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**A METHODOLOGY FOR VOLUNTARY PEER REVIEW OF THE REVISION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS**

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. OBJECTIVES

1. The overall objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) voluntary peer-review process is to help Parties to improve their individual and collective capacities to more effectively implement the Convention.
2. The specific objectives are as follows:
 - (a) To assess the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and produce specific recommendations for the Parties under review;
 - (b) To provide opportunities for peer learning for Parties directly involved and other Parties;
 - (c) To create greater transparency and accountability for NBSAP development and implementation to the public and other Parties.
3. The framework of the peer-review process is the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, NBSAPs, and other domestic instruments and national priorities related to the implementation of the Convention, its Protocols and other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements.
4. The review should have two main focuses. The first addresses the overall biodiversity policy process, in particular as laid down in the NBSAP. The second consists of an in-depth analysis of a limited number of key policy areas and issues.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

5. NBSAPs or equivalent instruments are the primary national mechanisms for implementing the Convention, and the peer reviews are intended to provide participating Parties with observations and recommendations which they might use either when developing/updating their NBSAPs, or to improve the implementation of their NBSAPs and other relevant instruments, including through integration of biodiversity into broader policy frameworks. This will stimulate mutual experience-sharing, learning and capacity-building with potential benefits for all Parties to the Convention.
6. The following additional guiding principles also underpin the peer review:
 - (a) Open to all Parties to the Convention;
 - (b) Peer means CBD Party;
 - (c) Based on an agreed common methodological framework;
 - (d) Flexible so as to allow a focus on some key issues of the Party under review;

- (e) Allows the country under review to be responsible for considering how it responds to any recommendations made and how it will use the review report;
- (f) Aims for broad participation of relevant Government institutions and stakeholders in the review process;
- (g) The review is undertaken on the basis of mutual trust between the review team and the Party under review;
- (h) Used by the Secretariat to highlight common lessons about what works well (leading to progress) and what works less well (leading to little or no progress, and presenting a continuing challenge) and to share this more broadly among the Parties to the Convention and beyond.

III. INITIATION OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

7. In response to a Notification on the subject, any Party wishing to be reviewed indicates this in writing to secretariat@cbd.int. The request must be endorsed by the CBD National Focal Point (NFP), or higher authority. The application should be accompanied by a completed Appendix 1 (see below).
8. Eligibility of Parties to undergo a review is guided by the following criteria:
 - (a) Evidence of high-level government support for the voluntary peer-review process;
 - (b) Latest national report submitted;
 - (c) Latest NBSAP adopted as a policy document; or advanced draft of an NBSAP, or policy equivalents, under revision;
 - (d) Willingness to contribute to in-country costs of the review.
9. The Secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, will select the Parties to be reviewed, taking into account regional balance.¹
10. The Secretariat will, through a Notification, invite all Parties to nominate candidates for the review teams. Candidates are CBD NFP, NBSAP Coordinators, or suitable experts nominated by the review Parties. Selected candidates will serve in their individual expert capacity.

IV. SELECTION OF REVIEW TEAMS

11. The Secretariat will form balanced review teams, taking into consideration experience with peer review and expertise related to the characteristics of the Party under review, with respect to biodiversity, governance system and language. The review team comprises four to six reviewers, plus Secretariat support.
12. Once the review team has been established, a virtual meeting of the team is organized by SCBD to identify a team leader and agree on responsibilities for the review.

V. REVIEW RESPONSIBILITIES

13. The team leader is expected to:
 - (a) Provide overall coordination of the review, in conjunction with Secretariat;
 - (b) Liaise between Secretariat and review team members;
 - (c) Facilitate the allocation of team tasks and ensure collective ownership of the results;
 - (d) Introduce the team in the in-country visits meetings;
 - (e) Facilitate the preparation and completion of the final report; and
 - (f) To liaise with the Party under review on the finalization of the report and the submission of the final report to the Secretariat.
14. The peer reviewers are expected to:
 - (a) Be able to set aside adequate time to fully participate in the review;

¹ Additional criteria may be relevant in the future.

