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Promoting synergies within the cluster of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements

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The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) is the biodiversity assessment and policy implementation arm of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the world's foremost intergovernmental environmental organisation. The centre has been in operation for nearly 30 years, combining scientific research with practical policy advice.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AAPG	Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
ABS	Access and benefit-sharing
ACB	ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
AHJWG	Ad Hoc Joint Working Group
AHTEG	Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BLG	Biodiversity Liaison Group
CAT	Committee against Torture
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEPA	Communication, education, participation and awareness (or Communication, education and public awareness)
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
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
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRMW	Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers
CSAB	Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions
DAW	UN Division for the Advancement of Women (now UN Women)
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EMG	Environment Management Group

ExCOP	Extraordinary joint meeting of the Conferences of the Parties
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FNR_Rio	Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (a UNEP/GEF project)
GBO	Global Biodiversity Outlook
GC	Governing Council (of UNEP)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
ICCPR	Human Rights Committee/ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICOMOS	International Council of Monuments and Sites
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IEG	International Environmental Governance
IGOs	Intergovernmental organizations
IMoSEB	International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (now UN Women)
IPBES	Intergovernmental (Science - Policy) Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MAB	UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan to Combat Desertification
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (now UN Women)
PEBLDS	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
PIC	Prior Informed Consent
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SGA	Sub-Global Assessment
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPREP	Pacific Regional Environment Programme
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCSD	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ('Rio+20')
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEO	United Nations Environment Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-DELIC	UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions
UNEP GC/GMEF	UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women)
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WCO	World Customs Organization
WEO	World Environment Organization
WHC	Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)

Foreword



Image by Pentti Hokkanen/Image bank of the Environmental Administration

Reversing a trend of proliferation and fragmentation is not an easy task. It is even less so when such change is pursued in a setting of complex and multilayered international environmental governance. It is, however, most definitely a worthwhile cause.

Over the past half-decade, the international community has successfully negotiated many multilateral environmental agreements. States have come together to craft legally binding solutions to environmental problems as these have emerged. But despite the many good legal instruments that we have negotiated, we have not managed to set up a coherent system.

The measure of success of international environmental governance is the betterment of the state of the environment. Current facts and figures tell us that our system is failing us. The state of the environment is not improving – on the contrary. There is growing scientific evidence that points to the continuous deterioration of the global environment. What is particularly worrying is that the Earth’s biological richness continues to decline globally at an accelerating speed. At the same time, climate change is expected to intensify in the coming years, resulting in devastating effects on biodiversity.

Countries report on the weakened implementation of MEAs, due to overloaded meeting agendas, duplication of tasks, failed national coordination, intricate and arduous reporting procedures, and so on. Our authorities simply cannot cope within the current system.

Trends can be reversed and international environmental governance must be reformed. This is something we have experienced first-hand from working on synergies in the chemicals and waste cluster. The intensified collaboration and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions set a good precedent for work in other thematic clusters of MEAs. Previous experience shows that reforms are possible, albeit in order for synergies to succeed they need to be tailored so that they take the specific characteristics of each cluster into account.

Finland has also taken on a lead role in the reform of the IEG system as co-chair, together with Kenya, of the intergovernmental process that resulted in the Nairobi – Helsinki outcome.

Against the backdrop of our commitment to reform it made sense to team up with UNEP-WCMC to look at the options for how to make work among our biodiversity-related conventions more effective.

This report presents the results of that team effort. I hope it will provide insights and systemic innovative thinking on fusing elements of our system to make it more than the sum of its parts.

Mr. Ville Niinistö
Minister of the Environment of Finland

1. Executive Summary

Objective, audience and remit of this report

The **objective** of this report is to analyse the potential for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions and to develop a set of practical options for realising synergies built around four selected key areas primarily at global (multilateral environmental agreement, MEA) level and informing and supporting MEA processes at the regional and national levels. The key areas include i) the science-policy interface (including the role of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, IPBES), ii) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, iii) national reporting and iv) capacity-building. In addition, the report develops a roadmap for achieving the suggested synergies for MEA governing bodies and the UNEP Governing Council through a party-driven process.

The report is aimed at guiding the governing bodies of the various biodiversity-related MEAs as well as the UNEP Governing Council, the International Environmental Governance process and MEA-related processes. This report focuses on the following **six biodiversity-related conventions and treaties**: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and World Heritage Convention (WHC).

The International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process

MEAs are at the heart of environmental governance, and those MEAs addressing the biodiversity crisis are faced with questions about their effectiveness and efficiency, in terms of their functioning but in particular of their implementation. One issue that has been highlighted consistently within this debate is the need for enhanced cooperation and synergies among MEAs as a tool to enhance MEA effectiveness. Accordingly, the debate of the **International Environmental Governance (IEG) reform process** has substantially addressed the issue of synergies and has consistently called for increased cooperation and coordination among MEAs and in particular the biodiversity-related conventions, and for a process towards enhanced synergies between conventions.

In February 2012, the UNEP Governing Council made an important decision that is expected to shape to future of the biodiversity-related MEAs. Decision SS.XII/3 recognizes *"the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognizing 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"* and, furthermore, requested *"the Executive Director to 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"*.

The recent decision from the UNEP Governing Council, calling for enhanced synergies among the biodiversity-related MEAs, builds on the IEG-process that has continued for over a decade. Key

aspects of the IEG debate since 2002 in this regard include the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance; the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development; the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document; the High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment; the Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' Environmental Activities; the 2008 report of the Joint Inspection Unit on *Management Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations Systems*; the 2010 report of the Environment Management Group (EMG) on *Advancing the biodiversity agenda – A UN system-wide contribution*; the 2010 'Nairobi – Helsinki Outcome' of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on International Environmental Governance; several decisions of the UNEP Governing Council and the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 by the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2010.

In April 2010, the **Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster** held in Helsinki, Finland, concluded that the focus of an MEA synergies process should be primarily on enhancing synergies on issues of substance, rather than on administrative issues. It identified the following programmatic areas as possible areas for joint action: the science-policy interface (*e.g.* an IPBES); harmonization of reporting; streamlining of meeting agendas; joint information management and awareness raising; and capacity building, compliance, funding and review mechanisms.

Convention provisions on synergies

The governing bodies of all six global biodiversity-related agreements have adopted **decisions or resolutions** calling for enhanced synergies with other conventions, while the **strategic planning documents** of CBD, CITES, CMS and Ramsar Convention carry provisions for implementing synergies as well.

Existing mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions

A wide range of mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the biodiversity-related conventions already exists. Among the **generic mechanisms and bodies**, the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), comprising the heads of the secretariats of the six conventions, and the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions (CSAB) have gained particular significance. The Environment Management Group (EMG) is a UN system-wide coordination body, while the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative seeks to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems in support of knowledge management activities among MEAs.

Thematic mechanisms of cooperation include the Inter-Agency Liaison Group on Invasive Alien Species, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and the Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds, all with participation of some of the biodiversity-related conventions. The biodiversity-related conventions have established a range of bilateral or multilateral **Memoranda of Understanding/ Cooperation** as well as joint work plans or programmes with other conventions. Subsets of the conventions also cooperate on a range of **thematic issues** through joint initiatives such as bushmeat, environmental impact assessment or site-based conservation, among others.

Despite the wide range of coordination mechanisms, no overarching mechanism exists that brings the Parties of the MEAs together to identify joint solutions for common issues and shared concerns.

The latest international status reports confirm that the loss of biodiversity continues all over the globe, meaning that additional efforts must be taken to enable the biodiversity-related MEAs to fully deliver their intended objectives. In this regard, enhancing synergies and coherence among the biodiversity-MEAs will be essential, as a huge potential for synergies lies unrealised.

Examples of synergies in other areas

The report briefly reviews significant lessons learned from other synergy processes. This includes the **cluster of chemicals and waste conventions**, which has achieved enhanced synergies facilitated by the work of an *Ad Hoc* Joint Working Group on Enhancing Cooperation and Coordination. Within the **Human Rights Treaty System**, efforts for enhanced synergies and a single, unified treaty body did not materialize due to procedural issues, while the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (**UN Women**) provides an example for the successful merger of distinct UN bodies.

First key area: Science – policy interface

The biodiversity-MEAs have long suffered from the lack of an external mechanism to guide decision-making with authoritative and scientifically credible information. The Intergovernmental Science - Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) intends to fulfil this gap, but necessary steps need to be taken to ensure a synergistic relationship between the new panel and the biodiversity-related MEAs.

With the current move toward an **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** (IPBES), several years of discussion about improving the science – policy interface for biodiversity are coming to fruition. As contained in the *Busan Outcome Document*, the third intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder IPBES-meeting outlined key principles and functions of the new panel. The biodiversity-related MEAs are outlined as the key clients of the new panel. To this end, CBD, CMS, CITES and Ramsar Convention have passed decisions or resolutions positioning themselves toward an emerging IPBES, and the ways in which they will engage are currently emerging.

The six global biodiversity-related agreements have established **scientific advisory bodies**, in the form of subsidiary bodies or, in the case of the World Heritage Convention, external organisations acting as advisory bodies to the convention. Mandated by the Biodiversity Liaison Group, the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions have, since 2007, discussed areas of cooperation and collaboration on the scientific issues of the various convention processes and their translation into policy.

Assessments and indicators are two areas of particular significance at the science – policy interface for the biodiversity-related conventions. The conventions have drawn on a number of **assessments**, which include the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and a range of thematic assessments. **Biodiversity indicators** have become particularly important for the CBD, in measuring progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, and are currently under preparation for the goals and targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. CITES, CMS, Ramsar and World Heritage Convention

also make use of indicators or envisage doing so while several of the conventions collaborate on indicators through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership.

A range of **options for synergies** between the biodiversity-related conventions in the area of the **science – policy interface** arise:

1. While the working arrangements of IPBES have not been decided yet, it is expected that the MEAs would find a way to speak with one voice to and within IPBES, using the opportunity of IPBES for a coherent approach to the science – policy interface. While mandated by the Parties to the conventions, the approach could be assisted by CSAB.
2. The government-driven character of the emerging IPBES would allow for consistency of decisions within IPBES and the conventions' governing bodies.
3. Through IPBES, the conventions could provide a coordinated mandate for global and regional as well as thematic assessments that can then be used to provide coherent and coordinated scientific advice to the convention-related decision-making processes.
4. The relevant conventions could also cooperate in taking a joint approach to the Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment.
5. There is need for an integrated approach to scientific advice at the regional and national level, in particular through sub-global assessments, which IPBES is expected to promote.
6. With the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, an opportunity is provided to better align indicator development between conventions at the global, but also regional and national level. Again, IPBES could play a supportive role in this regard.
7. Another area for cooperation of the conventions lies in recognition and involvement of traditional knowledge and the holders of such knowledge, facilitated and supported by the work of IPBES.

Second key area: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 calls for a UN system-wide approach for implementation of the convention. In this context, integrating the objectives and actions of the biodiversity-related MEAs under the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) will be the key to achieve greater coherence and efficiency in implementation.

With the adoption of the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD has reached out to other conventions, inviting them to contribute to the collaborative implementation of the Plan, stressing synergies with the national implementation of MEAs. Other conventions have begun to acknowledge the opportunities the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers for enhancing collaboration and synergies. The Strategic Plan has also been taken up by the Environment Management Group and the UN General Assembly, lending their support to the implementation of the Plan.

Both CITES and CMS have encouraged their national focal points to engage with the process of updating and revision of **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans** (NBSAPs), the main mechanisms for implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Also, several agreements have engaged with the updating and revision of NBSAPs through Memoranda of Cooperation with the CBD.

A range of **options for synergies** between the biodiversity-related conventions in the area of the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and NBSAPs** arise:

1. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers the chance for all biodiversity-related conventions and the wider UN system to collaborate on the Plan's implementation and to gain ownership of the Plan, including access to Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding.
2. Conventions can cooperate in the synergistic implementation of NBSAPs, with the options ranging from collaboration of national focal points on NBSAPs through, for example, national biodiversity committees; integration of convention-specific targets, objectives and commitments into the NBSAPs; national and local capacity-building for convention implementation through NBSAPs; support from non-governmental stakeholders to the conventions via the NBSAPs; as well as collaborative efforts of focal points to the biodiversity-related conventions for mainstreaming biodiversity.
3. Synergistic implementation of NBSAPs by the focal points of the biodiversity-related conventions would also assist individual Parties in taking consistent positions across the governing bodies of the conventions.
4. At the global level, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has the potential to allow for a better alignment of the strategic documents of MEAs.

Third key area: National reporting to the six biodiversity-related conventions

A lot of experience for synergies options in the area of national reporting has been assembled, ranging from integrated national-level data management to global level harmonization of reporting requirements, supported by new opportunities offered by information technology.

National reporting is a **key obligation** for Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions and treaties, with CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention and World Heritage Convention having well established national reporting systems. Since 1998, a number of pilot projects in developing countries and small island developing states have tested **approaches to more integrated or harmonized reporting** to the biodiversity-related conventions as well as to the three Rio Conventions, and a number of reports have been produced and workshops have taken place. The challenges and obstacles to, as well as preconditions for, streamlining and harmonizing national reporting, both at the level of Parties nationally as well as at the global convention level, have been identified.

A range of **options for synergies** between the biodiversity-related conventions in the area of **national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions** can be identified as follows:

1. At the national level, immediate gains can be made through improved communication, coordination and collaboration between national focal points to the biodiversity-related conventions on national reporting and through streamlining and integrating the national management of biodiversity information that underlies the reporting processes.
2. With testing of approaches to integrated reporting to the Rio Conventions at the national level through the current UNEP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) FNR_Rio project, experience on such approaches could be shared between the sets of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions.

3. Country experience could not only be further tested but also better made available to the global convention meetings and documentation, supported by regional processes and institutions.
4. National efforts in streamlining biodiversity data and information could be supported through the development and testing of guidelines for strengthening and integrating national management of biodiversity information.
5. The options for improved collaboration of the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the NBSAPs (see above) would also benefit the promotion of streamlining and harmonizing national reporting.
6. National experience could result in new insights into what should and what can be done at the global level, for example regarding changes to reporting formats.
7. Key aspects for global-level efforts for streamlining and/or harmonizing national reporting between the biodiversity-related conventions range from the identification of the conventions' information needs and an agreement on terms and definitions to the development of joint reporting formats for overlapping and/or theme-specific information, and joint information management systems and online reporting.
8. The current efforts for the development of indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its goals and targets could inform efforts for harmonization of national reporting to the range of the biodiversity-related conventions.
9. A technical working group at the global level, consisting of technical staff from the different secretariats and experts from governments and relevant organisations, could take the issue of streamlining and harmonization of national reporting forward.

Fourth key area: Capacity-building

Capacity-building has long been recognised as a key requirement for MEA implementation. With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, biodiversity-related MEAs are in a better position to cooperate and develop synergies within a joint capacity-building initiative for MEA implementation.

The **Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building**, adopted by the UNEP Governing Council in 2005, stressed the need for capacity to implement MEAs, in particular for developing countries. The decision of the CBD Conference of the Parties, which adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, placed the need for capacity building in the context of synergies with other conventions. Capacity-building plays a major role in the **texts, strategic documents and work plans of the biodiversity-related agreements**, while the conventions have developed a range of joint work plans and initiatives in support of **collaborative implementation** of the conventions by Parties. Capacity-building has accordingly been high on the agenda of the BLG. Capacity-building has also been recognized as a key element for ensuring the credibility and legitimacy of the future **IPBES** process and its products.

A range of further **options for synergies in the area of capacity-building** can be identified as follows:

1. Building on the existing collaboration, joint initiatives on capacity-building could be further developed by the biodiversity-related conventions.

2. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers new opportunities for collaboration between the conventions for building Parties' capacity to implement the obligations from the conventions, not least through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.
3. Within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, a joint capacity-building initiative of all the biodiversity-related conventions could be developed, making use of funding opportunities for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity.
4. The conventions could also cooperate on capacity-building in the area of the science – policy interface, working jointly through IPBES.

Synthesis and outlook – key options for developing synergies

Key **benefits from synergies** between the biodiversity-related conventions at the national level include enhanced cooperation across sectors (e.g. water, agriculture, forests), reduced burden of national reporting, more efficient use of financial resources, more efficient drawing on existing national expertise, and increased consistency between national positions in different fora. At the global level, benefits from synergies include consistency in international commitments, common targets allowing for better identification of gaps in addressing global issues, better targeting of development and environment funding. Furthermore, joint activities will enable an increase in the visibility and authority of the biodiversity-related MEAs both at national and global levels.

Some **lessons from the experience of other processes** include the need for synergies to be party-driven and government owned; following a step-by-step rather than a 'big jump' approach; being transparent, allowing for confidence-building for the stakeholders involved; and allowing for consistent decision-taking by individual Parties across the conventions.

The synergies process for the biodiversity-related conventions can **build on the wide range of existing cooperation** as well as make use of the options for collaboration and coordination at the global, regional and national levels provided by the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**.

Options for synergies in the biodiversity cluster

Synergies could be materialised through a number of non-mutually exclusive approaches. The following **five options** represent a growing level of ambition:

- 1) Enhancing synergies through the existing secretariat level cooperation (business as usual);
- 2) Enhancing synergies on programmatic issues through a party-driven approach and enhancing secretariat initiatives as well as synergies at the national level, building on existing collaboration and making use of lessons learned through projects and initiatives;
- 3) Extending party-driven synergies to include joint administrative functions, secretariats, budgets and communication functions, following the example of the chemicals and waste conventions;
- 4) Merging conventions as protocols under the CBD;
- 5) Fundamental reorganisation of MEAs under a proposed World Environment Organisation (WEO) or United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO).

This report suggests a **step-by-step approach to building synergies**, with the aim of making the biodiversity-related conventions more efficient in contributing to the overarching goal of conserving

biodiversity and sustainably using natural resources. This approach follows option 2 above, while not excluding options 3-5 at a later stage. It stresses a party-driven process that respects each individual convention's autonomy, where form follows function and synergies serve the purpose of enhancing implementation.

Key elements for this approach at the national level would include the following:

- collaboration of national focal points on NBSAP implementation, aided by appropriate mechanisms such as national biodiversity committees
- the inclusion of the objectives of other conventions in NBSAPs
- alignment of national policies and strategies for the non-CBD conventions with the NBSAP
- joint development of national indicators for convention implementation
- joint use of funding, in particular for national capacity-building for convention implementation
- collaboration of national focal points and relevant agencies on national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions and integrated management of national biodiversity management in support of reporting to, and implementation of, all the biodiversity-related conventions
- making available to the global convention processes the experience on synergies at the national level
- support to national synergy efforts by the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO)

Regional/ subregional cooperation mechanisms and processes, assisted by the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO), could provide support to the integrated implementation of NBSAPs across the conventions at the national level, could establish or host regional hubs for IPBES and could assist Parties in testing national approaches to streamlining and better integrating reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions.

The **global synergies process** could further evolve through the following elements:

- alignment of the strategic planning documents of the biodiversity-related conventions in the light of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020
- joint interaction of the conventions with IPBES, facilitated by the BLG and advised by CSAB
- joint approval and use by the conventions of global and sub-global biodiversity assessments as well as of biodiversity indicators
- joint activities in key thematic areas, such as water, forests, agriculture, marine biodiversity, invasive alien species, bushmeat or protected areas, among others
- further harmonization of national reporting
- a joint capacity-building initiative of the biodiversity-related conventions for convention implementation
- joint provision of guidance to national-level implementation of conventions in a synergistic manner, supported by the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO)
- extension of synergy efforts to other MEAs such as the other Rio Conventions, supported by UN-wide efforts facilitated by the Environment Management Group

- consistent decision-taking across the biodiversity-related conventions in support of synergies

Suggested next steps for synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions

It is suggested that the UNEP Governing Council establishes a party-driven **Intergovernmental Working Group on Synergies between the Biodiversity-related Conventions** and invites the bureaus of the governing bodies of the conventions to nominate Party and secretariat representatives. The **core function of the intergovernmental working group** would be to review a number of programmatic **issues** and prepare consistent decisions and resolutions for the governing bodies of the six conventions in terms of mandating and advising the synergies process. The group could also inform the International Environmental Governance process of the synergies process; agree on a joint approach to other MEAs (*e.g.* the Rio Conventions) and processes (*e.g.* IPBES); establish technical working groups on issues of common interest, such as national reporting, water, or capacity-building, including technical experts from the secretariats, Parties and relevant organisations; and develop a joint approach to funding for biodiversity-related MEAs. At a later stage, Parties might wish to **extend synergies to include also administrative issues** that currently might be considered difficult to achieve.

The work of the group would be supported by the Biodiversity Liaison Group. Global bodies such as the Environment Management Group and, in terms of funding, the Global Environment Facility, could support the synergies process, and the emerging process should be considered at the **follow-up process to the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)**.

2. Introduction and background

2.1 Objective of this report, audience and remit

The **objective** of this report is to analyse the potential for enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related agreements and to develop a set of practical options for realising synergies built around four selected key areas primarily at global (multilateral environmental agreements, MEA) level and informing and supporting MEA processes at the regional and national levels. The **key areas** include:

- 1) The science-policy interface (including the role of IPBES),
- 2) National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020,
- 3) National reporting,
- 4) Capacity-building.

In addition, the report suggests a roadmap for achieving the suggested synergies for MEA governing bodies and the UNEP Governing Council through a party-driven process.

The report is aimed at guiding the governing bodies of the various biodiversity-related MEAs as well as the UNEP Governing Council, the International Environmental Governance process and MEA-related processes, supporting appropriate action on enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs in accordance with recent decisions (see sections 2.4 and 2.6 below).

This report focuses on the following **six biodiversity-related conventions and treaties**: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands), and the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)¹. This is in line with the conclusions of the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the biodiversity cluster, held in Helsinki, Finland, in April 2010 (see section 2.5 below), which state that these six conventions ‘would constitute a manageable biodiversity cluster’, not least since the agreements are closely linked and have already established cooperative relationships². It is, however, acknowledged that other multilateral environmental agreements, global or regional in nature, would also play a role in implementing synergies. This is relevant in particular for the CMS Family of Agreements and species-related Memoranda of Understanding, for which the issue of synergies is highly relevant – this is outside the remit of this report.

The report builds on those opportunities for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related MEAs that the International Environmental Governance (IEG) process has clearly identified, while being aware of the challenges that have been put forward. The Nordic Symposium discussed the

¹ For the history, remit, mandates and objectives of the conventions, see, for example, Kiss & Shelton, 2004 and Baakman, 2011.

² *Report from a Nordic Symposium: “Synergies in the biodiversity cluster”*, p 5, available at <http://www.biodivcluster.fi/pdf/Synergies%20report%20final.pdf>.

possibilities for enhancing synergies among biodiversity MEAs and identified, among others, the four work areas (science-policy interface, NBSAPs, national reporting, capacity-building) explored in this report as key areas for further developing the concept of, and practical steps towards, synergies among the biodiversity-related MEAs³.

