



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

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UNEP support for the harmonization of national reporting and information management for biodiversity-related treaties

(Submitted by the Performance Working Group)

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is three-fold:
 - a) to provide the Conference of Parties with a summary of past, present and planned future UNEP-related work to support harmonization of national reporting and integrated information management in support of implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, in particular the ongoing and foreseen activities under:
 - (i) the current national pilot projects facilitated by UNEP;
 - (ii) the proposed draft harmonization action plan being developed at the request of the UN Environmental Management Group (EMG);
 - b) to provide input to and support to the harmonization and streamlining activities in the context of CMS and its agreements, in particular with respect to national reporting, integrated information management and implementation;
 - c) to outline the roles of UNEP and CMS in the further development and implementation of harmonization and streamlining activities.

Harmonization Pilot Projects

2. In October 2000, UNEP convened a workshop in Cambridge to review the issue of harmonization of national reporting to biodiversity-related treaties. This workshop, attended by representatives of eight countries and eight convention secretariats (including CMS), discussed possible actions for achieving harmonization, and recommended a series of national pilot projects to test various approaches.
3. Pilot projects facilitated by UNEP are being carried out in four countries (Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and Seychelles) to test information management and harmonization concepts in the context of the national reporting to the five global biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and WHC), with special focus on institutional co-ordination mechanisms and interlinkages at national and international levels. The pilot projects are being coordinated by the UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions (DEC) and UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

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4. The pilot project countries and the global biodiversity-related conventions to which they are a Party are as follows:

| Country | CBD | CMS | CITES | Ramsar | WHC |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-------|--------|-----|
| <i>Ghana</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Indonesia</i> | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Panama</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Seychelles</i> * | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |

* Although no longer a party, Seychelles also looked at reporting requirements under the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).

5. As well as reviewing the reporting processes at the national level and delivering these reports, each pilot project has a unique task to test one of the harmonization concepts recommended by the UNEP workshop (Cambridge, October 2000):

- Ghana* assessing the possibility of linking national reporting to the State of the Environment (SoE) reporting process;
- Indonesia* identifying common information modules and using this as a basis for developing a modular approach to national reporting;
- Panama* exploring potential regional support mechanisms for national information management and reporting;
- Seychelles* assessing the potential for producing a consolidated national report responding to the needs of several conventions.

6. In June 2001, a harmonization website was established which incorporated a discussion forum for the pilot projects (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/>). The website and forum facilitates communication and exchange of information among the participating countries, MEA secretariats and other interested parties.

7. The current status of the pilot projects is as follows:

Ghana Delays occurred in the administrative set-up of the pilot project, and communication difficulties have been encountered. The Government is trying to establish its national team for implementing the pilot project. The actual work under the pilot project is yet to begin. A possible mission by a UNEP representative to Ghana being considered to help progress the work.

Indonesia Work is on-going, with a national workshop currently being planned for mid-August to review the pilot project work. Additional funds were raised from the UK Government to cover the cost of a consultant, Dr Bill Phillips (former Deputy Secretary General, Ramsar Convention) to assist the Indonesian national team in its work. Dr. Phillips has conducted one mission to Indonesia, during which a detailed implementation plan was agreed with the national team.

Activities on harmonization and streamlining of national biodiversity reporting are also being discussed under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC), and with the support of UNEP and ARCBC the Indonesian pilot project leader has briefed the ARCBC national focal points on the UNEP harmonization work. UNEP is actively encouraging a closer co-operation between the pilot project and ARCBC.

Panama Work is on-going in Panama, and an analysis and review of the national reporting procedures to all five global biodiversity-related Conventions has been carried out. However, the flow of information from Panama on the progress being made is irregular, and no outputs have yet been received. A possible mission by a UNEP representative to Panama is being considered to review progress and support implementation.

Seychelles Most of the work in Seychelles has been completed. The following outputs were received in January and February 2002:

- minutes of the national expert team meetings
- financial report on project implementation
- draft reports to CITES, WHC and a hypothetical report to ICRW (CBD report awaiting official adoption)
- draft report summarizing the work carried out under the pilot project, and recommendations and conclusions for streamlining and harmonization to improve the national reporting procedure.

