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### SUBSIDIARY BODY ON SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

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#### **EVALUATION OF THE THIRD EDITION OF THE GLOBAL OUTLOOK (GBO-3)**

##### *Information note by the Executive Secretary*

1. In decision X/4, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to commission a review of the process of preparation and production of the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3) in order to further improve the process for future editions of the Global Biodiversity Outlook and maintain comparability with earlier editions, where necessary, and to report to a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice prior to eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
2. In response to this decision, and with the generous financial support from the Government of Japan, a review of the preparation process and impact of GBO-3 was carried out by an independent evaluator. This note contains the executive summary of that evaluation. The complete evaluation is available from the GBO-3 webpage at <https://www.cbd.int/gbo3/?pub=6667&section=6830>.
3. The document is presented in the form in which it was received by the Secretariat. The key messages of the evaluation are available in all United Nations languages in section III of the note by the Executive Secretary on Considerations for the preparation of the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/3).

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\* UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/16/1.

## EVALUATION OF THE THIRD EDITION OF THE GLOBAL OUTLOOK (GBO-3)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### A. *Background*

1. Global Biodiversity Outlook is the flagship publication of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The third edition of the report was prepared in response to decision VIII/14 and launched on 10 May 2010, drawing on a range of information sources, including national reports, biodiversity indicators data, scientific literature, and a study assessing biodiversity scenarios for the future. The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-3) summarized the latest information on the status and trends of biodiversity and was a key source of information for the development of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In turn, the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will be prepared to provide a mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including an analysis of how the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan have contributed to the 2015 targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (decision X/2).

2. This evaluation of Global Biodiversity Outlook-3 was carried out in response to a request by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2010 to review “the process of preparation and production of GBO-3 in order to further improve the process for future editions and to maintain comparability with earlier editions where necessary” (decision X/4). The methodology involved an extensive review of relevant sources of information, interviews with 26 stakeholders, including individuals involved in the preparation and use of GBO-3, as well as a survey sent out through the mailing list of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (hereinafter referred to as the Secretariat). The results of this evaluation will be presented at a meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) before the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to be held in India, in October 2012.

#### B. *Project management, funding, contractual and institutional arrangements*

3. The original intent to hire a publishing house to manage the GBO-3 production process led to some delays related to the Secretariat’s inexperience in dealing with such a large contract. To prevent further loss of time, the decision was made that the project would be managed in-house by a small core team including a short-term staff member dedicated exclusively to GBO-3. The internal project management was felt to have been effective and ran smoothly. A number of individual contracts were established for writing, design and layout, graph development, translation and printing. On the one hand, this arrangement increased the workload on the Secretariat and may have limited the level of promotion of GBO-3, while on the other hand greater flexibility in terms of meeting deadlines was possible. In general, the contractual arrangements worked well and benefited from strong lines of communication and a clear division of labour. However, there were issues with the quality of some of the translations and with the lateness of receipt of some inputs into GBO-3.

4. There was some uncertainty about how much funding would eventually materialize for GBO-3, which limited the ability of the project management team to undertake long-term planning. In the end, funding was provided by Canada, the European Union, Germany, Japan, Spain, the United Kingdom, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (total of US\$ 826,772). However, the grants received were significantly lower than the amount originally budgeted for GBO-3 (US\$ 1.4 million), which hampered the full implementation of the GBO-3 work plan and in particular the report’s communication strategy.

5. In general, the arrangements with funders were considered to have run smoothly. Two issues that were raised in the interviews were the importance of clarity on what different funds will be used for and how they will be distributed among different institutions and the need to ensure that sufficient profile is provided to each of the funders.

6. The Secretariat worked closely with the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) to obtain up-to-date indicator information for incorporation in the GBO-3 report. The BIP and GBO-3 benefited each other mutually, with BIP being provided with greater policy impact and GBO-3 benefiting from the wealth of indicator information provided. From the point of view of the Secretariat, however, it would have been beneficial to receive the indicator information in a consolidated form earlier on in the writing process, while from the point of view of the BIP there was a lack of clarity in terms of how their information would be integrated into the main GBO-3 report.

### ***C. Peer-review***

7. GBO-3 underwent an extensive peer-review process, which included public peer-review, a detailed review of the second draft by the GBO-3 Scientific Review Panel and a review by the Bureau of SBSTTA. This process contributed significantly to the high level of buy-in of the final product. The public peer-review led to substantial and useful feedback, including from Parties to the Convention. Based on some of the feedback on the first draft, the Secretariat decided to significantly shorten the second draft. As a result, some reviewers felt that it was difficult for them to see whether their comments had been incorporated in the final version. In addition, the fact that SBSTTA, as a large intergovernmental body, was not able to review GBO-3 (due to the lack of a SBSTTA meeting in 2009) was unfortunate, as this would have increased the level of exposure to GBO-3. In general, all interested stakeholders had the opportunity of providing input into GBO-3, though given more time and resources, more effort could have been made to specifically target CBD's stakeholder groups.