- The **science-policy interface** has recently emerged as a theme of major interest for the conventions in question, and the Intergovernmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is currently being established and is expected to provide a forum for many stakeholders including the biodiversity-related MEAs to cooperate.
- The 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD adopted the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** and invited ‘Parties and other Governments at the forthcoming meetings of the decision-making bodies of the other biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant agreements to consider appropriate contributions to the collaborative implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets’ (decision X/2, paragraph 16a). The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which is supposed to be implemented mainly through **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans** (NBSAPs), thus provides a major platform for promoting and further developing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions.
- **Harmonization of national reporting** between the CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and World Heritage Conventions has been discussed for many years and efforts toward it have been acknowledged by a number of governing body decisions of the conventions.
- Finally, **capacity-building** is an issue of major concern for all MEAs and is crucial for an effective implementation of the conventions, in particular in developing countries. It is thus a subject where synergies promise a strong positive impact on convention implementation at the national level.

2.2 Definitions

In line with a 2004 UNEP report on synergies (UNEP-WCMC, 2004) between MEAs, the following definitions apply in this report:

- *Biodiversity-related conventions*: These comprise the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and World Heritage Convention. This report uses the terms ‘conventions’ and ‘multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)’ although the ITPGRFA is called a treaty rather than a convention and the World Heritage Convention and the ITPGRFA might not be considered full environmental agreements⁴.

³ The Nordic Symposium (see section 3.5 below) also identified joint information management as an area for developing synergies; although not further discussed under a separate heading in this document, the biodiversity-related conventions cooperate strongly in this regard, in particular through the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (see section 3.1). The areas of compliance, funding and review mechanisms, also suggested by the Nordic Symposium for joint action, are not covered here in more detail (but note that national reporting, discussed at length here, is a key review mechanism).

⁴ For definitions of the terms Agreement, Convention, Treaty and Multilateral Environmental Agreement see UNEP, 2007.

- *Clustering*: Clustering refers to the combination, grouping, consolidation, integration or merger of MEAs or parts thereof in order to improve international environmental governance. Clustering provides opportunities for synergies, particularly within each cluster, where agreements have much in common in terms of issues to be addressed.
- *Harmonization*: Harmonization is defined as those activities, particularly in the field of information management and reporting, that lead to a more integrated process and greater potential for sharing information; it might include the merging of processes.
- *Inter-linkages*: Inter-linkages include synergies and coordination between MEAs.
- *Streamlining*: The streamlining of processes such as national reporting are defined as those mechanisms that make each individual reporting process or a joint, integrated process easier, and more efficient and effective, or more straightforward for Contracting Parties to implement; streamlined processes are not normally merged.
- *Synergies*: Synergies include all activities that aim at enhanced collaboration of MEAs through linking processes in a way that increases the effects of the sum of the joint activities beyond the sum of individual activities, and thus making efforts more effective and efficient.

2.3 Structure of this report

In the following sections, this report will review the IEG process, explore existing synergies and identify options and guiding elements for further promotion of synergies in the four work areas (science-policy interface, NBSAPs and the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, national reporting, and capacity-building). It is important to note that these subject areas are interlinked; in particular capacity-building constitutes a cross-cutting area of major relevance to the other subjects.

Following the subject-specific sections, a synthesis chapter identifies the key options for developing synergies through the four areas, before the report concludes with suggested milestones and next steps for synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions.

2.4 The International Environmental Governance reform process

In October 2010, at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the CBD, governments of the world concluded that the target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 had not been achieved (CBD decision X/2, preamble). The third edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010), launched by the CBD in 2010, found that despite all efforts the indications are of further **declines of biodiversity**, be it species, ecosystems or genetic diversity. While significant progress has been made in specific areas, such as the expansion of the network of protected areas or the protection of some threatened species, measures to address the five principal pressures directly driving biodiversity loss (habitat change, overexploitation, pollution, invasive alien species, and climate change) have not been sufficient; these pressures are either constant or increasing in intensity.

These findings provide a major challenge to the **system of International Environmental Governance** (IEG) for the area of biodiversity. MEAs are a key component of environmental governance, and those MEAs addressing the biodiversity crisis are faced with questions about their effectiveness and efficiency, in terms of their functioning but in particular of their implementation. The number of MEAs has increased over the past decades, bringing with them a substantial implementation and

reporting burden for contracting parties and in many cases overlapping mandates and work areas. On this background, the discussions about international environmental governance have intensified in recent years. One issue that has been highlighted consistently within this debate is the need for enhanced cooperation and synergies among MEAs as an important tool to enhance MEA effectiveness. The following paragraphs provide a summary of some of the key points of the IEG debate for the issue of synergies between biodiversity-related MEAs; see also **figure 1** for an overview.

The Plan of Implementation of the 2002 **World Summit on Sustainable Development** called for '*an effective institutional framework for sustainable development*' (paragraph 137) and suggested a number of concrete measures to implement this provision. In addressing biodiversity and the implementation of the CBD, the Plan of Implementation called for actions at all levels to ... '*Encourage effective synergies between the Convention [on Biological Diversity] and other multilateral environmental agreements, inter alia, through the development of joint plans and programmes, with due regard to their respective mandates, regarding common responsibilities and concerns*' (paragraph 44c).

The Plan of Implementation urged for full implementation of the decision on international environmental governance adopted by the Seventh Special Session/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the UNEP Governing Council in 2002, which, through decision SS.VII/1, had adopted the report of the **Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance**. That report⁵ concluded that '*the clustering approach to multilateral environmental agreements holds some promise, and issues relating to the location of secretariats, meeting agendas and also programmatic cooperation between such bodies and with UNEP should be addressed*' (paragraph 8n). On improved coordination among and effectiveness of MEAs (paragraphs 26+), the recommendations of the report include the following:

- Pilot projects addressing issues such as improvement of national reporting mechanisms among biodiversity-related conventions should be further pursued (paragraph 27).
- UNEP is asked to enhance synergies and linkages on issues related to scientific assessments on matters of common concern, in cooperation with the MEA secretariats (paragraph 27).
- The effectiveness of MEAs should be periodically reviewed; States should have regard for the UNEP guidelines on compliance with and enforcement of MEAs; and capacity-building, technology transfer and the provision of financial resources are regarded as of great importance for the effectiveness of MEAs (paragraph 28).
- '*While taking fully into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conference of the parties, considerable benefits could accrue from a more coordinated approach to areas such as scheduling and periodicity of meetings of the conferences of the parties; reporting; scientific assessment on matters of common concern, capacity-building, transfer*

⁵ Appended to decision SS.VII/1

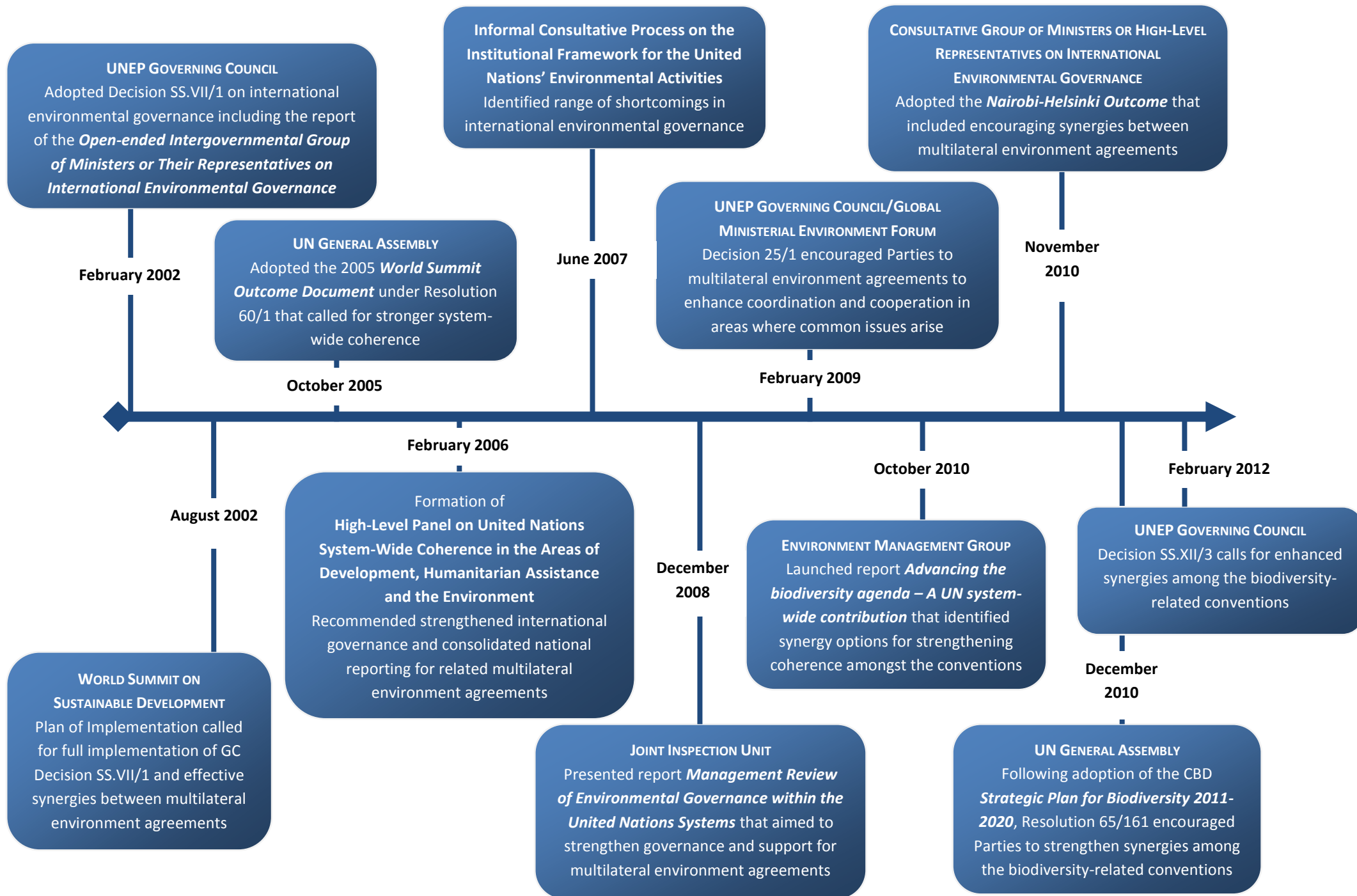


Figure 1: Key points in time of the IEG debate for the issue of synergies between biodiversity-related conventions

of technology; and enhancing the capacities of developing countries before and after the entry into force of legal agreements to implement and review progress on a regular basis by all parties concerned' (paragraph 29).

- The requirement of improved coordination of positions concerning MEAs at the national level is highlighted as one aspect of enhanced coordination at the convention level (paragraph 29).

The General Assembly resolution 60/1 adopted the **2005 World Summit Outcome Document**, which, in paragraph 169, called for a number of measures in support of stronger system-wide coherence, including, among others, exploring the possibility of a more coherent institutional framework to address the need for more efficient environmental activities in the UN system, 'including a more integrated structure, building on existing institutions and internationally agreed instruments, as well as the treaty bodies and the specialized agencies'.

Subsequently, in 2006, the Secretary-General announced the formation of the **High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment**. The report of the Panel, *'Delivering As One'*⁶, undertook a thorough assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations system in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. It found the UN work in the areas of development and the environment fragmented and weak and noted policy incoherence, duplication and operational ineffectiveness due to inefficient and ineffective governance and unpredictable funding (summary of the report). The Panel recommended strengthened international environmental governance and the commission, by the Secretary-General, of an independent assessment of IEG within the UN system (summary). It called for efficiencies and substantive coordination between treaty bodies, as pursued by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention secretariats, in particular through stronger efforts *'to reduce costs and reporting burdens and to streamline implementation. National reporting requirements for related MEAs should be consolidated into one comprehensive annual report, to ease the burden on countries and improve coherence'* (paragraph 39). The recommendations continue: *'Governing bodies of multilateral environmental agreements should promote administrative efficiencies, reducing the frequency and duration of meetings, moving to joint administrative functions, convening back-to-back or joint meetings of bureaux of related conventions, rationalizing knowledge management and developing a consistent methodological approach to enable measurement of enforcement and compliance'* (paragraph 39).

Another of the follow-up processes to the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document was the **Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' Environmental Activities**. A Co-Chairs' Option Paper in June 2007 (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/61/follow-up/environment/EG-OptionsPaper.PDF>) identified a range of shortcomings of international environmental governance, including, for MEAs, *'fragmentation and a lack of coherence in the environmental legal framework'* and a *'heavy burden on Member States, particularly in terms of reporting obligations and COP meetings'* (chapter 2). The paper suggested a number of building blocks for a strengthened IEG, one of which is MEAs, with the following rationale: *'Enhance*

⁶ General Assembly document A/61/583, 20 November 2006

cooperation and coordination amongst MEAs, promote working in clusters and rationalise secretariat activities'. Here, the paper suggests initiating the thematic, programmatic and administrative clustering of MEAs in, among others, the area of conservation (including '*biodiversity, forests, Ramsar, species*'), accompanied by more specific suggestions in this regard. This section of the paper concludes with the call for ensuring '*that any savings resulting from improved coordination and cooperation of MEAs are used to increase implementation activities*'. The Co-Chairs' options, including those on MEAs, were extensively and sometimes controversially discussed at the General Assembly and various other fora. As stated in a report on the Informal Consultative Process from 2009 (<http://www.un.org/ga/president/63/PDFs/ReportIEG100209.pdf>), the Co-Chairs '*found themselves in a situation, in which the attempt to move to a decision increased the difficulties in finding consensus*' and concluded that '*a consensus document would likely fail to add value to existing decisions*'. They recommended '*to all interested parties to make the best use of upcoming intergovernmental meetings to remain seized of the matter*'.

In 2008, the **Joint Inspection Unit** presented its report *Management Review of Environmental Governance within the United Nations Systems*. The report's objective was to '*strengthen the governance of and programmatic and administrative support for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) by United Nations organizations*'. Following a review of the management framework of IEG, including of global environmental conventions, the report concludes with recommendations, among others the following:

- '*The General Assembly should provide the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum with adequate support through activating its own regular review of the reports of MEAs to enhance GC/GMEF's capacity to fulfil its mandate to review and evaluate, on a regular basis, the implementation of all MEAs administered within the United Nations system, with a view to ensuring coordination and coherence between them in accordance with decision SS.VII/1 and keep the Assembly informed of progress made*' (recommendation 5).
- '*The Secretary-General as Chairman of the Chief Executive Board should encourage the executive heads of the organizations and the MEAs: (a) To develop a joint system-wide planning framework for the management and coordination of environmental activities, drawing on the results-based management framework endorsed by General Assembly resolution 60/257, and to this end, (b) to draw up an indicative-planning document serving for joint programming of their activities in the environment sphere*' (recommendation 7).

The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum**, in decision 25/1 (2009), encouraged '*contracting parties to other multilateral environmental agreements [than the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions] in specific areas where common issues arise to consider ways and means of enhancing cooperation and coordination, drawing upon, as appropriate, the experience of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions*' (paragraph 27).

In February 2010, in discussions by ministers and heads of delegations at the 11th Special Session of the UNEP GC/GMEF under the rubric of '*international environmental governance and sustainable development*' (Theme I of the session), the synergies process among the chemical and wastes conventions was said to provide an important example of incremental reform. Lessons learned

should be used swiftly for other conventions, in particular for those related to biodiversity. In decision SS.XI/9 (Nusa Dua Declaration), governments recognized *'the importance of enhancing synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives, and encourage the conferences of the parties to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements to consider strengthening efforts in this regard, taking into account relevant experiences'*. The COPs of the biodiversity-related conventions were invited to launch a synergies process, taking into account lessons learned from the chemicals and waste synergies process.

In 2010, the **Environment Management Group** (EMG) launched a report *Advancing the biodiversity agenda – A UN system-wide contribution*. The report contains a chapter on *Interlinkages and synergies in the implementation of the biodiversity agenda*, which identifies synergy options arising from the post-2010 targets for biodiversity and from the One UN approach. While discussing options at the global convention level (e.g. joint policy statements, coherent decision-making by governing bodies, joint knowledge management, reducing the reporting burden, coordinated capacity-building), the report concludes that *'perhaps the best means for strengthening coherence among the conventions... is national level coordination, cooperation and coherence'* (p 104). Options recognised in this regard are improved coordination among national focal points to the conventions and improved integration of national reporting.

In November 2010, the second meeting of the **Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on International Environmental Governance** adopted the 'Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome'. Regarding MEAs, the Outcome includes the following in paragraph 7: *'The Consultative Group identified a number of potential system-wide responses to the challenges in the current system of international environmental governance, including: ... (c) To encourage synergies between compatible multilateral environmental agreements and to identify guiding elements for realizing such synergies while respecting the autonomy of the conferences of the parties. Such synergies should promote the joint delivery of common multilateral environmental agreement services with the aim of making them more efficient and cost-effective. They should be based on lessons learned and remain flexible and adaptive to the specific needs of multilateral environmental agreements. They should aim at reducing the administrative costs of secretariats to free up resources for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements at the national level, including through capacity-building.'*

Following the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD at its tenth meeting in October 2010, the United Nations **General Assembly**, through Resolution 65/161 (December 2010) noted *'with appreciation the adoption ... of the updated and revised Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets'* (paragraph 4), took note *'of the ongoing work of... the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions'*, recognised *'the importance of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives'* and encouraged *'the conferences of the parties to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements to consider strengthening efforts in this regard, taking into account relevant experiences and bearing in mind the respective independent legal status and mandates of these instruments'* (paragraph 11).

In February 2012, the **UNEP Governing Council** made an important decision that is expected to shape the future of the biodiversity-related MEAs. Decision SS.XII/3 recognizes *"the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognizing 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"* and, furthermore, requested *"the Executive Director to 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"*.

2.5 Nordic Symposium *Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster*, Helsinki, April 2010

In April 2010, the Government of Finland and the Nordic ministers for the environment convened a Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster (www.biodivcluster.fi). The symposium brought together 50 experts from governments, MEA secretariats and governing bodies, and UN organisations. The purpose of the symposium was to identify options and possibilities for enhancing coherence and synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. The six conventions and treaties as defined in this report were considered to form a manageable and coherent cluster.

These six conventions are generally referred to as the biodiversity-related conventions and they already cooperate at the secretariat level through the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG). It was broadly understood that the Parties to these conventions must address the lack of coherence among them, to which end a country-driven synergies process could be launched to consider joint issues. One of the main conclusions of the symposium was that the focus should be primarily on enhancing synergies on issues of substance, rather than on administrative issues, because the secretariats are dispersed and administered by different organizations. The following programmatic areas were identified as possible areas for joint action:

- The science-policy interface (*e.g.* an Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES));
- Harmonization of reporting;
- Streamlining of meeting agendas;
- Joint information management and awareness raising;
- Capacity building, compliance, funding and review mechanisms.

2.6 Call for synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions

During the past decade, governments have repeatedly called for the realisation of enhanced synergies between MEAs — in particular those related to biodiversity. This is reflected in various decisions of the governing bodies of the MEAs, but, as shown above, also in decisions/resolutions of UNEP GC/GMEF and UNGA that have aimed at reforming the international environmental governance-system in large. It is beyond the scope of this report to list all the **decisions and resolutions** calling for synergies and collaboration with one or more of the conventions but the most recent key ones are listed in table 1 below.

