

CONVENTION ON WETLANDS (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
51st Meeting of the Standing Committee
Gland, Switzerland, 23-27 November 2015

SC51 INF.DOC.04

UNEP Paper: “Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-Related Conventions”

Action requested:

The Standing Committee is invited to note the final draft of the paper, and the link to the UNEP Source book of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Conventions.

1. On 21 October, UNEP shared a final draft of its paper “Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-Related Conventions”. The paper and the covering letter are attached.
2. The covering letter also shared a link to the UNEP Source book of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity related Conventions at national and regional levels. The Source book can be downloaded at:
<http://www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/Portals/7/Documents/cooperation-sourcebook-biodiversity-conventions.pdf> .



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement

Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente

Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

联合国环境规划署



Ref: DELC/2015/JH/nk

16 October 2015

Dear Mr. Briggs,

It is with great pleasure to share with you and through you, with Ramsar Convention Contracting Parties attending the 51st Meeting of the Standing Committee the final draft of the paper "Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-Related Conventions". I would also like to share with you the UNEP Source book of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the bio-diversity related conventions at national and regional levels that can be found at the following link:

<http://www.unep.org/delc/Portals/119/publications/cooperation-sourcebookbiodiversity-conventions.pdf>

The Options paper is aimed at serving as further input to the follow-up process according to Decision SS.XII/3 of the Twelfth Special Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme as well as the process established by the decision XII/6 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

I wish you success in the deliberations for implementation of the new Strategic Plan 2016-2024 and the resolutions adopted by the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in Punta del Este.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema

Director

Division of Environmental Law and Conventions

Mr. Christopher Briggs
Secretary General
Ramsar Convention Secretariat
Gland, Switzerland
briggs@ramsar.org

Enclosure: Options paper

Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELC)

P.O. Box 30552 - 00100, Nairobi, Kenya • Tel: (254 20) 762 4011 – Fax: (254 20) 762 4300/3926 – Email: delc@unep.org

www.unep.org

NOTE: This paper "Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-related Conventions" only serves as an output of the process to date, and will serve as an input for further follow up process according to Decision SS.XII/3 of the Twelfth Special Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme.

***Elaboration of options for
enhancing synergies among
biodiversity-related
conventions***

Table of Contents

List of acronyms and abbreviations	3
Executive Summary	4
Co-chairs' perspective on meeting outcomes.....	7
Background	11
Options for further enhancing collaboration and cooperation	15
1 NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets	18
2 Reporting, monitoring and indicators.....	23
3 IPBES and strengthening the science-policy interface	28
4 Information management and awareness raising.....	30
5 Capacity building.....	33
6 Funding and resource efficiency.....	36
7 Institutional collaboration	40

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
BIP	Biodiversity Indicators Partnership
BLG	Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions
BSP	Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building
CBD	The Convention on Biological Diversity
CHM	Clearing House Mechanism
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSAB	Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions
EMG	United Nations Environment Management Group
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPPC	International Plant Protection Convention
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JIU	United Nations Joint Inspection Unit
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MEA IKM	Multilateral Environmental Agreement Information and Knowledge Management Initiative
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
MOUs	Memoranda of Understanding
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHC	Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Executive Summary

Over the past decades, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). These efforts have put in place a comprehensive governance regime addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. 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 alignment among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, and this work continues.

The options for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions (focusing on the global level) presented in this paper, respond to calls by the governing bodies of conventions, the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to explore opportunities for synergies, in order to achieve more coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. This paper is one of several outputs being delivered by the UNEP project *Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies*.

Development of the paper began with online surveys, sent by UNEP to national focal points, authorities and convention secretariats in early 2014, which helped to inform the elements of a first draft document, which was discussed at a first expert meeting in August 2014. Based on the inputs received during this meeting, a first draft of the paper was completed in late 2014, and consequently sent out for review to key stakeholders, including the convention secretariats. Following the review period, a revised version was finalised, providing input to a second expert meeting in May 2015, which further refined and elaborated the options, as presented in this paper.

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

The options 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).

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

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

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

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

Options:

- 5.1 Strengthen the support provided by UNEP 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

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

Options:

- 7.1 Focus and enhance the work of UNEP 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 BLG 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.

Recognising that enhancing synergies across conventions requires a party-driven process, this paper can be used by parties to the relevant conventions to promote enhancing collaboration and cooperation. The paper will also provide draft elements for the UNEP Executive Director's report to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) in May 2016 on MEA synergies. Moreover, it will support the party-led process established through the Convention on Biological Diversity Decision XII/6 on enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Co-chairs' perspective on meeting outcomes

Over the past decades a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have been adopted, which have put into place a comprehensive legal and governance regime for addressing most biodiversity issues. However, when considered together, they can be challenging to implement in a coherent manner. As a result, there have been calls by governing bodies of conventions, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to explore possible synergies between such MEAs, with the specific aim of making their implementation more coherent, efficient and effective.

This 'Options Paper' has been prepared through a UNEP project on *Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies*, the aim and mandate of which are described in detail in the introductory part of this paper. This project was funded by the European Union, with additional support from the Governments of Finland and Switzerland.

The Options Paper is the outcome of two expert meetings convened by UNEP as part of the project. These expert meetings on *elaboration of options for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related MEAs* were both held in Switzerland, the first in Interlaken on 26-28 August 2014, and the second in Bogis-Bossey on 13-15 May 2015.

Discussion at the expert meetings demonstrated that there are many relevant activities already completed or underway, involving convention secretariats, governing and advisory bodies of the conventions, United Nations bodies and other stakeholders, such as intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. These include achievements, mandates, opportunities and activities that can be readily built upon, and it was recognised that these must be considered carefully, and wherever possible appropriately used as a basis for possible further action. It was also highlighted that it would be important to identify options that will lead to clearly identified benefits and substantive goals.

The Options Paper sets out 28 recommended options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, under which 88 action points in total have been identified for various actors which include: parties; UNEP and other relevant UN bodies; convention secretariats; and others. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors. The focus of the Options Paper is on programmatic cooperation, for which National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a fundamental basis.

In addition to the specific options, the co-chairs identify **five overarching considerations** which came out through the process:

- a) **the benefits to be gained by implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a synergistic and coherent manner**, so as to increase their national implementation, efficiency and effectiveness;
- b) **the importance of acknowledging and building on the past, existing and planned activities of biodiversity-related conventions** and others to identify and address opportunities to build synergies and increase coherence in implementation of the conventions;

- c) **the value of engaging with the activities of UNEP (and other relevant entities) to identify and address opportunities to further build synergies and increase coherence in implementation of the conventions;**
- d) **the potential opportunities for further promoting synergies among the biodiversity related conventions in the context of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including global Sustainable Development Goals and their targets; and**
- e) **the need for all actors, including governments, United Nations bodies, conventions and their secretariats, and other stakeholders, to continue to promote and undertake mutually supportive efforts and approaches aimed at enhancing coordinated and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, building on existing activities and experience.**

With regard to UNEP's role, the expert discussions indicated that there is a clear need to **focus and enhance the work of UNEP 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.** This work should both acknowledge and build on past, existing and planned initiatives, within and outside UNEP.

A summary of the workshop discussions and the Options Paper has been prepared for the UNEP Executive Director which, whilst recommending action relevant to a range of actors and processes, focuses on how UNEP can more effectively support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including in the context of a 'One UN approach'. The summary clusters UNEP-specific options and action points, identifying new opportunities for synergies, including, but not restricted to, the following actions emerging from the expert discussions:

- a) **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets as a framework for action: Ensure the effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets into the Medium-Term Strategy and future work programming of UNEP, recognising that these are not only key to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, but that they provide a framework with which biodiversity-related conventions and UN bodies have already aligned themselves, and within which synergies in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions can be addressed in a systematic and integrated way.**
- b) **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans: Communicate at all levels the importance of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans as high-level policy instruments for delivering coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant sectors, through all appropriate national planning processes, building upon what has already been done by the biodiversity-related conventions and others, and the opportunity that this brings to leverage resources.**
- c) **Support at the regional level: Strengthen the support provided by UNEP's regional biodiversity MEAs focal points for the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for this. Working in collaboration with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and relevant regional and other organisations, UNEP could develop a coherent framework for the work of their regional**

focal points. This framework could guide UNEP's regional-level support to the development and implementation of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, more synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and link it to the work of UNEP with United Nations country teams to contribute to United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs).

