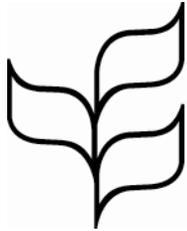




**CBD**



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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### SUBSIDIARY BODY ON IMPLEMENTATION

First meeting

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Item 13 of the provisional agenda\*

### NATIONAL REPORTING

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 26 of the Convention on Biological Diversity states that 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. The Conference of the Parties, in decision X/2 on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, urged Parties and other Governments to implement the Strategic Plan and in particular to, inter alia, monitor and review the implementation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans in accordance with the Strategic Plan and their national targets making use of the set of indicators developed for the Strategic Plan as a flexible framework and to report to the Conference of the Parties through their fifth and sixth national reports and any other means to be decided by the Conference of the Parties.

3. In paragraph 9(a) of decision XII/1, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to develop a proposal on guidelines for the sixth national report, taking into account the types of information from the fifth national reports used in the preparation of the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* and gaps that have been identified, for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at meetings held prior to the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In paragraphs 5 and 6 of decision XII/29, the Conference of the Parties further requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To prepare, on the basis of the experiences and lessons learned from the preparation of the fifth national report and the use of the voluntary online reporting tool, proposals for the sixth national report to facilitate streamlined reporting on issues covered by the Convention and its Protocols, as well as for any further improvement that may be needed to the online reporting tool, for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation;

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\* UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/Rev.1.

(b) To explore the potential for a more coherent reporting framework with other biodiversity-related conventions to improve access to relevant data for the implementation of the Convention and to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, and make use of the experiences from this work when preparing proposals for the sixth national report;

4. In paragraph 26 of decision XII/3, the Conference of the Parties further requested the Executive Secretary to integrate the financial reporting framework into the draft guidelines for the sixth national report.

5. In its recommendation XIX/5, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice requested the Executive Secretary, when developing a proposal on guidelines for the sixth national report:

(a) To take into account the lessons learned from the fourth and fifth national reports;

(b) To take into account the technical considerations on the timing, form and content of the sixth national report as contained in paragraphs 47-51 of the note by the Executive Secretary;<sup>1</sup>

(c) To include in the proposal:

(i) An item on the experiences of Parties in the use of tools to evaluate the effectiveness of specific measures undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020;

(ii) Consideration of mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns within and across sectors, including cross-cutting policy frameworks on biodiversity and evaluation of their effectiveness, best practices and lessons learned;

(d) To circulate a draft proposal for comments and take into account comments made by Parties and observers.

6. Also in its recommendation XIX/3, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice recommended that the Conference of the Parties, at its thirteenth meeting, encourage Parties to undertake evaluations of the effectiveness of measures undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, to document this experience, including the methodologies applied, to identify lessons learned, and to provide this information to the Executive Secretary, including through their sixth national report.

7. In response to these provisions, the Executive Secretary reviewed the experiences and lessons learned from the fourth and fifth rounds of national reporting under the Convention, summarized in section II of this note, as a basis for developing the proposals for the sixth national report. Section III introduces the content and format of the sixth national report. Section IV presents proposed modalities future reporting, including options for alignment in national reporting to the Convention and its Protocols and synergies in reporting among related Conventions. Section V provides recommendations for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting.

8. Draft guidelines for the sixth national report are contained in document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/11/Add.1. These were prepared on the basis of consultations with Parties and with due consideration to guidance provided in relevant decisions and recommendations. The proposals also build on initial feedback on the use of the online reporting tool during its pilot/testing phase.

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<sup>1</sup> “Work of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice in the light of the 2014-2018 work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and relationship with the Subsidiary Body on Implementation” (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/19/9).

## **II. EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE NATIONAL REPORTING PROCESSES OF THE CONVENTION**

### **A. Experiences and lessons learned from the fourth and fifth rounds of national reporting**

9. In decision X/10, the Conference of the Parties decided that all Parties should submit their fifth national report by 31 March 2014, using a narrative format, complemented by figures, tables and graphics where necessary. The fifth national report focused on the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, mainstreaming of biodiversity into sectors, and the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Parties were encouraged to provide quantitative and indicator-based analysis of implementation, using case studies and data and to highlight the outcomes achieved and challenges encountered.

