in any depth.

17. In terms of mainstreaming, the authors of the 2004 study note that much work remains to be done. There is still much confusion about what exactly mainstreaming encompasses, with GEF projects to date mainly focusing on mainstreaming biodiversity into relevant sectors (e.g., agriculture and tourism) and not addressing cross-sectoral needs (e.g., finance and energy). The study recommends that guidelines and clear definitions be developed to clarify the concept in the GEF context. At the country level, the most common problem identified is a lack of true commitment by governments to the incorporation of biodiversity considerations (p.73). The study notes that “in many projects, the government has opted for approving a development or infrastructure project that completely undermined the mainstreaming efforts supported by the GEF.” The benefits and incentives of mainstreaming need to be evident to all stakeholders. Finally, mainstreaming takes more time than usually allowed under GEF projects, and will not work unless the appropriate government agency is engaged.

18. The *Second Overall Performance Study*^{***} and the *GEF Biodiversity Program Study (2002)*^{†††} make little mention of NBSAPs. The major concern raised is whether NBSAPs are playing any role in

^{***} GEF. 2002. *The First Decade of the GEF: Second Overall Performance Study*. Washington D.C.: GEF

^{†††} Singh, S. and C. Volonte. 2002. *Biodiversity Program Study*. Washington D.C.: GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

helping countries to identify priority projects for GEF support, or in integrating global biodiversity conservation priorities into national plans, policies and legal frameworks. In 2004, the Biodiversity Program Study noted that the GEF had not yet taken action to improve effectiveness in these areas (p.37). The Operational Programs for Biodiversity and the draft executive version of the *Third Overall Performance Study of the GEF*^{†††} make very limited reference to NBSAPs, the latter noting that only five projects to support NBSAPs were approved between the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, that substantial delays occurred in their preparation, and that in general support should be provided to countries to assist with mainstreaming national reports and action plans.

19. Although rarely focusing specifically on NBSAPs, the evaluations mentioned in the preceding paragraph do highlight general shortcomings in the development and implementation of projects that could also apply to the NBSAP process. Among these is the need to build effective, long-lived institutions (currently hampered by hefty bureaucracy, lack of capacity, inertia and poor coordination); to promote flexible, adaptive management styles; and to monitor and evaluate performance.

C. Regional workshops organized under the Biodiversity Planning Support Programme

20. Regional workshops were held under the BPSP to allow countries to share experiences on the development and implementation of NBSAPs. The IUCN Regional Biodiversity Programme Asia was the Executing Agency for BPSP activities in that region, and organized workshops in Southeast Asia in 1999 and in Northeast and East Central Asia in April 2000. Countries were asked to prepare short papers on the development and implementation of their NBSAPs, for presentation at the workshops.^{§§§} Regional workshops also were held in Nairobi (November 1997) and the Dominican Republic (January 1998).

21. In Asia, participants at each workshop produced a list of common concerns related to NBSAP development and implementation. Both lists closely repeat the same issues, and are combined here. For ease of reference, concerns identified in the output documents are rearranged here under the same headings as used in the 1999 GEF assessment (points a. – f.), with a few additional categories (g – j).

a. Country motivation

Political support is limited due to a general lack of awareness of the economic value of biodiversity. This has led to biodiversity being ignored in planning processes. In general, all countries are short on integrating economics and economic development with conservation.

b. Stakeholder involvement

Consultation with and involvement of stakeholders (including resource users, local communities, experts, the private sector and key government resource development sectors) has been limited and needs to be strengthened at all levels. Additionally, little feedback occurs between initial consultations and the final NBSAP. Related to this is the need to promote transparency in the NBSAP formulation (and revision) processes.

c. Public support

Lack of communication about the NBSAP to sectoral agencies, to stakeholders at the sub-national level, to government offices at various levels, and to local and indigenous communities hinders cooperation on the implementation of action plans.

d. Action plans

^{†††} GEF. 2005. *Third Overall Performance Study*. Washington D.C.: IFC Consulting. GEF Council Document GEF/ME/C.25/4.