- d) Resource efficiency and mobilisation: Encourage the creation of enhanced opportunities for coordination and synergies, and share information on work to support parties on resource mobilisation that promotes cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions. This could involve supporting parties in prioritising coherent implementation of MEAs in national plans on which donors base their funding priorities (such as UNDAFs), pursuing a coordinated approach to accessing funding from Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund among the biodiversity-related conventions, and promoting the benefits of MEA synergies to the GEF and donors, including by sharing experiences on how this can increase the cost-effectiveness of action on biodiversity.
- e) Capacity building: As Chair of the Environment Management Group of the United Nations, and in accordance with Rio+20 *The Future We Want* which empowered UNEP to lead efforts to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment, promote possible ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. These should build on the previous work of the Environment Management Group Issue Management Group on Biodiversity, and take into account the current follow-up work of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force, the capacity building work being done under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the *Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building*. Working with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, as well as through collaborative mechanisms, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force, explore the development of a coherent capacity building framework to help achieve this. In addition, working with the members of the United Nations Development Group, support the increased integration of biodiversity considerations into UNDAF process to more effectively address the Aichi Biodiversity Targets as a coherent framework for action on biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- f) Coherent approaches and practical tools for information and knowledge management: Working with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, continue with and further enhance UNEP's contribution to interoperable data, information, knowledge and tools which support coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including tools to support reporting. Continue working with key stakeholders including convention secretariats and parties, on further development and improved delivery of tools such as *UNEP Live*, online reporting tools, *InforMEA*, mapping the contributions of the biodiversity-related conventions, UN bodies, and other relevant organisations, to implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the *UNEP Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional Levels*.

It is expected that the Options Paper, as well as the background material produced for the two expert meetings, will be useful for discussion and possible further action in a number of fora. This includes, *inter alia*, the United Nations Environment Assembly, the governing and advisory bodies of each biodiversity-related convention, the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-

related Conventions and the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions. The Options Paper will also be one of several inputs to the informal advisory group of the party-led process initiated by the Convention on Biological Diversity under Decision XII/6 concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. However, it should be noted that while some of the options presented in the Options Paper could already be taken up by UNEP, Parties, convention secretariats and other stakeholders, some other options will rely on the political will of parties to introduce such ideas during meetings of the conventions' governing bodies. Thus, country and party ownership of the synergies process are key elements for a successful outcome.

The discussions during this process demonstrated that there is both genuine interest and significant experience that can be applied to improving the effectiveness of, and cooperation among, the biodiversity related conventions. As the co-chairs of the two expert meetings, we would like to thank all of the participants who have contributed to the development of this paper. Without the dedicated input by the various experts the production of this Options Paper would have not been possible.

Background

Over the past decades, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). These efforts have put in place a comprehensive governance regime addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, as the number of obligations under such legal instruments has grown, so have concerns about how to implement them effectively and coherently, and concerns have also been raised that there might be duplication of efforts. As a result, significant efforts have already been made to improve alignment among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, and this work continues. As a result, there have been calls by the governing bodies of conventions, the UN, as well as the UNEP Governing Council in 2012 to explore possible cooperation, coordination and synergies between such conventions, with the specific aim of making their implementation more coherent, efficient and effective.

In February 2012, the UNEP Governing Council, in paragraph 1 of Decision SS.XII/3 on International Environmental Governance¹, recognised 'the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognising their respective mandates, and encourages the conferences of the parties to those conventions to strengthen efforts further in that regard, taking into account relevant experiences'. In paragraphs 2 and 3 of the same decision, the Executive Director was requested to undertake 'as appropriate, further activities to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements, taking into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conferences of the parties', and 'explore the opportunities for further synergies in the administrative functions of the multilateral environmental agreement secretariats administered by the United Nations Environment Programme and to provide advice on such opportunities to the governing bodies of those multilateral environmental agreements'.

In taking this decision, the UNEP Governing Council considered how the efficiency and effectiveness of International Environmental Governance might be increased, in particular through reducing fragmentation and the potential for duplication – issues of concern raised in the first and second reports of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on review of environmental governance within the United Nations System,² improving efficiency and enhancing coordination and cooperation among MEAs was subsequently also called for in paragraph 89 of the outcome document from Rio+20 *The Future We Want*. In that paragraph, heads of State and other high level officials recognised 'the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the multilateral environmental agreements' and encouraged 'parties to multilateral environmental agreements to consider further measures... as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication and enhance coordination and cooperation among MEAs, including the three Rio Conventions, as well as with the United Nations system in the field'.³

1 United Nations, Proceedings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its twelfth special session, Decision SS.XII/3, <http://www.unep.org/gc/gcss-xii/docs/Proceedings/K1280542%20-%20G-CSS-XII-14.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2015].

2 JIU/REP/2008/3 on *Management Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations System*; JIU/REP/2014/4 on *Post-Rio+20 Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations System*.

3 United Nations, *The Future We Want*, Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, A/CONF.216/L.1, paragraph 89, <http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html> [accessed 10 August 2015].

The interim results of a recent study undertaken by UNEP-WCMC that reviewed the decisions and resolutions of six biodiversity-related conventions, found that 849 paragraphs or subparagraphs in nearly 200 of the 1,200 decisions/resolutions that were reviewed⁴ based on the study's methodology provide guidance applicable for the implementation of various aspects of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, many covering closely-related topics. These results build on earlier mapping efforts (e.g. by EMG and individual conventions) in indicating possible areas for reviewing and further exploring opportunities for cooperation and collaboration among biodiversity-related conventions, including a potential need for consolidating guidance to support those attempting to conduct coherent approaches to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The options for further enhancing synergies presented in this paper have been developed through a UNEP project *Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies*, that aims to address the above mandate from the UNEP Governing Council, and help inform decisions on related issues by the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.⁵ This project explored options for further synergies at all levels between six biodiversity-related conventions, with a view to achieving improvements in efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced collaboration⁶ and cooperation⁷. It looked into the potential for synergies in the widest sense, and included consideration of all activities that aim to enhance cooperation and collaboration, with respect to strengthening implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.⁸ The work was supported by the European Union and by the Governments of Switzerland and Finland.

In addressing this mandate, UNEP carried out online surveys of national focal points and authorities of six biodiversity-related conventions (and their secretariats) considered by the project. The results of this survey informed two expert meetings convened to elaborate options for identifying potential ways of enhancing synergies in implementation of the conventions. The meetings focused on options at the global level, however, in some cases options and/or actions for the regional or national level were also identified.

The first expert meeting was held in Interlaken, Switzerland from 26 to 28 August 2014, and based on the outcome of this meeting, an initial set of options was prepared. This outcome was refined with written comments from participants, and circulated for wider peer-review by UNEP Member States as well as national focal points and authorities for the conventions, through notifications sent out by convention secretariats. The second expert meeting, held in Bogis-Bossey from 13 to 15 May 2015, refined the Options Paper. The paper, and a summary for consideration by the UNEP Executive Director, were finalised following further review and submission of written comments by workshop participants that refined the options suggested at the expert meetings. Participants at the expert meetings included representatives of

4 The majority of the decisions/resolutions reviewed were from the World Heritage Convention. It should be noted that the circa 200 decisions/resolutions noted are from all of the biodiversity-related conventions and that the convention(s) that was/were found to provide the majority of guidance (based on the study's methodology) varies between Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

5 This project has run in parallel to the work of, and seeks to complement, the UNEP MEAs Task Team which is exploring the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements for which UNEP serves as secretariat or performs secretariat functions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, including the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, as well as a number of regional agreements).

6 Defined, for this project as 'working together to produce a shared discrete output'.

7 Defined, for this project as 'working together towards a common aim or objective'.

8 Whilst the options presented focus on the biodiversity-related conventions, the applicability of the options to other MEAs should also be considered.

convention secretariats, national focal points and authorities and experts identified by UNEP meeting in their personal capacity, and the discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule⁹, facilitated by two co-chairs¹⁰.

This paper and the summary will inform draft elements of recommendations by the UNEP Executive Director to the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in May 2016 in response to the UNEP Governing Council Decision SS.XII/3 referred to above. The Options Paper contains 28 recommended options for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions under which 88 action points in total have been identified for various actors which include; parties, UNEP and other relevant UN bodies, convention secretariats and others. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, and existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors. The summary for the UNEP Executive Director captures the essentials of the discussions, presents overarching considerations for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and lists UNEP-specific options and action points clustered in a policy relevant manner. Whilst recommending action relevant to a range of actors and processes, the summary focuses in particular on the role of UNEP and how it can more effectively support the coherent implementation¹¹ of the biodiversity-related conventions, including in the context of a 'One UN approach' to support action at all levels.

In addition, this Options Paper, as well as background material produced for the expert meetings, can also be used by parties to the relevant conventions to inform discussions at meetings of governing bodies. This recognises that progress on enhancing coordination¹², cooperation and collaboration across the biodiversity-related conventions will require a **party-driven process** consistent with paragraph 89 of the outcome document from Rio+20 and mutually supportive decisions across the COPs. A number of fora will provide opportunities for further discussion and action including, *inter alia*, UNEA, governing and advisory bodies of each of the biodiversity-related conventions, the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG)¹³ and the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB). The paper will also be one of several inputs to the informal advisory group of the party-led process initiated by CBD Decision XII/6 that will prepare options for parties of the various biodiversity-related conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them, thereby supporting implementation of paragraph 89 of *The Future We Want*, which, as cited above, called on parties to the various MEAs to enhance coordination and cooperation among the MEAs.