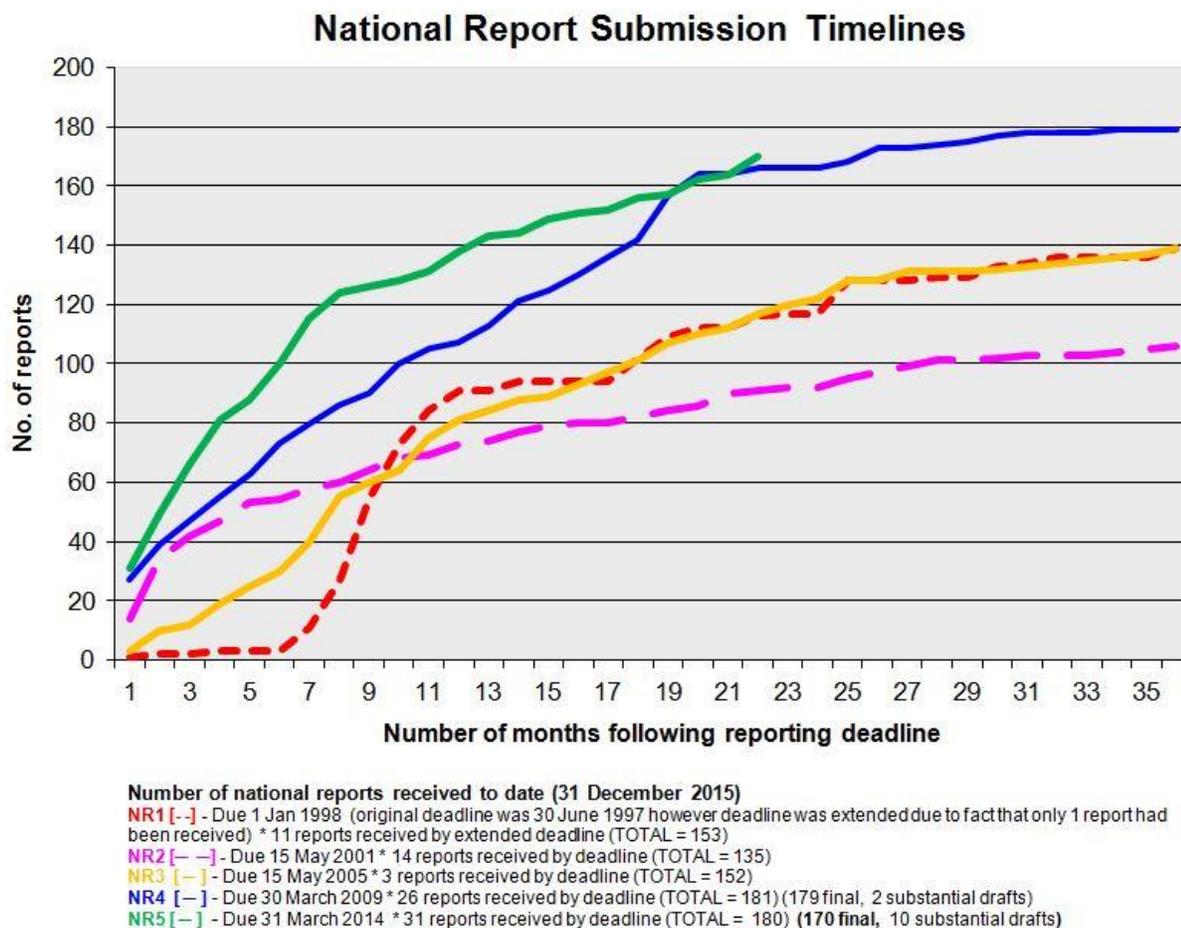
#### *1. Timeliness of submission of national reports*

10. By the 31 March 2014 deadline, only 31 Parties had submitted their fifth national reports. While this number is low, it does represent an improvement over the previous rounds of national reporting. Another 50 Parties submitted their national reports in the three months following the deadline. By December 2015 (more than a year and a half after the deadline), 170 Parties had submitted their fifth national reports. The figure below illustrates trends in the submission of national reports.

11. The submission rate of the fourth and fifth national reports was relatively quick compared to previous rounds of national reporting. Possible explanations for this include:

- (a) Increased political will and commitment of Parties;
- (b) Capacity development activities organized by the Secretariat, together with its partners, including the development of relevant supporting materials and tools;
- (c) Capacity development activities led by the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership on the development of biodiversity monitoring at various levels;
- (d) Enhanced availability of data and methodologies relevant to biodiversity monitoring at national and subnational levels;
- (e) Frequent communication with Parties;
- (f) Support from various stakeholders.

12. Despite the progress made in the submission rate for the fifth national reports it should be noted that most countries submitted their fifth national reports well past the deadline. Possible reasons for this include the complexity of the report, late initiation of national processes to prepare the report, underestimating the time needed to prepare the report and to have it approved for submission and limited resources (both technical and financial) to prepare the report. Many developing countries that had received funds from the Global Environment Facility for the preparation of national reports noted the need for increasing the funding level for preparing future national reports, as the current funding level (US\$ 20,000 per country) has proven inadequate to support the magnitude of work needed for completing national reports. Moreover, as the formation of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation considers strengthening review of implementation, to be primarily based on the national reports, further support will be required to enhance institutional capacity.



**Figure. Timelines for submission of national reports**

13. As a consequence of the late submission of the fifth national reports, only 64 national reports could be taken into account in the midterm review of progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 carried out through the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*. A similar number of fourth national reports were available when the draft of the third edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* was prepared.

