



Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat



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NEWS RELEASE

Integrating biodiversity with impact assessment

Montreal, 15 August 2002 – In an informal ceremony held today, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Hamdallah Zedan, and the President of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), Peter Leonard, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to integrate biodiversity considerations into impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment guidelines and procedures.

In general, the process of impact assessment attempts to identify the future consequences of current or proposed development plans, policies, and procedures. “Currently, too many environmental assessments around the world do not fully include the biodiversity dimension,” said Mr. Leonard. “IAIA is continually striving to improve the process of impact assessment, and this is a critical area for improvement. IAIA and CBD working together is an important step toward more comprehensive environmental assessment practices.”

These guidelines provide countries with appropriate procedures to use when implementing a policy and planning or starting a project, in order to minimize or avoid any effects on the environment and its biodiversity. Because such projects are typically of common interest, public participation is also encouraged to allow more transparency in assessment procedures.

“Biological diversity is a vital but often neglected resource. The adoption of such guidelines is a significant achievement and a step forward in mainstreaming biodiversity, which has been neglected for far too long,” said Mr. Zedan. “The integration of biodiversity issues means that the process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a project or a policy will from now on not only take into account the socio-economic, cultural and human impacts, but also the ones on biological diversity, whether beneficial or adverse.”

This agreement follows a request of the Parties to the Convention, at their sixth meeting in The Hague in April, to gain access to current experiences in environmental impact assessment procedures that incorporate biodiversity-related issues. By compiling and analysing lessons learned, Parties that apply such guidelines will be able to exchange information. The CBD in collaboration with the IAIA will prepare proposals to further develop and refine these guidelines. Specifically, they will introduce biodiversity considerations in all stages of impact assessment, taking into account the ecosystem approach.



United Nations
Environment
Programme

Tel.: (1-514) 288-2220
Fax: (1-514) 288-6588

website: www.biodiv.org
e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org

World Trade Centre Building
393 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 300
Montréal, Québec, Canada H2Y 1N9



International
Association for
Impact Assessment

Tel.: (1-701) 297-7908
Fax: (1-701) 297-7917

website: www.iaia.org
e-mail: info@iaia.org

IAIA International Headquarters
1330 23rd Street South, Suite C
 Fargo, North Dakota, USA 58103

Note to journalists

The **Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD) was opened for signature at the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992. It is the first global agreement to cover all aspects of biological diversity – genetic resources, species and ecosystems – and the first to recognize that the conservation of biological diversity is “a common concern of humankind” and an integral part of efforts to achieve sustainable development. The CBD is the main international instrument for policy-making and implementation relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It fosters scientific and technical cooperation and the equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources, and the widespread use of environmentally sound technologies.

The Convention's ultimate authority is the Conference of the Parties (COP), consisting of all governments (and regional economic integration organizations) that have ratified the treaty (183 to date). This governing body reviews progress under the Convention, identifies new priorities, and sets work programmes for members. The COP can also make amendments to the Convention, create expert advisory bodies, review progress reports by member nations, and collaborate with other international organizations and agreements.

The **International Association for Impact Assessment** (IAIA) is a multi-disciplinary organization for environmental practitioners interested in improving decision-making that has future environmental consequences. Its primary purpose is developing international and local capacity to make wise decisions regarding the anticipation, planning, and management of environmental change - in terms of ecological and human consequences - in order to enhance the quality of life for all.

IAIA has over 2,500 members in 104 countries. It seeks to ensure that political, environmental, social, and technological dimensions of decisions are understood by those making them. IAIA promotes ecologically sustainable and equitable development and is committed to environmental justice and the preservation of human rights.

For more information please contact:

Cristina Stricker
CBD Information Officer
Tel: +1-514-287-7031
E-mail: cristina.stricker@biodiv.org
See also www.biodiv.org

Nick King
Chair, IAIA Biodiversity Section
BioNET-INTERNATIONAL
Tel: +44 1491 829 036
E-mail: n.king@cabi.org

Peter Leonard
IAIA President
Hydro-Quebec Production
Tel: +1-514-289-2211 x4282
E-mail: leonard.peter@hydro.qc.ca