Table 1: Most recent key decisions and resolutions of the biodiversity-related conventions calling for synergies with other such conventions (focusing on provisions that address synergies with more than a single convention)

CBD	Decision X/20	<p>Paragraph 5: <i>'Urges Parties to establish close collaboration at the national level between the focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity and focal points for other relevant conventions, with a view to developing coherent and synergetic approaches across the conventions at national and (sub-)regional levels'</i>.</p> <p>Paragraph 10: <i>'Requests the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation at its fourth meeting to, in order to increase the involvement of Parties in the work of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, determine the form and content of a process to enhance coordination, coherence and national level synergies among the biodiversity conventions'</i>.</p> <p>Paragraph 11: <i>'Recognizing the importance of the coherent and synergistic implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, requests the Executive Secretary to: (a) Review and, where necessary, update working arrangements, such as the joint work plans, with the other biodiversity-related conventions; (b) Consider ways to assist Parties to reflect the full range of activities of all biodiversity-related conventions in the context of the revision of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, as well as in relevant capacity-building activities'</i>.</p>
CITES	Decision 14.38 (Rev. CoP15)	<p><i>'The Secretariat shall: ... continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other conventions, UNEP and other bodies in order to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting'</i>.</p>
CITES	Resolution Conf. 10.4 (Rev. CoP14)	<p><i>'Calls upon the CITES Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to coordinate their programme activities particularly through the UNEP coordination meetings; suggests that Parties, as appropriate to their national circumstances and to encourage synergy, take measures to achieve coordination and reduce duplication of activities between their national authorities for each Convention; calls upon Parties to explore opportunities for obtaining funding through the Global Environment Facility for relevant projects, including multilateral projects, which fulfil the eligibility criteria and guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to the Global Environment Facility'</i>.</p>
CMS	Resolution 10.21	<p>Paragraph 1: <i>'Requests the Secretariat to continue developing effective and practical cooperation with relevant stakeholders including other biodiversity instruments and international organizations.'</i></p> <p>Paragraph 13: <i>'Further requests the Secretariat and invites the Secretariats of other conventions to continue liaising with the UNEP regional MEA focal points for biodiversity and ecosystems and make best use of their role in assisting the implementation of the biodiversity-related MEAs.'</i></p> <p>Paragraph 14: <i>'Requests the CMS Secretariat and invites the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Secretariats of other relevant MEAs to consider and advise on ways and means of more coherently addressing the conservation and sustainable use of animal species in CBD processes, including in relation to the implementation by biodiversity-related conventions of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets adopted by CBD COP10 (Decision X/2).'</i></p> <p>Paragraph 15: <i>'Urges Parties to establish close collaboration at the national level between the focal point of the CMS and the focal points of other relevant conventions in order for Governments to develop coherent and synergistic approaches across the conventions and increase effectiveness of national efforts, for example by developing national biodiversity working groups to coordinate the work of focal points of relevant MEAs and other stakeholders inter alia through relevant measures in NBSAPs, harmonized national reporting and adoption of coherent national positions in respect of each MEA; and encourages CMS National</i></p>

		<p><i>Focal Points to participate actively in the national preparations for the discussions during the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation of the CBD (May 2012) to determine the form and content of a process to enhance coordination, coherence and national level synergies among the biodiversity conventions.'</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 18: 'Requests the Secretariat as far as possible to avoid duplication of work on the same issues between MEAs dedicated to nature protection issues, and invites the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions to address at its future meetings options for enhanced cooperation with regard to work on cross-cutting issues, such as climate change, bushmeat and invasive alien species, including through exploring the possibility of identifying lead MEAs in a manner consistent with their mandates, governance arrangements and agreed programmes.'</i></p>
CMS	Resolution 10.25	<p><i>Paragraph 2: 'Further encourages interested Parties to enhance collaboration with National Focal Points for the CBD and GEF to implement the options available under the existing GEF structure ... and specifically to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) develop further habitat-based projects under existing GEF strategies</i> <i>b) develop further species-based projects under existing GEF strategies</i> <i>c) enhance collaboration at National Focal Point level</i> <i>d) integrate relevant objectives into support for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP)s.'</i> <p><i>Paragraph 3: 'Further encourages Parties to include priorities for the implementation of the CMS in their NBSAPs, in particular species-based projects and capacity-building activities, in order to benefit fully from the GEF funding available for biodiversity.'</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 5: 'Requests the Secretariat to engage with the GEF at all appropriate levels in pursuing the implementation of the present Resolution, including participation in the meeting of biodiversity-related conventions with the GEF Secretariat ... concerning priorities for the GEF-6 programming strategy.'</i></p>
ITPGRFA	Resolution8/2011	<p><i>Paragraph 4: 'Takes note of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the Secretary and the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and commends the Secretary for the initiative, and requests the Secretary to explore with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, practical means and activities to give effect to this cooperation, in particular through capacity building for access and benefit-sharing, as related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, including through the organization of workshops, seminars and other events, coordination of technical assistance as well as the exchange of information';</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 6: 'Requests the Secretary to strengthen collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the implementation of the Convention's programme of work on agricultural biodiversity, sustainable use of biodiversity, biodiversity and climate change, as well as on the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity and the integration of biodiversity into poverty eradication and development, in harmony with the work of the Treaty';</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 7: 'Calls on Contracting Parties to ensure that any legislative, administrative or policy measures taken for the implementation of both the Treaty and the Convention on Biological Diversity (or its Nagoya Protocol), are consistent and mutually supportive';</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 8: 'Requests the national focal points of the Treaty to enhance their collaboration and coordination with their counterpart national focal points for the Convention on Biological Diversity on all relevant processes, in particular on the Nagoya Protocol and the Strategic Plan';</i></p> <p><i>Paragraph 10: 'Requests the Secretary to continue to foster collaboration with other treaty bodies, especially with the Convention on Biological Diversity in regard to the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity, access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and benefit-sharing in the light of the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization, according to the respective mandates, governance structures and agreed programs'.</i></p>

Ramsar Convention	Resolution X.11	Paragraph 12: <i>'Requests the Secretariat to continue to be fully involved in the work of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) established under the aegis of the CBD and to report regularly to Standing Committee on progress achieved by this group'</i> .
WHC	Decision 34 COM 5D	Paragraph 5: <i>'The World Heritage Committee... welcomes the proposed Action Plan for 2012 ... and encourages to reflect and to pursue the efforts to strengthen linkages between the World Heritage Convention and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).'</i> Paragraph 8: <i>'The World Heritage Convention... requests the World Heritage Centre to identify opportunities, of potential collaboration with the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other MEAs, and taking into account the needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), in the form of pilot projects to address the relation between conservation and sustainable development at regional/ ecosystem scales'</i> .

In addition to key decisions and resolutions, the **Strategic Plans** of the conventions contain calls for synergies with other conventions. The relevant paragraphs are listed below in table 2.

Table 2: Provisions on synergies with other conventions in the strategic planning documents of the biodiversity-related conventions

CBD	Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2012	Paragraph 17: <i>'...efforts will be needed to... promote synergy and coherence in the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements'</i> .
CITES	Strategic Vision: 2008-2013	Goal 3: <i>'Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive'</i> . Objective 3.5: <i>'Parties and the Secretariat cooperate with other relevant international organizations and agreements dealing with natural resources, as appropriate, in order to achieve a coherent and collaborative approach to species which can be endangered by unsustainable trade, including those which are commercially exploited'</i> .
CMS	Updated Strategic Plan 2006-2014	Operational Principle 2: <i>'To cooperate closely with relevant multilateral environmental agreements and key partners to maximise synergies and avoid duplication'</i> .
Ramsar Convention	The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015	STRATEGY 3.1 Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs: <i>'Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental agencies (IGOs)'</i> .

3. Existing mechanisms of coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions

A wide range of mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions already exists. They can be grouped into multilateral (generic and thematic ones) and bilateral mechanisms, including cooperation and coordination bodies and other arrangements. The most important existing mechanisms will be briefly introduced in this chapter, followed by a look into synergy processes in other arenas.

3.1 Multilateral coordination and cooperation mechanisms: generic mechanisms

The **Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions** (Biodiversity Liaison Group, BLG) comprises the executive heads of the secretariats of the six biodiversity-related conventions. The Modus Operandi of the BLG states that *'the BLG is a platform to exchange information and to enhance implementation at the national level of the objectives of each respective convention whilst also promoting synergies at the national level'*, with the aim of maximising *'effectiveness and efficiency and avoid duplication of effort in joint activities of BLG members'* (<http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/doc/blg-modus-operandi-en.pdf>). The Group first met in 2004 and has to date held seven meetings. At a high-level retreat of the members of the BLG in September 2011, a Modus Operandi for the BLG was adopted and signed. The members of the BLG collaborate on a number of issues. One example is sustainable use; the BLG has developed an interactive CD on the application of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity. A key area for cooperation addressed by the BLG is the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans; this is further described below. A **joint website of the biodiversity-related conventions**, covering CBD, CITES, CMS, International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, Ramsar and World Heritage Convention, is available at <http://www.cbd.int/blg/>.

In 2006, a Memorandum of Cooperation between Agencies to Support the Achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target was signed by, among other agencies, CBD, CITES, CMS and Ramsar Convention. This is now superseded by the **Memorandum of Cooperation Between International Agencies, Organisations and Conventions and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets**, which all the global biodiversity-related conventions have signed. The Memorandum of Cooperation creates a task force to provide a platform for agencies to coordinate their activities in support of the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions emerges also in the area of **financing for biodiversity**. Following the delivery of a statement to the 41st meeting of the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in 2011 by the Secretary-General of CITES, the GEF Council took the decision to further request *'the GEF Secretariat to organize a meeting of biodiversity-related conventions with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to facilitate the coordination of their priorities for inclusion in the GEF 6th programming strategy'*.

The **Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions** (CSAB), an informal group of the biodiversity-related conventions, have held five meetings, the last one in 2011. At the first meeting in 2007, the participants concluded that the group would *'discuss areas of cooperation and collaboration on the scientific issues of the various convention processes and their translation into policy. These discussions might facilitate similar approaches and considerations at national level.'* (report of the first meeting of CSAB, <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-01/official/csab-01-03-en.pdf>)

The **Environment Management Group (EMG)** is a UN system-wide coordination body, which was established in 2001 and is chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP. Among its membership are the MEA secretariats. The EMG has established an Issue Management Group on biodiversity, which is currently involved with a UN system-wide response to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Following the launch of the EMG report *Advancing the biodiversity agenda: A UN system-wide contribution* at CBD COP 10, the members of the EMG have been working on implementing the findings of the report, in light of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

The **MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative** seeks to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems in support of knowledge management activities among MEAs. The initiative, following from a UNEP project with the secretariats of a number of MEAs, was launched in 2009. The initiative, facilitated and supported by UNEP, brings together 16 global and eight regional MEAs, among them the six global biodiversity-related MEAs as defined in this report. In June 2011, the Initiative launched the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements, available at www.inforMEA.org.

3.2 Multilateral coordination and cooperation mechanisms: thematic mechanisms⁷

The **Inter-Agency Liaison Group on Invasive Alien Species** aims to facilitate cooperation among relevant organizations to support measures to *'prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species'* (CBD Article 8(h)), consistent with relevant decisions of the CBD. Among its members are CBD and CITES as well as the International Plant Protection Convention. The Group has met twice, in June 2010 and February 2011.

The **Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)** is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and MEA secretariats with substantial programmes on forests, among them the three Rio Conventions, namely CBD, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The CPF's mission is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest and strengthen long term political commitment to this end.

The **Scientific Task Force on Avian Influenza and Wild Birds** provides a liaison mechanism between those international organisations and MEAs engaged in activities related to the spread and impact of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1. It was established in 2005 by CMS in cooperation with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and comprises representatives and observers from 15 international organisations, including CMS, AEWA, CBD and Ramsar Convention. The Task Force is coordinated by CMS and FAO.

3.3 Bilateral coordination and cooperation mechanisms

Bilateral mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the biodiversity-related conventions include in particular joint programmes of work, Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation and collaboration on thematic issues.

⁷ The thematic mechanisms described here do not constitute a complete list.

The following **Memoranda of Understanding/ Cooperation** (MoU/MoC) between the biodiversity-related conventions exist: CBD and CITES, CBD and CMS, CBD and ITPGRFA, CBD and Ramsar Convention, CITES and CMS, CMS and Ramsar Convention, and Ramsar and World Heritage Convention. CBD, CMS and Ramsar Convention all have signed bilateral Memoranda of Cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); these MoCs/MoUs cover among others the World Heritage Convention.

The following **joint work plans/ programmes** have been established between the biodiversity-related conventions: CBD and CITES; CBD and CMS; CBD and Ramsar Convention; CITES and CMS; and CMS and Ramsar Convention.

An explicit link exists between the texts of the ITPGRFA and the CBD. Article 1 of the ITPGRFA reads as follows: '1.1 The objectives of this Treaty are the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security. 1.2 These objectives will be attained by closely linking this Treaty to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and to the Convention on Biological Diversity.'

Bilateral cooperation between biodiversity-related conventions exists for a number of thematic issues. Examples include collaboration of CBD and CITES on sustainable use, more specifically on the subjects of bushmeat (also with CMS) and the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity; the cooperation of CBD and Ramsar on environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment; the cooperation of CITES and CMS on the harmonization of the nomenclature used in the CITES and CMS appendices; and the cooperation of Ramsar and World Heritage Convention on monitoring of sites that are both Ramsar wetlands of international importance and World Heritage sites. The Ramsar Convention has been invited by the CBD 'to cooperate as a lead partner in the implementation of activities under the Convention related to wetlands' (CBD decision III/21, paragraph 7⁸). The CMS is the CBD's lead partner in conserving and sustainably using migratory species over their entire range (CBD decision VI/20, paragraph 23).

3.4 Some observations on coordination and cooperation mechanisms

The multitude of initiatives and mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the biodiversity-related conventions demonstrates the willingness of the MEA bodies (governing and subsidiary bodies and secretariats) to achieve more through interacting with other conventions than what could be achieved by acting alone. With the BLG, a high-level coordination mechanism has been established, but restricted to the secretariat level with limited legal clout to enforce genuinely meaningful solutions. The many joint projects and initiatives reflect key areas of concern for the conventions, with an increasing focus on strategic issues, such as the 2010 biodiversity target, the Aichi biodiversity targets, and financing for convention implementation. The cooperation of the biodiversity-related conventions within the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 is currently spawning new MoUs/MoCs and joint work plans, sometimes replacing rather generic cooperation agreements that may have been found having less impact, with provisions that were not always implemented.

⁸ This paragraph is now retired.

Despite the wide range of coordination mechanisms, no overarching mechanism exists that brings the Parties of the MEAs together to identify joint solutions for common issues and shared concerns. The latest international status reports ((Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a; Secretariat of the CBD, 2010) confirm that the loss of biodiversity continues all over the globe, meaning that additional efforts must be taken to enable the biodiversity-related MEAs to fully deliver their intended objectives. In this regard, enhancing synergies and coherence among the biodiversity-MEAs will be essential, as a huge potential for synergies lies unrealised.

3.5 Examples of synergies in other areas

Chemicals and waste conventions

A synergies process has been ongoing for several years within the chemicals and waste conventions, namely the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposals, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)⁹. The Conferences of the Parties established the *Ad Hoc* Joint Working Group among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (AHJWG), which had a regionally-balanced membership of 45, with 15 from each convention, and met three times in 2007/2008. Identical decisions on synergies, as recommended by the AHJWG, were adopted by the COPs of the three conventions in 2008/2009. These decisions stress the legal autonomy of the individual conventions and set out a Party-driven process of synergies where form follows function. Key aspects of the synergy process refer to the following issues:

- organizational cooperation (national coordination, programmatic cooperation, coordinated use of regional centres),
- technical cooperation (reporting, compliance, technical and scientific issues),
- information management and public awareness issues (joint outreach, information exchange, clearing-house mechanism),
- administrative issues (joint services and functions; managerial functions; resource mobilization; budgets and audits; joint legal, IT and information services) and
- decision-making (coordinated meetings).

An Extraordinary joint meeting of the Conferences of the Parties (ExCOP) took place in February 2010, a joint head of the secretariats was appointed and the budget cycles of the three conventions were synchronised. In 2013, the COPs of the conventions will undertake a first review of the synergy process, with assistance from the evaluation units of UNEP and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

A number of factors have allowed for the success of the Rotterdam/ Basel/ Stockholm synergy process¹⁰: the secretariats of the three conventions are co-located in Geneva and administered either by UNEP or by UNEP and FAO; the process was party-driven (bottom-up); it developed step-by-step; it followed the principle of form follows function; most of the work was undertaken in the

⁹ For details of these conventions, see Drost, 2010.

¹⁰ This information is based on the presentation by O. Álvarez-Pérez & K. Stendahl on *Synergies between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, from AHJWG to ExCOPs*, presented at the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the biodiversity cluster, Helsinki, April 2010; see www.biodivcluster.fi.

AHJWG and there was little need for the individual COPs to undertake extensive negotiation work. Of particular importance was that the process was based on trust, confidence-building and transparency.

Human rights conventions

The human rights treaty system is based on seven UN human rights conventions, which set legal standards for the promotion and protection of human rights: Human Rights Committee/ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Committee against Torture (CAT), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on the Rights of Migrant Workers (CRMW) and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In addition, two further treaties were adopted in December 2006, although have not yet entered in force: International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. All of the treaties have a Committee, generally referred to as the 'treaty body' that monitors the implementation and enforcement of the treaty in question.

The proliferation of the human rights treaties has led to the fragmentation of the treaty system. Hence, current challenges facing the system are similar to the ones for the biodiversity-related conventions. They include, *inter alia*, duplication in the work of the treaty bodies as well as lack of coherence and clarity for States Parties due to limited coordination and collaboration among the treaty bodies¹¹.

In 2002, the UN Secretary-General called for a reform of the treaty system as a key element in the United Nations goal of promoting and protecting human rights¹². He called on the human rights treaty bodies to, *inter alia*, create a more coordinated approach to their activities. As a response, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated in her plan of action that she would develop proposals for a unified standing treaty body for the seven treaties¹³. In 2006, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published an options paper to initiate discussions on the proposal (Document HRI/MC/2006/2 (2006)). The paper suggested the creation of a unified treaty body by amending each treaty, or by a consolidated amending protocol to all the treaties.

The proposal came as a surprise to Parties and was not met with much support. It was discussed at the Inter-Committee meeting in 2006 and most treaty bodies raised concerns about the substance of the proposal and the way in which it was introduced. The main concern was that one single permanent body which deals with all the treaties would lose the specialisation of the members of the individual treaty bodies. The discussion of a single, unified treaty body can now be considered over, even though the need for a reform of the treaty bodies remains obvious and urgent¹⁴.

¹¹ Dziurzynski *et al* 2006, Dziurzynski *et al* 2007

¹² Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change. Report of the Secretary-General (A/57/387)

¹³ In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all. Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/2005/Add.3, paragraph 147)

¹⁴ Dziurzynski *et al* 2006, Dziurzynski *et al* 2007

Although the human rights treaty system differs significantly from the system of biodiversity-related conventions, the ambitious attempt to create a unified standing treaty body has provided a valuable lesson that should be understood while trying to create more efficient institutions among MEAs. Above all, it has shown that initiatives cannot be implemented ‘top-down’. Hence, the involvement of all stakeholders (most importantly the Parties) in identifying options is crucial, since it will provide a sense of ownership. Secondly, it showed the attempt to follow through a dramatic reform is likely to raise a number of concerns that may ultimately lead to the rejection of the initiative¹⁵.

UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, established in July 2010 by the UN General Assembly. It is the merger of four previously distinct UN entities: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This historic step was undertaken as part of the UN reform agenda, aiming at pooling resources and mandates. UN Women has the following tasks:

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC), in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress

UN General Assembly resolution 64/289, which established UN Women, set up the following multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure: *‘(a) ... the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women shall constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the normative support functions and shall provide normative policy guidance to the Entity; (b) ... the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Board of the Entity shall constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the operational activities and shall provide operational policy guidance to the Entity.’*

The 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2010 and February/March 2011) welcomed the establishment of UN Women and its operationalization, ‘which will strengthen the ability of the United Nations to support the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women’¹⁶. Whether this will be achieved, is still too early to assess.

¹⁵ See the chapter on national reporting below for lessons learned from the Human Rights Treaty System approach to harmonized national reporting.

¹⁶ Conclusion on Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work, paragraph 3 (document E/2011/27, E/CN.6/2011/12)

4. Science-policy interface

The biodiversity-MEAs have long suffered from the lack of an external mechanism to guide decision-making with authoritative and scientifically credible information. The Intergovernmental Science - Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) intends to fulfil this gap, but necessary steps need to be taken to ensure a synergistic relationship between the new panel and the biodiversity-related MEAs.

This section provides an overview of the existing mechanisms of the biodiversity-related conventions for the science – policy interface and looks at two key areas for the science – policy interface for conventions: assessments and indicators.

4.1 From IMoSEB to IPBES

For many years, discussions about the relation of science and policy in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity have been ongoing. It has been commonly noticed that despite the accumulation of scientific knowledge about biodiversity and the threats to it, the overall situation of biodiversity has got worse¹⁷. In the mid-2000s, discussions about improvements to the science – policy interface in biodiversity led to suggestions of a mechanism addressing the issue within the framework of environmental governance. A consultative process on an **International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity** (IMoSEB) took place from 2005 to 2008, involving a range of stakeholders from biodiversity science and policy. Subsequently, the process toward an **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** (IPBES) was initiated. Since 2008, three intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder workshops on IPBES were held.

The third of these, held in Busan, Republic of Korea in June 2010, agreed, among others, on the need to establish an IPBES. In December 2010, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 65/162 requesting UNEP to convene a plenary meeting to fully operationalise IPBES, which was taken on board by the UNEP Governing Council at its 26th session in February 2011 (decision 26/4). The first session of a two-part plenary meeting to operationalise IPBES was convened in October 2011 in Nairobi. The meeting considered the modalities and institutional arrangements for IPBES, including functions, operating principles, legal aspects and elements of a work programme. Substantive decisions and the legal establishment of the platform are expected at the second session of the plenary meeting in April 2012.

For the second intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2009, UNEP produced a *Gap analysis for the purpose of facilitating the discussions on how to improve and strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services* (document UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1). The document's starting point is the '*wide range of science – policy interfaces of varying types, sizes and purposes [that] already exist for the many multilateral environmental agreements and other bodies relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services at all levels*' (paragraph 9). It presents a range of findings in terms of the gaps in the science – policy interface in six areas: multiple science – policy interfaces, effectiveness of science – policy interfaces,

¹⁷ See, for example, the Paris Declaration on Biodiversity, agreed by the scientists assembled in the International Conference *Biodiversity Science and Governance*, held in Paris in January 2005 (Le Duc, 2005).

common and shared knowledge base, policy impact, coordinated approach, and fundamental capacities.

In the Nairobi – Helsinki – Outcome, the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance, in November 2010, addressed the strengthening of the science - policy interface *'with the full and meaningful participation of developing countries ... The overall purpose would be to facilitate cooperation in the collection, management, analysis, use and exchange of environmental information, the further development of internationally agreed indicators, including through financial support and capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, early warning, alert services, assessments, the preparation of science-based advice and the development of policy options'*.

4.2 The biodiversity-related conventions and IPBES

Several of the biodiversity-related conventions have participated in the IMoSEB and IPBES meetings and CBD, CITES, CMS and Ramsar Convention have passed decisions or resolutions positioning themselves toward an emerging IPBES. In **CBD** decision VIII/9 (Implications of the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment), the Conference of the Parties said it is *'aware also of the need to improve knowledge of trends in biodiversity, and understanding of its value, including its role in the provision of ecosystem services, as a means of improving decision-making at global, regional, national and local levels'* (paragraph 19).

In CBD decision IX/15 (Follow-up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment), the CBD COP noted *'that a regular assessment is needed to provide decision makers with the necessary information base for adaptive management and to promote the necessary political will for action in addressing biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems and ecosystem services and their implications for human well-being'*. In paragraph 7 of the same decision, the CBD COP took *'note of the outcomes of the consultative process towards an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity (IMoSEB)'*, and, in paragraph 8, noted *'the need for improved scientific information, as related to inter alia the interests of the Convention on Biological Diversity and other biodiversity-related conventions with a view to strengthening the role of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and the scientific advisory bodies of other biodiversity-related conventions, welcomes the agreement of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to convene an ad hoc open-ended intergovernmental multi-stakeholder meeting to consider establishing an efficient international science-policy interface on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being ... and invites Parties to ensure that appropriate science and policy experts are made available to attend, and also encourages the participation of experts from various regions and disciplines'*.

In CBD decision X/11 (Science-policy interface on biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being and consideration of the outcome of the intergovernmental meetings), the COP welcomed *'the outcome of the third ad hoc intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 11 June 2010, and its conclusion that an intergovernmental science - policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services should be established'* and requested *'the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Bureau of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical*

and Technological Advice, to consider, once the arrangements and modalities for the intergovernmental platform are decided, how the Convention could make full and effective use of the platform, seeking complementarity and avoiding duplication between the work of the Convention, in particular the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, and the proposed platform’.

In **CITES** decision 15.12 (IPBES), the CITES Conference of the Parties decided that *‘without taking a position about the necessity for, or nature of, such a Platform, the Chairs of the Animals and Plants Committees and the Secretariat shall, subject to external funding, participate in discussions concerning a possible IPBES, to provide all necessary input into the process of IPBES and to ensure that the role of CITES receives due recognition’*. The 25th meeting of the Animals Committee in July 2011 recommended that the Standing Committee provide specific guidance to the Animals and Plants Committees, the Secretariat and the CITES Parties, including on i) participation of the Committees in the IPBES plenary meetings, ii) IPBES supporting and establishing a regular process of seeking the views and understanding the needs of MEAs, iii) IPBES supporting access to knowledge and generating knowledge on, and facilitating regular assessments of, the conservation and sustainable use of species but not duplicating the work of MEAs, and iv) IPBES providing support to the Scientific Authorities to the CITES Parties, including through capacity-building. These recommendations were subsequently endorsed by the 61st meeting of the Standing Committee. The Animals Committee also encouraged the Management Authorities of Parties *‘to coordinate and enhance information exchange with their competent national authorities for IPBES’* (agenda item 7.2).