^{§§§} For the NE and East Central Asia workshop, Afghanistan, China, Kazakhstan, Korea D.P.R., Korea R.O., Kyrgyz Republic, and Mongolia presented papers, with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also present. For the SE Asia workshop, China, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Singapore presented papers, with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also invited to share their experiences on the NBSAP process.

Impractical and out-of-date action plans. Mechanisms for setting priorities are not well understood or employed. Many activities listed in NBSAPs are either not practical (i.e., not likely to provide significant benefits for the costs involved) or not urgent, or try to tackle a large multitude of issues at once.

- e. Issues emphasized by the Conference of the Parties
Emerging issues may not be represented in older NBSAPs.
- f. Intersectoral issues (Mainstreaming)
There is great unrealised potential to achieve NBSAP implementation through reorientation of existing sectoral budgets and programmes. Furthermore, the private sector remains a minor player in both NBSAP planning and implementation.
- g. Limited human capacity and lack of funding resources
NBSAP activities are not often integrated with the annual budget process within government and national economic planning, and those funds that are available are not effectively managed.
- h. Institutional arrangements
Plans or structures need to be in place to facilitate implementation once the NBSAP has been developed. An effective legal framework often are lacking. Without these, countries have trouble coordinating actions between sectors, obtaining financial resources, and putting in place laws and regulations. The lack of detailed descriptions of implementation mechanisms and responsibilities in NBSAPs create obstacles in national implementation.
- i. Knowledge and Information Management
Lack of knowledge of biodiversity, with few monitoring and assessment programs in place, and a lack of information management and sharing mechanisms.
- j. Monitoring and Assessment
The lack of monitoring and feedback mechanisms in implementation is a key challenge in current NBSAPs as information on how sectoral agencies implement NBSAPs does not get transmitted to the lead agency on a systematic basis.

22. The regional workshops held in Nairobi, Kenya (November 1997) and the Dominican Republic (January 1998)^{****} identified many of the same problems as those listed above, with the following additional concerns:

- inadequate time is allotted to NBSAP preparation;
- uncertainty exists as to the type and level of output required;
- uncertainty and lack of expertise in economic analysis/valuation, biosafety, agrobiodiversity, intellectual property rights, and benefit sharing exist; and
- there is little experience with conflict resolution, participatory methodologies, team planning and leadership and process management.

Other issues raised

23. The workshops held in Asia highlighted other issues of relevance in developing effective NBSAPs. These included:

- protecting wildlife across political boundaries, through trans-boundary projects;

^{****} Reproduced from Box 3.1 in GEF 1999 assessment.

- developing sub-national (provincial) plans and strategies in order to respond to local conditions, particularly in a large country such as China;
- integrating biodiversity in Environmental Impact Assessments, and providing EIA training.
- incorporating key elements of NBSAPs into sector plans and budgets
- greater attention to valuation of biodiversity resources in economic terms in order to give greater weight and attention to biodiversity-related issues in development planning.

24. In addition, participants at the BPSP workshops in Kenya and the Dominican Republic noted that available guidelines were unclear, imprecise, and sometimes contradictory. Planning teams felt they may be reinventing the wheel when they could be benefiting from best practices in other countries. Yet often they were unaware of what other countries were doing in terms of innovative processes and activities.

D. Other international organizations

25. One of the overall conclusions of the current assessment is that engaging the economic sector is a new challenge for the conservation community and that mainstreaming in island economies can only be ranked as marginally satisfactory.

26. IUCN did an extensive review, based on case studies and a workshop, of the integration of economic measures and incentives into NBSAPs.^{††††} The report provides numerous examples of ways in which economics has been integrated and treated as a cross-cutting issues, arguing that this is the case in a majority of NBSAPs. However major challenges occur with respect to the implementation of economic tools and measures. Main obstacles identified were:

- weak in-country capacity and awareness including lack of knowledge and lack of prior experience among biodiversity planners with application of economic techniques and tools;
- insufficient involvement of economists in NBSAP processes;
- and lack of access to information on how economic measures have been used for biodiversity conservation in other countries and sectors.