## 2. Content of the fifth national reports

14. The guidelines for the fifth national reports suggested that Parties structure their national reports around three main sections. Part 1 provided an update on the status, trends, and threats to biodiversity and the implication of these for human well-being, while Part 2 examined the implementation the national biodiversity strategy and action plan and the mainstreaming of biodiversity. Part 3 examined the progress made towards the 2015 and 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and contributions to the relevant 2015 Targets of the Millennium Development Goals. The majority of the fifth national reports followed this structure.

15. In terms of the content of the fifth national reports, the first part of the national reports tended to be the longest section. Many Parties went into great detail describing the condition of biodiversity in their country. In some cases this included lengthy sections enumerating the different types of species and/or habitats present in the country. Much of the information included in these sections did not contain information related to how the trends or condition of biodiversity were changing over time. Further in many cases the information that was presented was similar to what had been presented in previous

national reports. The nature of information provided in this section did not easily lend itself to assessing global progress towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.

16. With regard to the second section of the national reports, most Parties described their progress in updating their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and/or described the types of actions that had been taken to implement it. However, while many Parties listed relevant activities, legislation or policies, very few described what the outcomes (or expected outcomes) of these were for biodiversity or how effective they had been in achieving desired goals or in initiating progress towards their achievement. Furthermore, few Parties provided information concerning mainstreaming of biodiversity into relevant sectors.

17. The third section of the national reports examining progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and contributions to the relevant 2015 Targets of the Millennium Development Goals tended to be the shortest section of the national report. More than 40 per cent of reporting Parties included an explicit assessment of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in their national reports. These assessments generally used a scale or rating system to classify the level of progress towards each target into a category (for example, no progress, some progress, on track to reach target). Parties that undertook such assessments did not use a common scale, which made aggregation of the information challenging. Further, in most cases, the methodology used to undertake these assessments was not explained in the national reports. Other national reports provided narrative descriptions of progress towards the Aichi Targets. These did not assign a specific metric to indicate progress but rather listed the types of activities taken, planned actions or referred to changes in biodiversity trends.

18. With regard to the use of indicators, while most Parties made use of at least a few indicators in their national reports, how these were used was highly variable. The indicators in the national reports tended to be a mixture of both outcome or impact indicators (those that measure a change in the status of biodiversity) and process indicators (those that measure actions taken). Some reports referred to and made use of comprehensive sets of indicators, however most Parties used them in a less systematic way. Further even those reports that made extensive use of indicators often had gaps where certain targets or elements of targets did not have indicators. The indicators used by Parties were often similar. For example many Parties had indicators related to habitat loss, species extinction or protected areas. These indicators may have different names and methodologies but often measure similar things. Further many Parties used similar indicators but which focus on different geographic levels such as ecosystems, region, state/provincial or subnational levels. These differences in methodologies, baselines and definitions made drawing comparisons between countries or directly aggregating national information difficult. The use of indicators also varied across the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Indicators were most often used for Targets 5, 11, and 12 while relatively few Parties used indicators to assess progress towards Targets 2, 3, 13, 16, 17, 18 and 19. This is likely because the indicators used in the national reports tended to be what would generally be considered as traditional biodiversity indicators. Socioeconomic or broader policy issues covered by the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity tended to be less well served by indicators. A detailed analysis of the use of indicators in the fifth national report can be found in one of the information documents prepared for the meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group of Experts on Indicators for the Strategic Plan, held from 14 to 17 September 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland.<sup>2</sup>

19. Almost all of the assessments of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the fifth national reports made use of various sources of information in addition to indicators to arrive at their conclusions. Information sources included literature reviews of government reports, scientific articles and grey literature, as well as expert opinion and stakeholder consultations. The information from the national reports suggests that most Parties are making pragmatic use of information by drawing on multiple sources of information and making the best use of these in reaching a conclusion regarding progress

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<sup>2</sup> See UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/2015/INF/3 accessible at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/ind/id-ahteg-2015-01/information/id-ahteg-2015-01-inf-03-en.doc>.

towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It is important to note, even in cases where limited information was available, most Parties have included information in their national reports which enables assessments of progress, at least towards some Aichi Biodiversity Targets, to be made, though sometimes with low levels of confidence. However, the different approaches taken in assessing progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the fifth national reports created challenges for a coherent and comprehensive assessment of global progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Detailed analysis of the national approaches used by countries for self-assessment can be found in one of the information documents prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) for the AHTEG meeting on Indicators for the Strategic Plan.<sup>3</sup>

## **B. Experiences and lessons learned from the pilot use of the online reporting tool**

20. In decision VIII/14, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish an online facility to support national reporting, through the clearing-house mechanism, for use by Parties on a voluntary basis as a planning tool.

21. In working towards implementing this decision, the Secretariat developed a pilot version of an online reporting tool in 2012. The scope, functions, linkages to other reporting processes and clearing-houses of the reporting tool and its relationship to formal national reports have continued to evolve in the light of feedback received from users of the pilot version and through consultations with Parties.

