

Agenda item 9.1

**Synergies with other conventions: Collaboration on, and
harmonization of, national reporting**

Action requested: The Standing Committee is invited to consider and approve the attached draft Resolution for consideration by COP9.

Note by the Ramsar Secretariat

1. In March 2005 the Standing Committee's Subgroup on COP9 considered a report from the Secretariat on synergies with other conventions and, in particular, on initiatives underway to develop ways and means of making national reporting by Contracting Parties to multiple environmental agreements less onerous.
2. The Subgroup on COP9 requested that the Secretariat report fully to COP9 on synergies with other conventions and international environmental structures, and that it prepare a draft Resolution on harmonization of national reporting in the context of the work of the Biodiversity Liaison Group.
3. A full report on implementation of synergies with other conventions and international environmental structures will be prepared as a COP9 Information Paper. The draft COP9 Resolution requested is attached to this note.

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COP9 DR5

Collaboration on, and harmonization of, national reporting among environment conventions and agreements

1. AWARE that at its 7th meeting, in 2004, the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted Decision VII/26, which, *inter alia*,

Urged further enhanced cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and all relevant international conventions, organizations and bodies, strengthening and building on existing cooperative arrangements to enhance synergies and reduce inefficiencies in a manner consistent with their respective mandates, governance arrangements and agreed programs, within existing resources;

Requested in this context, the Executive Secretary, to invite the secretariats of the other four biodiversity conventions (CITES, Ramsar, CMS and World Heritage Convention) to form a liaison group to enhance coherence and cooperation in their implementation, and to report on progress made to the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties; and

Requested the Executive Secretary, drawing on the experience gained in the exercise mentioned above, and in close collaboration with relevant conventions, organizations and bodies, to examine options for a flexible framework between all relevant actors, such as a global partnership on biodiversity, in order to enhance implementation through improved cooperation, and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting on possible ways forward;

2. FURTHER AWARE that the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) held a consultative workshop on the issue of Harmonized National Reporting, and that this issue has been also discussed by the Biodiversity Liaison Group established under CBD Decision VII/26, and that this workshop specifically noted seven key issues, as annexed to this Resolution, which should be addressed by Contracting Parties and Secretariats in an effort to harmonize national reporting, at least in the biodiversity cluster of conventions and agreements;

3. RECALLING that Ramsar COP8 Resolution VIII.5 *inter alia*:

URGED Contracting Parties, the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), the Standing Committee, and the Bureau, in cooperation with the governing and subsidiary bodies and the secretariats of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the International Organization Partners, and other collaborators, to implement fully the actions contained in Operational Objective 13 of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 on 'Collaboration with other institutions'; and

FURTHER URGED Contracting Parties to make renewed efforts to increase collaboration at the national level between the institutions and focal points responsible for the implementation of MEAs, including through ensuring their

participation in National Ramsar Committees, so as to foster synergies and harmonisation; and

4. RECOGNISING that a number of Contracting Parties have found difficulties in completing their National Reports for the triennium 2003 -2005, due to the length and complexity of the National Report Format;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

5. INSTRUCTS the Secretary General to take a full and effective part in all proceedings of the Biodiversity Liaison Group established under the *aegis* of the CBD and to report regularly to Standing Committee on progress achieved by this group;
6. ALSO INSTRUCTS the Secretary General, in consultation with Standing Committee, to undertake immediate work on ways and means to introduce a system of simpler but still effective National Reporting for the Convention; and to work with UNEP and other conventions and agreements to advance harmonization of national reporting; and
7. URGES Contracting Parties to develop ways and means at national level of improving liaison between the focal points of the Ramsar Convention and related conventions and agreements, and to communicate with the Secretariat on their progress with respect to harmonizing reporting for the biodiversity-related conventions.

ANNEX

Key issues for harmonizing national reporting

- i) **Purpose of reporting:** In the interests of increasing the efficiency of reporting, conventions and agreements should clarify and refine the information they need in order to assess implementation and outcomes. They should also address the balance between reporting on implementation and reporting on outcomes, particularly in the light of the 2010 target. When requesting reports, conventions and agreements should also explain clearly what the information will be used for and how it will be analyzed.
- ii) **Focus of reporting:** Reporting should relate to the decisions taken by the governing bodies, both providing information to support the decision-making process and reporting on actions taken to implement decisions and their effect.
- iii) **Coordination at international levels:** The Biodiversity Liaison Group should consider establishing a technical task force to develop and promote a streamlined reporting agenda across conventions and agreements, taking account of the issues raised in the pilot projects, developments requested by governing bodies, and issues discussed during the EMG review of harmonization of reporting. The task force would comprise technical officers from the secretariats, supported as necessary by other appropriate experts. It is anticipated that the group and task force would work inter-sessionally to develop proposals which would be considered and adopted by governing bodies.
- iv) **Action by individual conventions:** Conventions and agreements should also explore opportunities for taking concrete actions to reduce the reporting burden that they

themselves control, for example by not adding new requests for information without removing existing requests in parallel, by reducing the amount of information requested, by linking reporting more closely to strategic planning, by exploring new mechanisms for reporting, and so on. This can be done within existing mandates given to most secretariats.

- v) **Thematic issues:** Active consideration should be given to focusing on specific themes that are relevant across several conventions and agreements, and identifying means to harmonize approaches to information management and reporting, learning lessons from the CPF Task Force on Forest-related Reporting. Consideration might also be given to thematic reports on specific issues which would be relevant to all conventions and agreements which consider the issue. This may also be a matter for consideration by the Biodiversity Liaison Group.
- vi) **Web portal on reporting:** The convention secretariats and UNEP-WCMC should work together to develop and maintain a single, multilingual website (and perhaps also a CD-ROM) that links to existing questionnaires, guidelines and other instructions that secretariats have provided for national reporting, as well as results of the work on streamlining and harmonization. This might also incorporate discussion fora and opportunities for sharing of experience. The Joint Web Site of the Biodiversity Related Conventions (currently hosted by CBD) should be investigated as a possible home for this.
- vii) **Capacity building:** Capacity building activities for information management and reporting among local, national, regional and multilateral applications should focus on all three levels of capacity development: individual, institutional and systemic. It is also recommended that steps should be taken to ensure that the Global Environment Facility and the GEF Implementing Agencies take fully into account the coordination and information management required to support both implementation and reporting for the various MEAs when financing and implementing programmes.