

General and Open-ended Questions on the Strategic Plan Submission for Canada

Canada would like to thank the Executive Secretary for the opportunity to comment on the CBD Strategic Plan update process. We look forward to working with the Executive Secretary and other Parties in revising the Strategic Plan for consideration at COP 10.

Canada has six main points we would like to emphasize as the CBD goes through the process of revising the Strategic Plan:

- Active engagement of all Parties is essential for a successful Strategic Plan revision.
- Broad qualitative targets and associated indicators to measure progress are the most effective approach at the global level. Prescriptive global targets and indicators are unlikely to be either acceptable or applicable at the national or sub-national levels.
- The overarching goal needs to be more inspiring. It could, for example, strengthen the focus on ensuring the health of biodiversity in the interest of human well-being, reducing the risks to human well-being from biodiversity loss, and conserving options for future generations.
- Mainstreaming biodiversity needs to receive a higher profile in a revised strategic plan. This means that the emphasis should shift to collaboration and partnerships, particularly with those outside the traditional biodiversity community.
- Communication needs to also have a higher profile in the strategic plan.
- Collaborative, targeted research and improved observations on the state of biodiversity should be emphasized.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses (including gaps and inconsistencies, if relevant) of the existing Strategic Plan?

Strengths

The 2010 target is short and easy to understand and begins to make the link with human well-being. This likely contributed to its widespread acceptance and its effectiveness in mobilizing interest and action on biodiversity.

The current plan focuses on process. This has also encouraged increased cooperation and collaboration on biodiversity issues within and between countries and has raised the profile of biodiversity internationally. It has also contributed to the process of mainstreaming biodiversity.

In Canada, the Strategic Plan has influenced the development of, and is consistent with, the federal/provincial/territorial Biodiversity Outcomes Framework by the Canadian Councils of Resource Ministers, the development of the Ecosystem Status and Trends Report, several sub-national biodiversity strategies, and improved cooperation and collaboration amongst resource departments of all levels of government -- all of which have moved the biodiversity agenda forward.

The broad sub-goals and indicators associated with measuring progress towards the 2010 target remain relevant and set the context for Parties to develop their own goals, targets and indicators that are meaningful in the national and sub-national context.

Weaknesses/gaps/inconsistencies

Although the target itself has been a successful agent of mobilizing action and activity the link to human-well being is generally lost. A new target needs to be short and linked to the broader concept of human well-being with a strengthened focus on maintenance of the full range of ecosystem services and the protection of human health, well-being and quality of life both now and to ensure options for future generations.

There is a weakness in the current plan in the area of partnerships. There is a need to expand collaboration and partnerships, with international institutions, sectors, disciplines and organizations that make the decisions that affect biodiversity and human well-being. To do this CBD has to encourage participation in the activities of other organizations that promote human well-being. Asking other sectors to participate in biodiversity activities is one approach, but a more powerful approach is to also engage with other exercises to ensure that biodiversity protection and enhancement is part of their strategic goals.

Although there is a link between the Strategic Plan, and the framework for measuring progress and the Programs of Work, the flow and connection between these documents, including the process-focussed goals of the Strategic Plan and the action-oriented sub-goals of the framework, is not explicit or clear. The Strategic Plan should provide the guidance for the implementation of the 3 objectives of the Convention and should clearly illustrate the flow and linkages from the strategic goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan to the more specific action plans and programs of work to monitoring, evaluation and reporting. They should form a hierarchy.

Since the Strategic Plan was adopted, there have been several assessments that help identify gaps that need to be considered. Canada agrees with the gaps identified as needing priority attention in Review of Goals 2 and 3 (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/4/Annex 2/1): mainstreaming biodiversity; incorporation of ecosystem approach; costs of biodiversity lost; engagement of indigenous and local communities; and inclusion of all relevant sectors and stakeholders. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) also helps identify gaps and provides a framework that needs to be considered.

Progress on the goals and objectives related to Article 8j (Goal 9) and Access and Benefit Sharing (Goal 10) has been challenging. There is a gap in terms of measurable objectives that are focused on conservation and on the use of traditional knowledge to achieve the conservation and sustainable use objectives of the Convention. More serious work has to be done in revising goal 9 and developing a small set of accompanying measurable indicators that build on the work of the Ad Hoc Expert Technical Working Group on 8j. Goal 10 and its accompanying indicators also need reconsideration so that they directly relate to the achievement of a regime for Access and Benefit Sharing and ratifying and implementing that regime.