In resolution 10.8, the **CMS** Conference of the Parties recognized *‘the need for regular and thematic assessments of the status of biodiversity to provide decision-makers with the necessary information basis for adaptive management and to promote the necessary political will for action addressing biodiversity loss in general and the loss of migratory species in particular’*; urged *‘CMS Focal Points and Scientific Councillors to communicate and liaise regularly with the national representatives in the IPBES to ensure that the needs for research and policy guidance related to migratory species, especially those listed under CMS, are being adequately addressed by IPBES’*; invited *‘IPBES to address science-policy linkages and the need for assessments, policy support, capacity building and knowledge generation relating to the conservation and sustainable use of migratory species of wild animals’* and (among others) instructed *‘the Secretariat to maintain cooperative working relationships with IPBES, to participate as appropriate in meetings of the platform...’*.

The **Ramsar Convention** Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), at its mid-term workshops in 2010, asked the STRP Chair to circulate a summary of what IPBES should be delivering, including on what issues the STRP could feed in its needs and ideas. At its 16th meeting in 2011, through decision STRP 16-15, the STRP *‘agreed, given the STRP engagement to date in the IPBES consultative group, that the STRP Chair should attend the first plenary session of the IPBES’*, and through decision STRP 16-16, *‘that it should invite the COP to give the STRP a mandate to go forward and engage with the IPBES in future’*. The 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee in 2011 considered a draft resolution for the Conference of the Parties that requests the Secretariat and the Chair of the STRP to continue to engage in the establishment of an IPBES and invites the IPBES, when establishing its modalities and work plan, to take into account the needs of the Ramsar Convention and its Contracting Parties.

At the first plenary meeting of IPBES in October 2011, the six global biodiversity-related conventions delivered a joint statement.

4.3 Conventions at the science-policy interface: Scientific advisory bodies and CSAB

Five of the six global biodiversity-related conventions have established scientific advisory bodies, or, in the case of the World Heritage Convention, have identified external organisations acting as advisory bodies to the convention¹⁸. The ITPGRFA has not yet established such a subsidiary body but collaborates closely with FAO and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. See table 3 for the mandates of the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.

The **Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) to the CBD** is established by Article 25 of the Convention. SBSTTA works through regular meetings (currently once or twice in between meetings of the Conference of the Parties) and draws on a number of expert groups established for this purpose, in particular *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Groups on specific issues. SBSTTA is open to all Parties to the Convention and is comprised of ‘*government representatives competent in the relevant field of expertise*’ (CBD Article 25); it provides recommendations to the COP.

The **Animals and Plants Committees of CITES** were established through resolution Conf. 6.1 and re-established through resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP14). Both committees consist of government-designated experts serving in their personal capacity, elected at COP meetings as representatives of the six geographical regions of the Convention. Both committees meet twice in between meetings of the COP. The work of the committees is assisted by Working Groups on specific issues.

The **Scientific Council of CMS** was established by COP 1 on the basis of Article VIII of the Convention. All Parties are entitled to nominate a qualified expert, as a member of the Scientific Council, and an alternate member. Country members are appointed in their individual capacity as scientists and do not represent their governments, a feature which aims to ensure the autonomy of the Scientific Council. In addition eight experts are appointed by the COP to contribute through offering specific expertise on taxa, geographic regions and threats. The Scientific Council meets normally twice in between the meetings of the Conference of the Parties. Working Groups on specific issues may assist the work of the Scientific Council. The Scientific Council has adopted a Strategic Implementation Plan that is aligned to the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

The **Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Ramsar Convention** was established by resolution 5.5 as a subsidiary body of the Convention to provide scientific and technical guidance to the COP, the Standing Committee, and the Ramsar secretariat. It reports to the Standing Committee. STRP comprises regional representatives appointed for each of the six Ramsar regions, thematic experts relevant for the STRP priority thematic work areas (as identified by the COP) and

¹⁸ For a detailed overview of the scientific advisory bodies to the biodiversity-related conventions, see Annexes F and G to the document UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1 *Gap analysis for the purpose of facilitating the discussions on how to improve and strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services*, provided to the second Ad hoc Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), held in 2009.

representatives of the International Organization Partners of the Convention. Two meetings of the STRP as well as midterm workshops are held in the period intersessional to the COP.

The **WHC** recognises and calls upon the competence and expertise of three **advisory institutions**: the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The advisory bodies advise the World Heritage Committee on matters related to the Convention but also have a pivotal role in a number of important processes under the Convention: they evaluate if the sites nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List conform with the criteria and requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines, and, together with the Secretariat, play a key role in the monitoring of the state of conservation of inscribed sites. The advisory bodies make use of their own scientific networks in order to provide this advice (for example the World Commission on Protected Areas in the case of IUCN). The Operational Guidelines highlight that the World Heritage Committee may call on other international and non-governmental organisations to assist in the implementation of programmes and projects, and expert groups on specific issues related to the Convention are also established from time to time.

The **ITPGRFA** does not have a scientific body but has access to the assessment on *The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* by the FAO; the assessment is referenced in Article 17.3 of the Treaty. The Treaty collaborates closely with FAO and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Table 3: Mandates of the scientific advisory bodies of CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention and World Heritage Convention

Convention	Scientific Advisory Body	Mandate
CBD	SBSTTA	(a) Provide scientific and technical assessments of the status of biological diversity; (b) Prepare scientific and technical assessments of the effects of types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of this Convention; (c) Identify innovative, efficient and state-of-the-art technologies and know-how relating to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and advise on the ways and means of promoting development and/or transferring such technologies; (d) Provide advice on scientific programmes and international cooperation in research and development related to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity; and (e) Respond to scientific, technical, technological and methodological questions that the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies may put to the body (as per article 25 of the Convention).
CITES	Animals and Plant Committees	a) Provide scientific advice and guidance to the COP and other Convention bodies and processes; b) deal with nomenclatural issues; c) assist the Secretariat with respect to identification issues; d) cooperate with the Secretariat in assisting Scientific Authorities; e) develop regional directories of experts in CITES-listed species; f) identify and assess taxa included in Appendix II which may be significantly affected by trade; g) assess information on species where there is evidence of a change in the volume of trade; h)

		undertake a periodic review of animal or plant species included in the CITES Appendices; i) make available advice on management techniques and procedures for States requesting it; j) draft resolutions on scientific matters for consideration by COP; k) perform any other functions at the request of the COP or Standing Committee; and l) report to the COP and, if so requested, the Standing Committee, on the activities undertaken (as per resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP14)).
CMS	Scientific Council	Providing scientific advice to the COP, the Secretariat, and, if approved by the COP, to any body set up under the Convention or an Agreement or to any Party; recommending research and the coordination of research on migratory species, evaluating the results of such research in order to ascertain the conservation status of migratory species and reporting to the COP on such status and measures for its improvement; making recommendations to the COP as to the migratory species to be included in Appendices I and II, together with an indication of the range of such migratory species; making recommendations to the COP as to specific conservation and management measures to be included in Agreements on migratory species; and recommending to the COP solutions to problems relating to the scientific aspects of the implementation of the Convention, in particular with regard to the habitats of migratory species (as per article VIII of the Convention).
Ramsar Convention	STRP	a) Review the tasks and nature of the products requested of it by COP Resolutions and the Convention's Work Plan; b) undertake strategic review of the current tools and guidance available to Parties and new and emerging issues for the Convention; c) determine and agree a mechanism for the delivery of each of these tasks, including the establishment of Expert Working Groups as appropriate, advise on which tasks it does not have the expertise or capacity to progress, and receive the advice of the Standing Committee for this work plan; d) identify, for each task the Panel proposes to undertake, and with the advice of any Working Group on the topic, the best global expert(s) either from within or outside the Panel to undertake drafting work, taking into account geographical and gender balance and language ability; e) identify, for each product in the work plan, and with the advice of any Working Group and the STRP Support Service, additional experts to undertake review by correspondence of draft materials, as necessary; f) make expert review of the draft products in its work plan, taking into account the views expressed by additional experts in (d) above, agree any amendments needed, and transmit these revised products for consideration by the Standing Committee; g) ensure, with the assistance of the Ramsar Bureau, that the work of the STRP contributes to and benefits from the work undertaken by similar subsidiary bodies of other MEAs (as per resolution VIII.28).
WHC	ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN	a) To advise on the implementation of the Convention in the field of their expertise; b) to assist the Secretariat, in the preparation of the World Heritage Committee's documentation, the agenda of its meetings and the implementation of the Committee's decisions; c) to assist with the development and implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List, the Global Training Strategy, Periodic Reporting, and the strengthening of the effective use of the World

		Heritage Fund; d) to monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and review requests for International Assistance; e) to, in the case of ICOMOS and IUCN, evaluate properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List and present evaluation reports to the Committee; and f) to attend meetings of the World Heritage Committee and the Bureau in an advisory capacity (as per the Operational Guidelines of the Convention).
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In **summary**¹⁹, the scientific advisory bodies to the biodiversity-related conventions report to the respective Conference of the Parties, with the exception of the Ramsar STRP, which reports to the Standing Committee, and the advisory institutions of the World Heritage Convention, which report to the World Heritage Committee. Most scientific advisory bodies are mandated to provide scientific advice but some are also requested to provide technical or technological advice, in particular the CBD SBSTTA and the Ramsar STRP. It should be noted that there is not necessarily a clear distinction between scientific and technical advice. Membership in the scientific advisory body is either open to all Parties or consists of appointed members or regional representatives. There are no provisions on the need for the inclusion of scientists in these bodies, and the number of scientists participating in the advisory bodies may vary between convention and members to some extent. CMS and Ramsar include scientific experts independent of Party delegations as members in their advisory bodies. The advisory bodies to some conventions establish expert groups such as the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Groups of the CBD. The Scientific Council of the CMS has its own Strategic Implementation Plan, aligned to the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

Several conventions undertake reviews of the effectiveness of their scientific advisory bodies, *e.g.* CITES has commissioned an external review of the Animals and Plant Committees, and the CBD has reviewed the operations of SBSTTA. The Ramsar Convention regularly reviews the effectiveness of STRP, and IUCN has had an external review of their role as advisory body to the World Heritage Convention (Cameron, 2005).

Mandated by the Biodiversity Liaison Group, the **Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions** (CSAB) have met four times since 2007, *'to discuss areas of cooperation and collaboration on the scientific issues of the various convention processes and their translation into policy'* (report of the first meeting of CSAB in 2007).

At their fourth meeting in February 2011, the Chairs of the scientific bodies discussed the following items: i) Mobilizing the scientific community for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 – opportunities for the scientific advisory bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, ii) IPBES – opportunities for the scientific advisory bodies of biodiversity-related conventions, iii) mobilizing the scientific community for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing – opportunities for the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions, iv) mobilizing the scientific community for the celebration of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity - opportunities for the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions,

¹⁹ This and the following paragraph draw in particular on sections D.1 and D.2 of document UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1, the *Gap analysis for the purpose of facilitating the discussions on how to improve and strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services*.

and v) areas for collaboration or integration (ecosystem restoration, harmonization of species nomenclature, ways to strengthen support to improve the effectiveness of the liaison group of the biodiversity-related conventions).

Other **major areas for discussion** at the first three CSAB meetings included the following: review of processes and approaches of the conventions; scientific bodies in providing scientific advice; cooperation on climate change and biodiversity; management of information and knowledge: towards a coherent system for biodiversity information management; scientific and technical guidance: consideration of complementarities and gaps in guidance developed under the conventions; and celebration of the International Year of Biological Diversity 2010.

At the third CSAB meeting in 2009, a paper tabled by the Chair of the Ramsar STRP on *Options for improving collaboration and synergy on issues of common interest across the biodiversity-related conventions and MEAs* (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-03/official/csab-03-02-en.pdf>) was discussed. The paper suggests a number of **areas of potential closer collaboration of the conventions at the science – policy interface**: Development of a matrix listing common themes from which opportunities for collaboration could be derived; retrospective harmonization of a specific piece of guidance or scientific product (with the example of the CBD and Ramsar guidance on environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment); mapping existing guidance and scientific products onto the framework of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA); joint reporting of implementation in areas of common concern/interest; and proactive collaboration on a specific project/task/issue. The discussion concluded in the following observations:

- *'It would be helpful if the work programmes of each convention's scientific advisory bodies were easily accessible down to the level of specific tasks/activities.*
- *Equally, it would be useful if existing scientific products and supporting scientific information and documentation developed by each convention could be more easily located.*
- *A good working relationship and direct communication between the scientific bodies of biodiversity-related conventions is a precondition for the identification and joint design of possible products.*
- *Any activity should start with a thorough search of what the other conventions are doing or have done in relation to the specific area.*
- *The CSAB mechanism, in particular the meetings, should facilitate identification of priority issues or tasks of common interest.*
- *Themes that might lend themselves for the proactive design of joint projects/programmes include those that currently feature as priorities in one or more of the conventions' scientific work programmes: guidance on ecosystem restoration; specific climate change-related questions; hunting and harvesting; tourism and ecotourism; urbanization; and invasive species.'* (<http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-03/official/csab-03-03-en.pdf>)

In essence, the CSAB meetings have focused on **issues of overriding interest to the science – policy interface** of convention work, such as the contribution of science to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 or the emerging IPBES. The group has also addressed specific issues where progress might be achievable relatively easily: e.g. analysing complementarities and gaps in the guidance provided by the conventions, or harmonization of species nomenclature. Through CSAB, the biodiversity-related conventions have shown a synergistic approach to the science-policy

interface. The suggestions coming out of CSAB should help in further identifying and establishing synergies at the science-policy interface.

4.4 Role of assessments as a tool for improving the science-policy interface for conventions

The above-mentioned Nairobi – Helsinki – Outcome of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance in November 2010 listed assessments as one of the mechanisms for strengthening the science – policy interface, where cooperation in the collection, management, analysis, use and exchange of environmental information should be facilitated. Assessments are also one of the main activities envisaged for IPBES.

The biodiversity-related conventions tend to commission assessments to inform their own decision-taking on specific issues. Several of them have also positioned themselves to major biodiversity-relevant assessments, such as the **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)**. The MA Biodiversity Synthesis was designed to meet the needs of the CBD, among other users and the chair of SBSTTA and the CBD Executive Secretary were represented on the MA Board, as were representatives of CMS and Ramsar Convention. SBSTTA provided comments on the draft MA Biodiversity Synthesis (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a). Similarly, the MA Wetlands and Water Synthesis is the key MA product for the Ramsar Convention, which, through its Standing Committee, STRP and Secretariat, contributed to the document (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005b).

The **Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** is a periodic publication of UNEP that regularly contains a chapter on biodiversity. GEO has been published four times between 1997 and 2007. It is a collaborative effort between hundreds of scientists, experts and institutions aiming at informing environmental decision-making and facilitating the interaction between science and policy. The fifth edition is currently in preparation. **Further global assessments** of particular relevance to biodiversity include, among others, the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, the FAO Global Assessments of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture, the Comprehensive Assessment of Water and Agriculture of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) (coordinated by the International Water Management Institute), the Global Deserts Outlook, and the Global Outlook for Ice and Snow.

The CBD Conference of the Parties suggested considering the findings of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development in the design of the second phase of the joint work plan between the CBD and the FAO and its Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (decision X/34, paragraph 5 I).

Following a first agreement by the Plan of Implementation of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development on a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment, the General Assembly of the United Nations, in resolution 57/141, established the **Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment**, which includes the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other relevant instruments. In decision X/29, the CBD Conference of the Parties '*recognizes and supports*' its establishment (paragraph 3).

The **CBD** has discussed the need for scientific assessments at many meetings, not least at its SBSTTA. Through decision IX/15, the Conference of the Parties noted *'that a regular assessment is needed to provide decision makers with the necessary information base for adaptive management and to promote the necessary political will for action in addressing biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems and ecosystem services and their implications for human well-being'*. In decision VIII/9, the CBD COP acknowledged the reports of the MA, in particular the Synthesis Report on Biodiversity and had taken note of the findings and key messages of the MA Biodiversity Synthesis report. Earlier meetings of the COP had welcomed the MA and encouraged Parties to get involved in its preparations (e.g. decision VI/7 and VII/6).

The CBD has published three editions of the **Global Biodiversity Outlook** (GBO). The Convention has also commissioned a number of specific thematic assessments. Examples include the assessments of the impacts on ocean acidification and fertilization, respectively, on marine biodiversity (documents UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/INF/8 and UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/INF/7).

The Conference of the Contracting Parties to the **Ramsar Convention** has adopted a range of **guidance documents of relevance to assessments of wetlands**. These include the "Ecological 'outcome-oriented' indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention" (Resolution IX.1, Annex D), "Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity" (Resolution IX.1, Annex E i) and the "Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring" (Resolution IX.1, Annex E). The latter acknowledges a number of relevant assessments, including the MA, the CGIAR Comprehensive Assessment of Water and Agriculture as well as regional assessments.

The Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention adopted decision X.18 on the application of response options from the MA within the **Ramsar Wise Use Toolkit**, which encourages the Contracting Parties to utilise the MA response options (paragraph 13) and encourages *'the Ramsar Secretariat and Contracting Parties to collaborate with the secretariats and national focal points of other MEAs in pursuing implementation actions based on the MA outputs and on the STRP review of MA response options, and requests the Secretariat to make the STRP review [of MA response options] available to the subsidiary bodies of those MEAs'* (paragraph 14).

The **CITES** Animals and Plant Committees and the Standing Committee undertake regular assessments of the status of and trade in species listed on the appendices to the Convention, through the Review of Significant Trade and the Periodic Review processes. Through resolution 8.10, the Conference of the Parties to the **CMS** invited the Secretariat to *'strengthen linkages with the on-going global environmental assessments, particularly UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO)'* (paragraph 4).

As said above, the **ITPGRFA** makes use of the FAO assessment of **The State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture**. Article 17.3 of the Treaty provides that *'The Contracting Parties shall cooperate with the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the FAO in its periodic reassessment of the state of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in order to facilitate the updating of the rolling Global Plan of Action [for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture] referred to in Article 14'*.

In addition to the reporting by States Parties through the periodic reporting process, the **World Heritage Convention** has a unique mechanism to monitor and assess the State of Conservation of the sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Secretariat, with the assistance of the advisory bodies, reports on an annual basis on the State of Conservation of the sites, producing reports on individual sites, which are experiencing conservation challenges. Based on these site reports, the World Heritage Committee takes decisions on each of the site which is reported on, providing recommendations and guidance to the concerned States Parties on how to address the situation. In addition, a methodology has been developed to assess and improve management effectiveness of inscribed sites.

4.5 Role of indicators in conventions as a tool for improving the science-policy interface

Indicators have become an important tool for providing a scientific basis to measure progress in convention implementation. The Biodiversity Indicators Partnership defines an indicator as *'a measure based on verifiable data that conveys information about more than itself'* (2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, 2010).

Biodiversity indicators have been discussed within the **CBD** from as early as the first meeting of SBSTTA and CBD COP 2 (1995). A liaison group on indicators, established by the second meeting of SBSTTA, met in 1997. But it was only with the adoption of the 2010 biodiversity target through COP decision VI/26 that indicators became truly operational within the framework of the CBD. Informed by an expert group on indicators that met in 2003, COP 7 considered the framework for the development of national-level biodiversity and monitoring (decision VII/7), adopted a limited number of trial indicators for assessing progress towards the 2010 target and established a process for identifying, developing, reviewing and/or testing indicators (decision VII/30). Global biodiversity indicators were used in the third edition of the GBO to demonstrate progress toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target, with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership having developed the framework of biodiversity indicators²⁰. COP 10 established a process for developing indicators for measuring progress toward the Aichi targets which were adopted as part of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, building on the 2010 biodiversity indicators (decision X/7). The CBD COP has repeatedly encouraged Parties to develop their own national biodiversity indicators (decisions VIII/15, X/7).

Through resolution 14.2 (Annex), the **CITES** Conference of the Parties requested the Standing Committee to develop indicators that correspond to the goals and objectives of the Strategic Vision 2008-2013 and, through decision 14.37 (Rev. CoP15), to follow up on how the reporting required for these indicators would be undertaken. The Standing Committee at its 61st meeting in 2011 reviewed the CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013 and the development of indicators in the light of the post-2010 indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. CITES contributes to the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership as a key indicator partner, contributing information on the status of species in trade.

²⁰ The Biodiversity Indicators Partnership was established to assist the CBD in operationalising the framework of targets and indicators for the 2010 biodiversity target and is expected to contribute in a similar fashion to the Aichi Targets. The BIP comprises a range of partners, many of them with responsibilities for specific indicators, including the secretariats of CBD, CITES and Ramsar Convention. See www.bipindicators.net.

Through resolution 9.4, the **CMS** Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat to liaise with the CBD Secretariat and the other biodiversity-related conventions and relevant institutions with a view to adopting suitable indicators to measure the achievement of the 2010 target (paragraph 9). Resolution 10.6 requested the Secretariat to cooperate with others, including other MEAs, to develop and adopt suitable indicators to measure the impact of joint capacity building activities. The Guidelines on the integration of migratory species into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (annex to document UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.27), adopted at COP 10, highlight the potential of migratory species as indicators for biodiversity and ecosystem health.

As part of a general integrated updating on monitoring, assessment and reporting processes, the **Ramsar Convention** at the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2005 agreed on an initial set of eight ecological outcome-oriented indicators for assessing the effectiveness of the Convention's implementation (resolution IX.1 Annex D). The emphasis of the indicators is on science-based ecological outcomes regarding the state of the wetland environment rather than on activities carried out under the Convention. Information on the indicators is drawn in particular from the national reports to the Ramsar Convention. The Convention contributes to the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership as an indicator partner, contributing information on the extent of habitats.

The Operational Guidelines of the **World Heritage Convention** request States Parties to use indicators for monitoring the state of World Heritage properties in the nomination for the inclusion of properties in the World Heritage list, in particular *'to measure and assess the state of conservation of the property, the factors affecting it, conservation measures at the property, the periodicity of their examination, and the identity of the responsible authorities'* (paragraph 132.6). The Operational Guidelines also list example indicators for measuring the state of conservation of a property (annex 5). The Operational Guidelines also require that at the time of inscription, a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value is adopted, identifying why a property was inscribed under which criteria, including assessments of the condition of integrity and the requirements for protection and management. The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value will be the basis for future monitoring of the sites' State of Conservation. In addition, the World Heritage Committee introduced, for sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, a Desired State of Conservation for Removal of the Property from the List of World Heritage in Danger, which lays down the indicators that will guide decision-making by the Committee on when a site can be removed from the Danger List.