### ***D. Content, messaging and scope***

8. The final version of the main GBO-3 report was a relatively succinct document that focused on providing data on the status of biodiversity in 2010, the main pressures on biodiversity and responses, biodiversity scenarios for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and conclusions to support the development of a new strategy for reducing biodiversity loss. The messaging and style of GBO-3 were felt to have struck the appropriate balance between readability and technical soundness, largely due to the decision to hire a scientific writer for the first time.

9. The scope of GBO-3 differed somewhat from the plans presented in earlier planning documents, in particular by including less national data and case-studies. This was due primarily to limitations in the quality, comparability and timeliness of the national reports received and because of the perceived incongruence between the overall negative trends in biodiversity and the positive case-studies. The Secretariat decided to include the more detailed case-study information in a separate publication entitled "Action for Biodiversity." GBO-3 also included less regional content than planned, mainly because of the difficulty in obtaining information compiled at the regional level. Finally, GBO-3 included little information on the MDGs and on progress in mainstreaming biodiversity into the development agenda compared to the original plan, due to the limited availability of specific information on these issues and the desire to keep the final document as concise as possible.

### ***E. Incorporation of scientific and technical knowledge***

10. Extensive scientific and technical information was incorporated in GBO-3 from a variety of sources, including biodiversity indicators data from the BIP, 110 national reports, a report on future biodiversity scenarios, and over 500 journal articles and assessments. Compared to previous versions of GBO, the third edition had a greater amount of scientific information from which to draw. However, limited national data was included in the final report as many of the fourth national reports were submitted after the deadline and there were limited resources within the Secretariat to comprehensively assess all the national reports received. GBO-3 included more original content than previous editions as a result of the report on possible future biodiversity scenarios. This scenarios research was well-received and considered an important component of GBO-3, providing some of the key conclusions of the publication, including the idea of tipping points. In addition, there was a high level of satisfaction with the indicators data included, which provided a clear presentation of the trends in biodiversity.

#### ***F. Ancillary products***

11. Besides the main GBO-3 report, a number of other ancillary communication products were prepared. These included an Executive Summary for policy-makers, a GBO-3 website, a booklet on national case studies, a GBO-3 video, a GBO-3 presentation, an annotated version of GBO-3, regional summaries for four regions, two CBD Technical Series reports, and a Guide to GBO-3 for Small Island Developing States. These were considered useful tools to reach additional audiences. Funding limitations prevented many of the planned additional products from being developed, such as brochures, fact sheets or case-studies for target stakeholder groups. This was considered a key weakness of GBO-3, which limited its ability to reach beyond the biodiversity community. The need to prioritize this issue for future editions of GBO emerged as a key finding of this evaluation.

#### ***G. Launch and dissemination***

12. GBO-3 was launched at the fourteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body held in May 2010 in Nairobi, as well as at simultaneous launches in 11 cities around the world. It was considered among the “best-launched” reports of the year by UNEP and there was extensive media coverage around the world. Subsequent to the launch, GBO continued to be disseminated at a variety of venues. GBO-3 was an important input for the one-day high-level meeting on biodiversity under the United Nations General Assembly, in September 2010, as well as for the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in October 2010, in Nagoya, Japan. In addition, Secretariat staff promoted GBO-3 at a number of meetings. In general, GBO-3 received greater exposure due to its launch in the International Year of Biodiversity. However, lack of funds for the communication strategy limited the number of outreach activities that could be undertaken.

#### ***H. Impact of GBO-3***

13. GBO-3 was viewed as a very timely report that had a significant impact on policy and on policy-makers. It was considered to be the “latest scientific assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity” at the occasion of the high-level meeting on biodiversity held under the General Assembly on 22 September 2010 and constituted the scientific basis for the conclusion that the 2010 biodiversity target was not met. GBO-3 provided the rationale for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets which were agreed during the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2010.

14. GBO-3 also had an important impact on the scientific community. It has been referenced in biodiversity-related articles and publications and is being used as a source of information for other United Nations publications.

15. Few targeted outreach activities were undertaken with other sectors, such as the private sector, indigenous and local communities, parliamentarians and local governments. It is therefore difficult to determine the impact of GBO-3 on these groups, but the impact beyond the biodiversity community is likely to have been limited. This can be attributed in large part to the lack of funding for the implementation of the communication strategy.

#### ***I. Future editions of GBO***

16. GBO-4 will be released in 2015 and will serve as an interim progress report to measure the level of achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. GBO-4 needs to build on other reports to be released that year to ensure complementarity and impact, and to avoid duplication of efforts. In particular, GBO-4 should make the links between biodiversity, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and human well-being explicit, as the final MDG reporting process will take place in 2015. The Secretariat will also need to consider ways to create synergies with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity (IPBES), which is still in the process of being defined.