8. As contribution to the harmonization work, UNEP will also explore with a few countries the possibility of preparing reports on how they co-ordinate their implementation and reporting processes.
9. When results of all the pilot projects become available, UNEP will attempt to prepare preliminary guidelines for coordinated reporting at the national level. A document outlining recommendations for consideration at the international level will also be prepared. It is envisaged that the international-level recommendations will be considered by the secretariats and eventually by the COPs of the biodiversity-related conventions.
10. While it is premature to draw globally relevant lessons from the pilot projects, the Seychelles pilot project has already provided interesting observations and recommendations. For example:

At the international level:

- A significant barrier to streamlining procedures for reporting at the national level would appear to be differences in the reporting cycles of each MEA. This suggests that MEAs might consider synchronizing national reporting cycles.
- Potential exists for developing and implementing broader joint programmes of work between and among MEAs to tackle common themes such as international co-operation (including capacity building), policies and strategies, identification and monitoring and in-situ conservation. This would inevitably lead to greater integration and a more harmonized approach.

At the national level:

- Creation of a national biodiversity database and/or information network will support both implementation and reporting, if appropriately established.
- Establishment of an operational framework for biodiversity stakeholder interaction will help ensure effective involvement of stakeholders in implementation and reporting.
- Incorporation of objectively verifiable indicators which relate to convention implementation into projects will enable more rapid and accurate reporting.

Harmonization Action Plan

11. In January 2001, the Environmental Management Group (EMG) held its inaugural meeting. The EMG was established by the UN Secretary General under the chairmanship of the UNEP Executive Director for the purpose of enhancing UN system-wide inter-agency co-ordination related to specific issues in the field of environment and human settlements.

12. At its first meeting, the EMG established an Issue Management Group (IMG) on harmonization of reporting for biodiversity-related treaties, and appointed UNEP as task manager. UNEP, in consultation with the IMG, prepared a background paper on the issue. This paper was reviewed by the EMG, which subsequently asked for the preparation of a harmonization action plan based on the recommendations in the paper.
13. While the harmonization pilot projects have been under way, UNEP has had a range of informal discussions with convention secretariats and others (including the United Nations University and regional organizations such as the European Environment Agency and ARCBC) concerning the issue of harmonization, and has been preparing the draft action plan for harmonization as requested by EMG. Consideration within this draft action plan is being given to both direct activities (such as a second phase of pilot projects) and enabling actions (such as workshops) in the following key areas:
 - testing concepts and methods for harmonization and streamlining of reporting;
 - harmonization and integration of information management at national and international levels;
 - improving institutional linkages; and
 - supporting actions.
14. Taking into account experiences gained in previous and ongoing harmonization work, the activities and projects proposed in this action plan comprises a range of harmonization and streamlining actions, which:
 - are targeted on specific problems experienced by policy and decision makers at all levels;
 - can be implemented and reviewed in a step-by-step approach over time; and
 - make best use of existing networks, facilities and resources.
15. It is anticipated that the draft Harmonization Action Plan will be discussed, in the first instance, at the forthcoming 10th MEA Co-ordination Meeting. It will then be reviewed further by convention secretariats and others in the context of an IMG meeting, before submission to the next EMG meeting for review and endorsement. Implementation will subsequently depend on a wide range of stakeholders, who will be directly involved in developing more detailed specification of the actions to be taken, and in ensuring appropriate agreement by the governing bodies of each convention.
16. In the near future, copies of the draft Harmonization Action Plan can be obtained from the UNEP-WCMC website at http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/emg_img.htm.

UNEP support for ongoing and future work under CMS

17. Recognizing that effective and efficient conservation action requires information on which to base planning and decision-making, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals adopted in 1999 an Information Management Plan which addresses the requirement for CMS and related Agreements, and the needs for collaboration with other convention secretariats in the interest of harmonization of information management and reporting.
18. The further development and phased, stepwise implementation of the CMS Information Management Plan is set out in nineteen actions annexed to CMS Resolution 6.5 and UNEP/CMS/Conf. 7.6). The work under the UNEP pilot projects as well as the activities and projects foreseen in the Harmonization Action Plan will help facilitate and contribute to the range of high priority actions to be carried out under the CMS Information Management Plan in the next implementation phase, *inter alia*, by providing advice and guidance for:
 - further harmonization and streamlining of national reporting in the context of CMS and the Agreements under the auspices of CMS;
 - further development of IT facilities and tools for the dissemination and integrated management of data and information on migratory species;
 - improving institutional linkages.