22. Moreover, in its decision XII/29 the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to make the online reporting tool of the clearing-house mechanism fully operational as soon as possible and invited Parties and other Governments, on a voluntary basis, to make available information on progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and related national targets and on indicators and approaches towards assessing progress with a view to enabling the Conference of the Parties, at each of its meetings through 2020, to review progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

23. A joint session of the Informal Advisory Committees to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention and to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House was held in Montreal, Canada, on 30 October 2015 to provide advice on issues of common interest. The experts reviewed the status of the online reporting tool, noted the progress made, and provided the following guidance to the Executive Secretary with a view to operationalizing this tool as soon as possible:<sup>4</sup>

(a) Review the feedback received from the CHM-IAC and other Parties, and set implementation priorities by mid-November with a view to making the online reporting tool available for official submissions by the end of 2015;

(b) Investigate ways to present the submitted information in an effective and attractive way taking into consideration the expectations and requirements from all users;

(c) Clarify the modalities for online submissions to the central clearing-house mechanism, in particular with respect to the role of the CHM National Focal Point, and in line with existing modalities for the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House;

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<sup>3</sup> See UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/2015/INF/2 accessible at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/ind/id-ahteg-2015-01/information/id-ahteg-2015-01-inf-02-en.doc>.

<sup>4</sup> See the report of the meeting of the Informal Advisory Committees to the Clearing-House Mechanism (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/3) and the report of the first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the ABS Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/3).

- (d) Provide alternate procedures for submission by Parties having limited access to the Internet.

### III. CONTENT AND FORMAT OF THE SIXTH NATIONAL REPORT

#### A. Content of the sixth national report

24. The information from the sixth national report will be used primarily for the final review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to be undertaken at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in 2020, through the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* and related topical analyses. Information from the sixth national reports will also be used for the development of a follow-up to the Strategic Plan for the Convention for 2011-2020. Further, the sixth national report will provide information on selected elements of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the sixth national report will contribute to the review of the implementation of national targets set in line with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including the updated NBSAPs and with regard to mainstreaming biodiversity in and across sectors. Parties may make use of their sixth national reports for review of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and as a communication tool for further mobilizing public actions for biodiversity.

25. Therefore, it is suggested that the sixth national report should:

- (a) Facilitate self-assessments by countries of progress towards each national biodiversity target set in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and on, that basis, to assess the national contribution towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, focusing on outcomes achieved;
- (b) Allow for the evaluation of the effectiveness of policy instruments, the identification of lessons learned, and of specific technical, scientific and capacity needs;
- (c) Support the assessment of the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Target 20 and the targets for resource mobilization agreed in decision XII/3 through the financial reporting framework contained in annex II to that in decision.

26. It is envisaged that reporting on progress in implementation of the Convention's thematic programmes of work, its cross-cutting issues or other provisions or the Convention would be linked to national targets and Aichi Biodiversity Targets as an organizing framework. For example, information on implementation of the programme of work on protected areas would be reported on under Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, while implementation on the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action under the Convention on Biological Diversity could be reported on under the mainstreaming elements related to specific targets, and in particular under Aichi Biodiversity Target 14.

27. To ensure that information provided through the sixth national report will facilitate the review of implementation by the Conference of the Parties, Parties should:

- (a) Focus on the outcomes of the actions achieved, the measures taken to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020, the Aichi Targets and relevant national targets and critically assess the effectiveness of these actions and measures;
- (b) List obstacles encountered in the achievement of each target including suggestions to overcome them, especially by technical and scientific cooperation, capacity-development activities, the further development of guidance materials or other measures;
- (c) Include information on institutional arrangements and structures being utilized by Parties to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020;
- (d) Provide case studies to illustrate how the actions taken have or are expected to lead to the desired outcomes;

(e) Make use of indicators where they are available, including by drawing on the updated list of indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/20/13).

28. Concerns have been raised regarding the objectivity and comparability of country self-assessments, including means for verification of information, traceability of resources and replicability of methods. To maximize comparability clear criteria are needed to facilitate decisions regarding the progress ratings and supporting evidence needs to justify these decisions. Some lessons may be drawn from the voluntary peer-review process addressed in the note by the Executive Secretary on the subject (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/10/Add.1).

## **B. Format of the sixth national report**

29. It is envisaged that the guidelines for the sixth national report will include a combination of questions with multiple-choice answers, complimented by narrative information. Specifically Parties will be invited to assess progress towards each of their national target or the Aichi Biodiversity Target using one of five possible categories of progress. This will facilitate the identification, nationally, of those areas where most progress has been made and those issues which may be in need of further attention. Further, the use of these categories will more easily allow for a global assessment of progress towards the targets to be prepared for the further consideration by Parties during their meetings. The categories proposed are general and can be applied to different types of targets (both qualitative and quantitative). Thus, the categories indicate the current trajectory of progress and assume that this remains unchanged between the time of the assessment and the target date. The categories of progress being proposed for use in the national report assessment, consistent with those used in the fourth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, are the following:

(a) *On track to exceed target* – A target with this assessment indicates that the national actions taken will allow for the criteria/thresholds established by the target to be exceeded. In the case of those targets with quantitative elements, this would mean that the identified threshold will be surpassed. In the case of qualitative targets, this would mean the different actions or conditions required to be met have been surpassed;

(b) *On track to achieve target* – This category indicates that the actions which have been taken and the current status of the issues addressed by the target indicates that the target will be met by the target deadline;

(c) *Progress towards target but at an insufficient rate* – This category indicates that significant progress towards the attainment of the target has been made since it was established. The progress could take the form of actions being taken or actual improvements in the status of the issues being addressed. However, while this category indicates an improving situation, the progress that has been made will be insufficient for the target to be met by the deadline;

(d) *No significant change* – This category indicates that, since the target was set, there has been either no significant progress towards its attainment or no significant deterioration. Assessments using this category imply that no significant actions to reach the target have been taken, or the actions taken have been ineffective or neutralized probably due to increasing pressures or other changes to national circumstances;

(e) *Moving away from target* – This category indicates that the issues the target is seeking to address are deteriorating. This could be because no actions have been taken or the actions that have been taken have been ineffective. It could also be because pressures are increasing or other changes to national circumstances.

30. The categories selected by countries would serve primarily to facilitate the tracking of change over time within a country or the review by countries where they have made more or less progress, as well as informing the global assessment of progress in implementation. Because of differences in national targets and potentially different interpretations of global targets that do not include numerical elements, as

well as differences in the assessment approaches the scores would not be used for comparison among countries.

31. The decision of which category to use when assessing progress towards the target will require, in most cases, the consideration of different types of information (indicators, literature review, stakeholder consultation, expert opinion, among others). Further, when undertaking the assessment, information on the status or trends of the element of the target being considered as well as any actions which have been taken should also be considered. It is important to consider the actions taken as there can often be a lag between the time when an action is taken and the time when its effect becomes visible.

32. The use of these different types and lines of information allows for a more robust assessment of progress. However, it can also create challenges in reconciling different lines of evidence. For these reasons, most assessments will require a degree of interpretation. This can be reflected in the assessment by indicating the level of confidence associated to the assessment. Three levels of confidence are proposed for use in the sixth national reports. These are:

(a) *Based on comprehensive evidence* – This level of confidence implies that robust indicators and additional sources of information exist to support the assessment and that these allow for all elements of the target to be assessed;

(b) *Based on partial evidence* – This level of confidence implies that some indicators exist for assessing progress towards the target but that not all elements can be assessed with indicators or that the indicators have limitation. Therefore additional sources of information have been used to fill gaps;

(c) *Based on limited evidence* – This level of confidence implies that there are no quantitative indicators to assess progress towards the target and that the assessment draws heavily on other types of information reconciled with expert opinion. For this reason, the assessment is largely based on expert opinion.

#### **IV. PROPOSALS FOR MODALITIES OF FUTURE REPORTING INCLUDING OPTIONS FOR INCREASING SYNERGIES IN NATIONAL REPORTING TO THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS AND AMONG RELATED CONVENTIONS AND PROCESSES**

##### **A. Modalities of future reporting**

33. It is envisaged that the guidelines for the sixth national report will be available online in a downloadable electronic format that can be used offline and in paper form and that Parties will be able to choose the way to submit their report. Information received on paper would be entered by the Secretariat so as to make all submissions accessible and to facilitate analysis and display of the information.

34. The online reporting tool has been designed to facilitate preparation of the regular national report. It allows Parties, if they so choose, to make information publicly available as it is finalized without having to wait until the entire report has been finalized. It therefore enables the preparation of the regular national report in a cumulative way. It also facilitates internal consultations with draft information visible only to designated national users until it is formally published.

35. In line with the recommendations of the Informal Advisory Committee for the Clearing-House Mechanism and further guidance provided informally by Parties, the online reporting tool is expected:

(a) To be fully operational by early 2016, enabling inputs on key elements of the proposed format for the sixth national report and display of these inputs in graphic form;

(b) To be further developed in the light of further advice by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting and completed following a decision by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting on whether to include all elements of the agreed format for the sixth national report;

(c) To facilitate the preparation of the sixth national reports by providing online tools and allowing for the submission of the report in a modular format;

(d) To further facilitate the preparation of the sixth national reports at the national level by providing flexibility in the timing of submission of information on selected elements of the report or the entry of updates as well as by enabling the sharing of draft information among national authorized users (visible only to the group of national authorized users until it is formally published), thereby facilitating coordination at the national level;

(e) To be supported by an application programming interface (API) to facilitate interoperability with national or regional clearing-houses and the clearing-houses of other conventions and processes;

(f) To facilitate the gradual harmonization of reporting processes for the Convention and its Protocols;

(g) To facilitate the analysis of information provided by Parties and the communication of such information through a range of visual tools;

(h) To be complemented by an off-line version to enable Parties with limited access to the Internet to submit their information in a timely manner.