Concurrent with the work that has led to the Options Paper, UNEP has also been compiling guidance, experience and lessons learned at the national level with respect to coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, working closely with convention secretariats and national focal points and authorities. This resulted in a publication launched at the COP to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands held in June 2015 at Punta del Este, Uruguay entitled *UNEP Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels*.

⁹ When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed, thus enabling the experts to speak and air their views freely.

¹⁰ The co-chairs were identified prior to the meeting by the UNEP project team.

¹¹ Defined, for this project as 'implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a consistent manner as a whole'.

¹² Defined, for this project as 'the organisation of the different elements of a complex body or activity so as to enable them to work together effectively and without duplication (within an organisation or among organisations/different actors)'.

¹³ Consisting of the heads of the convention secretariats of CBD, CITES, CMS, ITPGRFA, Ramsar Convention, WHC and IPPC.

The promotion of enhanced synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, although not expressly mentioned, is relevant in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper was written however before the final outcome of this process.

Options for further enhancing collaboration and cooperation

Options for further enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions are presented in this paper. These options are proposed to achieve two main outcomes, namely:

- 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).**

It has not been within the scope of this project to develop indicators for the options presented to help measure progress on their implementation towards achieving the outcomes above, nor to assess the resource implications of the options. It is recognised that these would be important steps when taking forward any of the options.

While presenting the options in this paper, it is recognised, that there are a number of party and secretariat-led efforts already completed, underway or planned, which have aimed or are aiming to enhance coordination and synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions. In addition, a number of proposals for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions have been developed through other means and processes, and while some have been realised, others have not yet come to fruition. This Options Paper has been informed by considering whether and how such existing or planned initiatives and progress made to date can be built upon.¹⁴

With regard to existing initiatives, a number were particularly noted. The outcome of the recent 9th meeting of the BLG¹⁵ agreed on actions that relate to a number of options outlined in this paper, including those relating to facilitation of access to financial resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF); cooperation on on-line reporting; the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES); and communication and public awareness.

In addition, an important element now being addressed is a party-led process concerning synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. As previously mentioned, CBD COP12 in paragraph 6 of Decisions XII/6 agreed to the establishment of a regionally balanced informal advisory group, composed of two members per region, to 'prepare, in consultation with the Secretariat, prior to the first meeting of the subsidiary body on implementation, a workshop with the task to prepare options which may include elements that can contribute to

¹⁴ An overview of existing initiatives for enhancing coordination and collaboration at various levels across the biodiversity-related conventions was released as a background document for the second expert meeting, 13-15 May, Geneva, Switzerland.

¹⁵ 16th August 2014, Warth, Switzerland. Meeting report available at <http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/BLG-9-rep-final-en.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2015].

a possible road map, for parties of the various Biodiversity-related Conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them.' The workshop will engage parties and the secretariats of all seven of the biodiversity-related conventions as well as other relevant organisations.

At the same time, the UNEP Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered convention secretariats¹⁶ undertook consultations through two working groups that have explored a number of the issues raised in this paper. The UNEP Executive Director held a consultative meeting with the heads of the convention secretariats in June 2015 to review and consider the final report and recommendations from the Task Team. The meeting approved the report of the working group on programmatic cooperation with the aim to strengthen the programmatic collaboration, and agreed on the way forward for the implementation of the approved recommendations of the Task Team. It also requested the working group on administrative arrangement to finalise its work as soon as possible for the Task Team to review and approve the work, before the Executive Director and the heads of the convention secretariats provide final approval.

It should also be recognised that, although the options have been clustered under seven themes, there are many interlinkages between them. Of particular note are the decisions taken by the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, which are increasing efforts to align around the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to acknowledge and promote National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) as a framework for coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. The NBSAP is the national implementation mechanism for CBD. NBSAPs are therefore significant opportunities for coordination and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions. In this context, it should also be noted that the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (Res 65/161) has affirmed the overarching role of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, for the entire UN, including all MEAs and UN bodies. Advancing the continued development of comprehensive and coherent NBSAPs, that take into account and promote synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level, is critical for enhancing coordination and synergies, as well as for effective implementation, and is therefore central to many of the options proposed in this paper.

Equally important is the fact that a more synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions will also be achieved through better mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (such as development, trade, finance, climate change, forestry, fisheries, agriculture and health). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the global SDGs, as well as national planning processes such as those associated with UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), should provide platforms for mainstreaming work. Such policy integration is vital to the coherent and effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. Likewise, mainstreaming of biodiversity within the 2030 Agenda will help to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Therefore, biodiversity mainstreaming should be an essential feature of parties' and convention bodies' efforts. This allows countries to optimise processes, with potentially significant savings of resources. Such integration requires the involvement of actors in addition to national focal points and authorities of the conventions.

The options are outlined in seven thematic sections: NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; Reporting, monitoring and indicators; IPBES

¹⁶ CBD, CITES, and CMS.

and strengthening the science-policy interface; Information management and awareness raising; Capacity building; Funding and resource efficiency; Institutional collaboration. The options and associated actions for various actors presented are those that were suggested at either of the expert meetings and then refined by subsequent written comments from meeting participants. Each thematic sector starts with the overall intended outcome of the options and associated actions presented.

1 NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Anticipated outcome: The governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions, as well as UN bodies and agencies, continue to align their strategies and activities with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. NBSAPs therefore serve as frameworks for national-level implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors. Improvements in guidance and support, and increased engagement of national focal points and authorities from all conventions to which countries are party, help to encourage the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions through NBSAPs.

All the biodiversity-related conventions have taken steps to align their strategies with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and this represents a significant advancement in achieving synergies at a policy and programmatic level, and it has already provided impetus for collaborative action at global and national levels. CBD COP10 agreed to translate this overarching international framework into revised and updated NBSAPs by 2015 and this process for revising and updating NBSAPs has led to governing body decisions across conventions. For example, CITES, CMS, and WHC have all encouraged and provided guidance to their parties' national focal points and authorities to engage with the NBSAPs development, revision and implementing process.

As of August 2015, 42 out of the 52 NBSAPs submitted post-2010 take the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 into account. 132 CBD Parties have not yet submitted a post-2010 NBSAP, as envisaged by Aichi Biodiversity Target 17.¹⁷ However, many CBD Parties are in the final stages of the NBSAP revision or development process. There is an urgent need for support in the preparation of the remaining NBSAPs, as frameworks for national-level implementation of all the biodiversity-related conventions, as appropriate. At the same time, as the new NBSAPs move to the institutional phase there is scope to build on the current impetus with greater action to support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions through NBSAP implementation, including the design of shared sets of national level targets and indicators, and for strengthening the institutional arrangements for implementation, such as national focal point coordination meetings.

Fundamentally, NBSAPs should be seen as high level policy documents for mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors, and an incentive to develop a more coherent approach to resource mobilisation at global, regional and national levels.

Support for NBSAP revision and implementation should be carried out in collaboration with all relevant actors, including parties, convention secretariats, UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and other relevant UN and non-UN bodies such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), development cooperation agencies and other partner organisations.

One of the tools providing support for NBSAP revision and implementation is the NBSAP Forum. This is a global partnership hosted by the CBD Secretariat, UNEP and UNDP, which aims to support countries in finding the information and help that they need in order to develop and implement effective NBSAPs. The NBSAP Forum has become both a repository of

¹⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/>. [accessed 10 August 2015]

useful resources, and a community of practice, and an increasing number of organisations are becoming involved.

Option 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. Some conventions, such as CITES and CMS have already developed convention-specific guidelines for their national focal points and authorities to engage in the revision, updating and implementation of NBSAPs. Further convention-specific guidance might be necessary. As many parties should soon complete their NBSAPs, such guidance should be prepared quickly and be practical. There is scope for enhanced collaboration on these activities to support NBSAP implementation. This could be useful in addressing key concepts (e.g. development of national indicators and resource mobilisation), that are common across the conventions and in taking forward the mainstreaming of NBSAPs into wider policy sectors.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Convention secretariats, BLG, UNEP and partner organisations** should jointly develop simple guidance for bringing about a synergistic approach in the implementation of NBSAPs, e.g. guidance on developing collaboration between national focal points and authorities to identify potential opportunities for synergies, promoting actions on resource mobilisation for more than one convention, and/or targets and indicator development and monitoring.
- b. **Convention secretariats** should consider issuance of a joint or similar communication to national focal points and authorities from all conventions on the use of the NBSAP revision and implementation process to foster collaboration at the national level. The substance of such a communication could refer to the case studies from the NBSAP section of the *UNEP Sourcebook on opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions at national and regional levels*, case studies from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and potentially to the review of biodiversity-related convention decisions and resolutions and their relationship with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets undertaken by UNEP-WCMC.

