

Enhancing cooperation and synergies among the biodiversity related conventions: The Options¹

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Introduction

Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use has captured the attention of the international community since several decades ago. In recognition of the urgent need for action in support of biodiversity, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Each of the biodiversity-related conventions, working in isolation in the past, have put in place actions at the national, regional and international level in order to reach shared goals of conservation and sustainable use. However, as the number of obligations under such legal instruments has grown, so have concerns about how to implement them effectively and coherently, and that there might be duplication of efforts. As a result, significant efforts have already been made to improve integration among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, and this work continues.

To address this challenging scenario the governing bodies of United Nations and UN Environment made a call to explore opportunities to build synergies, in order to achieve more coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. The options for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions (focusing on the global level) presented in this paper, respond to this call.

Through a consultative process, UN Environment produced a set of options paper for enhancing cooperation and synergies among key biodiversity related conventions. The seven international conventions consulted in preparation of this outcome document were: the Convention on Biological Diversity (year of entry into force: 1993), the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1975), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2004), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971), the World Heritage Convention (1972) and the International Plant Protection Convention (1952).

The options paper identifies a set of seven linked thematic areas supported by 28 options (see list below) under which 88 actions have been identified for various actors, including governments, convention secretariats, UN Environment and other relevant UN bodies. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors.

¹ This paper has been prepared using extracts from the UNEP Options Paper on Enhancing Synergies and Cooperation amongst the Biodiversity related Conventions published in 2016- UNEP 2016 Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. 2016, UNEP, Nairobi.

The options presented are proposed to achieve two main outcomes:

a) **Implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions** carried out in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation amongst convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions;

b) **Increased collaboration and cooperation in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions** at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors, and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals).

The Thematic Areas

1 NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

NBSAPs preparation is a process by which countries can plan to address the main threats to their biodiversity and actions to achieve the objectives of the CBD. They are a requirement of Article 6 (a) of the CBD and are considered as the principal means for the implementation of the Convention both at the national and at the global level. They are increasingly relevant to other biodiversity-related instruments as well as other national sectors which contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets.

The following options have been identified to strengthen the NBSAPs.

Options:

- 1.1 Taking into account already existing materials, prepare streamlined and simple guidance and tools for facilitating the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs across the conventions.
- 1.2 Support the integration of NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, UNDAF and sustainable development instruments at all levels.
- 1.3 Support parties in accessing timely GEF-funding for the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs, through promotion of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in a coordinated manner among their respective national authorities.
- 1.4 Support experience exchange on the development and implementation of NBSAPs and voluntary 'peer review' of NBSAPs, including through the NBSAP Forum, with a particular focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.
- 1.5 Explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, by focusing efforts on collaboration between national focal points and authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of NBSAPs in different countries.
- 1.6 Elaborate on the role of each convention and UN body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

2 Reporting, monitoring and indicators

National Reports are the official documents by which countries report to the decision-making bodies of the MEAs on the measures they have undertaken to implement the priorities of the Conventions. National Reports provide an official record of national implementation of each Convention over time and collectively they draw the picture of the overall implementation of the instrument. The National Reporting process is essential for the effective functioning of the instruments, and when properly carried out, can provide substantial benefits both to the instrument and to the country concerned. The reporting process helps countries to assess implementation and to plan with other countries. The following options have been identified to strengthen the reporting and monitoring process considering the specifics of enhancing synergies and cooperation among the biodiversity conventions.

Options:

- 2.1 Building on existing work, and recognising the existing reporting obligations under each of the conventions, explore the possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and develop and test such an approach based on addressing the identified benefits.
- 2.2 Further enhance coherence in reporting through supporting indicator development and monitoring, building on existing work, including that of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP).
- 2.3 Further develop online reporting and information management systems and continue working to ensure their interoperability.
- 2.4 Continue support to reporting processes through joint (regional) capacity building activities.
- 2.5 Increase reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions.

3 IPBES and strengthening the Science-Policy Interface

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is mandated to assess the state of biodiversity and of the ecosystem services it provides to society, in response to requests from decision makers. One thousand scientists from all over the world currently contribute to the work of IPBES on a voluntary basis. Therefore, it was recommended during the consultations as an important option to build synergies among the biodiversity cluster. IPBES can be used as an effective platform to support synergies and mainstreaming issues among the biodiversity conventions. The following options are set to support this process.