4.6 Options for synergies at the science – policy interface

1. Working together on IPBES through CSAB

For MEAs, including all biodiversity-related conventions, the need for improved scientific information to guide decision-making has been widely acknowledged. The challenges related to this issue have been highlighted by the Gap Analysis produced for the second *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Meeting on an Intergovernmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services²¹. The Gap Analysis highlights that most of the current science – policy interfaces work in a separate manner (finding 2.2) and this is particularly true for the scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions. These bodies have evolved with their corresponding conventions and thus, the fact that the working mechanisms of each of the

²¹ Document UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1, see above

biodiversity-related conventions are separate is no surprise. However, the biodiversity-related conventions have established a mechanism for cooperation in this regard, the **Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of Biodiversity-related Conventions** (CSAB). The CSAB meetings have identified issues of common concern at the science - policy interface as well as issues with the potential of rapid progress in improving the science – policy interface for the participating conventions. The list of these issues could be provided to IPBES as a joint input from the conventions.

The working arrangements for MEAs within IPBES are still to be established with the operationalisation of IPBES but it would be expected that IPBES addresses MEAs in a way consistent across MEAs, *e.g.* by sending information or requests to the MEAs as one partner. As contained in the *Busan Outcome Document*, the third intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder IPBES-meeting outlined key principles and functions of the new panel. The biodiversity-related MEAs are outlined as the key clients of the new panel. To this end, it would seem important that MEAs find a way to speak with one voice to and within IPBES, mandated by their Parties, assisted by CSAB and the secretariats (building on the joint statement delivered by the six global biodiversity-related conventions at the first plenary meeting of IPBES in October 2011). This would not exclude individual conventions to interact with IPBES on convention-specific issues.

2. Parties driving the provision of scientific advice for conventions through IPBES

So far, CBD, CITES, CMS and the Ramsar Convention have positioned themselves to the emerging IPBES, expressing their interest in participating in IPBES and their concerns about recognition of their role. IPBES provides a unique opportunity for the biodiversity-related conventions to receive independent and peer-reviewed scientific advice, which is coordinated across various fields of expertise in biodiversity and ecosystem services and is expected to be mandated by the countries that are Parties to the conventions. If, as it currently seems, IPBES will be **country-driven**, there is the chance that scientific advice to the conventions originating from IPBES has been agreed upon effectively by the convention Parties – a model that would mirror the operations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Parties could, through elaboration of scientific advice in the scientific advisory and other bodies of the conventions, ensure that this advice is coherent across conventions. The meetings of CSAB could play an important liaison role to the scientific advisory bodies of the conventions in terms of the process between IPBES and the conventions.

3. Joint mandates for assessments

Coordinated scientific advice as recognised by IPBES could materialise in a number of key areas, of which assessments and indicators are particularly relevant for the conventions²². Several biodiversity-relevant **assessments** have been widely acknowledged by the conventions, namely the MA and more specific assessments in areas of particular relevance for the conventions. Such assessments are commissioned by the conventions themselves or have been established by other agencies or organisations, for example in the areas of agriculture (in particular through FAO) and marine ecosystems. Through IPBES, the conventions could provide a coordinated mandate for global and regional as well as thematic assessments that can then be used to provide coherent and coordinated

²² The Gap Analysis (UNEP/IPBES/2/INF/1) names other key aspects, including research strategies, models and scenarios, knowledge-brokering and capacity-building (finding 5.1).

scientific advice to the convention-related decision-making processes, including the convention bodies as well as processes at the regional and Party level. See **figure 2** for two options for the suggested interaction between the convention bodies, CSAB and IPBES. IPBES could also contribute to the biodiversity sections of future editions of the GEO and to the GBO.

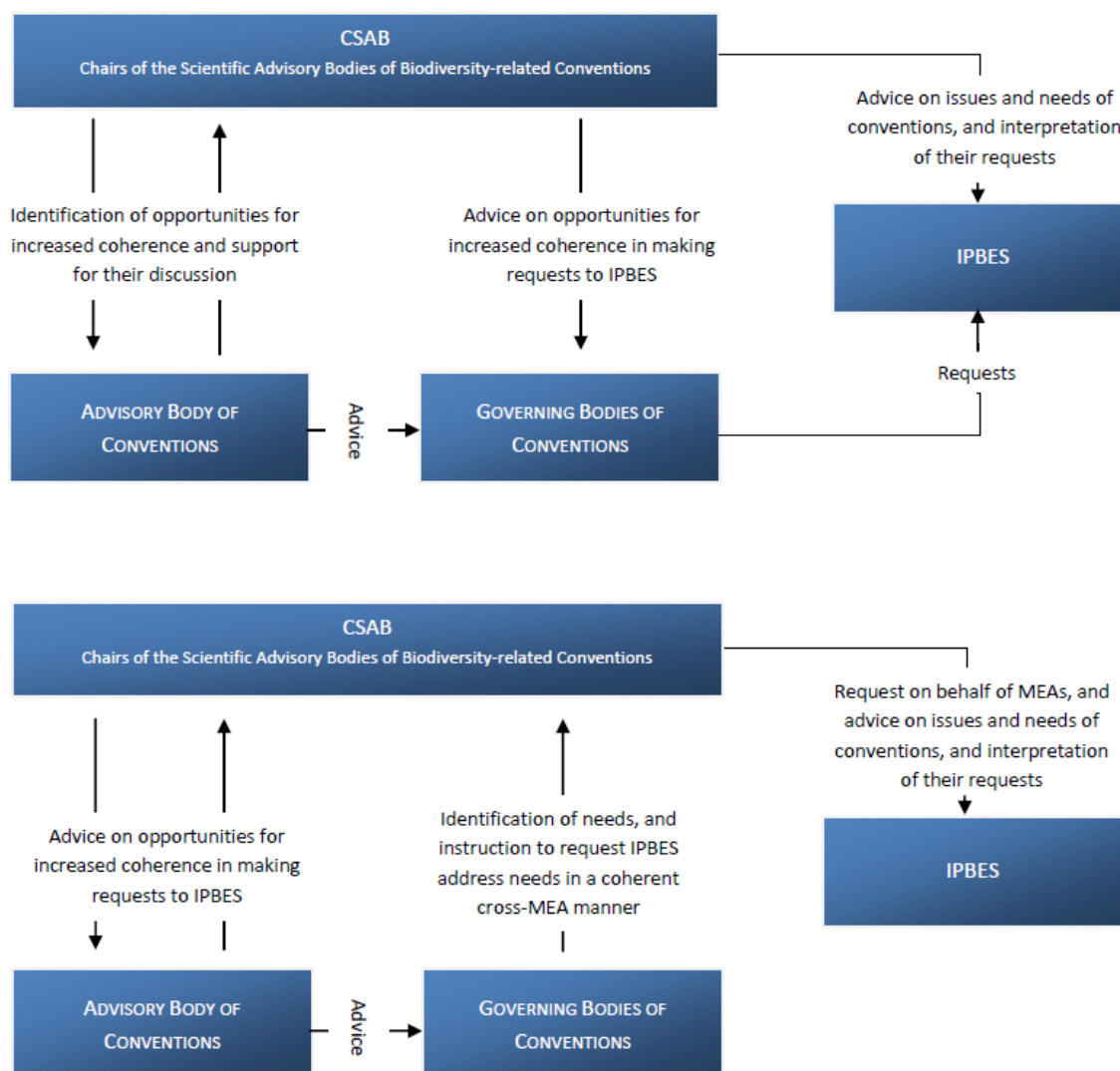
4. Joint approach to the Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment

The biodiversity-related conventions could also cooperate in taking a joint approach to the **Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment**, which would be likely to strengthen the conventions' benefiting from this global process and would open further opportunities to provide biodiversity-related information to this process. This joint approach could happen through, or with the assistance of, IPBES.

5. Cooperation through sub-global assessments

It should be stressed that coherent and coordinated scientific advice, provided across the conventions through IPBES, would need to extend to the **regional and national level**. The above-mentioned Gap Analysis lamented the widespread lack of capacity for the science – policy interface at those levels, in particular in least developed countries and small island developing states. The **sub-global assessments** – originally initiated as part of the MA – provide a useful forum for the biodiversity-related conventions to cooperate, potentially assisted and facilitated by IPBES. Sub-global assessments are ecosystem assessments conducted at either a regional, national or local scale. An ecosystem assessment provides the connection between environmental issues and people by considering the ecosystems from which services are derived and the people who depend on and are affected by changes in supply of these services. Furthermore, the sub-global assessments are linked through the Sub-Global Assessment (SGA) Network, which provides a learning platform for sub-global assessment practitioners to come together, share lessons learned and experiences and develop capacity by gaining new skills and knowledge.

Figure 2: Two options for the suggested interaction between the convention bodies, CSAB and IPBES



Alignment of indicator development

The process of developing **indicators** has evolved separately between the conventions, with CBD and Ramsar being particularly advanced (and other MEAs outside of the biodiversity cluster as defined here, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification UNCCD). With the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (see next chapter), an opportunity is provided to better align indicator development between conventions at the global, but also regional and national levels (see conclusions of the next chapter for mechanisms for this). Again, IPBES could provide a forum for mandating a coordinated and coherent approach to the development and/or refinement of indicators for biodiversity and ecosystem services that could build on the existing indicators and indicator processes of the conventions²³. It is particularly helpful in this regard that some

²³ The indicators of the different conventions overlap to some extent; see, for example, the mapping of the Ramsar indicators of effectiveness against the 2010 biodiversity indicators of the CBD in *The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its Indicators of Effectiveness*, document UNEP/WCMC/Post-2010/0709/8d for the International Expert Workshop on the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators and Post-2010 Indicator Development, Reading, UK, July 2009, available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/ind/emind-02/official/emind-02-08d->

conventions have called for an alignment of their own indicator development processes with those of other conventions (e.g. through the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020) and that several of the biodiversity-related MEAs already cooperate on indicators through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, allowing for building on an existing mechanism instead of creating new ones. The CBD *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, meeting in June 2011, adopted two key recommendations of relevance in this regard: Recommendation 11: *'The CBD should explore opportunities to collaborate with other multi-lateral environmental agreements and relevant international organizations and agencies in working towards coherent and prioritized monitoring programmes for biodiversity'* and recommendation 12: *'The proposed indicator framework for the Strategic Plan should be kept under review with a view to enabling the future incorporation of relevant indicators developed by other Conventions and processes that are relevant to monitoring biodiversity'*²⁴.

6. Cooperation in recognition of traditional knowledge

Another area of particular relevance to the biodiversity-related conventions is **traditional knowledge** generated and maintained by indigenous peoples and local communities. Traditional knowledge is particularly recognised by the CBD in article 8j. Target 18 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 calls for respecting and fully integrating traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous local communities in the implementation of the CBD. This opens an avenue for cooperation of the conventions in recognition and involvement of traditional knowledge and the holders of such knowledge in the joint science – policy interface enabled through the cooperation within IPBES. The 3rd *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder Meeting on an Intergovernmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in June 2010 concluded that in carrying out its work the platform should *'recognise and respect the contribution of indigenous and local knowledge to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems'* (UNEP/IPBES/3/3, Annex, paragraph 7d).

[en.pdf](#), and Annex III of document UNEP/IPBES/3/INF/2: Current and future status of biodiversity and ecosystem service indicators.

²⁴ Report of the *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, UNEP/CBD/AHTEG-SP-Ind/1/3

5. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020

The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 calls for a UN system-wide approach for implementation of the convention. In this context, integrating the objectives and actions of the biodiversity-related MEAs under the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) will be the key to achieve greater coherence and efficiency in implementation.

5.1 The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its relevance for other MEAs

The **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** contains a rationale, vision, mission, five strategic goals with a total of 20 targets as well as sections on implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation, and on support mechanisms. The twenty targets are widely known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The CBD COP, in decision X/2, paragraph 3f, urges Parties and other governments, to *'support the updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans as effective instruments to promote the implementation of the Strategic Plan and mainstreaming of biodiversity at the national level, taking into account synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions in a manner consistent with their respective mandates'*.

In paragraph 16a of that decision, the COP invites *'Parties and other Governments at the forthcoming meetings of the decision-making bodies of the other biodiversity-related conventions and other relevant agreements to consider appropriate contributions to the collaborative implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets'*.

In paragraph 17 of the section on implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation of the Strategic Plan the COP states that *'partnerships at all levels are required for effective implementation of the Strategic Plan ... to find synergies with national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. Partnerships with [among others] other conventions ... will be essential to support implementation of the Strategic Plan at the national level. At the international level, this requires partnerships between the Convention and other conventions...'*

The section on support mechanisms includes paragraph 24: *'Cooperation will be enhanced with ... [among others] conventions ... to support implementation of the Strategic Plan at the national level'*. Other conventions have recognised the opportunities the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers for enhancing cooperation and synergies (see section 5.3). In fact, during the High-Level segment of CBD COP 10, the Secretary-General of CITES delivered a joint statement of the heads of the secretariats of CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention and World Heritage Convention, supporting *'the adoption of an inclusive strategic plan for biodiversity'* and agreeing *'that National Biodiversity*

*Strategy and Action Plans should cover the full range of activities needed to implement biodiversity-related conventions*²⁵.

At the regional level, the Council of the **Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy** (PEBLDS), at its meeting in June 2011, decided that the future work of PEBLDS will, among others, *'identify and address the key actions that should be taken at the pan-European level in order to deliver the 20 new Aichi headline biodiversity targets for 2020 in a coordinated and coherent manner through the identification of common key actions facilitating the delivery and implementation of these targets'* (STRA-CO (2011) 7-b, 29 June 2011). Responding to the global mandate provided by the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the European Union in May 2011 adopted the **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**. The strategy consists of six targets with a total of 20 accompanying actions.

5.2 The role of the United Nations system in implementing the Strategic Plan

Following the launch of the report *Advancing the biodiversity agenda: A UN system-wide contribution* in 2010 by the **Environment Management Group** (EMG), CBD COP 10 invited the EMG, *'in building on its report to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to identify measures for effective and efficient implementation of the Strategic Plan across the United Nations system and provide a report on its work to the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting through the Working Group on Review of Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice'*. In addition, the CBD COP *'invited the United Nations General Assembly to consider for adoption relevant elements of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets as integral elements in the Millennium Development Goals, in particular MDG Goal 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability'* (decision X/2).

In response, the **UN Secretary General** (SG) requested the EMG to undertake a number of steps: *'(a) Convene ... a special meeting of the senior officials of the EMG to consider ways and means to support the outcome of the High Level meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly ... (b) Identify specific responsibilities that entities can undertake to make biodiversity conservation integral to their portfolios of activities e.g. in health, agriculture, energy, industry development, trade, water, environment etc based on its Special Report on "Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda: A UN System-Wide Contribution"; (c) Take immediate action to follow up the work initiated with its Special Report on "Advancing the Biodiversity Agenda: A UN System-Wide Contribution"; (d) Report back on a yearly basis to the SG on the development and implementation of these follow up actions; (e) Promote consultation and cooperation between UN agencies and the secretariats of the biodiversity related conventions on implementation activities related to those conventions'* (meeting of the Secretary General's Policy Committee on 14 September 2010). This request is currently being addressed by the EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity. The IMG, at its meeting on 9 November 2011, agreed to prepare a mapping of IMG members' targets and strategies *vis-à-vis* the Aichi Targets.

²⁵ This wording was developed during the High-Level Retreat of the secretariats of CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention and World Heritage Convention in September 2010, preceding CBD COP 10.

These initiatives signal the understanding that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity has the ownership not only of the CBD but also of the other UN agencies, organisations and mechanisms.

5.3 Biodiversity-related conventions and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and NBSAPs

Regarding the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), the fourth meeting of the **CSAB** in February 2011 concluded as follows: *'Recognizing the need for all the biodiversity-related conventions to engage more strongly with the NBSAP process as appropriate, to recommend that these conventions should: (i) consider how to better support their national focal points to engage in the process at country level; (ii) consider what scientific guidance might be needed from the scientific advisory bodies, and how this might be coordinated; (iii) consider and provide recommendations to their Contracting Parties on how the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and NBSAP process could help in harmonizing reporting requirements and processes.'* CSAB asked IUCN to map the strategic plans of the other biodiversity-related conventions against the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020²⁶.

Through the above-mentioned **Memorandum of Cooperation Between International Agencies, Organisations and Conventions and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Achievement of the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets** the six global biodiversity-related conventions and a range of other institutions have agreed on the following areas of cooperation: to exchange information on relevant activities, to identify and promote relevant activities, to coordinate or identify and implement joint activities, to support the early entry-into-force of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS, and to contribute to the UN Decade on Biodiversity. The MoC constitutes the 'Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force'.

CITES

Goal 3 of the **CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2013** reads as follows: *'Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive.'* Also, the Memorandum of Cooperation between CITES and CBD states that *'the secretariats will consult their Contracting Parties with a view to encouraging integration and consistency between national strategies, plans or programmes under the Convention on Biological Diversity and plans or programmes under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora'*. In Decision 15.10, the CITES COP directed its Standing Committee to *'review the adopted post-2010 biodiversity targets and, if necessary, make adjustments to the CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2013, as appropriate'*. The Standing Committee at its 61st meeting asked the Secretariat to prepare a revised draft of the Strategic Vision incorporating the Post-2010 Biodiversity Targets.

Through **Notification No. 2011/021** from 24 February 2011, the CITES Secretariat drew the attention of CITES Parties to the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets at CBD COP 10. CITES Parties were invited to consider integrating into NBSAPs national and regional CITES activities that contribute to the effective implementation of the Strategic

²⁶ See section 5.2 above for a similar request to the members of the EMG IMG on Biodiversity, which includes the biodiversity-related agreements.

Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the conservation and sustainable use of wild fauna and flora, as appropriate. CITES Management Authorities were encouraged to engage directly with the national CBD focal point in advance of the regional and subregional CBD workshops on NBSAPs, and throughout the process of updating NBSAPs, in order to identify relevant CITES activities that could be included into the revised and updated NBSAPs. Through **Notification No. 2011/026**, the Secretariat made available to CITES Parties a Draft Guide for CITES Parties on *Contributing to the development, review, updating and revision of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)* and invited feedback in order to finalise the Guide. The Draft Guide addresses, among others, the following key issues:

- Operationally integrating CITES targets into the NBSAP process and potential access to GEF funds
- Programming suggestions for CITES Parties and the Aichi Targets (national-level planning, trade in biological resources and NBSAPs).

CMS

The 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in **resolution 10.18**, urged '*CMS National Focal Points and Standing Committee members, in their capacity as regional representatives, to work closely with national focal points in their regions dealing with biodiversity-related MEAs, including the CBD and CITES, to ensure they play a proactive role and liaise with their counterparts for further consideration on the integration of measures to conserve migratory species into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and national implementation of national biodiversity targets and plans*', and encouraged '*Parties to celebrate the Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020 and contribute to the related global strategy prepared by the CBD Secretariat*'.

CMS Resolution 10.5 set up a Working Group with the task of drafting the next **CMS Strategic Plan 2015-2023**, the Terms of Reference for which include that '*the Working Group will further take into account the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the period 2011-2020 and in particular its Aichi targets, as adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as the strategic documents of other global biodiversity-related MEAs and any other relevant documents that the Working Group may consider appropriate*'.

The collaboration between CMS and CBD on providing support and guidance to Parties on the integration of migratory species considerations in NBSAPs is highlighted in the new **CMS – CBD Joint Work Plan** for 2012-2014.

ITPGRFA

The Governing Body of the ITPGRFA recognises in resolution 8/2011 '*the potential of the Nagoya Protocol and the Strategic Plan [for Biodiversity 2011-2020] for enhancing the synergies and improving the coherent implementation of the Convention [on Biological Diversity] and the Treaty*'.

The **Memorandum of Cooperation between the Treaty and the CBD**, signed at the occasion of the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in October 2010, covers, among other issues, significant technical activities, such as those for the updating and revision of the NBSAPs, which respond to the request of the CBD COP with respect to the Strategic Plan. In that regard, practical steps are taken to

include ITPGRFA components in some capacity building activities that are being organized by the CBD Secretariat (see also the chapter on capacity-building below).

Ramsar Convention

The 43rd meeting of the Ramsar Standing Committee in 2011 approved a draft resolution for the Conference of the Parties (to take place in July 2012) on **adjustments to the Strategic Plan 2009-2015**. The draft resolution recognizes *'the important contribution that the Ramsar Convention makes through implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015 towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020'*. The draft resolution contains an appendix to the Strategic Plan mapping the Ramsar Strategic Plan strategies against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

5.4 Options for synergies in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

1. Cooperation on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 nationally and globally

It is apparent from the above that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 aims at strongly **engaging the other biodiversity-related conventions** as well as many other stakeholders including UN organisations, IUCN and NGOs, in its implementation. Several of the biodiversity-related conventions have expressed their support to joint national-level implementation of the Strategic Plan, in particular through engaging with and contributing to the current process of updating and revision of NBSAPs. This approach entails in particular the following aspects:

- Adjustment of the Strategic Plans of biodiversity-related conventions in the light of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, as appropriate;
- Integration of convention-specific targets, objectives and commitments into the NBSAPs, through cooperation in the national NBSAP processes.
- Cooperation in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force.

2. Cooperation through synergistic implementation of NBSAPs

The positioning of some of the biodiversity-related conventions to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers new options for a **synergistic implementation of NBSAPs**:

- The cooperation of national focal points of all biodiversity-related agreements (as well as the other Rio Conventions UNCCD and UNFCCC) should be facilitated or strengthened by the NBSAP process
- Mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the national focal points, and the ministerial departments and agencies involved, can be developed, not least through the formation of National Biodiversity Committees or equivalent bodies
- The NBSAPs can incorporate key objectives and obligations from the other (non-CBD) conventions and become a major mechanism assisting their implementation
- National strategies and policies for the other conventions, *e.g.* national Ramsar policies, can be aligned with the NBSAPs and *vice versa*
- With the financial and political support to NBSAPs, perspectives for further synergistic activities open up, including national and local capacity-building for implementation of MEAs
- Relevant stakeholders, such as NGOs, business, indigenous and local communities, and scientific institutions, will be in a better position to support the implementation of the range

of biodiversity-related conventions in a consistent way, for example through the above-mentioned National Biodiversity Committees (or equivalent bodies)

- Increased collaboration of national focal points to various MEAs, and relevant ministerial departments and agencies, should become part of a wider strategy to mainstream NBSAP development and implementation with other relevant sectors impacting on biodiversity, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, transport, landuse planning, and development.
- In developing countries the MEA focal points could achieve increased priority for biodiversity-related activities within the United Nations Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF).
- Such cooperation of focal points and ministries and agencies would also extend to alignment with National Action Programmes (NAPs) under the UNCCD and, in least developed countries, National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) under the UNFCCC.