27. The outcome is that while many NBSAPs have incorporated economic objectives and goals, made the case for the mainstreaming of biodiversity, and even identified stand-alone activities and economic instruments, the economic measures specified in NBSAPs often are not implemented in practice. As a result, the report argues, NBSAPs have “not yet entered into the agenda of mainstream development and economic decision-making.”^{††††}

28. WWF and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) prepared a *Checklist for NBSAP Preparation* for Pacific Island countries. Every issue appearing in the checklist had been experienced by at least one Pacific Island country, with a corresponding lesson learned and solution offered for each. Pacific Island countries faced many of the same problems identified through BPSP workshops, including: a lack of country ownership (due to reliance on outside consultants); lack of political commitment; a lack of stakeholder consultation (in part due to the geographical remoteness of some areas and poor communication infrastructure); limited public awareness; limited human capacity (including limited staff time and lack of in-country expertise); and lack of funding. The checklist also included the following additional problems:

- Limited access to information/guidelines;
- Lack of motivation within agencies to engage in yet another project/strategy;

^{††††} Emerton, L. 2001. *The Use of Economics in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: A Review of Experiences, Lessons Learned and Ways Forward*. Karachi, Pakistan: IUCN Regional Environmental Economics Programme for Asia.

^{††††} Ibid., p. 17.

- Lack of project sustainability (includes high turn-over of personnel, government restructuring);
- NBSAP perceived as a threat by development interests (cross-sectoral conflicts), and by owners of traditional knowledge;
- Limited financial reporting – transparency lacking.

29. The Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region is currently under review with the objective of revising the Strategy.^{§§§§} As part of this review, the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation assessed progress made in implementing NBSAPs or the equivalent instrument in all Pacific Island Countries and Territories, as well as the integration of NBSAPs into development plans.^{*****} It was found that while compliance and enforcement of conservation legislation, instruments, and authorities are occurring, these activities may not be formally recognized within the individual NBSAPs.

30. In 2000, participants from 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa representing government, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and research organizations, met along with donor agencies at the First Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Biodiversity Forum.^{††††} One of the issues participants identified as a major limitation was that most NBSAPs in the region over-emphasize conservation and downplay sustainable use of biodiversity.^{††††} This was identified as a problem as the CBD treats the two in a more integrated and cohesive fashion. Integration of biodiversity-related concerns into economic sectors as well as sustainable development and poverty alleviation strategies were identified as other key challenges. It was argued that two key contributing factors were traditionally rigid sectoral policy formulation in which institutions see themselves as responsible only for the mandate with which they are charged, and a lack of interdisciplinary staff equipped to address cross-cutting issues. Additionally, NBSAP preparation and implementation is often seen as independent to sustainable development. Related to mainstreaming, participants identified similar challenges as those identified by participants in Asian workshops, namely obstacles related to funding, institutional frameworks, political support, alignment with the parallel process of sustainable development planning, and information needs including economic tools to better engage sectoral decision-makers. A concern raised was that donors, in particular the Implementing Agencies, have tended to be rigid with funds and pushed unrealistic timeframes. This, it was argued, has compromised quality and serves as another reason why identifying alternative funding sources is important.

31. Participants stressed information management as being critical to effective mainstreaming. Information was described as being unequally distributed or accessible within the region. The role that the Clearing House Mechanism could play in the exchange of information was emphasized, yet many of the participating countries at the workshop did not have access to or experience with the mechanism. Additionally, shortcomings were identified with respect to the integration of local skills and knowledge, including indigenous knowledge.

32. The majority of reviews as well as regional workshops on NBSAPs have linked the issue of mainstreaming with goals related to poverty alleviation. Yet reviews of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Poverty Reduction Support Credits ^{§§§§ ***** †††††} show how rarely NBSAPs are considered,

^{§§§§} Tortell, P. 2006. *The Roundtable and the Action Strategy: Issues and Options*. Report submitted to Pacifica Roundtable for Nature Conservation, Roundtable-10. Wellington: Environmental Management Limited.

^{*****} Under Objective 2.2 of, one of the targets was the integration of NBSAPs into the development plans of at least five PICTs.