Option 1.2: Support the integration of NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, UNDAF and sustainable development instruments at all levels. A number of global and regional initiatives and projects already exist to foster integration of biodiversity into a variety of sectors. However, to date, these mainstreaming activities generally do not take into account the benefits to be gained from the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Convention secretariats** should provide further joint support and guidance to parties with regards to mainstreaming of the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions into wider sectors.
- b. **UNEP, including regional offices, UNDP, and other UN bodies, working together with convention secretariats,** should jointly contribute to guidance on integrating NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, UNDAF and sustainable development programmes.
- c. **UNEP, in consultation with convention secretariats and parties,** should ensure effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi

- Biodiversity Targets in the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and future work programming of UNEP.
- d. EMG should ensure effective reflection of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets in wider UN policies and strategies on the environment, recognising that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a framework within which synergies in implementation of biodiversity-related conventions can be addressed in a systematic way.
 - e. UNEP and the BLG should communicate the importance of NBSAPs as high-level policy instruments for mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services into relevant sectors through all appropriate national planning processes, and the opportunity that this brings to leverage resources for synergistic and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.
 - f. UNDP and UN country teams in consultation with governments should integrate biodiversity into common country assessments thereby informing UNDAFs.
 - g. Governments should collaborate with national sustainable development councils and bodies, if in place, to facilitate mainstreaming of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and implementation of NBSAPs in order to deliver the co-benefits for the synergistic and coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, including the leveraging of resources.

Option 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. Although the GEF is only the financial mechanism for CBD among biodiversity-related conventions, the GEF can support projects that provide benefits under multiple conventions. The Biodiversity Strategy under GEF-6 includes a specific paragraph on synergies, which can provide a basis for collaboration with other biodiversity-related conventions, especially in NBSAP revision and implementation processes. In addition, in relation to the upcoming GEF replenishment period, CBD Decision XII/30 invites the governing bodies of the other biodiversity-related conventions to provide elements of advice concerning the funding of national priorities that may be referred to the GEF through CBD COP (see Option 6.2 Action e below).

Recommended actions:

- a. Convention secretariats, GEF focal points, UNEP (including UNEP regional biodiversity MEA focal points), UNDP and other GEF implementing agencies should encourage parties to take advantage of GEF funding for development and implementation of NBSAPs, that serve as frameworks for synergistic implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions, and should provide information on how to do so and facilitate experience-sharing.¹⁸

Option 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. Voluntary peer-review of draft NBSAPs is currently offered to countries through the NBSAP Forum to enhance the quality of the final NBSAPs. In addition, a CBD working group for the development of a methodology for voluntary peer-review of CBD

¹⁸ Please see GEF/R.6/20/Rev.01, GEF-6 PROGRAMING DIRECTIONS, p.8, November 26, 2013. [Online] Available from: http://www.thegef.org/gef/sites/thegef.org/files/documents/GEF_R.6_20_Rev_01.%20%20Programming%20Directions.%20Final.%20November%2026.%202013.pdf [Accessed: 10 March 2015]

implementation has been established. This group had its inception meeting in February 2015 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Recommended actions:

- a. **UNEP and UNDP**, using GEF NBSAP-support funds and potentially other funding sources, should organise workshops for experience-sharing on the implementation of NBSAPs with a particular focus on synergies and mainstreaming of NBSAPs into other sectors, plans and programmes.
- b. **UNEP, UNDP and CBD Secretariat and partner organisations** should as a matter of priority increase the focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions in the work of the NBSAP Forum, and invite **other convention secretariats** to provide more tools and guidance to be displayed on the Forum.
- c. **The CBD working group on the development of a methodology for voluntary peer-review** should ensure that the methodology includes consideration of the extent to which NBSAPs promote coherent implementation of all biodiversity-related conventions.
- d. **Convention secretariats** should consider ways to ensure that their specific convention's guidance (including on NBSAPs) and tools are built into the voluntary peer-review process.

Option 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. Biodiversity is not limited by national boundaries, but cuts across regions and continents, often involving multiple countries. By focusing efforts on enhanced regional coordination, stakeholders can access resources together, or coordinate their activities towards a common regional or transboundary goal.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Convention secretariats, UNEP regional biodiversity MEA focal points and UNDP** should explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, and, in collaboration with **convention secretariats**, support regional coordination and collaboration on NBSAP implementation, including through existing regional platforms and bodies, by developing regional strategies as appropriate.

Option 1.6: Elaborate on the role of each convention and UN body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In 2011, the EMG began mapping activities and initiatives of its members, including biodiversity-related conventions, against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This mapping exercise initially drew on an earlier International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) report that had been requested by the CSAB. The CITES Secretariat thereafter provided the EMG Secretariat with an official mapping of the Convention's Strategic Vision objectives against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which replaced the initial IUCN mapping and was incorporated into the EMG final mapping exercise. More recently, the Secretariat's mapping was reviewed and revised by the CITES Standing Committee Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements in January 2015, in the context of using it as a basis for annotating the proposed new CITES implementation report with relevant Targets, and this work will be discussed at the 66th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in January 2016. The new Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024 also includes a mapping

of the Plan's goals and targets with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.¹⁹ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force²⁰ has an important role to play in elaborating on the role of each convention and UN body programme of work in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. At the second expert meeting under the UNEP project on synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP-WCMC presented the interim results of a study it had undertaken to map certain convention articles, strategic objectives, resolutions and decisions of the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and options for finalising, as well as advancing, the study.

Recommended actions:

- a. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force should be strengthened and the contributions of the various members mapped against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets – building on existing mapping exercises. This can then be used as a basis for identifying opportunities for increased collaboration between conventions and UN bodies at national, regional and global levels.

¹⁹ Ramsar COP12 Resolution XII.2, annex 2.

²⁰ The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force was established as part of a Memorandum of Cooperation on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, between CBD and 27 of the largest international agencies, organisations and environmental conventions, including the secretariats of CITES, CMS, ITPGRFA and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force is comprised of the heads or deputy heads of the signatory organisations and its purpose is to promote information exchange and, where appropriate, to coordinate the activities of the respective institutions to achieve the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

2 Reporting, monitoring and indicators

Anticipated outcome: Heightened cooperation amongst the biodiversity-related conventions on the development and use of indicators, and on the organisation and management of reporting processes, leads to a more coherent use of data and indicators for monitoring at all levels, and streamlined reporting processes that facilitate the preparation, delivery and use of reports.

The monitoring of and reporting on implementation activities are key obligations for parties to the biodiversity-related conventions. It is recognised that each convention has its own reporting framework, and mandatory reporting requirements, and that some of these will remain distinct. There is nevertheless further scope for streamlining the reporting process, accompanied by complementary capacity development efforts, to decrease costs of monitoring, decrease the burden on parties, and to increase the utility and quality of reports and the feedback that parties receive on their reporting to assist with policy development and decision-making.²¹ There are limitations to this, given the provisions of the various conventions and the variation in the governing body sessions of the conventions and protocols.

A strategic approach to timelines for reporting could potentially decrease the burden of work for parties and enable more effective contributions to future assessments e.g. the Global Biodiversity Outlook and the IPBES deliverables. This would involve information relevant to multiple conventions being managed on an ongoing basis at the national level and used for reporting to the different conventions at an appropriate time. This has been a long-recognised issue, and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, along with the development of indicators to monitor progress at global and national levels, provide a new opportunity for streamlining national reporting and for mainstreaming biodiversity into wider sectors. Involvement of indigenous and local communities, as well as civil society in general, in reporting is also a shared interest across several conventions.

Developing a coherent set of national and global level indicators for reporting and informing progress on achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets could be a powerful tool when mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors, including informing the development of SDG indicators. This will involve working with the Biodiversity Indicator Partnership (BIP), the outcomes of the CBD Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, and the Inter-agency expert group on SDGs indicators (IAEG-SDGs). Regarding the latter, proposed indicators will be submitted to the 47th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2016 and thereafter approved by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and UNGA. This work must bear in mind the respective timelines for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (2020) and the global SDGs (2030).

There have been promising developments in convention online reporting systems as tools for the ongoing maintenance of appropriate data and delivery of this information for reports. For example, the Online Reporting System (ORS)²² developed for the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) has subsequently been used by other CMS Family Agreements,

²¹ Noting the work already underway through regional groups (i.e. SPREP and CARICOM in the Pacific and Caribbean respectively on consolidated reporting templates), MEA governing bodies and convention secretariats, and UNEP-WCMC.

²² The ORS was developed by UNEP-WCMC in partnership with the secretariats of CMS and AEWA, and was first used for the submission of AEWA national reports to the fifth meeting of the parties (MOP5) in 2012. The ORS enables MEA secretariats to easily generate tailored online questionnaires for completion by parties.

and for the 2014 CMS national reports to COP10 and COP11. The ORS has also been customised for use by CITES and the Bern Convention, and application of the system for future reporting cycles is in preparation. Another example of an online reporting system is the periodic Reporting Assessment under WHC, which is informed by the State of Conservation Information System. Working on the interoperability of the different systems will be essential for any future activities, i.e. ensuring information interchange between reporting systems to increase the effectiveness of the systems collectively, and reduce overlap in information requirements individually.