- (b) Develop an agreed work plan and timetable;
 - (c) Conduct the desk-study and actively contribute to a preparatory note for the in-country visit, including potential interview questions and a preliminary structure for the final report;
 - (d) Participate in the in-country visit;
 - (e) Contribute actively to the preparation and finalization of the report.
15. The Secretariat is expected to:
- (a) Provide the necessary logistic support to the review team;
 - (b) Prepare materials for the desk study;
 - (c) Provide coordination and support for the in-country visit;
 - (d) Assist with the preparation and development of the review report as appropriate and agreed.
16. The Party under review is expected to:
- (a) Make available relevant documents and information;
 - (b) Collaborate with Secretariat and review team on the development of the programme for the in-country visit;
 - (c) Facilitate the in-country meetings and logistics;
 - (d) Provide corrections and clarifications on the draft report;
 - (e) Provide a written response to the final report;
 - (f) Provide post-review feedback on the value of the review process.

VI. DESK STUDY

17. The desk study should build on the scoping exercise (Appendix 1), also using Appendix 2, and focus on good examples as well as on barriers to implementation identified from the national reports and other sources, based on the indicative list in Appendix 3.

18. The desk study should identify the main review outputs. An important output of the desk study is the identification of issues that need further clarification/verification/explanation during an in-country visit. While finalizing the desk study, the review team drafts a work programme for such an in-country visit. This is sent to the Party under review for comment and dialogue in order to finalize the in-country work programme. The desk study is to be completed sufficiently in advance of the in-country visit to allow the necessary logistic arrangements.

VII. IN-COUNTRY VISIT

19. The precise programme for each in-country visit is to be developed and agreed by the review team in collaboration with the NFP, taking into consideration the roles determined above and the guidance document in Appendix 4.

VIII. REPORT

20. Within two weeks of the end of the in-country visit, each review team member submits a “zero” draft of their agreed contribution to the report to the review team leader and the Secretariat, based on the structure developed in the desk study. The team leader continues to liaise with the review team members and Secretariat to produce a final report.

21. The Secretariat of the Convention sends the report to the Party under review within three months of the end of the in-country visit for posting on the national CHM website by Party under review and on the relevant CBD Country Profile website by the Secretariat.

IX. EVALUATION AND PROGRESS REPORT TO SBI

22. The Secretariat will make an evaluation of any additional reviews undertaken and provide a synthesis report of the VPR process for each SBI.

Appendix 1: Preliminary Scoping Checklist for a Party Volunteering for Peer Review

In order to be considered for the Convention on Biological Diversity's Voluntary Peer Review process a minimum set of information is required to enable the Secretariat and potential reviewing Parties to quickly assess the needs and priorities of the Party wishing to be reviewed.

The checklist is divided into three sections: (i) Pre-requisite information, (ii) Scoping and (iii) Progress and challenges.

Please complete the three parts of the checklist and return to <secretariat@cbd.int>

Pre-requisite Information:

1. Name of Party	
2. Contact Point within Country (Name, Address, Telephone, Email)	
3. Level of endorsement of request to be reviewed	
4. Date of submission of latest National Report (and number)	
5. Date of submission/adoption of latest National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (or equivalent)	
6. Indicative date for initiation of review (including desk review)	
7. Have you familiarized yourself with the methodology of the CBD Voluntary Peer Review process?	

Scoping

8. Does your latest NBSAP take into account the current Strategic Plan?	
9. Does your latest NBSAP include measures to address the three Protocols to the Convention (Cartagena, Nagoya and Kuala Lumpur-Nagoya Supplementary)?	
10. Does the latest NBSAP include national targets?	
11. Are these national targets cross-linked to global Aichi Biodiversity Targets?	
14. Do the national targets have associated indicators with baseline data for monitoring?	
15. In your latest National Report has any quantitative self-assessment of NBSAP implementation been undertaken?	
16. Is there currently an active Biodiversity Committee or equivalent whose members can be available for interview (either remotely or in-country)?	
17. Please list the sectors where you feel that mainstreaming (integration) of biodiversity has been relatively successful, and also list those where more progress is required.	
18. Please list all sub-national biodiversity strategy and action plans that have been developed, adopted and are under implementation.	
19. Please list (up to) five priorities areas of NBSAP revision and implementation that you would like to be considered in detail as part of the review process.	