19. **Further harmonization and streamlining of the national reporting of data and information on migratory species of wild animals:** Upon request of the CMS Standing Committee, new formats for the national reporting to the CMS were circulated to all Parties for voluntary use in the production of national reports, which will be examined at COP 7 together with feedback on the experiences gained in their use. In the context of the formal adoption of these new reporting formats (UNEP/CMS/Conf. 7.6.2) at COP 7,

the COP is invited to encourage and mandate the Secretariat to:

- a) *Further explore the full benefits of the modular structure of the new formats, in particular as regards:*
 - (i) the further development, application and integration of information modules for the collection of data and information under the CMS Agreements;
 - (ii) ways and procedures which would allow the integration of the national reporting under CMS into the reporting schemes under other biodiversity-related conventions and multilateral environmental agreements;

taking into account, inter alia, the ongoing and future activities to develop and harmonize the national reporting carried out within the relevant CMS Agreements, MEAs and UNEP, including the results of the national pilot projects described above.

- b) *Work with other convention secretariats and UNEP to move towards a synchronized timing and time schedule for future national reporting with that under other MEAs.*

The current lack of coherent and integrated reporting cycles has been identified by the current national pilot projects as a significant barrier to streamlining procedures for reporting at the national level.

- c) *Report to COP 8 on the outcome of the intersessional work set out under (a) and (b) above and to present this meeting with proposals to further improve the formats and the schedule for national reporting under the CMS.*

20. **Further development of IT facilities and tools for the dissemination and integrated management of data and information on migratory species:** The results and experiences gained through the harmonization pilot projects and other UNEP activities could provide valuable advice and support to CMS. In this context,

the COP is invited to encourage and mandate the Secretariat to:

- a) *Further explore the means to improve the full access to, and the efficient dissemination of, data and information on migratory species, inter alia, that reported by Parties to CMS and CMS Agreements.*
- b) *Continue reviewing and upgrading the services it provides through the CMS website, and support the implementation of identified improvements, in particular those aimed at linking and integrating services and clearing-house mechanisms across agreements and conventions thus leading to increased harmonization.*
- c) *Report to COP 8 on the outcome of the intersessional work set out under (a) and (b) above.*

21. **Improving institutional interlinkages:** The development of improved interlinkages both "internally" between CMS and its agreements and externally with other regional or global biodiversity-related organizations, agreements and conventions is a significant step towards harmonization. Indeed, the national pilot projects referred to above have already drawn attention to the need for increased coordination at the national level between focal points of the various agreements as a means to increase synergy and reduce duplication. With this in mind,

the COP is invited to:

- a) *Recognize within the joint work-programme between CBD and CMS (UNEP/CMS/Inf.7.13) the importance of Action 16.2 to " promote national level ... co-ordination between the national focal points of the two conventions" and the value of collaborating on information management (Action 19.1-19.3).*
- b) *Encourage the development of further joint work-programmes with other international agreements.*

The Way Forward – the roles of UNEP and the CMS Secretariat

22. UNEP will continue to support national and international harmonization and streamlining activities, and will keep all stakeholders informed about emerging needs and potential solutions with respect to national reporting and implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. To ensure a coordinated and co-operative approach, information about UNEP facilitated work and research will be disseminated to all relevant MEAs and MEA Secretariats by addressing, as appropriate, individual organizations, groups of organizations (e.g. the global biodiversity-related Conventions) or by raising generic, cross-sector issues for example at the MEA Co-ordination Meeting, which UNEP convenes annually.
23. The development and implementation of harmonization and streamlining activities requires the active and sustained involvement of policy-makers, administrators, national focal points and IT experts, both at the national and international level. MEA secretariats such as the CMS Secretariat are key players in this implementation process by actively supporting and providing feedback for the ongoing international work to develop harmonization and streamlining concepts. Furthermore, they are well placed to review and promote the results of this work by:
 - a) Implementing them in their own framework and administrative procedures (for example by developing joint work-programmes to strengthen the co-operation and institutional interlinkages with other MEAs or to improve the Secretariat's IT facilities/infrastructure to ease the access to and sharing of information).
 - b) Encouraging Contracting Parties to make best use of the results in their national implementation and reporting procedures. To ensure that information is communicated to the national level, the Secretariat could, for example, work to ensure that harmonization and streamlining activities are a standard agenda item of the relevant meetings, and are appropriately referred to in the relevant agreements, resolutions and decisions.
24. In this context, the CMS Secretariat is invited to continue to work with UNEP on harmonization of reporting and information management for biodiversity-related agreements, and to support efforts to implement the harmonization Action Plan developed under the auspices of the EMG.