Ultimately it is the parties which adopt their reporting frameworks through governing body decisions for each convention. Thus, action is needed to assist parties in taking decisions that are mutually supportive and implemented in a coordinated manner. In this context, recent decisions by the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions are encouraging and form a good basis for further work. Such decisions include: CBD Decision XII/6²³ requesting the Executive Secretary to explore the potential for a more coherent reporting framework with other biodiversity-related conventions; CMS Resolution 11.10²⁴ inviting the BLG to undertake efforts to increase synergies with respect to monitoring and reporting; and CITES COP Decision 16.44 f) directing the Standing Committee to consider how best to report CITES input to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Option 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.²⁵ This could include the exploring the opportunities to align convention reporting with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Such a modular approach would allow for some shared reporting as well as reporting on convention-specific elements without increasing the burden of reporting.

Recommended actions:

- a. BLG should provide some guiding principles (e.g. desired impacts) on, practical advice on a strategic approach to, and outline opportunities for further work on, harmonisation of reporting, including in relation to timelines for reporting, and modular approaches to reporting.
- b. With guidance from the BLG, the convention secretariats should undertake a review of possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and carry out a stocktaking of the current planned reporting requirements in order to identify potential for developing shared reports on certain issues, making this information available to parties. The stocktaking could include general country information (for example biodiversity status, legal measures taken, NBSAP priorities), and information on particular cross-cutting issues.
- c. Informed by the results of action b above, and as part of the development of national reporting formats and any accompanying guidance, convention

²³ Decision XII/6, paragraphs 4c and 4d. In addition, in Decision XII/29 paragraph 6, CBD COP requested the Executive Secretary to 'explore the potential for a more coherent reporting framework with other biodiversity-related conventions to improve access to relevant data for the implementation of the Convention and to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, and make use of the experiences from this work when preparing proposals for the sixth national report'.

²⁴ In CMS Resolution 11.10, the CMS COP 'Invites the members of the Biodiversity Liaison Group to strengthen cooperation and coordination with a view to increasing synergies among their respective explorations and developments of online reporting systems as a means to increase synergies on national reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions'.

²⁵ The national implementation of a number of MEAs relates to common topics and themes. A 'modular' approach would identify and group the implementation requirements of relevant conventions along specific topics. For example, information on site-based approaches to conservation of biological diversity could be held in one place and made available for reporting to, as well as implementation of, a range of conventions and mechanisms.

secretariats, with the support of the **MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (MEA IKM)**,²⁶ should jointly develop some shared reporting modules as demonstrations of what can be achieved, to be considered by parties.

- d. **Convention secretariats** should invite parties from both developing and developed countries to engage in pilot projects to test and refine these modules.
- e. In support of this work, **convention secretariats, UNEP and other host institutions**²⁷ should provide guidance and capacity development for the preparation of reports and for the increased coordination of national focal points and authorities on reporting.
- f. **Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions** should consider decisions in support of this work including on shared reporting modules and timelines for reporting.

Option 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). Indicators have become an important tool for providing a scientific basis to measure progress in convention implementation and joint indicator processes can foster streamlining and/or harmonisation of national reporting. In addition, a more coherent approach to using indicators across conventions could facilitate communication, including communication into other sectors.

Recommended actions:

- a. The **CBD Secretariat**, working with the **BIP**, should take forward technical work on the development of indicators for assessing progress towards the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The **CBD Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** could contribute technical input to this effect and help strengthen the mandate of the BIP.
- b. **Conventions** should increase their engagement with the **BIP**, for example through facilitating and promoting joint capacity building activities for the development of national indicators.
- c. **Parties** should be encouraged to develop or select common indicators (across conventions) that align with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (noting the mapping exercises mentioned in Option 1).
- d. **Parties**, supported by the efforts of the **convention secretariats and others**, including **UNEP and other UN bodies**, and making use of the work of the **BIP**, should be encouraged to seek the integration of biodiversity indicators into those of the **SDGs** and into the monitoring of national sustainable development plans.

Option 2.3: Further develop online reporting and information management systems and continue working to ensure their interoperability. There is a potential for building on the online reporting systems mentioned above and other systems to support more streamlined and efficient reporting processes, the sharing of information arising from reporting, and potential harmonisation of national reporting templates. In addition, there are

²⁶ The overall aim of the MEA IKM is to contribute to more effective MEA implementation by improving coherence in the area of data and knowledge sharing within and across clusters of MEAs and UN bodies that host MEAs, including UNEP, UNESCO and FAO. It aims to facilitate discussions amongst the MEAs on issues related to environmental governance by demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborative activities and harmonised approaches and processes in the field of information and knowledge management.

²⁷ Please see footnote 26 for examples of such host institutions.

several information management systems under development and in use (please see thematic area 4 on information management and awareness raising), which could be tailored to further support streamlined reporting. UNEP Live is an online knowledge management platform for searching national, regional and global data and knowledge to support assessments of the state and trends of the environment including of ecosystems and biodiversity.²⁸ InforMEA is the first project established by the MEA IKM (co-chaired by UNEP and CITES). It currently includes information on 43 global and regional legally-binding instruments on environment, including their decisions and resolutions, news, events, membership, national focal points, national reports, implementation plans and other information, under the custodianship of 18 MEA secretariats hosted by four UN organisations and IUCN. UNEP Live is an active partner in MEA IKM and will seek to establish semantic standards in various fields and will use the ontology on environmental law and conventions once finalised by the MEA IKM. The consolidation of such information on user-friendly platforms should facilitate access to relevant information for reporting.

Recommended actions:

- a. The **convention secretariats**, through the MEA IKM should continue to oversee the development of online reporting systems but with greater involvement of countries, including through greater use of pilot projects (see Option 2.1).
- b. **Convention secretariats** and UNEP should take forward the key short-term actions identified at the December 2014 expert meeting on 'Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of MEA Implementation: Interoperability between Reporting Systems for Biodiversity Data',²⁹ including further development of online reporting tools and introducing offline capabilities.
- c. UNEP, in consultation with **convention secretariats** and **governments**, should give consideration to how to increase interoperability of information systems and tools such as UNEP Live and InforMEA with online reporting systems for improved delivery and use of data and information for monitoring and reporting.

Option 2.4: Continue support to reporting processes through joint (regional) capacity building activities. This option can build on the existing good practices and experience from conventions, e.g. from WHC on ways to support reporting through experience exchange, capacity building and feedback mechanisms.

Recommended actions:

- a. UNEP **regional offices**, with the participation of relevant **convention secretariats**, should explore immediate opportunities for joint capacity building activities on reporting of progress towards achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and on the use of online reporting tools.

Option 2.5: Increase reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions. Parties to conventions should continue to be encouraged to provide information through their national reports on how they have enhanced synergies and facilitated coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions to which they are party. Such reporting should become or remain a regular agenda item for the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. Such efforts will help with the sharing of lessons learnt and best practices and the identification of relevant capacity building needs.

²⁸ UNEP Live provides access to reports, data, maps (including near real-time data), and links to UNEP knowledge assets such as the PIMS database, InforMEA etc. It has a thriving Community of Practice portal that enables experts to share ideas, data and knowledge, and also enables users to create maps by dragging and dropping geo-referenced data onto base maps.

²⁹ Co-hosted by CITES Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC under the auspices of the MEA IKM.

Recommended actions:

- a. If not already provided, **convention secretariats** (building on the efforts of those that have already done this) should provide guidelines to parties for reporting on how they have enhanced synergies and facilitated the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and develop a shared module to be included in future national reporting templates.
- b. **BLG** and **convention secretariats** should develop a more standardised approach across the conventions on how they report to their governing and advisory bodies on cooperation with other conventions.
- c. **MEA IKM** should regularly report on progress to parties³⁰.
- d. **Observer organisations** to meetings of convention bodies should, when possible, report on their contribution to, or perspectives on, efforts to facilitate coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

³⁰ Including the outcomes of the aforementioned expert meeting *Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of MEA implementation: Interoperability between Reporting Systems for Biodiversity Data*.

3 IPBES and strengthening the science-policy interface

Anticipated outcome: As a result of additional forward planning and cooperation, within their respective mandates, the biodiversity-related conventions make effective use of IPBES in supporting the work of their scientific advisory and governing bodies, including on communicating the value and importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to decision-makers, and strengthening the science-policy interface at all levels.

The newly established and quickly developing IPBES will play a key role for the biodiversity-related conventions, and there is a clear opportunity for conventions to work together both in identifying what is required from IPBES, and in using IPBES deliverables.

The conventions should continue to build upon the current momentum and position themselves in the emerging new architecture on the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services.³¹ Strengthening the relationship between IPBES and the biodiversity-related conventions is important in order to enable IPBES to contribute effectively to the advisory and policy decision-making processes of the biodiversity-related conventions. Many opportunities related to IPBES have already been explored, for example through convention governing body or subsidiary body discussions and decisions, as well as through meetings of the IPBES Plenary and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel. Looking further ahead, the IPBES work programme will be completed in 2018 or early 2019, and therefore planning for the next work programme will begin a year or so earlier. This is likely to include a new call for requests on what IPBES should address. It should also be noted, that several governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions have taken decisions positioning themselves relative to IPBES, encouraging collaboration between parties and IPBES National Focal Points.

