

Conventions' presence on the web, possibly through UNEP's new project to implement a UNEP-wide Web Content Management System. He personally wished to retain a distinctive CITES website. Mr Djoghlafl felt that it was important to recognize the UN and UNEP family and acknowledge that the family was made up of different members with different statuses, each with their role to play. He also stated that the secretariats of the conventions are accountable to their respective governing bodies on policies and this issue, when finalized, would require a policy decision by the CBD Conference of the Parties. He reiterated the need to respect the autonomy of the MEAs administered by UNEP. Mr Hepworth agreed that maintaining distinctive websites was important and cited the experience of the merger of ASCOBANS into the CMS Secretariat where ASCOBANS Parties had insisted that the Agreement should retain its own website.

Decisions

BLG members to send comments or nil returns to CITES on Addis Ababa CD Rom. Content to be finalized at the end of June 2008 and the material to be posted on BLG website with links from individual conventions' websites in July.

ITEM 3 COOPERATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE CONVENTIONS

Harmonization of nomenclature and taxonomy

8. Lahcen El Kabiri (CMS) introduced the subject of harmonization of taxonomic nomenclature and invited Veronique Herrens Schmidt (CMS) to report on the second meeting of the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB-2) held on 25 May 2008. She explained that CITES and CMS are already working towards harmonizing the nomenclature and taxonomy between their two conventions and provided details of the ongoing work between the two secretariats. The completion of this task, foreseen in 2009, would facilitate the practical cooperation between the conventions and also assist the understanding by partners and the general public as well as the Conventions' national focal points. A proposal to establish a common database for species covered by the two conventions is being explored and UNEP-WCMC should participate in finalizing this project. The CSAB-2 meeting had endorsed the idea that all the biodiversity-related conventions should move towards a harmonization of the species nomenclature and taxonomy that they use.

Review of the Effectiveness of the BLG

9. Rereading the draft review by the Environmental Management Group on "Enhancing MEAs Coherence", Mr Hepworth felt that the criticisms were not entirely justified. Mr Djoghlafl added that despite the criticisms, Parties had renewed the BLG's mandate at the CBD COP. Unlike the EMG or the chemical cluster, however, the BLG had no dedicated staff who could pursue common interests and tasks. Joint activities were therefore mostly of a technical nature and pursued by the responsible programme officers. Mr Hepworth while stating that he preferred to spend time and effort doing work rather than drafting work plans, felt that a BLG work plan might help the Group's progress although opposition could be expected from those seeing a BLG work plan as a first step towards institutionalising the BLG. A BLG work plan could be drawn up on the basis of bilateral joint work plans.

10. Mr Hepworth stated that having checked the records, the BLG had not met in 2007 and it was important to arrange meetings regularly, preferably with all members present. So far it had never proved possible to secure 100% attendance. He would be delighted for the next BLG meeting to coincide with the CMS COP, but as this was taking place in Rome at the FAO headquarters, it would be optimal for the ITPGR to act as hosts. Shakeel Bhatti

confirmed his willingness to arrange this. Mr Djoghlaif concurred adding that he thought that, as with the Heads of Agency Task Force on the 2010 targets, it was important for the heads of agency themselves to attend. He stated that the meetings missed their purpose if the Heads were unable to attend. To this Mr Rao (WHC) intervened to point out that although he agreed with the essence of Mr Djoghlaif's comments, within the WHC the responsibility for natural heritage rested directly with the Deputy Director of WHC. The meeting recognized the specific situation of the World Heritage Convention..

11. Mr Rao (WHC) thought that better coordination of existing programmes and mechanisms would be the best way forward, as this would not create additional work and further demands on limited financial resources. The Group's activities and achievements could be reported in the Conventions' existing communications. Mr Djoghlaif (CBD) said that the conventions were at the centre of a complex set of relationships - being institutionally linked to UNEP while also answering to their parties.

12. Mr Hepworth (CMS) offered to produce a mobile roll-up information banner dedicated to the BLG, while Mr Rao (WHC) would circulate a a brief note on how the BLG could operate and communicate more effectively in a country context using the Democratic Republic of Congo as one possible model.

Decisions

CBD would prepare a response to the EMG paper, stressing BLG's achievements while recognizing that some improvements were possible

CMS to draft text for the public display

WHC to circulate paper on effective countrywide communication

A minimum of one BLG meeting each year will be a high level which all 6 Heads of Agency will make a strong effort to attend, starting with BLG 7 in Rome

Knowledge Management

13. Marcos Silva (CITES) explained that the Knowledge Management project was not a BLG task at the outset, although BLG members were involved. Its aim was to improve capacity at the secretariat level for databases and data management, and to assist secretariats and convention parties to meet obligations under the different decisions, recommendations and resolutions adopted at different COPs. Some progress had been achieved and the input and guidance of UNEP and WCMC would be helpful. Secretariats would also have to commit the resources to ensure that the projects could be implemented. He concluded by saying that inter-agency productions, like the Addis Ababa CD-Rom, would be facilitated through better information management and common standards and the adoption of a controlled vocabulary. Mr El Kabiri (CMS) added that national focal points could also benefit where cross cutting issues affected more than one convention.