36. Online reporting tools are being used by the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol and a number of biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions. The CMS family of agreements is using an Online Reporting System to facilitate the compilation and submission of national reports. The Online Reporting System developed by the CMS family and UNEP-WCMC is also being used by the Bern Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (for its biennial reports) and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), and is also being considered for use in future reporting cycles by the Ramsar Convention. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is using an online reporting system called PRAIS for its Parties to submit their regular national reports within a fixed time of period. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is developing an online reporting tool to facilitate reporting by its Parties.

## **B. Options for increasing alignment in reporting among the Convention and its Protocols**

37. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has used an online questionnaire-based reporting format for interim national reports and the three national reports. Some key questions were maintained throughout all national reports to provide continuity and comparability.

38. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization adopted a similar approach for interim national reports (which are due 12 months before the third meeting of the Parties (most likely in the second half of 2017). At their third meeting, the Parties to the Protocol would review the information contained in the interim national report and consider the future intervals for reporting. At their third meeting, the Parties to the Protocol would also be expected to review the format of the national report on the basis of feedback received from Parties and experience gained.<sup>5</sup>

39. National reporting for both Protocols plays an important role in the procedures and mechanisms to promote compliance with the provisions under the Protocols and to address cases of non-compliance, and in the assessment and review process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Protocols.

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<sup>5</sup> See decision NP-1/3, paragraphs 6 and 7.

40. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation, established in decision XII/26, is mandated to review the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. In this context, it is envisaged that the Convention and its Protocols could gradually move towards a more synchronized and aligned approach to national reporting.

41. A number of options exist to enhance alignment in national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols, including:

(a) Synchronized reporting cycles for the Convention, Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol, with common deadlines for submission of the reports after the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol in 2020;

(b) A common approach to the format of the national reports under the Convention and its Protocols, for example by linking different questionnaires and common formats and by combining information on biodiversity country profiles;

(c) Gradual integration of the central clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the ABS Clearing-House, including unified user accounts (already implemented); a single portal to access the reports for each of the three instruments (already implemented); a common branding and design for all national reports; and a common system to analyse and display national report submissions;

(d) Appropriate cross-linkages between future strategic plans of the Convention and its Protocols, with a view to facilitating alignment in reporting to the Convention and its Protocols.

### **C. Options for increasing synergies to national reporting among Conventions**

42. In a number of decisions (V/19, VI/20, VI/25, VII/25, VIII/14, IX/19, IX/27, X/10, X/20, XI/15, XII/6, XII/26, XII/30) the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate synergies, streamlining and harmonization of national reporting with various Conventions, including the Rio conventions and the biodiversity-related conventions. Further, the guidelines for the fourth and fifth national reports also suggested that national focal points to the Convention should work with their counterparts for related conventions, such as UNCCD and UNFCCC, in preparing their national reports in order to increase synergies.

43. In its decision XII/6, paragraph 4(a), the Conference of the Parties invited the members of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions “to increase their cooperation, coordination and attention to synergies in the development of their respective reporting systems, including future online reporting systems, as a means to increase synergies in national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions”. The workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, held from 8 to 11 February 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland, listed a number of short-term and medium-term options to increase synergies. These will be further explored as guidelines for national reports are being developed with the expectation of a stepwise process towards better integration of these reports.

44. Over the last 15 years, under the coordination of UNEP and UNEP-WCMC, work on the harmonization of national reporting among related conventions, including some pilot projects, have been undertaken. These efforts have generated some useful experiences and recommendations. One of the information documents prepared by UNEP-WCMC for the third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/3/INF/10) provided a useful summary of the first 10 years of work in this regard. Under the UNEP Working Group on MEA Information and Knowledge Management (MEA-IKM), a Working Group on the Online Reporting System (ORS) was established to discuss options for the further development and use of this online reporting tools based on the experiences of a number of biodiversity-related conventions. The Liaison

Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions have also undertaken discussions on how to increase synergies in reporting to the different Conventions. A task force on forest-related reporting has been established by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and provided useful recommendations for streamlining forest-related reporting.

45. It should be noted that synchronizing the cycles of national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions is challenging, due to the different periodicities of the meetings of their COPs or governing bodies and different intervals and approaches to national reporting (see table below). For example, Parties to the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species and the Convention on Migratory Species are required to submit their national reports to each meeting of their Conferences of the Parties, which is held every two to three years. In addition, these Conventions have adopted their own strategic plans, which cover different time periods, and Parties to these Conventions are requested to report on progress in the implementation of these Plans. The reporting requirements of these conventions also vary. For example, Parties to CITES are required to submit annual and biennium reports to assist with decision-making at meetings of the Conference of the Parties, Standing Committee, Plants Committee and Animals Committee. Though UNCCD and UNFCCC have adopted a similar cycle of national reporting to that of CBD (Parties are required to submit their national reports or communications every four or five years), the reporting approaches adopted by these Conventions are quite different from that of CBD. For example, Annex I Parties and non-Annex I Parties to UNFCCC have different reporting requirements. Non-Annex I Parties are required to submit their first national communication three years after their ratification of UNFCCC and subsequent national communications every four years thereafter, while Annex I Parties are required to submit annual reports on national inventory of GHGs, in addition to regular national communication submitted every four or five years (with dates set by COP) and biennium update reports. Developed country Parties and affected country Parties to UNCCD use different reporting templates.