Option 3.1: Conventions should continue close dialogue with IPBES on timely communication of key findings coherently across the governing body sessions and scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. The IPBES work programme includes a range of deliverables that will be directly relevant to the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions. These deliverables will be more effectively used if consideration is given ahead of time to their relevance to biodiversity-related convention implementation at global, regional and national levels, and how this can best be communicated and built upon. In doing so it should be recognised that while some IPBES deliverables may be relevant to only one convention, others are more broadly relevant. Where the assessments and findings are relevant to multiple conventions, it will be important to cooperate and collaborate in their review and use.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Convention governing and advisory bodies** should consider how and when they will use IPBES deliverables, and the extent to which they will cooperate or collaborate in doing so.³²
- b. **Convention secretariats** should provide access to IPBES deliverables when they become available, including assisting parties in understanding how they are relevant to implementation.³³
- c. **Convention secretariats** should work closely with the **IPBES Secretariat**, both separately and in cooperation, so that timetables and potential areas of cooperation

³¹ It should be noted that the WHC Secretariat has no direct work relation to IPBES, instead this is the role of its host organisation UNESCO.

³² e.g. CBD Decision XII/25 paragraph 5(e).

³³ e.g. CBD Decision XII/25 paragraph 5(c) and (f).

and collaboration are well understood.³⁴

Option 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. In developing its first work programme for 2014-2018, IPBES put out a call for requests, inputs and suggestions, and its Plenary has to date placed particular emphasis on requests conveyed to it by the biodiversity-related conventions. Enhanced cooperation among conventions in developing requests for submission to IPBES when it prepares its next work programme could result in requests that are relevant across multiple conventions, and which help support coherent implementation.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions** should consider how they want to respond to future IPBES calls for requests, inputs and suggestions, common to several conventions, and whether they want to do this collaboratively through the BLG.
- b. **Bodies such as CSAB and BLG** should be involved in helping to develop and prioritise requests to be submitted to IPBES by conventions (recognising that these requests still have to go through processes established by individual conventions).
- c. **Secretariats working through BLG** should consider establishing a joint process amongst the conventions for identification of emerging issues common to several conventions that could be addressed by IPBES in the future.

Option 3.3: Strengthen focus on efforts to ensure that the subsidiary bodies and convention secretariats interact with IPBES in a coherent and timely manner. Both CSAB and the BLG have a key role to play in increasing cooperation and collaboration amongst the biodiversity-related conventions with respect to strengthening the science-policy interface, and in developing the relationship with IPBES. This includes opportunities for sharing information and planning joint activities, but it also includes opportunities for collaborating on engagement and thereby sharing costs.

Recommended actions:

- a. **CSAB** should receive a clear mandate for their work from the **governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions** of the participating conventions and meet on a regular basis.
- b. **BLG** should have IPBES as a regular item on its agenda, and should continue to invite the Executive Secretary of IPBES to participate in their meetings as an observer, as agreed at the 9th meeting of the BLG.
- c. **CSAB and/or BLG** should ensure regular and coordinated participation of the chairs of advisory bodies, the chairs of the governing bodies and the secretariats as observers to the IPBES Plenary and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (including through identifying a 'lead' scientific chair where resources are limited).

³⁴ e.g. CBD Decision XII/25 paragraph 5(a).

4 Information management and awareness raising

Anticipated outcome: Information is more effectively used in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, through improved interoperability and coordination of information management and awareness raising, supported by capacity building at the national and regional level.

Taking into account ongoing work under the MEA IKM and the BLG, improved coordination on information management and awareness raising, supported by capacity building at national and regional levels, could contribute to: more coherent implementation of the conventions; more efficient reporting; more effective efforts to raise awareness of the values and importance of biodiversity; and mainstreaming efforts. At present, the information and awareness raising activities of the conventions are still rather fragmented. The Aichi Biodiversity Target Task Force has now been revitalised, however, and there is increased emphasis on using the UN Decade for Biodiversity to expand and better link outreach efforts. For example, the UN General Assembly Resolution 68/205 (2013) on World Wildlife Day, the celebration of which is facilitated by the CITES Secretariat, linked it to the UN Decade on Biodiversity.

In this context, recent COP decisions provide good basis for further work. Both CBD Decision XII/6³⁵ and CMS Resolution 11.6³⁶ requested the BLG to consider ways and means to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies. In addition, CBD Decision XII/2 requested the Executive Secretary to: '[Facilitate] the development of a global communication strategy, to be implemented over the second half of the United Nations Decade, incorporating messaging approaches to be used as a flexible framework for parties and relevant organisations'; to undertake actions 'to develop and utilise messaging approaches for the specific target groups in the context of the different Aichi Biodiversity Targets'; and 'to conduct a workshop to develop and utilise messaging approaches for the specific target groups in the context of the different Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to report on the outcomes of the workshop to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting'.

Option 4.1: Develop shared approaches to use more effectively global information management tools. Global information management tools and databases relevant to the biodiversity-related conventions and their protocols include InforMEA, UNEP Live, ECOLEX and the various types of Clearing House Mechanisms (CHMs). Development of a coherent capacity building approach for the use of the global information management tools, taking into account IT infrastructure needs of the parties, could support the implementation of this option. Further ideas on implementation could be adapted from the recommendations included in the JIU report.³⁷

Recommended actions:

- a. UNEP, convention secretariats and other partners in MEA IKM, should consider the outcome of the party-led process initiated by CBD in Decision XII/6 concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

³⁵ Decision XII/6 Paragraph 4.

³⁶ Resolution 11.6 Paragraph 17.

³⁷ Please see the full report entitled 'REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT OF INTERNET WEBSITES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS', 2008, [Online] Available from https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/archive/JIU_REP_2008_6_English.pdf [Accessed: 31 July 2015].

- b. **UNEP**, in consultation with **parties** and **convention secretariats**, should consider how to make **UNEP Live** more useful to support countries in coherent implementation of **MEAs**.
- c. **UNEP**, **convention secretariats** and **others** should make use of **IPBES** capacity building activities on building capacity for the use of global information tools.
- d. **InforMEA Partners** should seek greater involvement of **governments** in the work of **InforMEA** to help raise awareness of the tools it works on, and to ensure greater accuracy and utility.
- e. **InforMEA Partners** should ensure that the information they provide to **InforMEA** is validated and properly tagged and **InforMEA** should further develop quality assurance processes with **convention secretariats**, **relevant UN bodies** and **parties**.
- f. **Convention secretariats** should continue to cooperate in sharing lessons learnt and exploring ways to build greater interoperability between web portals and **CHMs** of the biodiversity-related conventions. This could include, for example, the development of more links/tags among the information portals of convention websites.

Option 4.2: Deliver joint information and awareness campaigns, including in the context of the UN Decade of Biodiversity. This would require cooperation across convention secretariats and with other partners (including States, UN bodies, intergovernmental organisations, regional bodies, the private sector, civil society and the media) and tailoring joint awareness raising activities for different target audiences. There could also be coordinated/joint activity on 'days of...' (e.g. the International Day for Biological Diversity, World Wetland Day, World Wildlife Day, World Bird Day and other environmental days) and 'years of', noting that some are official UN days and others are not. New and innovative ways should thereby be explored in order to ensure optimal use of resources and maximised impact.

Recommended actions:

- a. Collaboration among the **communications officers of the biodiversity-related conventions** and **other partner organisations**, as agreed by the **BLG**, should be further strengthened, in particular to achieve increased awareness within other sectors. This has already started and could be built upon (e.g. through periodic meetings by remote means, such as teleconferencing) to consider and to take forward the development of joint campaigns.
- b. In developing the proposed **Global Biodiversity Communication Strategy**, the **CBD Secretariat** should facilitate work with **other conventions**, **organisations** and processes to agree content and target sectors, build understanding of target audiences, and develop messages.
- c. **Convention secretariats** should continue to seek more ambitious and innovative means of engaging people through different media, including TV or social media. Consideration should be given to a smaller number of bigger campaigns.
- d. **BLG** should cooperate in such campaigns including in the joint review of opportunities and through helping define a more strategic approach by, for example, reviewing 'international days of' strategies, and identifying annual cross-cutting themes.
- e. **Convention secretariats** should support parties in awareness raising campaigns, for example, through the provision of template communications, new stories, etc., which parties could then adapt to their own needs in order to address different target groups (political level, general public, etc.).
- f. **Convention secretariats**, **UNEP** and **other partners** should seek to engage, **UN-**

wide, on awareness raising to increase impact of campaigns. This could include the participation of **BLG members** at UN-system communication group teleconferences. Similarly, **convention secretariats** and **parties** could collaborate with **NGOs** and their extensive networks.

- g. Convention secretariats** should make more use of joint secretariat statements at official meetings (such as those done for **SDGs** and **IPBES**), as well as more joint op-ed pieces for transmission to the media.

5 Capacity building

Anticipated outcome: The capacity for coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level is further increased, as a result of increased cooperation and a more coordinated approach to capacity development by the conventions, coupled with appropriate support from UN bodies and other key stakeholders.

