



TRAINING MODULE ON NATIONAL REPORTING (FOCUS ON FIFTH NATIONAL REPORT)

Updated in January 2013

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What you will learn in this module:

This module discusses the importance of National Reporting and provides detailed suggestions for the preparation process. It also provides highlights of the Guidelines for the Fifth National Report.

The module briefly discusses how eligible Parties can access GEF funding for the preparation of the Fifth National Reports.

Key information, materials and tools for the preparation of the fifth national report are available on the portal for the fifth national report on the Convention website: <http://www.cbd.int/nr5/>

1. What are National Reports?

National Reports are the official documents by which Parties report to the Conference of the Parties on the measures they have taken to implement the Convention in their respective countries, and the effectiveness of these measures in achieving the objectives of the Convention.

National reporting is the only unqualified obligation under the Convention to be undertaken by Parties.

Article 26 of the Convention states:

“Each Contracting Party shall, at intervals to be determined by the Conference of the Parties, present to the Conference of the Parties, reports on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the provisions of this Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this Convention”.

2. Why do Parties need to prepare National Reports?

Through Article 26 of the Convention, Parties are obliged to report on the **measures taken for implementation of the Convention and their effectiveness**. In other words, the focus of the reporting is national implementation. It is because Parties are required to provide information on **outcomes** that the Conference of the Parties is able to assess the status of implementation, identify issues that need to be addressed, and provide appropriate guidance to countries and relevant organizations that can support national implementation. As such the process of national reporting is essential to the proper functioning of the Convention and, when properly carried out, will provide substantial benefits both to the Convention as a whole and to the country concerned. National reporting is essential because:

- The Convention is essentially a framework for **national action**. Parties will implement its provisions in accordance with their individual national capacities, circumstances, priorities and institutional frameworks. **Without a process of national reporting** and access to the information contained in the reports, the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies have **no way of evaluating the state of implementation** of the Convention. They will be unable to identify common problems encountered by Parties, lessons learned that can be made more widely available, or priority issues that need to be addressed by the Convention.
- The process of national reporting provides Parties with an important **opportunity to plan for further implementation** of the Convention based on reviews undertaken in the process.
- National reports **can be used as a communication tool** by Parties to raise public awareness of biodiversity and mobilize public support for and participation in the implementation of the Convention.

3. When is the Fifth National Report Due?

The Conference of the Parties decided that Parties should submit their national reports every four years or at an interval determined by COP. So far five national reports have been called for in various decisions of COP (decisions II/17, V/19, VII/25, VIII/14 and X/10).

The fifth national reports are due 31 March 2014 (decision X/10). This is a mandatory deadline decided by the Conference of the Parties. COP decision XI/3 urges countries to submit their fifth national report before or by the deadline, and to contribute cases and/or relevant data/information early to the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

It is essential that Parties adhere to the report submission deadline so that the information provided can be used by the Secretariat in preparing for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will undertake a mid-term review of progress towards the achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Where possible, Parties are encouraged to submit the national reports ahead of the deadline.

Should any Party anticipate that it may encounter any difficulty in completing their report by the above-mentioned deadline, they are invited to advise the Secretariat well in advance so that the Secretariat could help identify ways to assist Parties, where appropriate, in overcoming obstacles to the preparation of the fifth national reports.

4. What information should be included in the Fifth National Report?

The information required in National Reports is determined by the Conference of the Parties and reflected in Guidelines adopted at meetings of the COP. All the guidelines adopted for national reports are available on the Convention website at <http://www.cbd.int/reports/guidelines/>.

Guidelines for the preparation of the fifth National Report were adopted by Decision X/10, which are available in all UN languages and can be accessed at <http://www.cbd.int/reports/guidelines/>. Key aspects of the guidelines are highlighted below. In terms of the format, the report is to be provided primarily in a narrative form though Parties are asked to answer questions within each part of the report.

The guidelines for the fifth national report require that information is provided in 3 main parts focusing on:

Part I: An Update on Biodiversity Status, Trends and Threats - Parties are requested to provide an update on the status and trends of biodiversity and threats to it. Parties are also asked to elaborate the importance and value of biodiversity by highlighting contributions of biodiversity and related ecosystem services to human well-being and socio-economic development. This includes a description or analysis of the impacts of declining biodiversity and ecosystems on human well-being, livelihood and poverty reduction, etc. This part should provide a succinct, most up-to-date synthesis and analysis of data available sufficient to inform decision-makers, rather than repeat information provided in the previous national reports.

