



Ref.: CBD/I&O/TH/jh

16 October 2000

Madam/Sir,

Please find attached correspondence from the national focal point of the United Kingdom transmitting a report of a workshop held in London on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I am confident that the conclusions contained in the report will be of interest to all national focal points to the Convention.

Accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Hamdallah Zedan  
Executive Secretary

To: National Focal Points



Hamdallah Zedan  
Executive Secretary  
Convention on Biological Diversity

JONATHAN TILLSON  
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5 OCTOBER 2000

Dear Hamdallah,

### **NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

As you know, colleagues from Finland, the Netherlands and the UK met on 22 September for a workshop on implementation of the Convention. We were pleased that the Secretariat was also able to join the discussion.

The intention in holding the workshop was to compare notes and learn lessons for our future work on national implementation. As you will see from the enclosed note of the main points made in discussion, we had some valuable exchanges and reached some general conclusions which will certainly help inform future work in each country.

The participants felt that our conclusions might also be of interest to colleagues in other countries. I therefore would be grateful if you could make the note available to national focal points, on the Clearing House Mechanism, and to the Intersessional Meeting in November next year.

The three participating countries reiterated our commitment to implementation of the Convention, and we look forward to continued collaboration with other Parties and the Secretariat to this end.

Yours sincerely,

**JONATHAN TILLSON**

ATT: REPORT



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## CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

### WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION IN FINLAND, THE NETHERLANDS AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON, 22 SEPTEMBER 2000

#### Participants:

Dutch Government: Jacob-Jan Bakker, Marcel Vernooij

Finnish Government: Marina von Weissenberg

UK Government: John Angell, Matthew Medlock, Hilary Neal, John Robbins, Jonathan Tillson

CBD Secretariat: Tony Gross

FIELD\*: Ruth Mackenzie

\* Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development

1. The workshop was held to exchange experience of national implementation of the Convention, to identify lessons for possible application in the countries concerned and of possible wider interest to others. All three countries reaffirmed their commitment to full and effective implementation of the Convention, and expressed the hope that such collaborative ventures could help bring this about. The workshop certainly demonstrated the value of informal peer information exchange mechanisms. This is a note of the main points made in discussion.
2. Presentations were made on CBD implementation in each country. In **Finland** a comprehensive Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, based clearly on the articles of the CBD, is overseen by a National Biodiversity Committee. It covers the period 1997-2005 and has already been subject to a published first review of progress (1997-1999) in 2000. A second review of progress will be published in 2002. The Committee's activities include promoting sectoral integration of biodiversity in accordance with article 6(b) of the Convention. In addition, a liaison network of specialists has been established to monitor the measures taken and examine new opportunities in the fields of conservation, management and use of natural and genetic resources, development co-operation, environmental education and multi-disciplinary research. Successes include clear priorities and targets; broad participation ensuring agreement on problems and solutions; an increased political profile for biodiversity; and progress on national legislation and resources to tackle localised species and small area habitats. Weaknesses have included little extra public money at the community level; slow integration into major land use and economic policies; and slow progress on dispersed and threatened species and on large area habitats and farmland. The Finnish biodiversity research programme, FIBRE, has proved a great success, not only in its research advancements, but also by encouraging corporate and political involvement and interest.

