



COMMUNIQUÉ

Expert Meeting on Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development Cooperation concludes in Montreal

Montreal, 19 May 2009 – More than 45 development cooperation agencies, development banks, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental development organizations participated in the Expert Meeting on Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development Cooperation, held at the premises of the Convention Secretariat from 13 to 15 May.

The participants discussed how biodiversity can be mainstreamed in development cooperation and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and, in particular, on issues related to poverty. The meeting was convened by the Secretariat's newly established Biodiversity Development and Poverty Alleviation Unit. The Unit was set up early this year thanks to the secondment from the Government of France of a French specialist in biodiversity for development, a German national from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and an officer from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

“This meeting is of historic nature,” said Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, “as it is the first time 12 bilateral donor agencies together with 11 multilateral donor organizations have decided to join forces with the Secretariat of the CBD in making biodiversity relevant to the international development cooperation agenda. This is a historic step towards the convening in Nagoya of the first biodiversity forum with donor agencies as a contribution to the post 2010 biodiversity agenda.”

Participants discussed how the goal 5 of the strategy for resource mobilization in support of the achievement of the Convention's three objectives for the period 2008-2015 (decision IX/11 B, annex), entitled “Mainstream biological diversity and its associated ecosystem services in development cooperation plans and priorities including the linkage between Convention's work programmes and Millennium Development Goals”, can be advanced further by sharing views on tools available for biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation, which include the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and the environmental impact assessment (EIA).

Practical field examples were presented at the meeting by participants from the United Republic of Tanzania and Benin. Participants considered these examples as valuable in preventing the type of “mainstreaming overload” or “fatigue” that can occur when dealing with abstract information. It was stated that an important hindrance appears to be the limited time and money available to development practitioners for working effectively with other sectors. Additionally, the lack of indicators to assess the effectiveness of biodiversity-related projects remains a concern.

“That is why the environment and development community need to strengthen each other and I am pleased to see that the meeting agreed to continue their interaction,” stated Mr. Djoghlaif. “The issues tackled are complex, and two-three days are clearly not enough to lay down the various means to integrate biodiversity considerations at the various levels of development work.”

The Convention Secretariat was asked to continue supporting the network of development cooperation agencies and biodiversity and the OECD Secretariat and France agreed informally to co-host a follow-up meeting of this group prior to the Nagoya Summit. The Japan International Cooperation

Agency said that it would consider working with the Convention Secretariat to host a larger event on the margins of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

In the meantime, the Secretariat will be sharing the toolkits already developed by various agencies to mainstream biodiversity through its website while developing further toolkits based on the existing gaps.

In his concluding remarks, the senior representative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Dr. Konrad Uebelhör, said, “The Ministry wants to thank the Secretariat of the Convention and especially the Executive Secretary Ahmed Djoghlafor for having taken the initiative to invite the donor community and representatives from selected countries for this important meeting which was the first of its kind but hopefully not the last one.”

He further added that, “Germany is open to support a follow-up meeting in order to further exchange experiences gained and to elaborate more specifically on the agreements and recommendations of this meeting.” Similar calls were also made by Sweden and Japan to support a follow-up discussion of the network.

Speaking on behalf of Norway, Mr. Peter Schei welcomed the results of the meeting as a contribution to the convening in 2010 of the high-level meeting during the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly, which will also consider the contribution of biodiversity to the 10-year review of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Secretariat will soon post on the Convention website (www.cbd.int) a copy of all the presentations made at the meeting, including the list of participants.

Background

The meeting was divided into three sessions; an “update” session on what is biodiversity mainstreaming and how the concept can be applied in development activities and support through the use of innovative approaches, an “open dialogue” session with representatives from ministries of environment, planning and finance/budget of selected developing countries; and a third session focusing on “developing principles for mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation” where participants express opinions on how biodiversity considerations could be more effectively taken into account at different strategic levels within their organization.

The important links between biodiversity, poverty reduction and development are reflected in numerous decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. They are also widely acknowledged within the work of the UN Millennium Project for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in liaison with poverty alleviation. However, efforts to link biodiversity to development are facing a number of obstacles, which include a lack of information at the international, regional and national levels, inability to mainstream effectively biodiversity within development strategies and processes, and for scaling-up good practices and lessons learned.

Biodiversity is crucial to the alleviation of poverty, due to the basic goods and ecosystem services it provides. It is integral to key development sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism, on which more than 1.3 billion people depend for their livelihoods. Although biodiversity does not contribute directly to all sectors of development, such as infrastructure or mining, sustainable development cannot be achieved if biodiversity is compromised by development efforts. Consequently, biodiversity mainstreaming into development strategies and programs is essential to poverty alleviation and development.

The Biodiversity for Development initiative was established by the Secretariat with the generous support of the French and the German Governments as a follow-up to the Conference on Biodiversity in

European Development Cooperation, held in Paris in September 2006 and to the Trondheim Conference on “Ecosystems and People – Biodiversity for Development – The Road to 2010 and Beyond”, held in Trondheim, Norway, in November 2007.

Important points raised during the meeting include:

- The need to develop indicators assessing the effectiveness of biodiversity-related projects.
- The need to use appropriate language. It was said that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provided a common language to the environment and development communities. Adapting this language to local governments, the private sector or different productive sectors is a precondition for success.
- Participants were pleased that strategic environmental assessment (SEA) was increasingly being used at the national level.
- There was not much demand for biodiversity mainstreaming. As such, it is believed that development practitioners could support the development of enabling conditions for this demand to gather momentum. Donors need to use a “how can we help you and what can I do help” approach.
- Development and environment communities need to change their attitudes accordingly.
- Need to for a renewed outlook on national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs).
- Processes such as the study on the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity (TEEB) are possible means to bridge the language divide often highlighted between the environmental and development communities.

Twelve key recommendations were made by participants in the discussion groups:

- Biodiversity is natural capital and should be recognized as such.
- Make the case at the local level: show local benefits, maximize convening powers of partners, build evidence, and involve local communities.
- Establish value of biodiversity to economic sectors and the cost of not investing in biodiversity management.
- Work with donor coordination mechanisms to ensure the environmental sector works upstream with other relevant sectors to integrate environmental objectives at multiple levels from the onset.
- Consider environmental fiscal reform.
- Recognize the need for champions to drive changes within institutions and enhance institutional capacity at the country level.
- Donors should promote a systematic and coherent use of strategic environmental assessment across sectors.
- Support the use of national biodiversity strategies and action plans for the recognition of the contribution of biodiversity to development.
- Donors should support a systems thinking and results approach that allows for the sharing of data across sectors and supports country level data and information systems.
- Promote synergies between biodiversity, climate change and desertification conventions and with the climate change agenda.

- Enhance communication strategies on biodiversity-related issues to provide relevant ministerial briefings.
- Develop user-friendly planning toolkit for development practitioners focusing on productive sectors.

Further information available at:

www.cbd.int/development/

www.cbd.int/development/emmbdc-01/presentations/