^{††††} Emerton, L. and J. Maganya, (eds.). 2000. *Report of the First Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Biodiversity Forum: Using Biodiversity to Strengthen Livelihoods, Mombasa, Kenya, 2000*. Nairobi: IUCN Eastern Africa Regional Office

^{††††} Emerton, L. 2001. *The Use of Economics in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: A Review of Experiences, Lessons Learned and Ways Forward*. Karachi, Pakistan: IUCN Regional Environmental Economics Programme for Asia, p. 42.

^{§§§§} Bojo, J. and R. C. Reddy. 2003a. *Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goal on Environmental Sustainability: Opportunities for Alignment*. Washington D.C.: World Bank, Environment Department Paper No. 92.

and highlight a major challenge with regard to effective engagement in national planning processes. This further supports a number of the findings above on mainstreaming as well as two other challenges identified by parties: lack of effective partnerships and lack of horizontal cooperation among stakeholders.†††††

III. NATIONAL CAPACITY SELF-ASSESSMENTS (NCSAS)

33. Funded under the GEF and launched in 2001, NCSAs provide countries with the opportunity to identify country level priorities and needs for capacity building to address global environmental issues. Countries are encouraged to then develop a plan of action to achieve global environmental management objectives in the context of the three Rio Conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity.

34. The Secretariat has consulted nine of the 11 NCSAs available as of August 2006.‡‡‡‡‡‡ Each clearly states obstacles to implementation of the Convention, and many suggest opportunities for enhanced effectiveness. Although addressing implementation in general, rather than specific progress under NBSAPs, these documents are useful complements to any voluntary NBSAP reviews submitted by Parties.

35. Overall, the same issues identified by international organizations in their assessments of obstacles to NBSAP development and implementation reappear in National Capacity Self Assessments (see Table 1). The case of Jamaica is illustrative. There, even though there is widespread knowledge of the CBD and high priority accorded to the NBSAP within the agency responsible for CBD implementation (National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA)), progress remains limited. The CBD national focal point for Jamaica reported that biodiversity issues are not given high priority at the national level, as the link with poverty reduction and development is not readily understood.

***** Bojo, J. and R.C. Reddy. 2003b. *Status and Evolution of Environmental Priorities in the Poverty Reduction Strategies: An Assessment of Fifty Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*. Washington D.C.: World Bank, Environment Department Paper No. 93.

††††† Bojo, J., K. Green, S. Kishore, S. Pilapitiya, and R.C. Reddy. 2004. *Environment in Poverty Reduction Strategies and Poverty Reduction Support Credits*. Washington D.C.: World Bank, Environment Department Paper No. 102.

‡‡‡‡‡‡ See UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2 and UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2/Add1.

§§§§§ The exceptions are the Tajikistan NCSA (in Russian) and the Bahamas NCSA (corrupted file)

Table 1. Obstacles to implementation of the CBD as identified in selected National Capacity Self Assessments^{*****}

Obstacle (Broad category)	Related obstacle	Cited by
Lack of human and financial resources		ARM; BTN; HRV; EST; GMB; JAM; POL; ROU
	Lack of targeted funding in national budgets for implementation of the CBD	ARM; HRV; EST
	Non-transparent use of funds	HRV
	Lack of capacity at the local level	BTN; HRV; URY
	Low qualification of employees—brain drain to the private sector, and low motivation in the public sector	EST
Weak institutional arrangements	No dedicated staff/ institution	BTN; HRV
	Unclear definitions of responsibility and functions among agencies	ARM; HRV; EST; ROU
	Lack of coordination and collaboration among various agencies	BTN; EST; ROU; URY
Limited scientific research and training	Expert training needed on biodiversity science and management	BTN; HRV; GMB; ROU; URY
	No baseline data or biodiversity monitoring systems	GMB; ROU; URY
Lack of information management	Lack of an information exchange mechanism	HRV; EST; JAM; ROU
	Existing scientific and traditional knowledge not fully utilized	JAM
Lack of public education and awareness at all levels		JAM; HRV; GMB; EST; POL; ROU; URY
	Consequences of biodiversity loss not well understood or documented	JAM
Limited stakeholder involvement	Weak NGOs/ Weak civil society	HRV; ROU; POL; URY
Lack of legislation/ regulations		ARM; HRV; EST; GMB; ROU; URY
	Lack of law enforcement	POL
	Lack of harmonization with EU regulations	HRV
Lack of country ownership/ high-level political support		ARM; JAM
	Political instability	POL
Lack of appropriate incentive measures		HRV; GMB
Limited international collaboration		HRV; POL
Poverty and unemployment;		EST; POL
Consumer lifestyle		