14. Mr Rao (WHC) explained that WHC had not taken part because its reporting system was entirely different, being based on a six-year cycle for the States Parties' reporting and annually through the reactive monitoring and reporting system which was open to anybody to file information. Mr Silva (CITES) explained that information management was a wider subject than national reporting, and would benefit national focal points who would understand better their commitments and facilitate the production of information material as well as save staff time.

15. Mr Hutton (WCMC) explained that a concept paper for a follow-up project on Knowledge Management had been prepared and invited the BLG for comments prior to

the finalization and submission to UNEP. The project would draw lessons from any problems in the first project phase.

Decisions

BLG members to specify their needs on follow-up Knowledge Management project. CITES will take the lead and liaise with DELC and WCMC in finalizing the project document.

ITEM 4 PREPARATION OF THE THIRD EDITION OF GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK AND PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE 2010 TARGET

16. Robert Höft (CBD) described the aims and objectives of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO), a suite of targeted products to assess the achievement of the 2010 target. BLG input was desirable to develop a feeling of “ownership” of the process and products. This could be achieved by producing outreach material that draws on the main report but is focused on the specific mandates of BLG members. By contributing to the work on indicators, for example by disaggregating species-related information to allow specific statements about migratory species or endangered species in trade, BLG members were already part of the process.

17. Mr Höft reported that the Ramsar Convention represented the BLG in the GBO Advisory Group and asked the meeting how he could ensure that GBO was relevant to the other conventions.

18. Mr Wijnstekers (CITES) felt that the process was being driven by CBD and it was difficult for him to assign staff to monitor the process when his secretariat was losing four posts. He undertook however to try to engage in the process as much as possible and called on greater coordination within the UNEP family.

19. Mr Rao (WHC) thought that it was unlikely that additional funding could be found, to contribute to this work, but suggested that access could be provided to review relevant state of conservation reports and relevant World Heritage publications that may be useful for producing the GBO.

20. Mr Höft stressed the importance of GBO to CBD and asked other BLG members to see the project as an opportunity rather than a burden. CBD had a dedicated member of staff monitoring new information as it came to light, and other BLG members could provide case studies to ensure that their interests were represented. CBD’s work would be facilitated if others could indicate where new data sources could be found.

Decisions

BLG members to inform CBD of their priorities and provide their input and participate fully in the GBO process

The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership

21. Introducing this agenda item, Mr El Kabiri said that CMS was working together with BirdLife International and the Zoological Society of London on its own indicators in the run-up to the forthcoming meeting of the CMS Scientific Council in November. He then invited Mr Hutton (WCMC) to give a report on progress of the Partnership.

22. Mr Hutton (WCMC) explained that the Partnership had been established as a process to support the CBD in charting progress towards achieving the 2010 targets in a manner understandable to a wider public. A number of headline indicators, some of which in

turn contained composite indicators, had been identified and were being elaborated by the key partners, which included organizations such as the IUCN, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO, WHO, the Universities of Queensland and British Columbia, WWF and Traffic International. Forty affiliate partners were working on more specific indicators within their organization's area of expertise. A proposal had been submitted to GEF in 2006 and this was approved in 2007.

23. Both a Steering Committee and Scientific Advisory Board had been established to guide the work of the partnership and ensure scientific rigour. Most of the affiliate partners had already developed sound standards, and Scientific Advisory Board would be responsible to subject data and methodologies to peer review.

24. A decision had been necessary on whether to prioritize those areas where indicators were thought to be close to finalization (and thus achieve early results) or provide initial funding to those areas where little preparatory work had been done. It had been decided to do the latter, meaning that there were few completed outputs so far. Some parts of the work had progressed better than others. Some partners had been allocated a large amount of work but were receiving relatively little funding. The time span of the project had also been altered and the membership of the project team had changed.

25. The CBD COP9 decision of holding only one meeting of SBSTTA, probably in early 2010, would make it easier to overcome some of the difficulties arising from these delays and flaws in project design.

26. Mr El Kabiri (CMS) invited comments from BLG members, reminding them that there would be a meeting of MEA Scientific Subsidiary Bodies Chairs in the margins of the IUCN World Congress in Barcelona, which would also consider biodiversity indicators.

27. Mr Wijnstekers (CITES) was concerned that Convention parties were working towards targets without corresponding indicators by which to measure success and again requested that UNEP be asked to provide necessary support. Mr Höft (CBD) pointed to the CBD COP-9 decision on updating the strategic plan and emphasized that the current experience in the use of indicators would inform the design of future targets.

Decisions

MEAs to pursue establishing their specific indicators in full harmonization with WCMC and CBD framework.

MEAs to engage in process of designing a post-2010 target.