Part II: The national biodiversity strategies and action plans, its implementation and the mainstreaming of biodiversity – Parties are requested to provide an overview of the updating and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the extent to which

biodiversity has been mainstreamed into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, plans and programmes. The focus should be on national targets set in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, the content of an updated NBSAP and relevant strategies and plans if any, actions (including mechanisms and approaches) taken to implement NBSAP and mainstream biodiversity into various sectors since the fourth national report. Countries could use cases and success stories to illustrate outcomes or impacts of implementation of NBSAPs and mainstreaming. Countries could conclude this part with an overall analysis of NBSAP implementation, including remaining challenges for implementation.

Part III: Progress towards the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and contributions to the Millennium Development Goals - Parties are asked to bring together key information or findings from the first two parts to assess how actions taken at national level have contributed to progress towards the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the achievements of the relevant targets of the Millennium Development Goals. Parties should focus on the establishment of national targets, actions taken to achieve these targets and outcomes achieved. Parties are encouraged to use indicators for measuring progress and outcomes. Ideally the indicators used should be quantitative however, recognizing that these may not be available for all issues addressed by Parties in their reports, qualitative indicators can also be used. Parties could also use “traffic-light” scheme or other illustrative tools to provide an overall assessment of progress. In addition, countries could provide specific cases or examples to illustrate progress, outcomes and impacts of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, particularly achieving the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Executive Summary Finally, after Parties have completed all these parts and appendices, they are asked to present an executive summary of the whole report, which should be concise, appealing to decision makers and the general public, and most importantly, capture key findings and conclusions from the report.

Appendix III: Implementation of the thematic programmes of work and COP Decisions related to cross-cutting Issues: Parties could use a matrix or table to summarize how actions taken to implement NBSAP, mainstreaming and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 have contributed or are contributing to the implementation of relevant thematic programmes of work and relevant plans or decisions of the COP related to cross-cutting issues. Countries could focus on those areas and issues to be reviewed in-depth at COP 11 (island biodiversity for example) and COP 12 and those that are nationally relevant and important.

Throughout the report, Parties are requested to (a) provide up-to-date data and information (avoid repeating what has been provided in earlier national reports); (b) provide more analysis and synthesis than description, supported by data, evidence and outcomes; and (c) use indicators for analysis and assessment where possible. Parties are also encouraged to complement narrative reporting with tables, figures and graphics to better communicate the information presented.

5. How should National Reports be developed?

Normally, the preparation of national reports is the responsibility of the National Focal Point for the Convention and involves all the relevant ministries or agencies responsible for environmental or natural resources management in each country as well as those departments responsible for cross-sectoral planning and coordination. Those involved in this process vary from country to

country considering different countries have different circumstances and governance structure. Often, a “national steering committee” is appointed to oversee and coordinate the preparation of a national report and technical groups are established to draft and review parts of the report. To ensure consistency among national reports to different but related Conventions and reduce the overall reporting burdens, CBD National Focal Point is encouraged to work closely with national focal points of other relevant Conventions (such as UNFCCC, UNCCD, Ramsar Convention, etc.) in preparing the report, particularly in sharing data and analysis. More importantly coordination could further enhance opportunities for synergy in the national implementation of related conventions. While many countries are updating or considering updating their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, it is important for countries to link the report preparation with the process of updating NBSAP, as the NBSAP review will provide important inputs to the report.

Countries could also use the following milestones to check the status of preparation of the fifth national report:

MILESTONES FOR PREPARATION OF THE FOURTH NATIONAL REPORT

1. GEF funding request has been submitted to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/The Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (developing-country Parties).
2. GEF funding has been approved and received (developing-country Parties).
3. Organization assigned overall responsibility for report coordination and preparation has been identified.
4. Cross-sectoral steering committee has been established to:
 - Identify a representative group of stakeholders, including national focal points for biodiversity-related conventions, who will participate in report preparation;
 - Establish a draft methodology for report preparation (e.g., face-to-face meetings, email exchanges, telephone conferences), and a draft timetable;
 - Establish mechanisms for coordination, including requiring all relevant departments and organizations to provide information needed for report preparation.
5. First general meeting of all the above participants or national workshop has been convened to establish methodology, timetable, thematic working groups, etc.
6. Draft reports of thematic working groups have been submitted to the steering committee for review.
7. Steering committee has compiled a draft fifth national report and circulated it to all participants for comments.
8. Second general meeting or national workshop has been held to seek comments from more stakeholders and prepare a final draft report on that basis.
9. If outstanding items exist, a third general meeting may be convened to agree on conclusions (if impossible, report should reflect where no consensus was reached). Parties could circulate the report for wider consultations through national CHM, if necessary.
10. Report has been adopted by all participants.