2. What lessons have we learned from the implementation of the existing Strategic Plan at the local, sub-national, national, regional or global levels?

The Strategic Plan has provided a useful touchstone for the development of a number of national and sub-national planning frameworks in Canada. Although Canada's Biodiversity Strategy was developed before the Strategic Plan and the work of sub-national and national governments in implementing Canada's Biodiversity Strategy is not a direct result of the Strategic Plan, these efforts are consistent with the Strategic Plan. These implementation efforts include the creation of the Biodiversity Outcomes Framework, which is a federal/provincial/territorial framework for delivery of Canada's Biodiversity Strategy, and the preparation of several sub-national biodiversity strategies and action plans, or equivalent strategies and plans (i.e. Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories, Ontario, Quebec). One province, Quebec, is preparing its third Strategy and Action plan. Several local and regional governments, including cities, have either developed biodiversity strategies and action plans or are incorporating biodiversity objectives into other planning processes. The number of local and regional governments taking this approach in Canada is continuing to increase. The revised Strategic Plan needs to be a flexible framework that it provides broad direction but that can easily be adapted to circumstances at the national, sub-national and local levels.

It is clear that there is a reluctance in many jurisdictions, including in Canada, to set measureable, time-bound targets at the global level. Setting targets is more appropriate as the geographic scale shrinks (i.e. it is easier at a local scale than a national scale). Recognizing this, the Strategic Plan should provide broad goals and indicators that inspire and challenge jurisdictions within their specific contexts to develop action-oriented plans and targets where relevant.

Implementation of existing plans has reinforced the critical need for buy-in and involvement of sub-national and local governments, the resource-sector, indigenous people and communities. Despite progress, we have not been entirely successful at mainstreaming biodiversity and/or making the case for biodiversity outside of the traditional biodiversity-oriented community. The involvement and commitment of decision-makers outside the biodiversity-oriented community is critical and new, innovative approaches are required. In addition, capacity issues remain a huge barrier. Canada has had some success in engaging the business community and cities in biodiversity conservation. Decisions at COP9 around engagement of cities and the business community were steps in the right direction. The CBD needs to build on these decisions and ensure links between these decisions and the strategic plan.

Another obstacle to moving forward on implementation is the lack of a consistent, credible and regular observation and information systems to assess the state of biodiversity. Recent efforts such as Geo-BON and GBIF are steps in the right direction. Reliable observation is critical to recognizing early warning signals, reducing the risk to biodiversity, ensuring maintenance of what remains, and providing links among reduction of stressors on biodiversity, human well-being and healthy biodiversity.

A final obstacle relates to the need for more coordinated research that provides the links to human well-being and biodiversity at different scales, across disciplines and looking to the future. Coordinated research like this will aid in providing solutions, particularly to the restoration of biodiversity where it has been degraded and to providing solutions for the reduction of stresses on biodiversity, that are in harmony with human well-being. The importance of coordinated research efforts, carried out simultaneously in different locations around the globe, has been proven. International Polar Year provides an outstanding example but there are other examples.

Biodiversity planning, assessing and reporting have been focussed on species and more recently ecosystems. The genetic diversity component has received little, if any, attention. This is partly because of the perceived difficulty in monitoring. The CBD could do more to promote research on methods to assess status and trends at the genetic level.

3. What should be included in the revised and updated Strategic Plan?

The Strategic Plan should be an inspiring, relevant global framework to stimulate action across a wide range of institutions, organizations and elements of society. As such it needs to start with a broad, overarching goal or vision. This overarching goal should describe the desired future state and be framed in a positive way.

The overarching goal is captured to some extent in the current mission statement – but this needs to be expanded beyond protection of biodiversity in the interest of poverty alleviation. It should be a positive statement that seeks to ensure healthy global biodiversity as a prerequisite to improving the quality of life for all people now and future generations. The overarching goal should be broad, qualitative and flexible, leaving the door open for the development of either qualitative or quantitative targets at different and more meaningful geographic scales (i.e. national, sub-national, local).