17. In addition to developing a well thought-out niche for GBO-4, it is important for the Secretariat to learn from the many lessons learned in the preparation, production, and dissemination of GBO-3. In

this respect, this assessment presents the following process and content-related recommendations, which should be considered in preparing future editions of the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

#### ***J. Process-related recommendations***

18. **Seek funding for the implementation of a comprehensive communication strategy.** This recommendation is overarching and will contribute substantially to the achievement of many of the other recommendations presented in this report. This will enable future editions to have a more sustained and stronger impact on a wider group of target audiences through the development of a greater number of tailored products and increased outreach and dissemination activities. In addition to funding from Parties to the Convention, the Secretariat may wish to explore other possible funding sources, such as cost-recovery mechanisms.

19. **Expand partnerships to increase impact and reduce costs.** This refers to partnerships with other organizations both to gather relevant information and input for future editions of GBO, as well as to disseminate GBO content. In order to increase the impact of GBO, it will be important to ensure that GBO-3's main conclusions are included in important publications, such as UNEP's Global Environment Outlook, development reports and the material of the World Economic Forum on Biodiversity.

20. **Consider hiring a publishing house to manage the production process to expand reach of GBO.** Such an arrangement would significantly lessen the workload on the Secretariat as the publishing house could manage the day-to-day interactions among different actors, and would allow the Secretariat to devote more time to developing the content of the report. A publishing house with a built-in outreach ability could also facilitate the dissemination of GBO beyond the biodiversity constituency. On the other hand, in-house management by the Secretariat could allow for greater flexibility to manage the production process and meet deadlines.

21. **Define the nature of final product(s) from the outset.** Agreement should be reached on the general structure, length, scope, main messages and target audiences early on in the production process. Although a certain level of flexibility may still be required to address feedback from peer-review, early decisions on the final product will lead to time savings and greater consistency between different drafts.

22. **Continue to prioritize effective messaging, design and layout.** While maintaining scientific rigour, it is critical to ensure that the writing style and presentation of future editions of GBO be easy to understand and accessible to a variety of different audiences, as was the case with GBO-3.

23. **Maximize opportunities for political buy-in.** This involves engaging policy-makers and decision-makers in the preparation of future editions of GBO, ensuring that GBO products meet their needs, and encouraging the dissemination of information to policy-makers.

24. **Make greater use of social networking tools and mass media in launch and dissemination efforts.** The increased use of mass media and social networking tools to promote future editions of GBO can play an important role in mainstreaming the messages of GBO and reaching out to a greater number of people.

25. **Encourage GBO advisory group(s) to carry out as much promotion as possible.** Members of future GBO advisory group(s) should be encouraged to use their extensive networks to undertake as much promotion and dissemination of GBO products as possible to increase the impact of the publication.

26. **Continue to make use of GBO-3 in ongoing outreach activities.** As part of the International Decade of Biodiversity and the implementation of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan, GBO-3 should continue to be used and disseminated to a wide range of audiences to sustain its impact.

27. **Ensure support available to pull together indicator data.** The Secretariat may wish to consider contracting expertise if necessary to pull together biodiversity indicator data in a timely manner to facilitate their inclusion in future editions of GBO.

28. **Increase transparency surrounding the way in which peer-review comments are addressed.** It is advisable for the Secretariat (or publishing house) to make publicly available a description of how comments from the public peer-review are addressed.

29. **Arrange for the production of high-quality translations.** As such, sufficient time needs to be allocated for possible delays in the receipt of translations and for any additional editing that may be required.

#### *K. Content-related recommendations*

30. **Develop and disseminate products for different target audiences to encourage mainstreaming.** The products that are developed, main messages communicated and language used in future editions of GBO must be tailored to target audiences, such as the private sector, educators, the scientific community, indigenous and local communities, and decision-makers, to name a few.

31. **Encourage greater inclusion of national data in GBO.** The Secretariat should continue to encourage countries to submit timely and complete national reports, and to support the organization of workshops if possible to help countries prepare these reports. The Secretariat should also increase efforts to analyze information from the national reports in a comprehensive manner, with a view to including more national information in future editions of GBO.

32. **Incorporate more case-studies and success stories.** The inclusion of more well-developed case-study material in the main GBO report and ancillary products would serve to provide countries with tangible examples of how progress toward achieving the 2020 targets is being made at the national level.

33. **Better substantiate the links between biodiversity and human well-being.** This is particularly important given that GBO-4 will be launched in the same year as the MDG reports. This may require the commissioning of a study on ecosystem services to address information gaps.

34. **Ensure comparability with earlier versions of GBO.** While new indicators need to be included to track progress toward the new 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, it would be useful to continue to report on existing indicators to permit the gathering of valuable longer time-series information. Biodiversity scenarios information should also continue to be presented.

35. **Include references in main GBO reports.** This is important to enable readers to easily access the sources of information that underpin the report, and should be prioritized, at least in future online versions of GBO.

36. **Consider including more regional data as well as information on global and national monitoring needs.** While these should not take away from the focus of GBO as a global report, regionally compiled data and more information on national gaps in biodiversity observation and monitoring would be very useful.

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