3. In 1995 the **Netherlands** adopted a Strategic Plan of Action on Biodiversity, building heavily on separate plans already adopted in a wide range of relevant sectors. An inter-Departmental group meets monthly to monitor and encourage progress. A review in 1998 highlighted a variety of issues, above all the differing rates of progress, among the wide range of actors involved, in truly assimilating biodiversity considerations into other processes – especially those concerned with economic development. Successes to date include progress with in particular research and international co-operation; weaknesses include patchy progress on integration and little awareness of the CBD and its aims. In 2000 the Strategic Plan of Action has been integrated into a new policy document for nature conservation, landscape protection and forestry.
4. In the **United Kingdom** much work to date has focussed on a Biodiversity Action Plan, with over 400 species and habitat action plans, overseen by a UK Biodiversity Group and with a first review of progress due in 2001. Other activity includes a National Biodiversity Network, to help share relevant information; integration of biodiversity into Government (central and local) and business policy and practice; and a range of activity tackling implementation beyond Article 6. Successes include innovative partnership working, the beginnings of integration, and the Darwin Initiative grant scheme helping developing countries implement the CBD. Weaknesses include the bureaucracy of the arrangements (especially at a time of constitutional change), a mixed record on resource delivery and public awareness, and the need for a more comprehensive and systematic approach particularly to implementation beyond Article 6.
5. Participants reached the following general conclusions about implementation of the Convention:
  - i) Plans to implement Article 6 of the Convention should recognise the broad scope of the CBD: they should cover the Convention’s threefold objectives; focus on the ecosystem, species and genetic levels; and recognise the intrinsic value of all functions of biodiversity. This implied that both horizontal/integrating and vertical/sectoral activities would be needed;
  - ii) Implementation can also build on the strong tradition of nature conservation present in at least some countries (including our own), but at the same time activities should be extended into the field of sustainable use. Amongst other things this requires appropriate policy development, co-ordination and attitude change. While it is important for nature conservation to define conditions for economic development, the CBD offers an opportunity to find common ground for integration of ecology and economics;
  - iii) Measures are also needed to ensure coherence and coordination between conservation and sustainable use activities. These can include sectoral obligations on Government Departments (Finland), incorporation into sectoral planning procedures (Netherlands) and checklists for use by “Green Ministers” (UK);
  - iv) It is important but challenging to communicate a sufficiently broad definition of “biodiversity” to the widest interested audience. This can be done via education and public awareness-raising, over a sustained period of time, and by using a range of approaches including demonstrations and indicators;

- v) The fact that biodiversity represents far more than a few charismatic or threatened species must be constantly borne in mind by policy makers in developing their plans and finding the appropriate forms for interdepartmental and external co-operation, with the support of a strong and continuing political impetus;
  - vi) A constant tension in plans to implement the Convention lies in the balance to be struck between central co-ordination/steering of activity and a more decentralised/partnership approach. The latter is liable to become more common as the Convention's aims are mainstreamed. This tendency has to be taken on board in (re-)defining the role and functions of co-ordinating units, which may have to focus more on the underlying CBD principles, facilitating information exchange, and co-ordination of cross-sectoral activities. Also, special attention has to be given to the need for a coherent approach in international fora;
  - vii) A wide range of key actors are involved in striking this balance, and there is a need to keep expanding their numbers and influence. Politicians in particular have a vital role to play in pursuing horizontal integration;
  - viii) Participants noted the phenomenon of "happy coincidence", or the existence of activity taking place regardless of the CBD but which nevertheless helped meet its objectives. CBD implementers should welcome this, and those responsible should be helped to recognise the significance for the Convention of what they do;
  - ix) Research has an important role to play in support of implementation. This should be multi-disciplinary, driven by stakeholder demand, and allowed to feed into policymaking and practice. It was noted that SBSTTA's agenda has already benefited directly from biodiversity research (eg via subject focal points in the Netherlands) and that the CBD agenda could drive important new initiatives (eg the FIBRE programme in Finland, the Stimulation Programme for Biodiversity Research in the Netherlands and the Darwin Initiative in the UK);
  - x) Stakeholders and the implementation process both benefited if stakeholders were explicitly held to account/given credit for their participation in implementation;
  - xi) National action must be supported at the local level, if real change is to be delivered. The constitutional implications were noted, especially where these are changing (eg decentralisation in the Netherlands, devolution in the UK).
6. Finally, participants recognised the importance of national reporting for systematically assessing the status of implementation of the CBD and reconfirmed their commitment to delivering their second national reports on time. Views differed as regards the specific role of reporting in national, regional and global co-operation.

October 2000