Appendix 2: NBSAP Review Template for use in Desk Study²

Part 1. Status of national biodiversity strategy and action plan

Question	Answer
What is the date of adoption of the first NBSAP?	
How many revisions have been undertaken, and what is the status of the most recent version of the NBSAP (or equivalent)? At what level has it/will it be adopted?	
To which Strategic Plan is the most recent NBSAP aligned?	
Does the most recent version of the NBSAP address all of the major thematic areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention relevant to your country and national priorities? List here any relevant issues not covered in the NBSAP.	
Does the most recent version of the NBSAP include national targets and indicators?	
Have the national targets been mapped to the global Aichi Biodiversity Targets?	
How does biodiversity fit in the overall institutional structure for environmental management and mainstreaming?	

² This template has been developed from the annex to [COP Decision VIII/8](#).

Part 2. Development of the national biodiversity strategies and action plan

Question	Answer
Which institution(s) took the lead in preparing the NBSAP? Was development of the NBSAP sub-contracted to an outside agency?	
Which NBSAP guidelines, if any, were used?	
Which other different sectors and stakeholders (including indigenous peoples and local communities) were involved in the NBSAP development/revision process? How extensive was the stakeholder engagement? (See Footnote ³)	
What financial or technical support was received, and from where?	
How long did the latest revision process take?	

³ **The Spectrum of Public Participation according to the International Association for Public Participation (iPA2):**

- i) **Informing** - Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions;
- ii) **Consulting** - Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions;
- iii) **Engaging** - Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered;
- iv) **Collaborating** - Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution;
- v) **Empowering** - Place final decision-making authority in the hands of citizens.

Part 3. NBSAP components

To what extent are the following components represented in the NBSAP, in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020?

NBSAP Component		Representation
INTRODUCTION	Values of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the country and their contribution to human well-being	
	Causes and consequences of biodiversity loss	
	Constitutional, legal and institutional framework	
	Lessons learned from the earlier NBSAP(s) and the process of developing the earlier NBSAPs.	
STRATEGY: PRINCIPLES, PRIORITIES AND TARGETS	Long term vision	
	Principles governing the strategy	
	Main goals or priority areas	
	National Targets (SMART) (but see Part 4 below)	
ACTION PLAN	National actions to achieve the strategy, with milestones	
	Application of the NBSAP to sub-national entities	
	Sectoral Action - mainstreaming into development, poverty reduction and climate change plans	
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	Plan for capacity development for NBSAP implementation, including a technology needs assessment	
	Communication and outreach strategy for the NBSAP	
	Plan for resource mobilization for NBSAP implementation	
INSTITUTIONAL, MONITORING AND REPORTING	National Coordination Structures	
	Clearing House Mechanism	
	Monitoring and Evaluation, and Reporting Plan	

Part 4. Evaluation of implementation

Does the NBSAP contain an action plan with clear objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes, with SMART targets and indicators that address the 5 Goals of the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#)?

Strategic Goal A. Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society

Global Aichi Target	Relevant National Target(s)	Associated Activities	Indicator(s) and Baseline level ⁴	Status of Implementation ⁵	Challenges ⁶
Target 1					
Target 2					
Target 3					
Target 4					

Strategic Goal B. Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use

Global Aichi Target	Relevant National Target(s)	Associated Activities	Indicator(s) and Baseline	Status of Implementation	Challenges
Target 5					
Target 6					
Target 7					
Target 8					
Target 9					
Target 10					

⁴ **Indicator(s) and Baseline** refers to the status or reference level of the subject of the target at the time of adoption of the NBSAP (and/or target) and the reference baseline level from which NBSAP implementation is starting.

⁵ **Status of implementation** provides information on the extent to which the element has been implemented. These could be process indicators to measure state of implementation, such as whether a budget line exists for this element, staff have been assigned, etc.

⁶ **Challenges** includes existing and potential future limitations, obstacles, barriers, etc. to progress specific (though not necessarily unique) to this national target.

Strategic Goal C. Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity

Global Aichi Target	Relevant National Target(s)	Associated Activities	Indicator(s) and Baseline	Status of Implementation	Challenges
Target 11					
Target 12					
Target 13					

Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services

Global Aichi Target	Relevant National Target(s)	Associated Activities	Indicator(s) and Baseline	Status of Implementation	Challenges
Target 14					
Target 15					
Target 16					

Strategic Goal E. Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity-building

Global Aichi Target	Relevant National Target(s)	Associated Activities	Indicator(s) and Baseline	Status of Implementation	Challenges
Target 17					
Target 18					
Target 19					
Target 20					

Part 5. Mainstreaming and integration of biodiversity concerns

Are biodiversity concerns being effectively mainstreamed and integrated into relevant sectors? This section should be cross-checked with information provided under Strategic Plan 2011-2020 Goal A above (indirect drivers).