Options:

- 3.1 Conventions should continue a close dialogue with IPBES on the timely communication of key findings coherently across the governing bodies and scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.

- 3.2 Conventions should consider and identify common issues for closer cooperation in developing and making future requests of IPBES, so that priorities requested address areas of common interest.
- 3.3 Strengthen efforts to ensure that the governing and subsidiary bodies of conventions and convention secretariats interact with IPBES in a coherent and timely manner.

4 Information management and awareness raising

The fourth theme combines biodiversity information management and awareness raising. It envisages to use more effectively documentation and dissemination of biodiversity information and to promote awareness and appreciation of the diverse values of biodiversity, underpin the willingness of individuals to make the necessary changes and actions and to create the “political will” for governments to act. Implementing this option will greatly facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the fulfillment of the Aichi Biodiversity Target 1 and the other 19 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly Target 2. The options identified under this theme include,

Options:

- 4.1 Develop shared approaches to use more effectively global information management tools.
- 4.2 Deliver joint information and awareness campaigns, including in the context of the UN Decade of Biodiversity.

5 Capacity building

The importance of capacity building to attain sustainable development goals has been widely recognized by the international community. In particular great deal of attention has been drawn to the specific capacity building needs in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Options suggested here can enhance effective deliver of coordinated actions related to implementation of several MEAs.

Options:

- 5.1 Strengthen the support provided by UN Environment and regional offices for implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for sustaining the functions of the MEA focal points.
- 5.2 Identify immediate opportunities for collaboration on capacity development activities and develop harmonised and possible common approaches.
- 5.3 Promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

6 Funding and resource efficiency

Lack of sufficient funding has been a major impediment to implement the conventions, especially at the national level. Several options are proposed to increase funding opportunities as well as appropriate use of available funding. The options include,

Options:

- 6.1 Convention secretariats to collaborate on new initiatives for obtaining additional financial resources.
- 6.2 Pursue a coordinated approach to accessing GEF and Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding among the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 6.3 Encourage donors, particularly those concerned with development assistance, to contribute to the creation of enhanced opportunities for, and to incentivise, coordination and synergies.
- 6.4 Share information on work to support parties on resource mobilisation, including in relation to innovative financial mechanisms that promote cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 6.5 Review and share past and ongoing experiences on MEA synergies and on wider mainstreaming efforts to identify means to increase the cost-effectiveness of synergistic action on biodiversity.

7 Institutional Collaboration

Finally, it was recommended that institutional collaboration is key in supporting the implementation of the of biodiversity conventions. This is critically important at the national level. Options in support include,

Options:

- 7.1 Focus and enhance the work of UN Environment in supporting the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels, including, where appropriate, by promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in their implementation, in those areas that fall within its mandate, through its various programmes, initiatives and policies.
- 7.2 Strengthen the Biodiversity Liasion Group as a mechanism for promoting collaboration and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions within its mandate.
- 7.3 Encourage mutually supportive decisions and possible common decisions across the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions for achieving coherence at all levels, including further developing and strengthening joint work programmes and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).
- 7.4 Develop mechanisms to share expertise across the biodiversity-related conventions in order to seek and identify common issues to address, and actions to undertake, at programmatic

and political level to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in a coordinated manner.

Conclusions

During the consultations and discussions to promote synergies among the key biodiversity related conventions at global, regional and national levels the following key messages have emerged.

1. Mainstreaming biodiversity and synergies are two side of the same coin.
2. One cannot achieve mainstreaming without ensuring synergies and enhancing cooperation among the conventions is incumbent on achieving mainstreaming
3. Key challenge for achieving mainstreaming and synergies is lack of capacities at national level and limitations to dealing with mandates of the conventions to look beyond their objectives.

UN Environment has now embarked on an initiative to help countries achieve synergies and mainstreaming at national level through pilots in about 8 countries across three regions. The results of the activities will be presented during CBD COP 13 meeting in Cancun, Mexico (December 2016).