11. Report has been approved by the Minister or other senior officers as relevant domestic procedures require.
12. Report has been submitted to Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
13. Party has publicized to the general public key findings and conclusions from the report, including the positive outcomes from implementation, and remaining challenges.

It is important to remember that the national report is an official document being submitted by the government to an intergovernmental body, and will therefore need to follow the required national procedures for such submissions. At the same time, and in line with the decisions of the COP, the completed report should be made widely available in the country.

If the national report is developed in the ways suggested above, a comprehensive assessment of national measures to meet the objectives of the Convention will generate much interest among stakeholders, researchers, media organizations, the general public and other groups. Consideration might be given to arranging for a public launch of the report, for example, on International Biodiversity Day (22nd May, 2014). The report can be used to promote the UN Decade for Biodiversity. If the country has a national biodiversity clearing-house mechanism or website, the report should also be posted there.

6. Who should be involved in the preparation of the National Report?

The preparation of the national report entails undertaking an assessment of the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CBD. These are important activities in themselves, and should not be regarded simply as tasks required to meet the reporting obligation. Through a number of decisions (V/19, VI/26, VIII/14 and X/10), the Conference of the Parties has emphasized the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders in the process of preparing national reports to ensure national reports reflect comprehensively national situation.

Accurate and comprehensive collection of the relevant data will involve consultation with many stakeholder groups not necessarily directly involved with the relevant ministry such as indigenous and local communities as well as many non-government organisations, as well as other ministries and local governments. Inputs from all relevant sectors such as industry, education, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, etc. are also critical to a meaningful portrait of the status of implementation of the CBD in each country. Scientific institutions, non-governmental and community organizations, private sector bodies, other national and sub-national government agencies – that possess knowledge and expertise, should be also involved in national biodiversity monitoring and reporting.

In the cases where financial support from the Global Environment Facility has been received to facilitate the process, an implementing agency such as UNDP and UNEP will also be involved.

Example of the participatory preparation used by Mauritius in the preparation of the country's Fourth National Report

The preparation of the report was carried out through a thorough participatory process involving relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors, statutory bodies, research organisations, academics and NGOs. These include:

- a. National Parks and Conservation Service, Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security

- b. Agricultural Services, Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security
- c. Forestry Services, Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security
- d. Ministry of Fisheries and Rodrigues
- e. Rodrigues Regional Assembly
- f. Mauritius Meteorological Services
- g. University of Mauritius
- h. Food and Agricultural Research Council
- i. Agricultural Research and Extension Unit
- j. Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, and last but not least,
- k. Mauritian Wildlife Foundation

A 'National Report Coordination Committee' (NRCC) was set up to steer the whole preparation process. The meetings of the NRCC were chaired by the representative of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

Three thematic working groups were established as follows:

Group 1: Forest and Terrestrial Biodiversity

Group 2: Agrobiodiversity and Biotechnology

Group 3: Inland Water, Marine and Coastal Aquatic Biodiversity

Each group was facilitated by a local resource person/ team leader. A number of meetings/ working sessions were carried out in each of the working group.

A national consultant was hired to consolidate the inputs from the three groups. Further consultations were also held with the National CBD Focal point, the SBSTTA Focal Point and the three resource persons. This process culminated in the preparation of a draft Fourth National Report.

The draft report was circulated to all relevant stakeholders including the CBD Secretariat and UNDP Country Office for views and comments. Finally, the report was finalized by incorporating views and suggestions received.

7. How is this information used by the CBD?

The information contained in National Reports is used by the Conference of the Parties to assess the status of implementation of the Convention. Analysis or synthesis of the information contained in the national report is undertaken by the Secretariat and is disseminated in the form of documents for review by each successive session of the COP, including intersessional meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

This analysis or synthesis assists the COP in determining priority actions, work programmes and issues for each biennium and beyond, and providing relevant guidance.

The information provided by the fifth National Reports will be used to assess progress towards the 2015 and 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and contributions to the achievement of the relevant 2015 Targets of the MDGs. The fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will

be published at COP-12 and will include relevant information provided in the fifth national reports.