Integration can be considered in terms of:

- Other sectors besides the environment, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, finance, trade and industry, etc.;
- Other national and sub-national programmes and strategies, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, national reports on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, National Development Plans, National Plans to Combat Desertification, and others;
- Other convention processes besides the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as the four other biodiversity-related conventions (CITES, CMS, Ramsar, WHC), the Rio conventions (UNCCD, UNFCCC) and others.

As in reviewing implementation, progress made in integration should be considered in terms of concrete outcomes for achieving the priorities of the national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Sectoral Plan, Programme or Policy	Manner in which biodiversity is being integrated	Progress	Challenges
Agriculture			
Fisheries			
Forestry			
etc.			
Synergies with other Conventions	Manner in which synergy is being achieved	Progress	Challenges
CITES			
Ramsar			
etc.			

Part 6. Ways and means

Success stories and lessons learned

Does the revised NBSAP or NR contain any success stories and lessons learnt in overcoming challenges to the development, implementation, cross-sectoral integration, evaluation and/or update of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, which can benefit other Parties and the Conference of the Parties as it seeks to update guidance on these processes?

Specific mention of factors that facilitated NBSAP processes would be particularly useful. For example,

- Technical or financial support received;
- Political mandates and national priorities;
- Facilitating legal frameworks;
- Engagement of civil society and the private sector;
- Effectiveness of monitoring and reporting.

Needs for further support

In light of the review information, what additional specific resources would be needed in order to overcome major challenges to implementation of NBSAPs, and challenges to the integration of biodiversity into other sectors. These needs might include, but need not be limited to, technical support from developed countries.

Appendix 3: Indicative checklist of documents which could be used for desk study

Document	Likely source
Latest National Report	CBD website
Current NBSAP or Biodiversity Policy or equivalents	CBD website
These two documents provide the «backbone» for the desk study and could be used to identify a number of other relevant documents, which could include the following:	
Previous versions of NBSAP or equivalent; previous National Reports	CBD website
Others, if any*	
National biodiversity management	
Government Organigram	National government website; CBD NFP
Policy Framework for Environment, Biodiversity and relevant sectors	National government website; CBD NFP
Legislative Framework for Environment, Biodiversity and relevant sectors	National government website; CBD NFP
Biodiversity Governance Flowchart;	CBD NFP
ToR and composition of National Biodiversity Council/Committee or equivalent	CBD NFP
Stakeholders of NBSAP process	NBSAP, CBD NFP
Evidence of implementation	
List of major biodiversity projects under implementation including GEF projects, etc.	GEF Sec website; CBD NFP
National Land Use Planning Policy and Maps	CBD NFP; Ministry of Planning
Protected area and other habitat maps	National CHM; WCMC-WCPA database
Species level monitoring information	National CHM
Others, if any*	
Evidence of Mainstreaming	
National constitution	National government website; CBD NFP
National economic and development plan, National Sustainable Development Strategy, Five or Ten-year Development Plan, etc.	National government website; CBD NFP
National Macro Planning Documents	National government website; CBD NFP
Poverty Reduction Strategy, plans to meet the Sustainable Development Goals	National government website; CBD NFP
National education and social plan (including gender related plans)	Ministry of Education; CBD NFP
Relevant sector policies, strategies, plans (i.e. Wetland Policy, Forestry Policy, etc.)	CBD NFP
Decentralization plans	CBD NFP
Climate change adaptation and mitigation plans / Disaster Risk reduction plans	CBD NFP; Ministry of Environment
Trade policies	CBD NFP; Ministry of Trade
Others, if any*	

Document	Likely source
Finance and Resource mobilization	
General Budget Support arrangements (thematic and sector working groups, technical working group on budget, performance assessment framework).	CBD NFP; Ministry of Finance
UNDAF, International cooperation policies, Country Assistance Strategies/Plans,	UNDP Country Office; CBD NFP