3. *Consistent position-taking across conventions*

Synergistic implementation of NBSAPs by the focal points of the biodiversity-related conventions and agencies in charge would also assist individual Parties in taking **consistent positions at the governing bodies of the conventions**. This in turn would strengthen cooperation between conventions at the level of the governing bodies and decisions/ resolutions.

These options are in line with the following recommendation of a recent **United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies** review of NBSAPs (Prip *et al*, 2010): '*NBSAPs should be an instrument for implementation of all the biodiversity-related conventions and thereby promote coherence in national implementation of these*' (p101). This recommendation is further explained as follows: '*... countries should promote coordinated and coherent action at the national level to meet their commitments under the various conventions. NBSAPs should provide the overall framework for national biodiversity planning and should be an instrument for achieving the objectives of all the global biodiversity-related conventions to which the country is a party*' (p 101+).

4. *Alignment of strategic documents and joint support to Parties*

At the global level, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 has the potential to allow for a better **alignment of the strategic documents of various MEAs**, with CITES already having initiated a process to revise the CITES Strategic Vision in the light of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. In addition, the governing bodies of the conventions should provide further **support to Parties' engagement with the NBSAP process** at the national level, through taking resolutions and decisions in this regard and providing capacity-building and funding. The UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO), with their detailed understanding of Parties' needs in their respective regions could provide assistance in this regard as could do regional mechanisms, for example the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), the European Union and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). A possible mechanism for this could be the establishment of regional centres for the support to Parties in implementing the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

In **summary**, the revision and updating of NBSAPs in the light of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 provide unique opportunities for all biodiversity-related conventions to enhance

cooperation and coordination at the national level and, thereby, promote the synergistic implementation of the various commitments of the biodiversity-related MEAs. In this regard, opportunities provided by or for the CBD for the preparation of NBSAPs in form of, for example, resources should be extended to other biodiversity MEAs. A particularly important role at the national level could be played by National Biodiversity Committees or equivalent bodies, through which the national focal points to the different conventions could cooperate and coordinate. Enhanced national synergies should also stimulate supporting decisions and resolutions by the governing bodies of the conventions and allow for closer collaboration at the global level.

6. National reporting

A lot of experience for synergies options in the area of national reporting has been assembled, ranging from integrated national-level data management to global level harmonization of reporting requirements, supported by new opportunities offered by information technology.

6.1 National reporting to the six biodiversity-related conventions

National reporting is a key obligation for Parties embedded in most conventions and treaties. In some cases, it is one of the few 'hard-law' obligations that Parties have to adhere to.

Article 26 of the **CBD** requires Contracting Parties to present reports to the Conference of the Parties on measures taken to implement the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the Convention's objectives. To date, Parties have been asked to report four times, while the fifth national reports are due in 2014.

In addition to the national reports, the COP has invited Parties to submit thematic reports on items due for in-depth consideration at future COPs. The following issues have been covered by thematic reports: invasive alien species, access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, forest ecosystems, mountain ecosystems, protected areas, technology transfer and cooperation, and Global Taxonomy Initiative. In addition, Parties have been invited to submit a voluntary report on forest biological diversity. Thematic or voluntary reports have, however, not been requested in recent years.

Article VIII of **CITES** requires each Party to submit an annual and a biennial report. The annual report contains statistics on, *inter alia*, the number and type of permits and certificates granted, the States with which such trade occurred, the quantities and types of specimens and the names of species as included in Appendices I, II and III. The biennial report informs about legislative, regulatory and administrative measures taken to enforce the provisions of the Convention. The COP, in addition, has asked Parties concerned to submit annual reports on ranching operations.

Article VII of the **CMS** states that the COP, at each of its meetings, may receive and consider any reports presented by, *inter alia*, any Party. Parties have been asked to report to every COP since COP 2 in 1988, with the COPs meeting every second or third year. In addition, Article VI, paragraph 3, requests Parties which are Range States for migratory species listed in Appendix I or II, to inform the COP, through the Secretariat, at least six months prior to each ordinary meeting of the COP on measures they are taking to implement the provisions of the Convention for these species. In addition, a number of the Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding under the CMS have their own reporting requirements.

Article 21 of the **ITPGRFA** requests the Governing Body to approve procedures and operational mechanisms to promote compliance with the provisions of the Treaty, including through, *inter alia*, monitoring. The Governing Body, at its 4th session in March 2011, decided that the Compliance Committee shall develop a standard reporting format for approval by the Governing Body at its next session, 'taking into account harmony with other relevant reporting processes, such as those under the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture' (resolution 2/2011).

Although not based on the text of the Convention, the Conference of Contracting Parties to the **Ramsar Convention**, at its 2nd meeting in 1984, decided that Contracting Parties should prepare national reports for each meeting of the COP, following a defined reporting format. The more recent report formats, including the one for reporting to COP 11 in 2012, have been structured along the goals and strategies of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

Article 29 of the **World Heritage Convention** requests the States Parties to the Convention to submit reports to the General Conference of UNESCO, providing information on the legislative, administrative and educational provisions as well as fundraising efforts which they have adopted and other action which they have taken for the application of the Convention (section I of the reports), together with details of the experience acquired in this field. Section II of the reports addresses the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties. The World Heritage Committee has a regional approach to periodic reporting as a means to promote regional collaboration and to be able to respond to the specific characteristics of each region. This process includes regional and subregional consultative and information meetings. The Committee examines these regional reports according to a pre-established schedule, which is based on a six-year cycle. Reporting feeds into regional action plans and programmes and thus supports a regional dynamic in the implementation of the Convention as well as raising awareness of the Convention. In addition, States Parties are often requested to report on the State of Conservation of specific sites, which are being monitored by the Committee.

Key observations on national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions

Before reviewing the potential for synergies in national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions, some **key observations on national reporting** should be discussed. These are based on a variety of documents, including the documentation on national reports of the convention governing bodies as well as previous reviews and analyses²⁷.

- The national reporting systems of the biodiversity-related conventions have evolved in most cases over several decades, independently of each other (note that national reporting to the ITPGRFA has not been established yet). Mandated by the governing bodies, the national report formats are highly specific and in some cases closely linked to strategic planning documents.
- Being a core requirement for Parties to most MEAs, national reporting provides a substantial burden in terms of human, financial and technical resources – this has been recognised in a number of decisions and resolutions of the conventions' governing bodies.
- The reporting rates vary between conventions. In particular the national reports to the Ramsar Convention, the WHC and the CITES Annual Reports achieve very high rates, while the rates have substantially increased for the other conventions. In the case of CITES, non-reporting might result in punitive action (this refers to the annual reports). It has been found that regional workshops on reporting have helped to improve the reporting rate of CBD and WHC.

²⁷ UNEP-WCMC, 2005; UNEP-WCMC, 2009

- The regional reporting workshops in the World Heritage Convention serve as fora to not only address reporting *per se*, but to enhance collaboration at the regional level and to identify future work priorities.

6.2 Synergies in national reporting – the experience so far

For more than 12 years, the issue of harmonization and streamlining of national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions has been considered at convention and UNEP-organised meetings. Several decisions and resolutions from the Conferences of the Parties to CBD, CITES, CMS and the Ramsar Convention have provided mandates for these efforts²⁸.

A number of projects have tested approaches to streamline or harmonize national reporting. In the early 2000s, UNEP-assisted **pilot projects** took place in four developing countries:

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

In 2002, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) established the **Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting**, which developed a portal on forest reporting, allowing for single-point access to information reported by Parties to a wide range of conventions, including CBD, Ramsar Convention, UNCCD and UNFCCC, and other mechanisms.

More recently, the Australian Government and SPREP have worked with Pacific Island Countries on developing and testing a **streamlined reporting format for five biodiversity-related conventions**, using the approach that the human-rights treaties are using: a core report would apply to all the conventions, while convention-specific annexes (or in the case of the Human Rights Treaty System separate reports) supplement the core report.

Also relevant in this context is a current UNEP/GEF project on Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC). The **'FNR_Rio' project** aims to (a) develop integrated approaches to data collection/analysis and information management of relevance to the three Rio Conventions at the national level; (b) increase synergies in the process of reporting to the three conventions without compromising relevant COP decisions; and (c) contribute to improved overall planning and decision-making processes at the country level related to the implementation of these three conventions. The project works through six pilot countries: Afghanistan, Eritrea, Lao PDR, Liberia, Mauritius and Palau.

²⁸ For the history of harmonization of reporting efforts and governing body decisions and resolutions see the annexes to UNEP-WCMC, 2009.

The experience of these efforts to harmonize or streamline national reporting can be summarised through the following lists of key obstacles to and preconditions for streamlining and/ or harmonizing national reporting²⁹. These aspects have been outlined in a paper on the preconditions of national reporting³⁰.

The key **obstacles at the global level** can be summarised as follows:

- The fact that the national reporting systems of the conventions have evolved over a long period and independently of each other might hamper efforts to streamline or harmonize national reporting at the level of the governing bodies.
- The reporting cycles vary between conventions, between annually for the CITES Annual Reports and six years for the World Heritage Convention.
- Different conventions use different terminologies. This is relevant, for example, for the species-based conventions where taxonomy plays a major role.
- Not every country is Party to all the conventions in question. Some Parties might therefore be unwilling to support efforts to harmonize reporting with a convention to which they are not a Party.

The key **obstacles at the national level** can be summarised as follows³¹:

- In many countries, the data and information needed for reporting across the conventions might be scattered and not easily available.
- In many countries, a lack of coordination and cooperation between national focal points in charge of national reporting can be observed³².
- In particular developing countries may lack the human, financial and technical capacity to adequately address issues of data and information management as well as coordination between focal points and institutions.

The key **general preconditions** for streamlining or harmonization of reporting can be grouped in general, national and global preconditions. The general preconditions are as follows:

- National reporting should be seen not as an exercise in itself but closely related to agreement implementation and MEA-related information management. Reporting can serve a number of purposes, including demonstrating compliance, providing an overview of implementation, identifying future implementation priorities, and sharing experience, among others.
- The use made of the reported information, be it at the global or the national level, should be well understood and demonstrated.

The **preconditions at the national level** can be described as follows:

²⁹ The obstacles and preconditions draw on, among others, the background documents on national reporting of the relevant governing and subsidiary bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions and a number of other sources; see http://www.unep-wcmc.org/harmonization-of-reporting_491.html for a comprehensive list of information sources.

³⁰ UNEP-WCMC, 2009 (prepared in collaboration with the secretariats of biodiversity-related agreements). The paper predates the FNR_Rio project but the preliminary findings of the project are entirely consistent with the obstacles and preconditions identified in the paper.

³¹ See also Parsons, 2009

³² See also Chik, 2009

- National focal points to the conventions in question should cooperate regularly and, where appropriate, through clearly defined mechanisms, such as convention committees.
- The availability and accessibility of the data and information required for national reporting should be analysed and, if needed, improved. In many countries, central biodiversity databases or clearing-house mechanisms have been established in order to improve accessibility. Such efforts require liaison and cooperation with institutions, organisations and stakeholders that hold relevant data and information.
- Improvements in cooperation and data and information management would be expected to inform and improve national MEA implementation. One aspect of that is the involvement of stakeholders, such as NGOs, the research community, indigenous and local communities, and the private sector in data and information management.

The following **preconditions at the global level** can be described:

- Conventions should clearly identify their information needs and to which extent national reports are expected to satisfy those needs. This could result in a reduction of the amount of information requested from Parties and simpler reporting formats, with less information requested from Parties.
- The information needs of a specific convention could be shared with other conventions, resulting in an agreement of which convention collects which information, in order to avoid overlapping information requests. In addition, reported information could be made available electronically in a form that allows easy access by other conventions, which in turn could help to reduce the amount of information requested from their Parties.
- Conventions could harmonize their definition of terms and terminology, making reported information better accessible to other conventions and allowing for inter-convention analyses.
- Conventions could explore joint information management systems, following the example of the forest reporting portal that the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the CPF had developed³³. The TEMATEA issue-based modules provide access to Party commitments from a wide-range of biodiversity and environmental conventions³⁴. Such thematic information systems might be particularly helpful (and due to their limited size relatively easy to manage). The InforMEA portal, an output of the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative, makes available decisions/ resolutions/ recommendations, news and events, calendars, contact details of national focal points, and official documents from the participating agreements, including all six conventions in focus here (www.inforMEA.org).
- As to the issue of differing reporting cycles, a new harmonized reporting system could reflect the one applied by the Human Rights Treaty System, where a joint core report for all the treaties is accompanied by convention-specific reports. If applied to the biodiversity-related conventions, the different reporting cycles could be kept for the convention-specific reports,

³³ The forest reporting portal of the CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting had not been updated in recent years and is currently not available; see <http://www.cpfweb.org/73035/en>.

³⁴ See www.tematea.org. Currently, the following issues are addressed by the tool: access and benefit-sharing, biodiversity and climate change, forest biodiversity, inland waters, invasive alien species, marine and coastal biodiversity, protected areas, and sustainable use.

while a joint core report to all the conventions would be either required at a 'harmonized cycle' or produced, say, every two years and made available to the respective next meeting of the governing bodies of the conventions.

- The governing bodies of conventions should continue providing mandates for further efforts for harmonizing or integrating reporting between MEAs. These mandates put secretariats and Parties in a position to further pursue the issue with other secretariats and Parties.
- The discussions of harmonization have over the years majorly benefited from committed stakeholders, including government representatives at conventions as well as senior and technical secretariat staff. Without this personal commitment, the much increased level of understanding of the challenges and possible solutions to national reporting would not have been possible.

At their third meeting in 2009, the CSAB discussed areas of potential closer collaboration. This included options for improving collaboration and synergy on issues of common interest. On the issue of **joint reporting** of implementation in areas of common concern/interest, the meeting concluded: *'It requires significant thought and effort to develop common reporting frameworks, in particular because of the need for a careful analysis to cross-match indicators and targets. Nevertheless, there would be significant advantages for Parties in a reduced reporting burden as well as for users of the reports (coherent data and analysis). It can take a substantial amount of time to implement joint reporting procedures, due to the different timing of COP cycles amongst conventions.'*³⁵

6.3 Options for further synergies in reporting

The discussions on harmonization of national reporting have taken place over many years, mainly at the global level, with substantial input from interested Parties, including through projects that tested different approaches to harmonization. As a result, there is now a much improved understanding of the challenges to, but also the opportunities for, enhancing the reporting harmonization agenda, as part of the wider efforts to promote and implement synergies between conventions.

1. Streamlining reporting and information management at the national level

While ways for harmonizing the reporting formats for the biodiversity-related conventions have been considered and practical steps toward this have been suggested, immediate gains could be achieved with streamlining reporting processes at the **national level**. This is in line with the conclusions of the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the biodiversity cluster that stress the importance of processes to enhance synergies being party-driven. Depending on the specific national circumstances, such national progress should focus on two aspects that, from the experience available, are particularly promising:

- **Improving communication, coordination and collaboration on national reporting between national focal points** to the biodiversity-related agreements in-country. These efforts could involve establishing regular communication mechanisms as well as making information used in reporting to one convention available to the focal points for other conventions, in order to avoid duplication of work and of requests to the providers of information. Those efforts could be enhanced by the use of web-based information facilities.

³⁵ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/csab/csab-03/official/csab-03-03-en.doc>

- **Streamlining and integrating the national management of biodiversity information.** Information that underlies national reporting could be made better available and accessible, through, for example, a centralised biodiversity database or clearing-house. This would overcome the challenge that scattered information sources provide for national focal points and those that compile national reports. It would allow for the same information modules being available for reports to different conventions, thus avoiding non-consistency between information presented in different national reports.

2. *Information exchange between biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions*

Similar approaches to streamlining national reporting processes at the country-level are currently being tested in the above-mentioned FNR_Rio project for national reporting to the **Rio Conventions** (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC). Both sets of conventions, the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio Conventions, include the CBD, which opens options for information exchange and mutual support with efforts on harmonization. Within the FNR_Rio project, it has been suggested that funding for national reporting in developing countries, e.g. through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), could be focused on improving the reporting processes (coordination committees for national focal points, facilities for managing national information) instead on the preparation of individual reports. Biodiversity-related conventions other than the CBD could well benefit from such targeted funding.

3. *Testing of national approaches*

Despite the past and recent pilot projects at national level on harmonization/ streamlining of national reporting, there is limited information available on **country experience** in this regard. It would be worthwhile to promote testing the suggested national approaches in more countries and making the experience available to the global discussions, in particular to the governing bodies of the conventions. Regional processes and institutions, for example SPREP, PEBLDS³⁶, the European Union or the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, supported by the UNEP Regional Offices, could facilitate national experiences and the collection and dissemination of information about such experience. This work could draw on the experience of the World Heritage Convention's regional approach to reporting.

4. *Guidelines for national biodiversity information management*

National efforts in streamlining biodiversity data and information could be supported through the development and testing of **guidelines for strengthening and integrating national management of biodiversity information**³⁷.

5. *Cooperation through NBSAPs to benefit reporting*

National reporting reflects on the implementation of conventions and treaties and therefore, for the biodiversity-related conventions, among others, on the drafting, reviewing and implementation of NBSAPs. The options for improved **collaboration of the biodiversity-related conventions at the**

³⁶ The Council of PEBLDS, at its meeting in June 2011, requested the Secretariat to develop prioritized proposals on, *inter alia*, harmonization of national reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions (STRA-CO (2011) 7-b, 29 June 2011).

³⁷ Such guidelines could build on the WCMC Handbooks on Biodiversity Information Management (WCMC, 1998), which are now outdated.

national level as described in the chapter on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the NBSAPs (above) would therefore also benefit the promotion of streamlining and harmonizing national reporting. This is in line with the conclusions of the fourth meeting of the CSAB in February 2011: *'Recognizing the need for all the biodiversity-related conventions to engage more strongly with the NBSAP process as appropriate, to recommend that these conventions should: ... consider and provide recommendations to their contracting Parties on how the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and NBSAP process could help in harmonizing reporting requirements and processes.'* The Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements of the CITES Standing Committee is currently investigating options in this regard.

6. *Party needs for national reporting inserted into governing body considerations*

National experience could result in new insights into what should and what can be done at the **global level**. Party needs could be better addressed when governing bodies consider national reporting to specific conventions and collaboration with the other biodiversity-related conventions. Parties could, for example, comment better on, and promote, changes to reporting formats such as a move to the reporting modality chosen by the Human Rights Treaty System (see above).

7. *Key global-level aspects for harmonization of reporting*

Some key aspects for global-level efforts for streamlining and/or harmonizing national reporting between the biodiversity-related conventions are as follows:

- Identification of information needs of the individual conventions and an agreement of which convention collects what data and information
- Agreement on definitions and terms
- Development of joint reporting formats for overlapping information (forming core reports), supplemented by additional convention-specific reports
- Establishing joint reporting on specific themes of interest to more than one convention, *e.g.* ecosystems such as forests, marine or drylands; water; sustainable use, and others
- Joint information management systems building on the forest reporting portal of the CPF, the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative and the TEMATEA initiative
- Online reporting, helping building common standards between conventions and also assisting the national-level efforts on harmonization (see national-level issues identified above)³⁸ as well as the efforts of secretariats to analyse the reported information

8. *Indicators to support harmonization of reporting*

In addition, the current efforts for the development of **indicators** for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its goals and targets could inform considerations on harmonization of national reporting. The CBD *Ad Hoc* Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in June 2011 recommended that *'the 5th national report to the CBD should make a significant step towards indicator-based reporting'*³⁹, which would offer further opportunities to streamline national reporting across the biodiversity-related conventions.

³⁸ Online reporting has been applied for many years by the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and Their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia and is currently under development/ applied for the CMS and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement. It has also been applied in 2010 for the first time by the UNCCD.

³⁹ Recommendation 8 of the report of the AHTEG (UNEP/CBD/AHTEG-SP-Ind/1/3)

9. A technical cross-convention working group on harmonization of reporting

Building on the experience from the harmonization and streamlining projects and key documents, a **technical working group at the global level**, consisting of technical staff from the different secretariats and, crucially, experts from governments, as well as from relevant organisations, could take the issue of harmonization of national reporting forward. Such a group could suggest possible steps towards harmonization in line with the key preconditions outlined above. The group could also provide support to the testing of national as well as regional approaches to harmonization of national reporting.

7. Capacity-building

Capacity-building has long been recognised as a key requirement for MEA implementation. With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, biodiversity-related MEAs are in a better position to cooperate and develop synergies within a joint capacity-building initiative for MEA implementation.

Capacity to implement global commitments, such as the objectives and decisions or resolutions of MEAs, has widely been acknowledged as a key aspect for countries. Country capacity varies widely, not only between developed and developing country parties to conventions and treaties, but also within these groups. For the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC), the GEF, through UNDP and UNEP, supported developing countries to undertake **National Capacity Self-Assessments**, which revealed the variance between countries in their capacity needs.

The UNEP Governing Council, at its 23rd session in 2005, adopted the **Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building**. The Plan, while addressing many aspects of capacity in the field of the environment, has as one of its objectives *‘to strengthen the capacity of Governments of developing countries as well as of countries with economies in transition, at all levels ... to comply with international agreements and implement their obligations at the national level’* (paragraph 3a). The indicative list of cross-cutting issues and thematic areas that the plan should address includes, among others, *‘assistance for facilitating compliance with and enforcement of obligations under multilateral environmental agreements and implementation of environmental commitments’* (paragraph 20a).

In decision X/2 that adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the CBD COP placed the need for capacity building in the context of synergies with other Conventions: in paragraph 17c the COP requests the Executive Secretary *‘to develop ... options for the further enhancement of implementation of the Convention, including through the further development of capacity-building programmes, partnerships and the strengthening of synergies among Conventions and other international processes’*.

This section reviews the role that capacity-building plays for the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions and treaties and its potential for developing cooperation and synergies between the conventions.

7.1 The role of capacity-building in the biodiversity-related conventions

CBD

The text of the Convention, in its **Preamble**, acknowledges *‘the urgent need to develop scientific, technical and institutional capacities to provide the basic understanding upon which to plan and implement appropriate measures’*.

Capacity-building, although not recognised as one of the cross-cutting work areas of the CBD, underlies a number of, and plays a major role in, the CBD **thematic and cross-cutting work programmes**. In addition, many of the decisions that the CBD Conference of the Parties has taken refer to capacity-building needs.

One of the four strategic goals of the **Strategic Plan** of the CBD, adopted at the 6th Conference of the Parties in 2002, focused on capacity: *'Parties have improved financial, human, scientific, technical, and technological capacity to implement the Convention'*. One of the objectives associated to this goal was *'Technical and scientific cooperation is making a significant contribution to building capacity'*.