The current plan describes the issue. This section should be included in the revised Strategic Plan, after the Overarching Goal. However, it needs to be rewritten taking into account advancements in knowledge and thinking since 2002. The links between biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services, the need for preventative action when biodiversity loss seems imminent, the importance of focussing on restoration where biodiversity loss has already occurred, and the difficulty in effectively assessing the state of biodiversity and clearly linking it to drivers are all part of the issue.

The world has changed since the first strategic plan. New developments such as the global economic crisis, the greater certainty and acceptance of climate change since the release of the Fourth Assessment Report of IPCC in 2007, and the “One, World, One Health” Initiative provide opportunities to reinforce the links between the economy, climate change, health and biodiversity. These developments also have the potential to exacerbate biodiversity loss if organizations charged with biodiversity conservation do not become engaged. New information from reports released since the current strategic plan was developed, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) Report should be drawn upon, as should highlights of issues raised in the Second and Third Global Biodiversity Outlooks and the biodiversity sections of the Global Environment Outlook.

The challenges should focus on a few priority areas, such as the importance and difficulty of mainstreaming biodiversity, communicating the meaning of biodiversity and the consequences of biodiversity loss to all aspects of human well-being, including health, economic stability, poverty reduction and personal and national security. Particularly important is the need to prioritize work on climate change and biodiversity.

The Strategic Plan should continue to include a section on achievements under the issues section. An accounting of achievements is critical to motivating further progress.

Strategic Goals and objectives are the heart of all Strategic Plans and they should continue to be part of this one. There are currently 4 strategic goals. These needs to be more inspiring, at a higher level and should ensure that the link with human well-being is clear – i.e. better linked

to achievement of the overarching goal. The strategic goals should provide a framework that links the wide ranging consequences of biodiversity loss with all aspects of human well-being, provides a better understanding of biodiversity loss, develops the means to mainstream biodiversity, and communicate its fundamental importance. They should also link directly to providing the framework to solve the issues identified in the 'Issues' section.

Some examples of the type of strategic goals needed are:

To improve human well-being now and for future generations through:

- a. Maintenance of the full range of ecosystem services provided by biodiversity,;
- b. Fair and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity;
- c. Restoration of biodiversity where it has been lost;
- d. Adaptations and mitigations to climate change that are sensitive to biodiversity impacts

Objectives should be aligned with each of the strategic goals, as is the case now. The revised objectives should be guideposts to diminishing risk and minimizing the impact of global biodiversity loss. They should inspire countries and organizations to work together and to invoke successful interventions at the national level. The objectives should lead to building robust and well-governed public systems that ensure the protection of biodiversity, preventing crises, promoting collaboration, providing a new focus on restoration of lost biodiversity including research that addresses restoration techniques that are practical and viable at local scales.

The revised Strategic Plan should shift its focus from process to implementation and results. The strategic objectives, following under the strategic goals, should be clear, measurable and meaningful, action oriented, directly linked back to the 3 objectives of the Convention.

Currently there is an appendix that lists obstacles to implementation of the convention. These are the same as challenges which appear in the issues section. As they are a long shopping list of obstacles we think it would be better to incorporate them into the challenges and shorten them. Many can be collapsed into the challenges already described above, such as mainstreaming and advancing knowledge.

The revised Strategic Plan should include the importance of better integration with the objectives of other international efforts such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, that should have mutually supportive activities. This is particularly important in the area of climate change, where the effects of decisions around mitigation and adaptation need to consider the consequences to biodiversity.

Some effective Strategic Plans include a section entitled "Guiding Principles". The CBD has many lists of guiding principles under various decisions, including principles related to invasive alien species (Dec VI/23), the incorporation of indigenous and local knowledge (Dec VII/16), the use of the ecosystem approach (Dec VII/11), sustainable use (Dec VII/12), access and benefit sharing (VI/24), Impact Assessment (Dec. VIII/28) and Incentive Measures (VI/15). A synthesis and shortened version of these principles could replace the obstacles annex. These principles guide implementation of the Convention and giving them a more visible profile in the Strategic Plan could guide implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan by a wider range of players.