The 'Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome' from the 2010 meeting of the second Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on International Environmental Governance recommended a UN system-wide capacity building framework for the environment, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP)³⁸. A call for the continued and focused implementation of the BSP was made in *The Future We Want*.³⁹ UNDP is the lead entity in the UN for capacity building and it hosts the country-level resident coordinators, and leads in the coordination of UNDAFs.

A more coordinated and coherent approach to capacity building among the biodiversity-related conventions in selected areas could help increase the effectiveness of capacity building efforts on synergies. In this context, it should be noted that CBD Decision XII/6 requested the Executive Secretariat to prepare 'a study on key capacity-building and awareness-raising needs regarding cooperation with other MEAs at the national level' as an input to the party-led process initiated by the same decision concerning enhancing synergies and improving efficiency in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Synergies should be built in an inclusive way by involving all resource networks and actors including: UN bodies, development cooperation agencies; and regional and subregional institutions; local governments and communities; academia and private sector, as well as civil society organisations. This should link to the capacity building efforts of IPBES, where appropriate, and its current work to review capacity building needs. Opportunities for advancing synergies through the NBSAP Forum should also be considered. North-South and South-South cooperation should be encouraged.

At the same time, ensuring adequate funding for UNEP regional biodiversity MEA focal points in the regions is crucial, since they provide valuable capacity for addressing implementation of the conventions at the regional level, working closely with parties and the relevant convention secretariats.

Option 5.1: Strengthen the support provided by UNEP regional offices for implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for sustaining the functions of the MEA focal points. UNEP regional biodiversity MEA focal points have since the inception of the UNEP MEAs Focal Points Programme in 2009 supported the synergistic implementation of MEAs, including through: pilot projects and capacity building workshops; the facilitation of information exchange and networking among governments on MEA implementation; the facilitation of an integrated approach towards the organisation of pre- and post-COP regional consultations focused on multiple biodiversity-related conventions.

³⁸ UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.1

³⁹ United Nations, *The Future We Want*, Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, A/CONF.216/L.1, <http://www.uncsd2012.org/thefuturewewant.html> [accessed 10 August 2015].

Recommended actions:

- a. UNEP, with input from **convention secretariats**, should develop a coherent framework on the role of UNEP's regional biodiversity MEA focal points in supporting implementation of MEAs. This framework could be integrated into appropriate plans, programmes and strategies (see Option 7.1) and guide UNEP's regional level support to the NBSAPs process, the coherent implementation of MEAs, including supporting access to GEF and other sources of funding, and UNEP's work with UN country teams to contribute to UNDAFs.
- b. **UNEP and convention secretariats** should regularly liaise on the activities of UNEP regional biodiversity MEA focal points in the implementation of joint capacity building activities.
- c. **UNEP** should strengthen its regional capacity to support implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions (see Option 7.1).

Option 5.2: Identify immediate opportunities for collaboration on capacity development activities and develop harmonised and possible common approaches. When considering capacity development requests from parties, convention secretariats could enhance collaboration in the short term by also considering whether the activity could be designed to benefit implementation of more than one convention. In the longer term they could seek more harmonised ways to receive, review and deliver capacity building requests from parties.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Parties** should seek COP decisions on joint capacity building initiatives concerning implementing the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
- b. **Convention secretariats** should identify and address immediate capacity building needs with synergistic potential. This could be done by building on already planned activities.
- c. **Convention secretariats** and the **BLG** should consider developing a mapping exercise to identify overlaps in capacity building decisions among the biodiversity-related conventions as a basis for considering and proposing further opportunities for joint delivery of capacity building. In doing so they should consider ongoing capacity building efforts of other processes such as IPBES. This could form the basis of the study on 'capacity building and awareness raising needs regarding cooperation with other MEAs at the national level' that will be carried out as a result of CBD Decision XII/6.

Option 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. This should be done in partnership with convention secretariats and the parties to the respective conventions and make use of the existing coordination structures such as the EMG and United Nations Development Group. Such efforts should build upon the previous work of the EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity, and take into account the current follow-up work of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force, the capacity building work being done under IPBES, and the *Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building*. Increased integration of biodiversity considerations into the UNDAF process is needed in order to more effectively identify and address capacity building needs on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Recommended actions:

- a. As Chair of the EMG, the **Executive Director of UNEP**, building on relevant existing work, should, working with **convention secretariats**, promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, including by exploring the development of a more coherent capacity building framework.
- b. **UNEP**, in partnership with **convention secretariats**, **relevant UN bodies**, **NGOs** and other members of **civil society** should seek immediate opportunities to facilitate capacity building on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level.
- c. **UNEP** and **UNDP** should encourage and work closely with **UN country teams**, including through the **UNDAF** at the national level, to support capacity building on the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

6 Funding and resource efficiency

Anticipated outcome: Options and opportunities for resource mobilisation are increased as a result of enhanced collaboration among the biodiversity-related conventions and other key stakeholders with respect to achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the related support that they provide to parties.

In order to achieve the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a significant increase in resources (financial, institutional, human and technical) will be required. This has been recognised by governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and, as a result, much work has been done to provide guidance to parties on resource mobilisation from existing and new and innovative sources. This includes work done under the auspices of the CBD Strategy for Resource Mobilisation adopted at COP9. Other examples include the UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), launched in 2012, which is a global partnership seeking to address the challenge of biodiversity finance in a comprehensive manner.

Further collaboration across the biodiversity-related conventions towards the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets can increase options for resource mobilisation, could increase the effectiveness of spending and lead to resource savings; whilst mainstreaming of biodiversity into wider policy sectors offers significant opportunities for more efficient policy-making processes and co-funding (High-Level Panel 2012). This could be supported, at the national level, by increased incentives for submission and funding of projects specifically aiming to increase cooperation and enhance synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, and mainstreaming into wider sectors.

Following the recent GEF6-replenishment, biodiversity is the largest focal area (1.2 billion USD) of the GEF. The biodiversity portfolio of the GEF is built on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, following the guidance of CBD COP. As stipulated in the GEF6 Programming document 'Due to the inclusive and comprehensive nature of the GEF biodiversity strategy, ample opportunity exists for the inclusion of pertinent GEF-eligible activities, as prioritised in the country's revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), to exploit this synergy amongst the conventions and advance shared objectives.'

In support of this, CBD Decision XII/30⁴⁰ invited parties to enhance coordination among biodiversity-related convention national focal points. This will foster the identification of national priorities in support of the implementation of the various biodiversity-related conventions that are aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and enable parties to incorporate them into their NBSAPs. Responding to a recommendation of the BLG, the decision also invited the governing bodies of the various biodiversity-related conventions to provide elements of advice, as appropriate, on funding of national priorities that may be referred to the GEF through a decision at CBD COP13. This decision was welcomed by CMS COP11 which asked the CMS Standing Committee to prepare such advice concerning national priorities for implementation of CMS. Increased access to GEF funding will depend upon coherent and robust guidance from convention governing body decisions.

⁴⁰ Decision XII/30 Paragraph 1.

Option 6.1: Convention secretariats to collaborate on new initiatives for obtaining additional financial resources. The convention secretariats could work together to review: new opportunities and make joint approaches to relevant institutions; and how the parties could benefit from accessing alternative funds to support integrated approaches for implementing the various biodiversity-related conventions (e.g. the UNDP Adaptation Programme). This option could be considered in particular in relation to the funding of shared priorities, for example NBSAPs and cross-cutting work programmes.

Recommended actions:

- a. **BLG** should facilitate further review of relevant funding programmes and promote the development of opportunities and strategies for joint fundraising efforts.
- b. **Convention secretariats** should jointly develop additional guidance for parties for accessing financial resources.

Option 6.2: Pursue a coordinated approach to accessing GEF and Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding among the biodiversity-related conventions. The convention secretariats, UNEP regional offices (including regional biodiversity MEA focal points) and UNDP should provide information and encourage countries to take advantage of the opportunity of GEF funding for development and implementation of NBSAPs that are frameworks for implementation of all of the biodiversity-related conventions and for integrated approaches to implement the conventions. This approach can also enable and enhance cooperation among the Rio Conventions: CBD, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and UN Convention to Combat Desertification. Efforts in response to CBD Decision XII/30 could be extended to consider the opportunities provided by the GCF.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and convention secretariats** should act on CBD Decision XII/30 on the financial mechanism with regard to the provision of elements of advice concerning the funding of national priorities that may be referred to the GEF through CBD COP.
- b. **BLG** should continue to liaise with the GEF, including by inviting the GEF Secretariat to its regular meetings, to enhance synergies on financing and access to GEF funding for the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.
- c. **Convention secretariats and GEF implementing agencies** should continue to support this by facilitating liaison among the national focal points and authorities of different conventions, capacity building on the development of joint proposals including on biodiversity-related issues covered by conventions that are not independently able to access GEF funding, and raising awareness of national GEF operational focal points on the opportunities for synergistic implementation.
- d. **BLG, convention secretariats and GEF implementing agencies** should consider applying similar efforts to capitalise on the opportunities provided by the GCF.
- e. **UNEP and convention secretariats** should raise awareness and facilitate utilisation of the *UNEP Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels* (May 2015), which includes guidance on accessing GEF funds for the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Option 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. The Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a coherent framework for sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and should be

recognised as part of countries' wider efforts to achieve sustainable development. Mainstreaming and integration of Aichi Biodiversity Targets in national policies, plans, programmes and strategies facilitates synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions and could increase co-benefits and opportunities for funding. On their part, donors could promote synergies and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in their funding priorities.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Parties** should be supported (including through guidance by UNEP, UNDP and convention secretariats) in prioritising coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in national plans on which donors base their funding decisions, including UNDAFs.
- b. **Convention secretariats, parties** and UNEP should seek to promote through, for example, awareness raising activities, the benefits of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions to donors such as the GEF, GCF, World Bank, private sector and charitable foundations.