**Table. Possible timing of COP meetings and reports to the other biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions**

<b>Convention</b>	<b>Period covered by latest Strategic Plan</b>	<b>Possible timing of future COP meetings around 2020</b>	<b>National reporting intervals and approaches</b>
CBD	2011-2020	COP 13 in 2016, COP 14 in 2018 and COP 15 in 2020	National reports submitted every four or five years. Sixth national report due in March 2019. An online reporting tool will be operational in early 2016 to facilitate national reporting.
Ramsar Convention	2016-2024	COP 13 in 2018 COP 14 in 2021 COP 15 in 2024	National reports to be submitted to each meeting of COP for review.
CITES	2008-2020	COP 17 in 2016 COP 18 in 2019	Annual and biennium reports to assist with decision-making at COP, Standing Committee, Plants and Animals Committees.
CMS	2015-2023	COP 12 in 2017 COP 13 in 2020 COP 14 in 2023	National reports to be submitted to each COP meeting. CMS Family online reporting tool being used.

Convention	Period covered by latest Strategic Plan	Possible timing of future COP meetings around 2020	National reporting intervals and approaches
World Heritage Convention	N/A	World Heritage Committee (WHC) meets once a year and the General Assembly of State Parties to the Convention meets every two years during the sessions of the General Conference of UNESCO  21 <sup>st</sup> GA in 2017 22 <sup>nd</sup> GA in 2019	Periodic reports submitted by State Parties to the World Heritage Committee (WHC) every six years. The World Heritage Committee examines reports prepared on a regional basis according to a pre-established schedule, which is based on a six-year cycle. The current cycle is from 2008 to 2015. The review results will be included in the report of WHC to the General Conference of UNESCO.
ITPGRFA	N/A	Governing Body 7 in 2017  Governing Body 8 in 2019	The first national report is due in October 2016. NRs to be reviewed by the Compliance Committee. An online reporting tool being developed to facilitate reporting.
IPPC	2012-2019	Meetings of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures held annually	Parties have to maintain information relating to a number of reporting obligations. Delivery is primarily through online submissions to the International Phytosanitary Portal.
UNCCD	2008-2018	COP 13 in 2017 COP 14 in 2019	Developed country Parties and affected country Parties use different reporting templates. National reports submitted through PRAIS online within a fixed time period. Currently it is the fifth reporting and review cycle (deadline set for July 2014).
UNFCCC	N/A	COP meetings held annually	Annex I Parties submit National Communications periodically, according to dates set by the COP. The deadline for the sixth NC, (1 January 2014), was agreed upon in Cancún. The first Biennial Report (BR) for Annex I Parties should be submitted by 1 January 2014, and the second and subsequent BR two years after the due date of a full NC (i.e. 2016, 2018). Non-Annex I Parties are required to submit their first NC within three years of entering the Convention, and every four years thereafter. The first Biennial Update Report for non-Annex I Parties should be, consistent with the Party's capabilities or level of support provided, submitted by December 2014, and every two years thereafter. Least developed country Parties and small island developing States may submit BURs at their own discretion.

46. In addition to having different reporting intervals, the reports to the conventions noted above also differ in their focus. For example, in the case of deforestation, the CBD reports focus on impacts of

deforestation on biodiversity, while UNFCCC national communications/reports focus on impacts of deforestation on emission reductions. Even among the biodiversity-related conventions, there are differences in the focus of reporting.

47. Despite the challenges noted above, there are opportunities to increase synergies in reporting among these conventions. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for 2011-2020 has been used by some biodiversity-related conventions as guidance for their strategic plans. An alignment with Aichi Biodiversity Targets as common denominator provides opportunities for synergies in reporting. A further opportunity is to make use of the national reports prepared for other multilateral environmental agreements as technical evidence for statements on progress towards relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets. For example, national reports submitted to the World Heritage Convention would contain information relevant to Aichi Target 11, and national reports submitted to CITES and CMS contain information relevant to Aichi Biodiversity Target 12. Similarly, national reports submitted to the United Nations Forum on Forests contain information relevant to Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5 and 7, and reports submitted to the United Nations Forum on Indigenous Peoples are relevant to Aichi Biodiversity Target 18.