4. What are the key issues that need to be addressed in the Strategic Plan?

- Active engagement of all Parties is essential for a successful Strategic Plan revision. Adequate time for meaningful discussions on proposed revisions prior to and at the Third Working Group on Review of Implementation (WGRI III) of the Convention will help achieve this;
- Broad qualitative targets and associated indicators to measure progress are the most effective approach. These should help guide Parties to create their own, realistic, qualitative or quantitative targets and indicators. At the international level qualitative targets and indicators are more effective. Prescriptive targets and indicators are more effective at national, sub-national or local scales.
- The overarching goals should be to promote the health of biodiversity in the interest of human well-being, to reduce the risks to human well-being from biodiversity loss, and to ensure options for future generations are maintained. Healthy biodiversity promotes human well-being through public health (including disease reduction), economic stability, and personal and national security. The connection already made between poverty reduction and biodiversity is on the right track, but the revised Strategic Plan needs to make the connection broader, to include all aspects of human well-being, including but not limited to poverty reduction;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity needs to receive a higher profile in a revised strategic plan. This means that the emphasis should shift to collaboration and partnerships, with international institutions, sectors, disciplines and organizations. To do this CBD has to participate in the activities of other organizations. Inviting other sectors to participate in biodiversity activities is one approach, but a more powerful approach would be to reach out and offer to help articulate the biodiversity component of other exercises, particularly those focussed on human well-being.
- Communication needs to also have a higher profile in the strategic plan. This means communicating the meaning of biodiversity and the importance of biodiversity to human well-being, the shared responsibility for biodiversity protection, the wide ranging impacts of biodiversity loss and the necessity of incorporating biodiversity considerations into the goals and objectives of all organizations interested in human well-being, be they health-based, economic-based or biologically based.
- Promotion of targeted research and improved observations on the state of biodiversity is necessary to ensure the reduction of risk to biodiversity, provide options for the maintenance of current biodiversity in harmony with human well-being, and provide effective solutions to restoration of past damage.
- Strong emphasis on the importance of biodiversity in climate change responses, particularly in the areas of impacts, adaptation and vulnerability.

5. What should the COP aim to achieve in the short term (e.g. by 2020) and in the long term (e.g. 2050)?

COP should aim to inspire players outside of the traditional biodiversity community to be engaged in biodiversity conservation. Halting biodiversity loss is not inspiring in itself. What inspires is the understanding that biodiversity conservation is in the interest of human well-being and an improved quality of life. The linkages to human well-being are a powerful means to advance the overall objectives of the convention.

In the short term COP should aim to turn the paradigm around, so that all those concerned with deteriorating quality of life understand that the protection and rehabilitation of biodiversity is an essential piece of the puzzle to maintain a high quality of life for those who are faring well, to improve quality of life for those who are suffering, and to ensure a good quality of life for future generations. The short term goal would be to have biodiversity concerns interwoven into all decision-making processes at the global level.

The long term goal would be to have biodiversity concerns interwoven into all decision-making processes at national and sub-national levels. In the long term COP should aim to achieve healthy ecosystems, a diversity of species and genetic variability to ensure a high quality of life for everyone.

6. What are the main considerations that need to be taken into account in developing the post-2010 biodiversity target? What type of evidence-base is required and how can we get that information?

A primary consideration in developing the post-2010 target is the results of all assessments since the current Strategic Plan was written, including: the MA; the TEEB report, IPPC Fourth Assessment Report, review of Goals 1-4; assessment of Programs of Work; in-depth review of VIII/15 sub-goals and targets; Global Biodiversity Outlook 2 and 3; all National Reports; Global Environmental Outlook; regional assessments (e.g. Arctic Climate Impact Assessment).

The evidence-base for biodiversity loss is stronger at a regional and local level than it is at the national or global level. This is primarily because of a lack of standardized observation and information systems. Efforts such as Geo-BON and GBIF are just beginning to show results. More work needs to be done in support of better observation and improved links between the maintenance of healthy biodiversity and all other aspects of human well-being (e.g. health and the economy) at both the global and local level. The evolving Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services is a potential means of improving the evidence-base for biodiversity.