IV. ACADEMIC RESEARCH

36. There are relatively few academic studies that seek to assess implementation of the Convention. The conservation literature tends to address biodiversity science and practical responses to biodiversity loss (e.g., conservation planning) without reference to government obligations under the CBD. A number of studies on environmental governance consider the operations and effectiveness of the CBD, but discussion of NBSAPs per se appears limited.

***** Armenia (ARM), Bhutan (BTN), Croatia (HRV), Estonia (EST), Gambia (GMB), Jamaica (JAM), Poland (POL), Romania (ROU), Uruguay (URY).

A. General Reviews

Obstacles to implementation

37. LePrestre (2002)⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ considers that a general lack of capacity remains one of the biggest constraints on the development and implementation of the CBD, with many of these problems affecting both developing and industrialized countries. In seeking to implement the CBD, all countries must deal with the “complexity and scope of the convention, its relative lack of public visibility, its political ramifications and the underdevelopment of its key tools.”

38. Obstacles to effective implementation identified by LePrestre (2002) include⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺:

- uncoordinated administrative structures, with divided and competing levels of administrative authority;
- a brain drain effect: after attending professional development courses, government officials can and do get promoted, or join international NGOs or Inter-Governmental Organizations, without fully implementing skills learned on the job or training others;
- uneven participation in international fora by developing country experts: reasons range from a lack of information and networking, through limited resources for participation, to the domination of the process by a few individuals and the importance of English in international negotiating fora and in the background literature;
- inadequate communication between stakeholders and government at local levels.

39. NBSAPs that might have helped overcome some of these problems were, in LePrestre’s view, too often undertaken as a pro forma exercise, and have failed to identify national priorities.

Obstacles to mainstreaming

1. Swiderska (2002) has reviewed country experience in mainstreaming biodiversity in development policy and planning.^{§§§§§§} Despite some positive outcomes, she argues that NBSAPs have not influenced planning in economic sectors, and so are not addressing the main drivers of biodiversity loss. She identifies from previous reviews and country experiences^{*****} a number of reasons for why biodiversity objectives have not been integrated into economic policy and planning. These include:

- Lack of assessment of the economic value of biodiversity and cost of its loss;
- Inadequate institutional arrangements and lack of integration with other national institutions and planning mechanisms. The separation of units or departments responsible for environment from finance, planning and sectoral departments, and the weak position of environment ministries meant to take the lead in implementation;
- Lack of guidelines and practical approaches for integrating biodiversity across sectors;
- Limited engagement of stakeholders, including government departments, local communities, women and the private sector and a lack of communication and awareness-raising;
- Poor NBSAP design. NBSAPs are often too centralized and prescriptive (not fine tuned to specific priorities and constraints of government departments) and over-ambitious (leading to inaction by agencies faced with an impossible agenda). They also tend to be developed by biodiversity specialists who lack capacity to engage economic sectors and build links to

⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ LePrestre, P. 2002. The Convention on Biological Diversity: Negotiating the turn to effective implementation. *ISUMA* Fall: 92 - 98. http://www.isuma.net/v03n02/prestre/prestre_e.shtml

⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ Ibid.

^{§§§§§§} Swiderska, K. 2002. *Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development Policy and Planning A Review of Country Experience*. London, UK: IIED. http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/bio_liv_documents/Mainstreamingbiodiversity1.pdf

^{*****} Carew-Reid, J. (ed) 2002. *Biodiversity Planning in Asia*. IUCN Sri Lanka; Swiderska, K. 2002. *Implementing the Rio Conventions: Implications for the South*. IIED, WSSD Opinion Paper; OECD and UNDP 2002. *Sustainable Development Strategies: A Resource Book*.

development planning. Additionally, many NBSAPs have failed to generate substantial political interest and “remain on the shelf;”

- Weak national development planning systems, in general;
- Time limitations and funding constraints imposed by governments or donors;
- Lack of monitoring of NBSAP implementation and of biodiversity status;
- Poor coordination between different environmental conventions and priorities.