48. Further options for increasing synergy between different conventions could include the following:

(a) Inviting Parties to use a common set of indicators, as CBD and a few other related conventions (the Ramsar Convention, CITES, ITPGRFA and WHC) are all involved in the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership;

(b) Exploring opportunities for sharing, among related conventions, common information, such as baseline data for biodiversity status and trends, relevant legislation, relevant regulatory functioning and organizational roles, responsibilities and structure which would only need to be updated should the situation change;

(c) Exploring the development of common reporting modules on issues or areas shared by these conventions and associated protocols. For example, CBD and the Ramsar Convention could develop and use a common reporting template on issues related to inland water biodiversity;<sup>6</sup>

(d) Increasing interoperability of information management and reporting systems, harmonization of national reporting tools (building on the work of UNEP MEA IKM);

(e) Developing guidance for information management and use at the national level, as well as developing common reporting frameworks.

## V. SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

49. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation may wish to adopt a recommendation along the following lines:

### *The Subsidiary Body on Implementation*

1. *Welcomes* the draft guidelines for the sixth national report;<sup>7</sup>
2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to refine the guidelines for the sixth national report, in the light of comments made during the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the

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<sup>6</sup> This was called for in decision VIII/20 (para. 5 (b)) and reiterated during the Workshop on Synergies among the Biodiversity-related Conventions (Geneva, Switzerland, 8-11 February 2016).

<sup>7</sup> UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/11/Add.1.

twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and to submit them for adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting;

3. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to further develop the online reporting tool to fully align it with the format for the sixth national report, by 31 March 2017 at the latest, with a view to facilitating the preparation of the sixth national report;

4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to develop a resource manual to assist Parties in applying the guidelines for the sixth national report;

5. *Recommends* that the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting adopt a decision along the following lines:

*The Conference of the Parties*

1. *Adopts* the guidelines for the sixth national report;<sup>8</sup>
2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to make the guidelines for the sixth national report available to Parties in the six official languages of the United Nations no later than 31 March 2017, including through the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention and the online reporting tool;
3. *Requests* Parties to submit their sixth national report preferably by the end of 2018 and at the latest by 31 March 2019, and *encourages* Parties to submit elements of their sixth national report as soon as they are ready through the online reporting tool;
4. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility, as the financial mechanism of the Convention, to increase the funding level for strengthening institutional and technical capacity, to prepare the sixth national report, and to provide such support in a timely and expeditious manner to developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States among them;
5. *Invites* Parties, Governments and relevant organizations, including through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, to provide support to developing countries for the preparation of their sixth national reports, in particular with regard to the development and use of indicators for reporting and the assessment of progress in the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets and relevant national targets;
6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources, and where possible and appropriate in collaboration with relevant partners and related processes, to organize capacity-building activities to support developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, for the preparation of their sixth national reports;
7. *Requests* Parties to involve relevant stakeholders in the preparation and review of the sixth national report to ensure that national reports reflect national implementation comprehensively, and to increase alignments and coordination in reporting to the Convention and its Protocols and synergies in reporting among related conventions, including the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions;

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<sup>8</sup> (Document symbol to be inserted)

8. *Agrees* to enhance the alignment in national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols, including:

(a) Synchronized reporting cycles for the Convention, Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol, with common deadlines for submission of the reports after the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol in 2020;

(b) A common approach to the format of the national reports under the Convention and its Protocols, for example by linking different questionnaires and common formats, and by combining information on biodiversity country profiles;

(c) Gradual integration of the central clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House, including unified user accounts (already implemented), a single portal to access the reports for each of the three instruments (already implemented), a common branding and design for all national reports, and a common system to analyse and display national report submissions;

(d) Appropriate cross-linkages between future strategic plans of the Convention and its Protocols with a view to facilitating alignment in reporting to the Convention and its Protocols;

9. *Also agrees* to explore options for increasing synergy on national reporting between different conventions, and invites the other biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions to do the same, including consideration of the following:

(a) Inviting Parties to use a common set of indicators, as the Convention on Biological Diversity and related conventions (such as the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the World Heritage Convention) are all involved in the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership;

(b) Exploring opportunities for sharing, among related conventions, common information, such as baseline data for biodiversity status and trends, relevant legislation, relevant regulatory functioning and organizational roles, responsibilities and structure which would only need to be updated should the situation change;

(c) To explore the development of common reporting modules on issues or areas shared by these Conventions and associated Protocols. For example, CBD and the Ramsar Convention could develop and use a common reporting template on issues related to inland water biodiversity;<sup>9</sup>

(d) To increase interoperability of information management and reporting systems, harmonization of national reporting tools (building on the work of United Nations Environment Programme's Working Group on Multilateral Environment Agreement Information and Knowledge Management);

(e) Developing guidance for information management and use at the national level, as well as developing common reporting frameworks;

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<sup>9</sup> This was called for in decision VIII/20 (para. 5 (b)) and re-iterated during the Workshop on Synergies among the Biodiversity-related Conventions (Geneva, Switzerland, 8-11 February 2016).

10. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and the secretariats of the other biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions, a proposal with options for a step-wise process to promote alignment and complementarity and avoid duplication of reporting requirements under the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions and their protocols after 2020, and to submit it to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting.

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