ITEM 5 CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY 2010

28. Mr Djoghlaif said that although CBD was in the lead in the organization of the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB), the active support of the other conventions would be critical. The Year would be presented as a joint effort and logos designed or amended accordingly. Responding to a point made by the Chairman, he explained that BLG members would be consulted at a meeting in September organized by the CBD Secretariat on the planning for this, including banner and logo design where he accepted the need for consultation to obtain full buy-in for BLG and other potential users. Each BLG member needed to make sure that their chief information officer participated in this meeting which would be a teleconference).

29. It was important for the IYB to be more than a publicity campaign, but as none of the conventions were really implementing agencies, a broader coalition was necessary. Elements of the campaign would be a tree-planting project with a target of three

billion trees partly achieved through a children's initiative involving twinning partnerships (e.g. one between schools in Montreal and Senegal). Another objective was to secure a billion signatures to be presented to the 2010 Heads of Governments summit. The "green wave" symbol would be depicted on the A380 airbus and passengers invited to sign the petition. CBD had appointed a dedicated staff member to coordinate planning.

30. During the IYB a number of key summits would be taking place: children, women, business, and religion. Each of these could be presented with relevant tailored messages. One area which would be the focus of International Biodiversity Day in 2009 would be alien species, a problem for all biodiversity-related conventions and one being exacerbated by increasing air travel.

31. Robert Höft (CBD) added that GBO was part of the outreach component during IYB. In taking ownership for GBO, BLG members could work with their networks and constituencies to ensure the widest dissemination of information. Mobilization of other partners would be key to success.

32. Mr. Rao (WHC) pointed to the special issue of "World Heritage" No. 49 on World Heritage Biodiversity, which the WHC had specifically produced as a contribution to CBD COP-9 and the fact that it carried an interview with the Executive Secretary of the CBD. This contribution was appreciated by the latter.

33. Mr Wijnstekers (CITES) asked who decided what the subjects of the annual campaigns were (some were determined by the UN centrally and others by the parties of individual conventions). Mr Wijnstekers feared that there were too many "Year of the .." campaigns and the public was becoming confused by them. This was acknowledged – a future calendar would be useful here.

34. Mr Hepworth felt that that CMS could have contributed more to the 2007-8 IBDs. Somehow the opportunities offered had not been fully taken up. He explained that CMS had experience of running successful "Year of the ..." campaigns, starting in 2006 with "Year of the Turtle", followed by 2007 and 2008 which had been designated "Year of the Dolphin" in partnership with travel firm, TUI and the NGO, WDCCS. 2009 would be "Year of the Gorilla". These were COP-backed campaigns. He was keen to free up CMS resources to support IYB in 2010, and so at this stage did not propose a separate CMS species campaign in 2010 – the emphasis in 2010 would be on meeting the targets for ALL species (and wildlife)

Decisions

All BLG members would try to increase their participation in International Biodiversity Day, starting in 2009. This would be a platform for BLG to be at the heart of preparations for the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010. All BLG members would participate in the IYB teleconference to be arranged by CBD (probable date September 2008) for Information officers.

ITEM 6 UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

35. Members of the group were reminded that it had been agreed to establish a calendar of events of interest.

36. The forthcoming COP of the Ramsar Convention in Korea was mentioned. This would provide another possible opportunity for the BLG to convene, in addition to the CMS COP in Rome in December 2008.

Decisions

Draw up a list of designated years and days as well as a joint calendar of meetings as agreed at the previous meeting in Gland

ITEM 7 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

37. Mr Bhatti (ITPGR) had indicated that he would be willing to arrange for the next BLG meeting to be held in Rome to coincide with the CMS COP. It was agreed that he should liaise with Mr Höft over details.

Decisions

Next meeting to be in Rome in December 2008 hosted by ITPGR

ITEM 8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

38. Mr Wijnstekers (CITES) reported difficulties encountered with the World Trade Organization, with whom the CITES COP had decided to enter a Memorandum of Understanding. While WTO had been granted observer status at CITES COPs, no reciprocal offer had been made. Similarly, the CBD's request for observer status in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) had been repeatedly turned down. WTO only seemed prepared to enter agreements of a strategic nature with organizations larger than Conventions. Mr Bhatti (ITPGR) confirmed that WTO would normally only enter agreements with other bodies on specific technical issues.

Decisions

The next meeting to consider a joint approach to WTO to try to agree a better approach. The CITES Standing Committee chair (Chile) would visit WTO as a national representative and would report back.

39. Mr El Kabiri (CMS) closed the meeting at 12:40.

Annex

List of participants

Robert Hepworth (CMS)
Lahcen El Kabiri (CMS)
Ahmed Djoghlaif (CBD)
Willem Wijnstekers (CITES)
Shakeel Bhatti (ITPGR)
Kishore Rao (WHC)
Veronique Herrenschmidt (CMS)
Jon Hutton (UNEP-WCMC)
Marcos Silva (CITES)
Robert Hoft (CBD)
Olivier de Munck (CBD)
Liam Addis (CMS)
Robert Vagg (CMS)
Patricia Nolan-Moss (CMS)

Apologies:

Anada Tiéga (Ramsar)
Nick Davidson (Ramsar)