40. Underlying reasons for the weak implementation and sectoral integration of NBSAPs include, most significantly, a lack of political commitment, related to the widespread lack of awareness of biodiversity and its economic value. Other frequently cited reasons are: lack of strategy ownership and leadership, lack of clearly assigned responsibility, and limited capacity of biodiversity units and environmental departments.

B. Region or Country-specific Studies

41. Available academic studies of CBD implementation at the national level make only general remarks concerning obstacles to effective NBSAPs. In reviewing key achievements and gaps in South Africa’s biodiversity sector since the Rio Earth Summit, Wynberg (2002) notes that, although completion of an NBSAP was a priority under the 1997 Biodiversity White Paper, progress had been slow because of insufficient capacity and funding, and lack of political support.^{††††††††}—Considering progress in implementation of the Convention in Mesoamerica, Aguilar-Støen and Dhillion (2003) argue that the CBD remains little known among politicians (particularly at the local level) or among key groups in civil society.^{††††††††} As a result, biodiversity issues are rarely taken into account in policy decision-making. In their interviews with officials and reviews of available government reports, lack of resources and institutional limitations were the most frequently cited reasons for countries not fulfilling obligations under the CBD. Aguilar-Støen and Dhillion (2003) note that while all countries in the region have a government institution responsible for the implementation of the CBD, not all have explicit legal or regulatory frameworks for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity nor guidelines for the incorporation of the CBD into national legislation and broader policy and institutional decisions. This further affects progression towards broad-scale mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns across government and within economic sectors.

V. PRIORITIES

42. This section draws out the priorities (or next steps) for the improved development and implementation of NBSAPs as identified in the various reports reviewed here.

43. The interim assessment prepared by the GEF (1999) noted that most governments did not seem to be taking significant steps to maintain or build on the momentum that had gathered behind the NBSAP development process, and proposed the below essential next steps. These have been supplemented with recommendations drawn from the more recent, informal assessment prepared within UNEP.

- Obtain formal government approval or adoption of NBSAP. Involve Parliamentary Select Committees in order to have NBSAP implementation included in budgeting processes.
- Strengthen the action plan: prioritize activities, assign responsibilities and obtain commitments from key stakeholders (officially representing key institutional partners) to move forward with implementation. Bring the action plan under the microscope. Develop complementary agreements with other arms of government.

^{††††††††} Wynberg, R. 2002. A decade of biodiversity conservation and use in South Africa: tracking progress from the Rio Earth Summit to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. *South African Journal of Science* 98: 233-243. NB. South Africa’s NBSAP was finalized in 2005.

^{††††††††} Aguilar-Støen, M. and S.S. Dhillion. 2003. Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Mesoamerica: environmental and developmental perspectives. *Environmental Conservation* 30: 131-138.

- Confirm or establish permanent institutional arrangements for the coordination and monitoring of NBSAP implementation.
- Coordinate NBSAP execution with other national environmental planning exercises.
- Develop a plan to mobilize financial resources, including the use of market and fiscal policies (e.g., forming trust funds), and organize donor workshops and other coordination mechanisms.
- Clarify the role and importance of the CHM as a functional scientific and information network.
- Develop communication strategies for biodiversity conservation, to reach mainstream media.
- Develop public support for NBSAP implementation, bringing in the private sector, NGOs, the legal fraternity, parliamentary select committees, indigenous groups and academia.
- Deepen the NBSAP in weak areas, such as intersectoral analysis, awareness raising, local consultation, policy development, institutional reforms, sustainable use, and so on.