Option 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. Several conventions have provided guidance to parties on resource mobilisation and have also been discussing guidance on 'new' and 'innovative' financial mechanisms for biodiversity, such as: environmental fiscal reform; payment for ecosystem services; biodiversity offsets; markets for green products; and impact investment funds. Improved coordination of future efforts could eliminate duplication of guidance and help to identify and implement new mechanisms that support the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and, in particular, their mainstreaming into wider sectors.

Recommended actions:

- a. **BLG** should facilitate development of an overview of relevant guidance on resource mobilisation and different approaches across conventions, identifying promising examples and best practices to facilitate experience-sharing.
- b. **Parties** should request additional guidance and capacity building on resource mobilisation, including resource efficiency, to be developed cooperatively among convention secretariats (see Option 5.2).
- c. **UNEP** and **UNDP** should support the development of such guidance and capacity building, in cooperation with other relevant organisations with expertise in this field (e.g. UNDP, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), and taking into account the needs across conventions.
- d. **UNEP** and **convention secretariats** should facilitate utilisation of the *UNEP Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels* (May 2015), which includes guidance on financial resource mobilisation to support the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level.

Option 6.5: Review and share ongoing experiences on MEA synergies and on wider mainstreaming efforts to identify means to increase the cost-effectiveness of synergistic action on biodiversity. Enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions and other MEAs could increase the effectiveness of spending and lead to resource savings. Mainstreaming efforts can enable the delivery of co-benefits and drive the reform of policies/sectors with a negative impact on biodiversity, thereby freeing up resources that

would otherwise be used for addressing negative impacts. Sharing examples of approaches to enhancing synergies and mainstreaming leading to cost-effectiveness would add to the evidence-base and provide lessons learnt on the application of such approaches.

Recommended actions:

- a. **Parties, UNEP, UNDP and convention secretariats** should collaborate in sharing experiences on enhancing synergies through resource mobilisation and efficiency, as well as on mainstreaming efforts, and on whether and how synergies can increase the cost-effectiveness of actions on biodiversity. This information should be made available through existing platforms such as the NBSAP Forum.

7 Institutional collaboration

Anticipated outcome: Coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels is enhanced as a result of increased cooperation amongst those institutions concerned with implementation of the conventions, including all relevant convention and UN bodies.

Institutional cooperation is essential to support coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels. Many institutions are, or could be, supportive already exist at these different levels, some of which need further development and strengthening. Global entities include: the BLG; EMG; the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force; and the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management. In the future, enhanced collaboration of multiple conventions on the issue of the coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions should be considered with additional relevant conventions and organisations. This could include cooperation with UNESCO, FAO, non-UN bodies like ITTO and IUCN; and with regional or subregional bodies such as the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, the Southern African Development Community and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, regional ministerial environment forums and development banks which, with their regional presence, outreach and convening powers, are well suited to promote MEA implementation in a coherent manner. For effective implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national level, the involvement of UN country teams through UNDAFs is also crucial.

Given that the biodiversity-related conventions are legally separate and autonomous in their decision-making, it is essential that parties collaborate and cooperate to ensure that the decision-making bodies of the conventions act in a coherent manner and that their decisions are mutually supportive.

Regarding mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation at the national and regional level, the *UNEP Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions* includes a section that provides a number of case studies and lessons learnt on how different formal and informal mechanisms can facilitate cooperation, collaboration and coordination among national focal points and authorities of conventions and other key stakeholders to improve efficiency and effectiveness of activities.

Option 7.1: Focus and enhance the work of UNEP 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. UNEP could strengthen its support for synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global level in various areas falling under its existing mandate, for example by supporting and facilitating cross-cutting activities for implementation of the conventions.

Recommended actions:

- a. UNEP should integrate MEA implementation into the relevant parts of the MTS 2018-2021, as well as into its future programmes of work, in close cooperation with MEA secretariats, thereby resulting in synergies. This could build on the

recommendations of the Working Group on Programmatic Cooperation of the UNEP MEA Task Team, as revised by the MEA Management Team.⁴¹ These could include efforts to ensure that UNEP activities relevant to more than one MEA are carried out in a more systematic and coherent manner.

- b. **Member States** should ensure that support for MEA implementation is considered in the relevant parts of the UNEP MTS and programmes of work.

Option 7.2: Strengthen the BLG as a mechanism for promoting collaboration and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions within its mandate. The BLG has an important role in reviewing and advancing options for enhancing collaboration, cooperation and coordination on a practical level and has already achieved success in increasing the programmatic cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions. Possible means for strengthening the BLG, and the time and financial resources implications of doing so, could be addressed in more detail by the workshop initiated by CBD Decision XII/6.

Recommended actions:

- a. **BLG** should seek closer collaboration and consultation with parties. This could include: consultations with parties on the work programme for the BLG; increased transparency including continued intersessional communication of its activities to the parties; and some means of involving parties in BLG meetings (for example, by inviting COP bureau members and/or standing committees chairs).
- b. **BLG** should scale up efficiencies by replicating the 'lead secretariat' model. This would build on existing examples such as CBD representing coordinated input of all the convention secretariats in the SDGs process, the Ramsar Convention for UN-water activities and CITES for trade issues (including liaising with World Trade Organisation). This model could potentially be extended to a range of functions, for example, the identification of 'lead secretariats' for working with funding institutions, for development of communication and awareness raising programmes, and for development of online reporting. A recent example of this model being used is CMS Resolution 11.10 inviting the BLG to consider options for enhanced cooperation on cross-cutting issues, including through exploring the possibility of identifying lead MEAs.⁴²

Option 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). The expert meeting background paper 'Mapping MEAs to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets – interim summary of results' produced by UNEP-WCMC (see 'Background' section above) indicates possible areas for reviewing and further exploring opportunities for cooperation and collaboration among biodiversity-related conventions. Joint approaches identified could be captured in joint work programmes and MOUs. CBD and ITPGRFA (2010-2015), CBD and the Ramsar Convention (2011-2020) and CMS and CITES (2015-2020) currently have joint work programmes in place, the joint work plan for 2012-14 between the CMS Secretariat and the CBD Secretariat is under

⁴¹ Established in 2014, the UNEP Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats is composed of two working groups. One working group has been examining the effectiveness of administrative arrangements, and then considering how these could be improved. The other working group of the task team has identified priority areas for such programmatic cooperation based on directions from the relevant governing bodies and general and specific mandates including identifying thematic and functional areas for potentially greater synergies.

⁴² UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.10, paragraph 19.

renewal, and that CMS Resolution 11.10 requested the CMS Secretariat to prepare proposals to strengthen cooperation, coordination and synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions, including through joint work plans.⁴³

Recommended actions:

- a. **Convention secretariats** should further develop tools for supporting coherence at all levels, including the Decision Tracking Tool mandated by CBD Decision X11/28 and tools being developed by the MEA IKM.
- b. **Convention secretariats** (if mandated by their governing bodies) should conduct a review and gap analysis of the effectiveness of relevant decisions adopted since 2010 against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
- c. **BLG** should review the need and potential for development of joint work programmes and MOUs, with a view to further increasing collaboration and cooperation, and with a focus on the mid- to long-term, including beyond 2020.

Option 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. This can be facilitated by identifying common areas of expertise among the secretariat staff that can be useful across other biodiversity-related conventions. In this way, various officers and experts of each convention secretariat could be 'loaned' or 'borrowed' by other secretariats, thus avoiding the expense of securing other experts. There is existing experience of such practice to build upon, for example a staff member of ITPGRFA has been based at the CBD Secretariat, there is currently a joint CITES-CMS officer based in the CMS Secretariat, and various secretariats and UNEP have seconded staff to each other for support to COP sessions and other events.

Recommended actions:

- a. Building on existing experience, **convention secretariats** should review the potential for further sharing of expertise, to increase efficiencies and strengthen collaboration.
- b. For UNEP administered conventions, and in accordance with any established UN mobility programme, **UNEP and convention secretariats** should organise and manage targeted rotation programmes for their staff if this is needed to help convention secretariats secure certain relevant expertise, or to assist the career development of certain staff.

⁴³ UNEP/CMS/Resolution 11.10, paragraph 8.