Capacity-building in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020

Strategic goal E of the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** addresses capacity-building: *'Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building'*. In decision X/2 that adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the COP emphasised *'the need for capacity building activities ... in order to support all countries ... in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity'* (paragraph 6). In paragraph 17a, the COP requests the Executive Secretary *'to promote and facilitate ... activities to strengthen capacity for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity'*, and further in paragraph 17c *'to develop ... options for the further enhancement of implementation of the Convention, including through the further development of capacity-building programmes, partnerships and the strengthening of synergies among Conventions and other international processes'*.

'Enhanced support mechanisms for capacity-building' are among the actions foreseen in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for achieving its goals (paragraph 10d). Such global and regional capacity-building programmes are further outlined under support mechanisms for the implementation of the Strategic Plan (paragraph 20), in particular *'for the development of national targets and their integration'* into NBSAPs. The Strategic Plan further specifies capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in accordance with the Convention's gender plan of action, for indigenous and local communities concerning the implementation of the Plan (paragraph 20), and for research, monitoring and assessment (paragraph 25). See table 4 for how capacity-building features in the thematic work programmes and other key work areas of the CBD.

Table 4: Capacity-building in the thematic and some cross-cutting programmes of work of the CBD

Thematic or cross-cutting programme of work	Description
Agricultural biodiversity	Capacity-building features as the third programme element, with the operational objective <i>'to strengthen the capacities of farmers, indigenous and local communities, and their organizations and other stakeholders, to manage sustainably agricultural biodiversity so as to increase their benefits and to promote awareness and responsible action'</i> .
Dry and sub-humid lands	Capacity-building is recognised as an activity necessary for implementation of both parts of the programme of work: Part A: assessments and part B: actions in response to identified needs. Capacity building is particularly foreseen for the undertaking of case studies for management practices (paragraph 7 c) and for effective conservation and sustainable use at the local level (activity 7k).
Forest biological	The expanded programme of work considers the <i>'need to ensure capacity-building ...'</i>

diversity	<p><i>to allow implementation of the work programme by all relevant stakeholders'</i> (introductory subparagraph e). Specifically, capacity-building is foreseen for objectives on mitigating the negative impacts of climate change on forest biodiversity, promoting sustainable use of forest resources, enabling indigenous and local communities to develop and implement adaptive community-management systems, promoting the fair and equitable sharing of benefits resulting from the utilization of forest genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, integration of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into forest and other sector policies and programmes, promotion of forest law enforcement and addressing related trade, enhancing and improving the technical capacity at the national level to monitor forest biodiversity, benefiting from the opportunities offered through the clearing-house mechanism, and to develop associated databases as required on a global scale.</p>
Inland water biodiversity	<p>The revised programme of work highlights capacity-building needs under goal 2.3 on the provision of appropriate incentives and valuation measures and the removal or reform of perverse incentives opposing conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems, goal 2.5 on promoting the effective participation of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders in the conservation and sustainable use of inland water biodiversity, and goal 3.2 on rapid and other assessments as well as improved understanding of threats to inland water ecosystems and responses of inland water ecosystems to these threats.</p>
Island biodiversity	<p>Goal 11 is dedicated to capacity-building: <i>'Parties have improved financial, human, scientific, technical and technological capacity to implement the Convention'</i>. Target 11.3 under this goal reads <i>'Capacity of islands to implement this programme of work on island biological diversity and all its priority activities is significantly strengthened'</i>.</p>
Marine and coastal biodiversity	<p>The following operational objectives of the elaborated programme of work refer specifically to capacity-building: operational objective 1.1: <i>'to apply appropriate policy instruments and strategies, including building of capacity, for the effective implementation of integrated marine and coastal area management'</i>; and operational objective 2.3: <i>'To gather and assimilate information on, build capacity to mitigate the effects of, and to promote policy development, implementation strategies and actions to address: (i) the biological and socio-economic consequences of physical degradation and destruction of key marine and coastal habitats including mangrove ecosystems, tropical and cold-water coral-reef ecosystems, seamount ecosystems and seagrass ecosystems including identification and promotion of management practices, methodologies and policies to reduce and mitigate impacts upon marine and coastal biological diversity and to restore mangrove forests and rehabilitate damaged coral reef; and in particular (ii) the impacts of mangrove forest destruction, coral bleaching and related mortality on coral-reef ecosystems and the human communities which depend upon coral-reef services, including through financial and technical assistance'</i>. The enabling activities of the programme of work (section IV) include three that relate to capacity building: b) strengthening the capacity of small island developing states, through training and other appropriate means, to enable their effective participation in research priorities, g) building capacity in marine science, information and management, and h) capacity-building and, among others, training in order to improve the implementation of the programme of work.</p>
Mountain	<p>Capacity-building is most prominently addressed through goal 3.4: <i>'To improve</i></p>

biodiversity	<i>research, technical and scientific cooperation, and other forms of capacity-building related to mountain biological diversity'. Capacity-building is also recognised in relation to the following goals: 1.3 'To promote the sustainable use of mountain biological resources', 1.4 'To promote access to, and sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources related to mountain biological diversity in accordance with national legislation where it exists', 2.1 'To enhance the legal, policy, institutional, and economic framework', 2.2 'To respect, preserve, and maintain knowledge, practices and innovations of indigenous and local communities in mountain regions', 3.3 'To improve the infrastructure for data and information management for accurate assessment and monitoring of mountain biological diversity and develop associated databases' and 3.5 'To increase public education, participation and awareness in relation to mountain biological diversity'.</i>
Protected areas	Capacity-building is addressed under goal 3.2: <i>'To build capacity for the planning, establishment and management of protected areas', with the following target: 'By 2010, comprehensive capacity building programmes and initiatives are implemented to develop knowledge and skills at individual, community and institutional levels, and raise professional standards.'</i>
Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020	The Strategy includes objective V: <i>'The capacities and public engagement necessary to implement the Strategy have been developed', with two accompanying targets on the number of trained people, and established or strengthened institutions, networks and partnership for plant conservation. In decision X/17, the COP emphasized the need for capacity-building to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy.</i>

Capacity-building has played a major role in the consideration by the CBD of **access and benefit-sharing** related to genetic resources (ABS). In 2002, an Open-ended Expert Workshop on Capacity-building for Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing was convened. The Bonn Guidelines on Access to Genetic Resources and Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising out of their Utilization, adopted by COP 6 in 2002, had as one of their objectives capacity-building *'to guarantee the effective negotiation and implementation of access and benefit-sharing arrangements'*. In 2004, COP 7 adopted the Action Plan on Capacity-building for Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-sharing.

The **Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization**⁴⁰ to the CBD addresses capacity-building in Article 22. Parties are requested *'to cooperate in the capacity-building, capacity development and strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities to effectively implement this Protocol'*, with a focus on developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition. Those Parties are asked to identify their capacity needs and priorities through national capacity self-assessments. The text then identifies key areas that capacity-building and development may address. The first meeting of the Open-ended *Ad Hoc* Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol in June 2011 recommended the development of a strategic framework for capacity-building and development under the Protocol.

⁴⁰ The elaboration of the Nagoya Protocol here are of a somewhat preliminary character as the Protocol was only adopted in October 2010 and is not expected to enter-into-force before 2012 or later.

CITES

The **CITES Strategic Vision 2008-2013** lists capacity-building as one of four elements on which implementation of goal 1 (*'Ensure compliance with and implementation and enforcement of the Convention'*) relies. This is further specified through objective 1.8: *'Parties and the Secretariat have adequate capacity-building programmes in place'*. For goal 2 (*'Secure the necessary financial resources and means for the operation and implementation of the Convention'*), objective 2.3 addresses capacity-building: *'Sufficient resources are secured at the national/international levels to implement capacity-building programmes'*.

A range of **decisions** in effect after the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties is assembled under the heading of capacity-building (see <http://www.cites.org/eng/dec/index.shtml>). These include the following: 12.79: Non-commercial loan, donation or exchange of museum and herbarium specimens; 12.90-12.93: Capacity-building programme for science-based establishment and implementation of voluntary national export quotas for Appendix-II species; 14.10: Support to Master's programmes; 14.11: Regional cooperation and coordination; 14.12 & 14.13: Virtual college; 15.21 & 15.22: Capacity building; 15.23 & 15.25: Non-detriment findings; and 15.26 & 15.27: Non-detriment findings for timber, medicinal plants and agarwood. In addition, decisions 15.21 & 15.22 address capacity-building workshops for the Oceania and Africa regions in order to improve regional implementation of the Convention.

CMS

The **Updated Strategic Plan 2006-2014** of the Convention recognises *'the development and mobilization of human capacity and financial resources to implement needed conservation measures'* as one of the greatest challenges for the conservation of migratory species (paragraph 23). It also states in paragraph 33, objective 4, that *'the Strategic Plan must also make provision for helping to develop the capacity of bodies involved in implementing the Convention and its legal instruments, especially in developing countries'*. Operational principle 7 of the Strategic Plan reads *'to seize opportunities for capacity-building in all activities'*.

For COP 10 in 2011, the Secretariat prepared documents UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.16 (Implementation of the **Capacity Building Strategy 2009-2011**) and Conf 10.17 (**Capacity Building Activities** Planned for the Next Triennium 2012-2014). The Conference of the Parties addressed the issue through resolution 10.6. The resolution calls on Parties to provide resources for the capacity building work plan and to establish national coordination mechanisms, and requests the Secretariat to undertake a number of relevant activities, including cooperation with CMS Agreements, other MEAs, UNEP, the BLG and the private sector in developing tools that would strengthen the capacity of CMS Parties and sharing lessons learned as well as developing and adopting suitable indicators to measure the impact of joint capacity building activities.

ITPGRFA

In article 13 of the ITPGRFA, Parties agree that capacity-building is one of the mechanisms for sharing fairly and equitably the benefits arising from the use of plant genetic resources under the Multilateral System. In the same article, in terms of capacity-building for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, priority is given to programmes for scientific and technical education and training, facilities for conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources, and

scientific research. Article 14 recognises the role of capacity-building for the effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. According to article 18, developing countries and countries with economies in transition will give priorities in their plans and programmes to building capacity in plant genetic resources.

The Treaty, in 2008, launched a **capacity-building programme**, which resulted in activities at the regional and national levels, including legal and technical assistance for the operation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing. In this context, a Capacity Building Coordination Mechanism was set up, serving as a platform of providers of capacity building. The platform serves organizations and institutions involved in capacity building activities for the implementation of the Treaty as a central point for information exchange and coordination. The Treaty has developed a Joint Capacity-Building Programme for Developing Countries with FAO and Bioversity International. Through resolution 6/2011, the Governing Body encourages Contracting Parties to engage farmers' organizations and relevant stakeholders in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources through awareness raising and capacity building (paragraph 10).

Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar **Strategic Plan 2009-2015** includes goal 4 on institutional capacity and effectiveness: *'To progress towards fulfilment of the Convention's mission by ensuring that it has the required mechanisms, resources and capacity to do so'*. The implementation of the goal is to be assisted by, among others, the Advisory Board on Capacity Building. The key result areas for goal 4 highlight Parties' training and capacity building planning and implementation activities as well as Parties' assessing their capacity and training needs.

Several **resolutions** of the Conference of the Contracting Parties have addressed capacity-building. Among others, resolution IX.1, annex Ci on river basin management identifies a number of key issues for river basin management, among them ensuring adequate technical, institutional and infrastructural capacity (paragraph 76). Resolution IX.2 on future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention requests capacity building as part of assistance to developing countries in order to help reverse the factors leading to consideration of deletion or restriction of a designated Ramsar site (paragraph 137 of annex 2 on the schedule of actions for scientific and technical implementation of the Convention). It also calls for a review of national needs and capacities in the area of communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) and to use this review to define capacity-building priorities in national wetland CEPA action plans (paragraph 155). Resolution IX.20 on integrated, cross-biome planning and management of wetlands, especially in small island developing states, acknowledges that *'for developing countries, and small island developing states in particular, resource constraints, financial, technical and human, continue to restrict the capacity to implement'* MEAs (paragraph 6). Paragraph 12 of the same resolution addresses *'the need to support the efforts and capacity-building requirements of Parties, and small island developing states in particular, with the implementation of integrated management approaches'* and requests Parties, non-Parties and donors *'to give priority to training and capacity building in this field'*.

Capacity building also plays a role in the **guidance documents** of the Convention. Among others, the Principles and guidelines for incorporating wetland issues into Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) stress the need for sufficient institutional capacity to secure full integration of wetlands into ICZM (paragraph 44), highlight the lack of knowledge or capacity in authorities responsible for ICZM implementation (paragraph 35), and call for support to capacity-building for civil society groups in order to develop skills for resource management in coastal areas (guideline 9.4). The Guidelines for the rapid assessment for inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity address the issue of limiting capacity for undertaking such assessments (paragraphs 11, 17, 30, 60, 62 and 63). Funding for small capacity-building projects in Latin America is available through the Ramsar Wetlands for the Future initiative, which is funded by the United States State Department and Fish & Wildlife Service.

WHC

Capacity building has been recognised by the World Heritage Committee as one of its five strategic directions. The **Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention** (revised version January 2008) address capacity-building and research in section VI on Encouraging support for the World Heritage Convention. States Parties are encouraged to develop national training strategies and to include regional cooperation for training. International cooperation by the World Heritage Committee in the area of research for the effective implementation of the Convention is referenced and States Parties are encouraged to make resources available for research. States Parties can request assistance for training and research from the World Heritage Fund.

Building on the Global Training Strategy for World Cultural and Natural Heritage, approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2001, the World Heritage Committee adopted in 2011 the **World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy**. The strategy contains, among others, a mission statement, a vision, goals and actions, accompanied by the relevant audience and potential implementation partners. The document also addresses regional capacity building strategies and implementation plans as well as national capacity building strategies.

7.2 Capacity-building in the emerging Intergovernmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

At the time of writing, IPBES has not been established (see chapter 4) but the third intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on an IPBES in June 2010 concluded in the ‘Busan Outcome’ that *‘the new platform should prioritize key capacity-building needs to improve the science – policy interface at appropriate levels’* and that it should *‘integrate capacity-building into all relevant aspects of its work’* (document UNEP/IPBES/3/3).

In May 2011, an **international Expert Meeting on IPBES and Capacity Building** took place in Trondheim, Norway to address capacity-building *‘as a major element of a future IPBES’*⁴¹. Implicit at the meeting was *‘the role that capacity building plays in ensuring the credibility and legitimacy of the future IPBES process and hence also its products’*. Capacity-building was identified as essential to

⁴¹ All quotes in this paragraph are taken from the Summary Report (Extracted from the chairmen’s report) of the International Expert Meeting on IPBES and Capacity Building, Trondheim, Norway, 25-27 May 2011, available at <http://www.dirnat.no/multimedia/49166/Final-Report---Summary.pdf>.

IPBES, *'helping to ensure capacity both to undertake assessments and to implement policy based on the results of these assessments'*. More specifically, the need for capacity building was identified for three areas: i) human capacity, including both the number of people and their level of knowledge, ii) institutional strength and building active cooperation between institutions, and iii) empowering communication, access to information and full engagement in processes. *'Improving access to data, information and knowledge that already exists, including access to scientific publications'* was identified as an essential element of capacity building. A range of potential mechanisms for addressing capacity-building needs with respect to knowledge generation were described, including exploring ways and means for helping to influence research agendas, promoting the convening of national conferences on capacity-building, and promoting reviews of the data and data storage/access capacities of countries and to which extent these are used in assessments and indicators.

The meeting highlighted specific **challenges to capacity-building needs for assessments**, including asymmetry in participation, with still a northern dominance prevailing; a patchiness of data, information and knowledge; insufficient engagement of the full range of social science expertise; and the need to improve capacity to use traditional and other knowledge based on experiential knowledge. The particular potential of sub-global assessments as an engine for driving capacity-building relevant to IPBES was acknowledged.

7.3 Capacity-building as an element for cooperation and synergies between conventions

Cooperation on capacity-building in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity

As stated above, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, through decision X/2 that adopted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, has placed the need for capacity building in the context of synergies with other Conventions.

CITES -CBD cooperation on capacity-building

The **Memorandum of Co-operation** between the secretariats of CITES and CBD (1996) includes article 4c: *'The secretariats will endeavour to co-ordinate their activities in research, training and public awareness'*.

Through decision 15.19, the CITES COP requests the Plants Committee to cooperate with the CBD **Global Strategy for Plant Conservation**, which includes capacity-building for the implementation of the Strategy as objective V (Updated Global Strategy for Plant Conservation 2011-2020).

The Green Customs Initiative

CITES and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the CBD participate in the **Green Customs Initiative**, a partnership of 11 international organizations working together to strengthen compliance and enforcement of MEAs. Its objective is to enhance the capacity of customs and other relevant enforcement personnel to monitor and facilitate the legal trade, and to detect and prevent illegal trade in wild species of fauna and flora, ozone depleting substances, toxic chemical products, hazardous waste, chemical weapon precursors and living-modified organisms. This is achieved through awareness-raising on all the relevant international agreements as well as the provision of integrated training, assistance and tools to the enforcement industry. Green Customs is coordinated

by the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics. The partners of the Green Customs Initiative comprise MEAs, UN agencies and international organizations: CITES, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), Interpol, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). The Green Customs Initiative also works closely with a number of other regional and international organizations.

CMS cooperation with other MEAs on capacity-building

The **Memorandum of Co-operation** between the secretariats of CMS and CBD (1996) specifies in article 4 that *'the Secretariats will endeavour to co-ordinate their activities in research, training and public awareness'*. The **joint work plan** between CMS and CBD for 2012-2014 addresses *'collaborative information, outreach and capacity-building'* (document UNEP/CMS/StC38/Doc.4). Similarly, the **joint work plan** between the Ramsar Convention and CMS 2012-2014 lists information, outreach and capacity-building (document UNEP/CMS/StC38/Doc.5).

The **CMS CITES Joint Work Programme 2012-2014** also envisages joint activities on capacity-building, not least through joint participation in regional capacity-building workshops on NBSAPs (document UNEP/CMS/StC38/Doc.3).

The **Memorandum of Understanding** between CMS and UNESCO (2002) identifies as joint activities, among others, the elaboration of environmental education materials, education and public awareness programmes on migratory species and their habitats, as well as capacity building training courses and workshops.

In **CMS resolution 10.6**, the Conference of the Parties considers *'the need both to strengthen coordination of capacity building efforts under CMS with those of UNEP, other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and other organizations in accordance with the Bali Strategic Plan and to avoid duplication'*. The resolution *'requests the Secretariat to continue to liaise with UNEP, the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and Secretariats of conventions relevant to the conservation of migratory species with a view to sharing lessons learned as well as developing and adopting suitable indicators to measure the impact of joint capacity building activities'*, *'calls on the Secretariat and UNEP to further identify possible regional, multilateral and bilateral opportunities for collaboration and to involve relevant stakeholders including other MEAs and the private sector in order to secure funding and develop further capacity building initiatives in line with Resolution 10.21'* (Synergies and Partnerships), and *'encourages Parties to establish national coordination mechanisms, such as national biodiversity working groups, for implementation of the objectives of CMS, its daughter agreements and other biodiversity MEAs as envisaged under paragraph 15 of Resolution 10.21 on Synergies and Partnerships, and urges the Secretariat, subject to the availability of funds, in collaboration with the Secretariats of other MEAs, to facilitate workshops'*.

Cooperation between CBD and ITPGRFA on capacity-building for access and benefit-sharing

The 2010 **Memorandum of Cooperation** between CBD and ITPGRFA covers, among others, capacity-building dealing with access and benefit-sharing as related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, information exchange and technical assistance. In resolution 8/2011, the Governing Body of the ITPGRFA takes note of the MoC and requests exploring practical means and activities to give effect to this cooperation, in particular through capacity-building for access and benefit-sharing. In June 2011, the two secretariats held a **capacity-building workshop** that was aimed at helping governments to identify the priorities and needs for capacity-building in the implementation of their obligations under the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. The workshop built on the experience of the International Treaty that had launched a capacity-building programme in 2008, which includes legal and technical assistance with the operation of the Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing.

Ramsar Convention cooperation with other MEAs on capacity-building

The Ramsar Convention, in paragraph 12 of resolution IX.20 on integrated, cross-biome planning and management of wetlands, especially in small island developing states, acknowledges *'the need to support the efforts and capacity building requirements of Parties, and small island developing states in particular, with the implementation of integrated management approaches'* and requests Parties, non-Parties and donors *'to give priority to training and capacity building in this field, also taking into account related efforts through other conventions and international arrangements'*.

Through the latest **joint work plan** between the Ramsar Convention and the CBD (2007-2010), the secretariats of the two conventions recognise that *'capacity-related issues'* are one of the key requirements for the achievement of the objectives of the joint work plan. Furthermore, the two secretariats agree to promote or assist implementation of the joint work plan through, among others, promoting capacity of Parties, including through enhanced south-south cooperation.

The **joint work plan** between Ramsar, CMS and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) (2004) does not mention capacity-building as such but aims for a range of activities that increase the capacity of Parties in the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their associated biodiversity, including making available relevant information from the three agreements.

World Heritage Convention – CBD cooperation on capacity-building

Through the **Memorandum of Co-operation** between UNESCO and the CBD (1998), the two agree to *'co-operate in building up the required scientific and technical capacity in countries for the effective development of the Convention [on Biological Diversity⁴²]'* (section III.e). Section IV of the MoC identifies *'capacity building (training courses and workshops, University Chairs and other activities)'* as one of several joint activities.

Capacity-building and the Biodiversity Liaison Group

The **BLG** addressed capacity development at its 5th meeting in 2006. The Group agreed *'that there was a common interest in further capacity development, training and information on the AAPG'* (Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity). Subsequently, an

⁴² The text is ambiguous about which convention it refers to here but it seems likely that it is the CBD.

interactive CD ROM on the application of the AAPG was produced under the aegis of the BLG. Under the heading of Capacity development and technical support for achieving the 2010 Biodiversity Target, the meeting discussed *'ways and means to increase the capability of developing countries to participate in convention processes, to increase the understanding about other conventions and to increase synergy at the national level'* (paragraph 38 of the meeting report) and *'to what extent existing training modules from other conventions could be used to complement training activities'* (paragraph 40).

At its 7th meeting in 2009, the BLG addressed capacity-building at regional and national level, through a wide range of activities between two or more conventions. Following a suggestion by CITES for cooperation in preparation of MEA-related modules on trade and the environment for use in appropriate WTO training events, CITES was asked to take a lead in this regard.

At the first **high-level retreat among secretariats of biodiversity-related conventions** in September 2010 participants agreed *'to coordinate capacity-building activities in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan [for Biodiversity 2011-2020]. All biodiversity-related conventions would be invited to contribute to and participate in the regional and subregional capacity development workshops for the revision and updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans'* (page 3 of the meeting report).