44. Participants at the BPSP regional workshops organized in Asia by IUCN listed their priorities for improving NBSAP implementation. In addition to rather vague points (i.e., on the need for management, funding, capacity-building, awareness-raising, conservation of species and ecosystems), the list also included the following priorities:

- To establish a national green accounting system, that reflects the economic value of biodiversity
- To develop biodiversity inventories (assessments) and monitoring systems
- To develop protected areas
- To [consider] sustainable use

45. Participants at the First Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Biodiversity Forum identified similar priorities, but also highlighted several additional key requirements in the workshop recommendations for improving national biodiversity planning in the region including:

- a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between different stakeholders and institutions involved and the improved generation and exchange of information;
- greater inter-agency collaboration in NBSAP preparation;
- integration of regional processes and cross-border ecosystem issues of relevance to biodiversity be included in NBSAPs;
- greater political commitment at both national and sub-national levels including continued efforts to decentralize the preparation as well as implementation of biodiversity strategies and action plans; and
- capacity building to address emerging issues

46. In terms of improving mainstreaming of biodiversity issues, Swiderska (2002) recommends that NBSAPs need to concentrate much more on building a constituency for biodiversity across different sectors and levels of government and sustaining high-level political commitment.^{§§§§§§§§} The GEF Interim Assessment (1999) similarly argues that political will is needed at the highest level for effective mainstreaming to occur, as well as commitments of support from local government authorities, where necessary. As noted in multiple reports, securing political buy-in will depend on making clear to government and major stakeholders the economic incentives for biodiversity conservation.

47. Also speaking with regard to ways in which mainstreaming of biodiversity could be made more effective, Emerton (2001)^{*****} focuses on the integration of economic measures into NBSAPs and the

§§§§§§§§ The author also describes specific opportunities for overcoming current obstacles to effective mainstreaming.

***** Emerton, L. 2001. *The Use of Economics in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: A Review of Experiences, Lessons Learned and Ways Forward*. Karachi, Pakistan: IUCN Regional Environmental Economics Programme for Asia.

engagement of economic sectors in the implementation of the action plans. Pulling from both country experiences and priorities as well as guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties of the Convention, she proposes a four-step framework:

1. Building a biodiversity economics capacity and database, involving training, capacity building, networking, and information sharing
2. Presenting the NBSAP in development and economic terms using valuation to highlight economic gains of NBSAP implementation
3. designing and implementing economic measures for biodiversity conservation
4. sustaining and reviewing economic measures over the long-term, including monitoring and modifying economic measures as conditions and needs change over time. This involves viewing the NBSAP as a “rolling investment”^{††††††††††} which requires revision and reformulation on a regular basis.

48. The GEF Biodiversity Programme Study (2004) finds^{*****} that the dominant lesson from their assessment is that mainstreaming takes time, a fact often underestimated in project planning documents. The authors note the need to select the appropriate government agency to work with, and to develop indicators (economic, social and biodiversity) to measure the impact of mainstreaming projects. There are now important opportunities for increasing support to Parties’ mainstreaming efforts. Firstly, the mainstreaming of biodiversity in production sectors is now one of the GEF’s four strategic priorities for biodiversity. Second, the World Bank is pursuing a policy to increase “blended” projects, that is, development projects that include a small GEF Biodiversity component coupled with a larger component related to a relevant sector like forestry.

49. Some interesting opportunities for engaging NBSAPs at regional levels have been highlighted through recent reviews and meetings undertaken and organized by intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder bodies operating at the regional scale with objectives of fostering coordination of biodiversity conservation-related initiatives. Two such examples come from the Pacific Islands region and Central Africa. The regional Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Islands Region is undergoing a revision process. One of the recommendations of the Pacific Island Roundtable for Nature Conservation is that the revised Strategy link more closely to the NBSAPs in the region. Eight themes common among the individual NBSAPs are proposed for incorporation in the new Regional Strategy in order for the strategy to be more reflective of the priorities of individual Pacific Island Countries and Territories. The linkage is further strengthened through the proposed annual evaluations of the Action Strategy that would concurrently aid countries in evaluating and monitoring progress of implementation of their own NBSAPs via the close association. Another example comes from recent activities in Central Africa, including the Commission des Forêts d’Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC) Convergence Plan and the creation of a Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems (REPAR), that seek to support the harmonization of forest policy and legislation, manage transboundary areas, develop strategies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of a Subregional Biodiversity Policy, and, importantly, to actively engage parliamentarians in the process, provide another examples of actions being taken to coordinate biodiversity-related policies at the regional level.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

50. This meta-analysis serves as an input to the documents produced by the Secretariat for review at the second meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention which present overall conclusions of the synthesis and analysis of obstacles encountered, lessons learned, effectiveness of policy instruments, and strategic priorities for action relating to NBSAPs (see: *Status of Implementation of Goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan Focusing on Implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and Availability of Financial Resources: An Overview*

^{††††††††††} Ibid. p.38.