It is also important to look at what has changed in the world since the 2010 Target was set and what is relevant to current and projected future world realities. This includes consideration of what issues are dominant, what is imminent, what are the obstacles and opportunities. For example, the current global financial crisis is already providing an opportunity to rethink basic economic assumptions and insert the principles of sustainability. Since the release of the IPPC Fourth Assessment Report climate change has become more widely accepted. Finally, the One World, One Health Initiative is resulting in policies that link infectious diseases with the animal/human/ecosystem interface.

The other five biodiversity related conventions (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR), World Heritage Convention (WHC)) can be important partners in contributing to the goals of the Strategic Plan, and also in providing components of the evidence base needed to support the strategic plan and any post 2010 biodiversity targets.

Finally the Bar Code of Life Initiative offers a unique opportunity to enhance the evidenced base on which the CBD depends.

7. In what ways can we increase the impact of the revised and updated Strategic Plan on resource mobilisation and capacity-development for implementation of the Convention?

To increase resources and capacity, biodiversity conservation must be made relevant and meaningful to the current issues and challenges facing the Parties. This means, to a large degree, focusing on the business case for biodiversity, the services it provides, links to biodiversity and human health and the interconnectedness of biodiversity with the economy. Helping Parties understand the importance of action on biodiversity to their economic prosperity and well-being of their citizens should support resource mobilisation and capacity building.

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8. How can the revised and updated Strategic Plan be made relevant to all biodiversity-related conventions/agreements and to the full range of stakeholders of society and the economy including those that have a significant impact on, benefit from, or use biodiversity and its related ecosystem services?

To make the Plan relevant to the full range of stakeholders, it needs to be accessible, easy to understand, clearly linked to economic prosperity, long term sustainability, human health and well-being, and poverty reduction. It also needs to be action focused, clear on priorities and provide tools for implementation. Some things to consider in order to achieve this are:

- consider the framework used in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, particularly its focus on ecosystem services, as a way of incorporating the environmental dimension into sustainable development policy and planning
- incorporate elements of the strategic plans of the biodiversity-related conventions where relevant as well as elements of the strategic plans of health and economic organizations
- put priority on building the business case for biodiversity
- move beyond process to action, making it inspiring, outcome oriented, and achievable
- develop opportunities to involve those outside of the traditional biodiversity community, including business leaders, health promotion organizations, resource sectors and local governments in the discussion
- minimize the number and length of planning documents and frameworks by bringing together and simplifying the Strategic Plan, framework, targets and indicators.
- focus on communications , particularly targeted outside the biodiversity community
- promote the clearinghouse mechanism and make it more accessible
- develop specific case studies for specific sectors that demonstrate the importance of biodiversity to all aspects of human well-being.

Valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, such as that being provided in the TEEB report, is urgently needed to permit the integration of biodiversity in the economy and the mainstreaming in sector activities. The specific evaluations already done need to be made more available. "How to" kits are necessary for local implementation of these data in decision making.

The potential synergies between the CBD and the objectives of other conventions should be made clearer and the revised Strategic Plan could include mechanisms/objectives to make this happen. For example, the CBD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change can contribute to meeting each others' objectives.

9. How can the revised and updated Strategic Plan provide an effective framework for the establishment of national targets and promote effective national action, including through the national biodiversity strategies and action plans and other national regional strategies, plans and programmes relevant to biodiversity?

The Strategic Plan needs to provide broad qualitative targets that challenge national and sub-national institutions to develop realistic targets relevant to the scale and specific context. The framework needs to be positive, inspiring and create an enabling framework that encourages collaboration and action.

10. How should progress in implementing the updated and revised Strategic Plan be assessed?

Progress should be assessed at different scales. Indicators at the global level that link directly with the strategic goals and objectives of the Plan should measure progress at the global level. National and sub-national reporting should be linked to national and sub-national plans. The basic goals and objectives might be similar but measuring progress must be flexible and relevant to national and sub-national circumstances.

Regular reporting by the Executive Secretary to COP on progress towards implementation should be mandated. Parties should agree on the reporting interval (e.g. every 5 years). Strategic Plans need to be living documents and should be reviewed and revised at regular intervals as well (e.g. every 10 years).

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