The National Reports are made public through the clearing house mechanism of the Convention upon receipt and are further disseminated and used by many stakeholder groups.

8. What assistance is available to Parties in preparation of the Fifth National Reports?

In addition to the guidelines outlined above, other assistance is available to Parties in the preparation of the fifth National Reports and is outlined below.

Portal for the Fifth National Report

A portal has been developed at the CBD website dedicated to the preparation of the fifth national report. This portal is accessible at <http://www.cbd.int/nr5/>. This portal is designed to provide Parties with consolidated information resources and tools to assist with the preparation of the fifth national report and the assessment of progress towards the 2015 and 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Some of the key tools will be highlighted below. This portal also serves as a communication tool through which countries could exchange their experiences in preparing the fifth and earlier national reports and submit cases or examples of progress towards the 2015 and 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Secretariat will also use this portal to respond to inquiries that Parties may have about the preparation of the fifth national report.

Resource Manual for the Fifth National Report

The Secretariat has developed a resource manual on the preparation of the fifth national reports, which is now available in the languages of the United Nations on the portal for the fifth national report on the CBD website at <http://www.cbd.int/nr5/>.

Quick Guide to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020)

The CBD Secretariat, together with relevant partners, has developed a quick guide to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) to help countries better understand the targets therein. It also helps countries report on progress in implementing the Strategic Plan. The guide is now available at the Convention website at: <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/training/quick-guides/>.

NBSAP Training Modules

A set of training modules on NBSAPs have been developed or updated to help countries update their NBSAPs in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Countries could get suggestions from these training modules for undertaking reviews of implementation of NBSAP, which will contribute to the preparation of the fifth national report, particularly Part II. These modules can be accessed at <http://www.cbd.int/nbsap/training/>.

Database on 2020 indicators

The Secretariat has developed a database for 2020 indicators from which countries select indicators for analyses and assessments to be made in the fifth national report. The database can be accessed at <http://www.cbd.int/sp/indicators/>.

Funding from Global Environment Facility for Preparing the Fifth National Report

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the financial mechanism of the Convention.¹ It provides financial support to the eligible Parties of the Convention for qualifying projects that are developed in conjunction with the GEF Implementing Agencies as noted below. The Conferences of the Parties (decisions X/10 and X/25) has requested the GEF and other donors to provide support to eligible countries for preparing the fifth national reports.

In accordance with correspondence from the CEO of the GEF to implementing agencies and relevant Convention Secretariats in January 2011, eligible countries could access funds for biodiversity enabling activities particularly updating national biodiversity strategies and action plans in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and preparation of the fifth national reports through the implementing agencies and directly from the GEF Secretariat.

Requests for financial support should be made as early as possible so that the resources can be made available soon enough. Funds are usually limited.

For more detailed information concerning Direct Access via the GEF Secretariat, please log on: http://www.thegef.org/gef/BD_direct_access. For applying via a GEF Implementing Agency, please use the template available at: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/3891>, or contact Ms. Esther Mwangi of UNEP by email <esther.mwangi@unep.org> and Ms. Fabiana Issler of UNDP by email <fabiana.issler@undp.org>.

Other possible sources of support

Preparation of the national report is intended to be a multi-stakeholder process. In addition to the GEF Implementing Agencies, there are a number of international organizations, inter-governmental and non-governmental, that have expertise, mandates or resources that enable them to assist countries with the preparation of national reports. Such inter-governmental organizations include World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations University (UNU), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and others, including regional organizations. Non-governmental organizations include the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Wide fund for Nature (WWF), Birdlife International and its regional and national partners, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), the World Resources Institute (WRI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Global Biodiversity Information Facility and others, to name a few. Some regional and/or sub-regional organizations such as the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity could provide support to their member countries for preparing their national reports.

9. Concluding Remarks

¹ Article 21

As the fifth national report provides key sources of information for a mid-term review of implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan for 2011-2020, it is very important that all Parties shall submit their reports by the deadline set by COP 10(March 31, 2014). To this end, it is important that all countries initiate a national process to prepare this report as early as possible, involving relevant stakeholders. For eligible countries it is urgent to get funds from the GEF to support this process. The timely submission of the fifth national report is crucial as COP 12 of the Convention needs information to assess where the Strategic Plan stands in 2015 and decide what needs to be done further before 2020.