Appendix 4: Checklist of steps for the review exercise

1. A budget should be prepared and funding secured before any review exercise can be initiated.
2. During the completion of the scoping exercise, using Appendix 1, the country under review may identify areas or themes of special interest. The review team, once formed, can decide which of those areas or themes of special interest can be pursued, in addition to the general review. The SCBD will then inform the country under review. Within the review team, an overall team leader should be decided, and lead reviewers should be identified for the various areas or themes.
3. The latest NBSAP and National Report (NR) are the basic documents for use during the desk study. Earlier versions of these documents may assist in reviewing progress over a longer timeframe. The documents listed in Appendix 3 can assist in the desk study, as can any other additional information identified and obtained during the desk study.
4. The desk study is an essential component of the review exercise that lays the foundation on which the in-country visit and the final report are built. The individual reviewers should therefore make notes and formulate two sets of observations, based on their reading, (i) those that need further clarification during the in-country visit and (ii) those which can form the basis of the final report. Based on the scoping exercise (Appendix 1), experience gained with previous reviews, the desk review notes, and before the in-country visit, an initial structure for the final report should be agreed upon and the organisation of the draft report may commence during the desk review. Potential reviewers should be aware that the desk review tasks may take up several weeks of their time. A minimum of two months is required between the start of the desk study and the implementation of the in-country visit for the review exercise to be efficient and effective.
5. Based on the content of the NBSAP, the latest National Report, the notes and observations arising from the desk study, and keeping in mind the agreed focus of the review, a draft list of potential stakeholders for the in-country visit should be prepared.
6. A national coordinator who arranges and confirms meetings in advance is also determined. This should be decided by the CBD NFP or higher office. Using the draft list of stakeholders to be met, the Secretariat agrees with the host country on the national stakeholders to be contacted during the in-country visit and the modalities of the contacts – group meeting, separate interviews, etc. The possible need for a field visit or a visit to stakeholders outside the capital should also be discussed and decided.
7. Where possible and practical, initial communication with main stakeholders via teleconference could be conducted to clarify some of the observations arising from the desk review in advance of the in-country visit.
8. The number of days required to implement the visit can then be decided, taking into consideration the budget available. Based on the availability of stakeholders, reviewers, and Secretariat staff, the dates for the in-country are then agreed upon with the host country. Subsequently, and in coordination with the host country, a travel plan and a draft visit programme are then prepared by the team leader, assisted by the Secretariat as necessary. The final programme will be sent by the host country after confirmation of meetings. The programme of visits should include daily team meetings to evaluate progress and prepare for

upcoming meetings. Time for the daily consolidation of notes between review team members should be included- this will assist in preparing the final report. At least half a day at the end of the programme should be scheduled for conclusions and report drafting.

9. Upon arrival, an internal team meeting should be convened. An approach to clarifying any uncertainties arising from the desk study should be agreed among the review team members. The Team Leader will introduce the team and facilitate group discussions/interviews, but the team could split up where necessary and meet again where needed, especially to consolidate experiences. A final de-briefing meeting should be held with the CBD NFP, or higher office, before departure.
 10. Upon return to their respective countries, and coordinated by the Team Leader, the reviewers will continue to contribute to the final report. Several teleconferences may be needed, facilitated by the Secretariat, as necessary, to assist in this process. Potential reviewers should be aware that completing the report will be additional to their regular work, and the preparation of the final report may need to be spread over several weeks. However, the final report should be completed within an agreed deadline of not more than two months.
 11. The final report should clearly reflect the results of the review exercise in line with its objectives. Other than facts, it should include observations and recommendations made by the review team in following their task to review the country's progress in NBSAP revision and implementation. Reflections from both the reviewing Parties as well as the reviewed Party on peer learning should also be incorporated, as should more general lessons learnt from the review process that may have broader relevance to the Convention parties.
 12. The draft report should be sent to the Party under review for corrections and clarifications only. For the review to maintain a necessary level of independence, comments from the side of the Party under review on the Team's observations and recommendations should not be incorporated in the report. The final report will be sent to the Party under review for a written response which would be added as an Annex to the final report.
 13. The final report, including the official written response from the side of the Party under review, will then be uploaded to the Party CHM and the Country Profile on the CBD website.
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