^{††††††††††} Section 7.4.3

(UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2) and *Synthesis and Analysis of Obstacles to Implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, Lessons learned from the Review, Effectiveness of policy instruments and Strategic Priorities for Action* (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/2/2/Add.1). This section of the present document focuses on some key conclusions of the earlier assessments and reviews.

51. The development of NBSAPs has had some positive outcomes, raising awareness about the importance of biodiversity within governments and about countries' obligations under the Convention.^{§§§§§§§§} Yet it is generally agreed in the reports and assessments reviewed here that enthusiasm generated during the preparation of NBSAPs has failed to carry over into the implementation stage, with most NBSAPs remaining as documents on the shelf. Even where implemented, NBSAPs are not affecting the main forces driving biodiversity loss.^{*****} In addition some NBSAPs are now over ten years old, and have not been revised to reflect new measures set out in the Convention. Others have only recently been approved, and since NBSAPs encompass complex challenges time is needed to address them.

52. Opportunities for increasing the effectiveness of NBSAP development and implementation can be sought at the Convention level (the responsibility of the GEF and of the CBD Conference of the Parties) and at the national level (as the responsibility of CBD national focal points and agencies responsible for implementing NBSAPs). Other problems will require systemic solutions.

Convention-level.

- The GEF should support national-level capacity building on how GEF policies, programs and procedures can support countries in developing and implementing NBSAPs.⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺
- The Implementing Agencies should provide more technical guidance to overcome some of the weaknesses apparent in many NBSAPs, including lack of prioritization within action plans, and lack of a realistic plan for funding biodiversity conservation.
- The Implementing Agencies also need to strengthen coordination among themselves and to integrate NBSAPs more aggressively with their own regular operational activities in individual countries.
- Implementing Agencies need to develop country-specific technical assistance activities in support of NBSAPs.
- The Conference of the Parties should consolidate available guidance on NBSAPs at its ninth meeting (following from decision VIII/8).
- The Conference of the Parties should approve new and improved guidelines on the development, implementation, evaluation and updating of NBSAPs. The guidelines should include country examples and best practices, and be relevant to regional and national contexts. The guidelines should specifically address integration of 2010 targets into NBSAPs, and methods for effective mainstreaming.
- The Conference of the Parties should regularly review NBSAPs, as part of its obligation to review implementation of the Convention. Countries should be given opportunities to exchange experiences and learn from one another at regular regional preparatory meetings.

^{§§§§§§§§} Swiderska, K. 2002. *Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development Policy and Planning A Review of Country Experience*. London, UK: IIED.

^{*****} *ibid*

⁺⁺⁺⁺⁺ GEF. 1999. *Interim Assessment of Biodiversity Enabling Activities: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans*. Washington D.C.: GEF

- The Secretariat of the CBD, with partners, should develop and maintain up to date information materials that clearly identify the key issues emerging from the Conference of the Parties.

National-level

53. Efforts at the national level should be supported by the GEF, donors, and UNDP, UNEP, and the UN specialized agencies and not solely be the responsibility of countries:

- Design stronger and more strategic action plans.
- Ensure that NBSAPs truly reflect national circumstances and priorities and not international experience.
- Adopt more flexible management and more participatory consultation processes.
- Develop stronger institutional arrangements.
- Develop an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting system that feeds back into NBSAP updating and implementation.
- Develop stronger links to other planning processes.
- Identify innovative financing mechanisms.
- Design strategic communication strategies for NBSAPs.
- Develop a better understanding of the economic value of biodiversity among the general public, key stakeholders, and government (especially high-level politicians).