7.4 Synthesis and options for further synergies in capacity-building between conventions

Capacity-building is a priority for all biodiversity-related conventions and is incorporated in many key documents, including some of the convention texts, all the existing strategic plans and many of the specific work programmes (e.g. all thematic programmes of work of the CBD). Funding for capacity-building, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, is therefore a major concern for agreements.

Capacity-building is widely understood as a **cross-cutting issue**, of relevance to all or most aspects of MEA implementation. Some conventions have established specific capacity-building programmes or mechanisms: The ITPGRFA has a Capacity Building Coordination Mechanism and has joined forces with FAO and Bioversity International to establish a Joint Capacity-Building Programme for Developing Countries; the WHC has a World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy, and a capacity building strategy for the CMS is under development.

1. Joint initiatives on capacity-building

Given the key role that conventions have lent to capacity-building, it is no surprise that the issue has featured prominently on the agenda of the BLG. The group has developed an interactive CD-ROM on the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines and has envisaged joint activities for capacity-building on trade and the environment.

Several of the Memoranda of Cooperation and joint work plans between the biodiversity-related conventions have also identified capacity-building as a **key area for cooperation**, in particular in terms of research, training and raising public awareness. Governing bodies of several of the conventions have called for such joint activities with other conventions and relevant organisations.

Further areas for joint capacity-building initiatives between subsets of the conventions could include, for example, climate change adaptation, management effectiveness of designated areas, combating invasive alien species, and the area of communication, education and public awareness.

2. *New options for cooperation on capacity-building with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020*

The 2005 Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building strongly featuring capacity-building for MEA implementation, provides a useful background for cooperation of MEAs in the area of capacity-building. More recently, the **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** recognised the key role of capacity for implementation (strategic goal E: '*Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building*'). Decision X/2, through which the COP adopted the Plan, features strong calls for capacity-building, including through placing capacity-building in the context of strengthening of synergies among conventions. In chapter 5, the options that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 offers for cooperation between conventions at the national level in the context of **National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans** were outlined. The national implementation of NBSAPs – including through activities that achieve the objectives of other conventions than the CBD – requires enhanced capacity. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity thus offers new opportunities for the biodiversity-related conventions to cooperate in building capacity at the national level to implement the wider biodiversity agenda.

3. *A joint capacity-building initiative*

In practical terms, the individual conventions could identify to which extent their own capacity-building strategies and activities could contribute to joint efforts for capacity-building. A **joint capacity-building initiative**, focused on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in developing countries, could be developed under the aegis of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and/or the Environment Management Group and conventions could jointly seek funding through bilateral and multilateral sources.

4. *Cooperation on capacity-building through IPBES*

Another avenue for joint capacity-building activities between MEAs might open with the emerging **IPBES**. Capacity-building has been identified as an area of major needs for implementing the science-policy platform and several biodiversity-related conventions have positioned themselves in this regard (see 4 chapter on the science-policy interface). Capacity-building for IPBES would necessarily involve issues of provision of sound scientific advice to decision-making and thus be a key issue for all MEAs if proper linkages are established and utilized. Coordinated engagement of agreements in the planning and coordination of IPBES-related capacity-building activities might well be required.

8. Synthesis and outlook – key options for developing synergies

8.1 Benefits of and challenges to synergies and key experience from other processes

The concept of synergies between multilateral environmental agreements has been discussed for a long time, in particular through meetings of MEA bodies, the International Environmental Governance process and informal symposia and workshops. The concept has generally been found useful for achieving the objectives of the conventions and treaties and a number of **benefits from synergies** between MEAs have been identified. These can be summarised as follows⁴³:

At national level:

- Enhanced cooperation across sectors (*e.g.* water, agriculture, forests)
- Reduced burden of national reporting
- More effective use of financial resources at national level
- More effective drawing on existing national expertise
- Increased consistency between national positions in different fora

At global level:

- Consistency in international commitments
- Common targets allowing for better identification of gaps in addressing global issues
- Reduction in duplication and more effective use of resources
- Better targeting of development and environment funding

These benefits, if realised, would support a better implementation of the MEAs and would thus help to achieve the biodiversity targets as laid down in the objectives of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is expected that synergies lead to more efficiency of the instruments involved and also to a decrease in the amount of duplication of efforts, at the national and the global level. Thus, synergies should be cost-effective, at least in the longer term⁴⁴.

There are, however, possible **risks** associated with a synergy process. These might relate to the potential loss of 'identity' of the individual MEAs, possibly resulting in reduced efforts for implementation and funding and subsequently reduced impact. On the other hand, the biodiversity-related MEAs could jointly get their voices better heard, leading to greater visibility of the issues and challenges they address.

⁴³ The list of benefits is adapted from Webbe, J.: Synergies within the biodiversity-related MEAs. Presentation at the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster, Helsinki, Finland, April 2010, available at http://www.biodivcluster.fi/pdf/friday/7Webbe_9April2010.pdf.

⁴⁴ Jill Hanna, in her presentation on *MEA budgets and financing – will synergies deliver more for less?* at the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the biodiversity cluster in April 2010, looking at the experiences in the chemicals and waste cluster, concluded that the synergies work would be 'cost-neutral in the long run' (report of the symposium, p 9).

For the discussion of synergies between the biodiversity-related MEAs, the **experience of other processes** is important. In this report, synergy processes at the chemicals and waste cluster of MEAs, the Human Rights Treaty System and the UN Women process have been considered. Some of the critical success factors for enhancing synergies from these processes can be summarised as follows:

- **Government ownership:** Synergy processes are more likely to succeed when they are party-driven and not developed ‘top-down’ with limited ownership of Parties.
- **Progressing step-by-step:** Synergy processes are more likely to succeed when they are taken rather step-by-step than through sudden and dramatic changes.
- **Transparency:** Synergy processes are more likely to succeed when they happen in a transparent manner allowing for confidence-building among all involved or affected, Parties, secretariats and convention-bodies alike.
- **Consistent decisions:** Consistent decisions, adopted across the various MEAs involved, promise progress at various steps of a synergy process. This requires that individual Parties take consistent positions across the MEAs (*e.g.* Party A taking the same position in governing body meetings of all conventions). Consistent decision-taking needs to happen while respecting the autonomy of the individual treaties – this requires a careful and considerate approach.

Many **cooperation processes** between the biodiversity-related conventions have been underway for many years, through bilateral and multilateral memoranda of understanding, joint work plans and programmes, initiatives and coordination groups. In the absence of an overarching coordination mechanism for Parties of the biodiversity-related MEAs, the BLG, which comprises the secretariats of all six biodiversity-related conventions, has initiated coordination processes, *inter alia*, the CSAB meetings, and has identified a number of issues of high potential for further developing synergies.

The **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** calls on other MEAs to support its implementation, and other conventions have begun to analyse the potential for better achieving their own objectives through contributing to the operationalisation and implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. A key mechanism for this to happen is the NBSAP process, which is likely to stimulate national implementation of wider biodiversity objectives.

There are, however, some **challenges** to further enhancing synergies, which need to be taken into account. They relate in particular to some key differences among the set of conventions:

- The six agreements reside under different agencies: UNEP (CBD, CITES, CMS), FAO (ITPGRFA), UNESCO (WHC, Ramsar Convention) and IUCN (Ramsar Convention)⁴⁵.
- The governing structures differ, *e.g.* the WHC does not have a Conference of the Parties, with decisions being taken by the World Heritage Committee, which consists of representatives of 21 States Parties to the WHC.

⁴⁵ UNESCO is the depositary for the Ramsar Convention, while IUCN hosts the Secretariat. The institutional hosting of the Ramsar Secretariat will be discussed at the forthcoming COP-11 in July 2012. The options for the host institution include UNEP and IUCN. Exploring the issue from a synergistic perspective would imply that UNEP administration of the Ramsar Secretariat could be more advantageous.

- The remit of the conventions differ, with the WHC being not only a biodiversity-related but also a cultural convention. The latter issue has capacity impacts as the majority of staff of the World Heritage Centre are focused on culture and not biodiversity-related issues.
- At the national level, the focal points for the six conventions are often based in different ministries, *e.g.* the ministries for environment, agriculture and culture.

8.2 Options for synergies in the biodiversity cluster

Synergies could be materialised through a number of approaches, which are not mutually exclusive. The following five options represent a growing level of ambition to clustering, with the threshold of succeeding being clearly larger in options 4 and 5 than in option 1, but also the potential for achieving synergies being much greater.

1. Enhancing synergies through the existing secretariat level cooperation

The first level would develop synergies through secretariat-driven initiatives, but with limited mandate to achieve profound changes. This scenario can be described as business as usual.

2. Enhancing synergies on programmatic issues through a party-driven approach and enhancing synergies at secretariat and national levels

This level would include creating a joint platform for the Parties of the MEAs to develop common approaches to programmatic issues, such as reporting, information management, science-policy-interface *etc.* Synergies could be further developed, through a party-driven approach, on programmatic issues at the level of the secretariats and at national level. The existing mechanisms of enhanced cooperation of the secretariats described above could be further developed and intensified. However, the secretariats have a limited authority to develop synergies, and results will only be achieved with mandates from Parties, through decisions and resolutions of the governing bodies. In addition, such mandates should address the lack of sufficient human and financial capacity and resources of secretariats to pursue synergies. At the same time, synergies could be increasingly implemented at national level. As described above, there have been pilot projects but there is no complete picture of the extent to which issues such as cooperation between national focal points, pooled information management and joint institutional arrangements between MEAs are implemented⁴⁶. Lessons learned from national experience could be fed into the global convention processes much more systematically and efficiently.

3. Extending party-driven synergies to include joint administrative functions, secretariats, budgets and communication functions, following the example of the chemicals and waste convention

A higher degree of clustering of biodiversity-related conventions has been suggested in a number of processes and was discussed extensively at the Nordic Symposium: Synergies in the Biodiversity Cluster. While respecting the legal integrity of MEAs, clustering could involve even joint

⁴⁶ An analysis of national reports to all biodiversity-related and Rio Conventions might provide a better picture in this regard.

administrative functions, secretariats, budgets, communication functions *etc* as is to some extent achieved in the chemicals and waste cluster of conventions⁴⁷.

4. Merging conventions as protocols under the CBD

A far-reaching option would be the subordination of biodiversity-related conventions as protocols under one convention, with the most logical option being the CBD. Given the independent legal character and the long evolution of the individual MEAs, it is extremely unlikely that Parties would agree to such a proposal. In addition, this option would not be likely to get the agreement of all conventions, particularly ITPGRFA and WHC, whose core mandates are not environment *per se*, and which are not administered by an organisation focused primarily on the environment⁴⁸.

5. Fundamental reorganisation of MEAs under a proposed WEO/UNEO

This is a far-reaching option, which could involve incorporating certain structures (such as secretariats) of MEAs within a prospective World Environment Organization (WEO) or United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO), should one be established. This involves suggestions that UNEP should be upgraded to a UN specialized agency. Although proposals for how MEAs would function under a UNEO/WEO in practical terms have not been debated, one option is that all the Conferences of the Parties of the MEAs would meet at the seat of the UNEO/WEO. The rationalization of MEAs would bring various administrative benefits, in particular, since the various secretariats, COPs and funds would be organized more systematically.

8.3 A step-by-step process for building synergies

Building on the understanding and experience outlined earlier, this report suggests a step-by-step process of achieving synergies with the aim of making the biodiversity-related conventions and treaties more efficient in contributing to the overarching goal of conserving biodiversity and sustainably using natural resources. This approach would follow option 2 as outlined in section 8.2 above, but would not exclude the implementation of other options at a later stage. The approach would also address, to some extent, the possible risks and challenges to the synergy process as identified above. It would observe the following **principles**:

- Synergies are not an end in itself but should create results that improve the implementation of the convention objectives and of biodiversity targets.
- The process should be party-driven; it would need to involve Parties at all stages, allowing for a strong sense of ownership by Parties.
- The process would respect the autonomy of the COPs of the individual treaties and the specific identity of each convention.
- A step-by-step iterative approach, whereby the process would entail taking small steps rather than big jumps.

Importantly, synergies would be developed by enhancing multi-level governance of biodiversity: a national-level move to synergies, regional support to national-level synergies and a global process involving the bodies of the conventions, in particular the governing bodies and the secretariats. All processes would need to be driven and owned by Parties. Capacity needs for the synergies process

⁴⁷ Being not merely biodiversity-related agreements, the ITPGRFA and the WHC may not be suitable for clustering (nor for merging, see next paragraph).

⁴⁸ See Jóhannsdóttir *et al* 2010 for further discussions of a 'radical system redesign' of MEAs.

at all levels, including human resources, would need to be identified and addressed. Form would need to follow function.

The **national process** is of great significance for developing synergies as it is ultimately at the national level where agreements are implemented; also, synergies at the global (convention) level should build on national synergy efforts. Although depending on national circumstances and decisions taken by national decision-makers, the national synergy process could involve the following aspects, all building on enhanced coordination and cooperation between national focal points and other actors in charge of specific conventions:

- The **NBSAP process** offers opportunities for the national focal points of the six biodiversity-related conventions to better coordinate and collaborate; with appropriate mechanisms, such as national coordination bodies or regular meetings, to be developed where they do not yet exist.
- The NBSAPs could include objectives of the other conventions, allowing for a broad ownership of the NBSAPs by national focal points of other conventions and relevant agencies, institutions and stakeholders. National policies and strategies for the country-specific implementation of other (non-CBD) conventions and the NBSAP could be aligned, in the wider framework of the national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, without jeopardising the convention-specific objectives and approaches for the country in question.
- National **indicators** for biodiversity and the implementation of the conventions could be jointly developed for the objectives of the six conventions (and other related conventions such as the UNCCD), under the framework of the NBSAP process and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
- Joint ownership of the NBSAP across the national convention-related stakeholders could open new avenues for funding the national implementation of all six conventions (including access to GEF-funding for the implementation of the biodiversity MEAs in an integrated manner), not least through initiatives in the area of **capacity-building**. Such funding for capacity-building could support processes of building joint arrangements and mechanisms by stakeholders across the six conventions.
- A test in case for improved coordination and collaboration across the conventions at the national level could be **national reporting**, as a key obligation for Parties to conventions. The collaboration between focal points to the different conventions on reporting could extend to building integrated national biodiversity information systems that assemble and make available data and information modules of relevance to national reporting to all conventions. This would avoid duplication of efforts of national focal points or institutions and agencies in collecting the data and information that is required for national reporting. Such efforts would benefit from the development and testing of guidelines for strengthening and integrating national management of biodiversity information.
- The **experience** on synergy building gathered at national level should be **made available to the global convention processes**, allowing for improved consistency of Parties in decision-taking across conventions, informing the decision-taking by convention bodies, and informing other Parties in their own efforts to improve synergies and ultimately convention implementation. This would be particularly relevant for MEA governing body considerations of cooperation with other conventions and processes, capacity-building and technology

support for convention implementation, the science – policy interface, indicators, information and knowledge management, and national reporting.

- The **UNEP Regional Offices** and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO) could provide support and advice to Parties on building synergies, working with conventions and other UN agencies, with possible implementation under the *Delivering as One/One UN* agenda. They could also help to establish a mechanism for regular reporting on national synergy processes to the governing bodies of the conventions⁴⁹.
- Donors should (continue to) consider providing financial assistance to the synergies process at the national level.

Regional cooperation mechanisms and processes, assisted by the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO), could provide support for the development of synergies at the national level, in line with the decisions and approaches taken globally, through the following activities:

- **Support** could be provided to the **national implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020** and the updating and implementation of NBSAPs, potentially through regional centres established through the existing regional cooperation mechanisms and processes.
- Depending on the approaches for IPBES that will be taken, **regional hubs for IPBES**, which might be established, could allow for close collaboration of the conventions.
- Regional mechanisms could assist Parties in testing national approaches to **streamlining and better integrating national reporting** and the delivery of the experience and expertise gained to the global convention bodies.

The **global synergies process** could further evolve through the following approaches:

- Following the current example of the Ramsar Convention (see section 5.3), the **strategic planning documents** of the six conventions could be aligned in the wider framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, without any subordination of such plans under the latter. This could build on the current exercises undertaken by the Issue Management Group on Biodiversity of the EMG and by IUCN for CSAB on mapping key activities and objectives and the strategic plans of MEAs against the Aichi Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
- In terms of the **science – policy interface**, the six biodiversity-related conventions could develop a mechanism for joint interaction with the emerging IPBES (dependent on the latter's working arrangements). This could be facilitated through the BLG, advised by the governing bodies and CSAB. In turn, IPBES could, in cases where this is appropriate, channel scientific advice and requests to the conventions in a way consistent across the MEAs.
- Such arrangements would allow for **biodiversity assessments**, enabled by IPBES, to be jointly approved and used by the conventions. This could extend to global but also sub-

⁴⁹ Reporting on cooperation and synergies is built into the existing reporting formats of several of the conventions. The UNEP Regional Offices could help providing regional overviews of the state of the art of implementing synergies at the national level (*cf* the regional overviews of Ramsar and World Heritage Convention implementation derived from information in the national reports of these conventions).

global assessments. Assessments should recognise and involve traditional knowledge and the holders of such knowledge, as already agreed in the IPBES Busan Outcome.

- Similarly, the development of scientifically-sound joint **indicators** between the conventions could be promoted, in the framework of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the existing cooperation through the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership. Joint indicator processes could also inform efforts for streamlining and/or harmonization of national reporting.
- The conventions could further cooperate and develop joint activities in **thematic areas** that are relevant to all or a subset of the six conventions, such as water, forests, agriculture, marine biodiversity, invasive alien species, bushmeat or protected areas.
- Enhanced initiatives could take place for time-bound initiatives. For example, specific conventions – also including other relevant organisations and institutions – could cooperate for the **achievement of specific Aichi Targets** (as already envisaged through the above-described Memoranda of Cooperation and joint work plans).
- **National reporting** to the conventions should be further harmonized, in order to reduce the reporting burden for Parties. Steps that could be taken include the identification of information needs of the individual conventions and an agreement of which convention collects which data and information; agreement on definitions and terms; development of joint reporting formats for overlapping information (forming core reports), supplemented by additional convention-specific reports; joint reporting on specific themes of interest to more than one convention; joint information management systems building on the forest reporting portal of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative as well as the TEMATEA initiative; and online reporting. A cross-convention working group with experts from the secretariats, Parties and relevant organisations could provide advice and guidance to this process.
- The conventions could cooperate through a joint **capacity-building initiative** for national implementation of the conventions, building on the existing efforts between several conventions, including joint fund-raising for capacity-building. Increased collaboration on capacity-building could also focus on specific issues of relevance to all or a subset of conventions, *e.g.* climate change adaptation, management effectiveness of designated sites, invasive alien species, or communication, education and public awareness. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 provides a helpful framework for such an initiative. The initiative could also work through and with IPBES in the area of capacity-building for scientific assessments and indicators.
- Crucially, all these efforts would include the joint provision of **guidance to national-level implementation** of conventions in a synergistic manner. As outlined above, the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO) or other regional organisations could assist in this regard by working with Parties in their regions on the issues in question, helping with translating global guidance into national decision-making.
- It should be noted that these initiatives might well extend to **further conventions**, in particular the UNCCD and UNFCCC or regional conventions, building on existing cooperation through, for example, the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, regional initiatives such as the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, and bilateral cooperation between biodiversity-related and Rio Conventions. The **Environment**

Management Group could play an important role in facilitating efforts and activities across a broader spectrum of conventions and UN agencies.

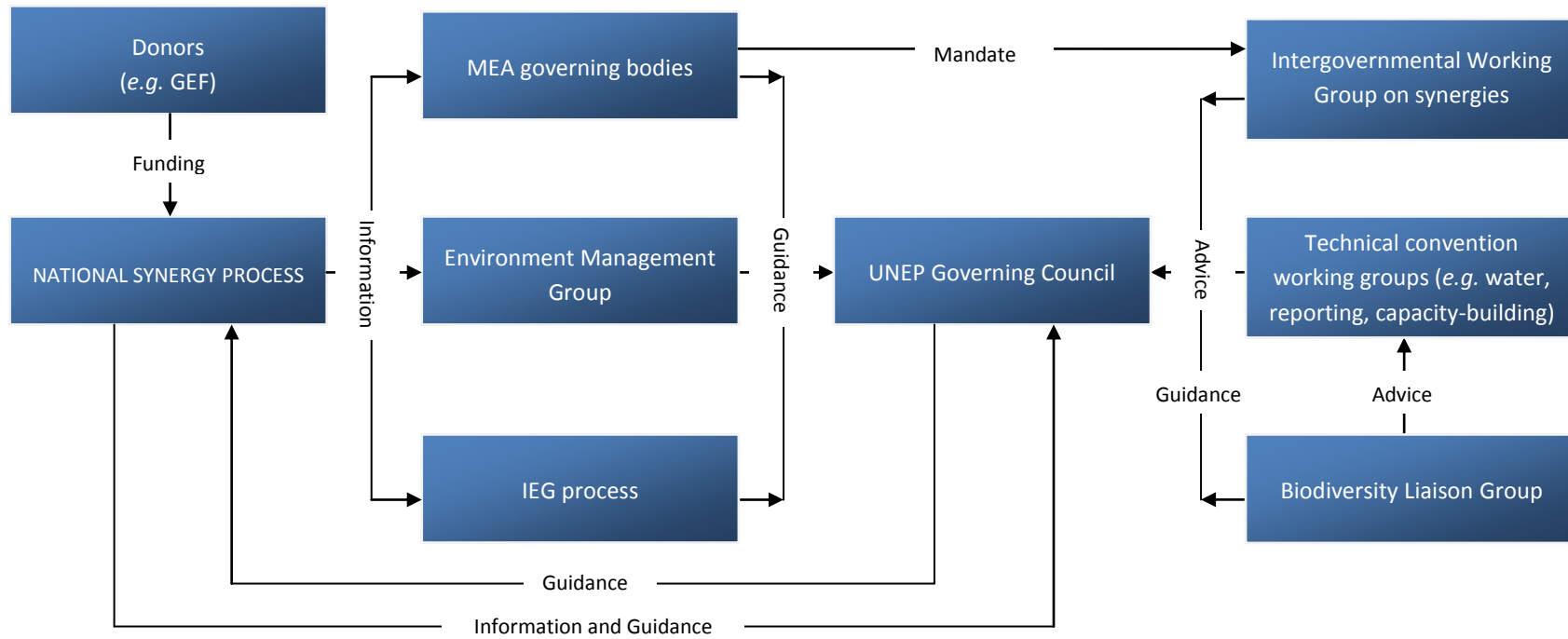
- As said above, none of these efforts are entirely new and the many existing cooperative initiatives between conventions provide excellent platforms for the further development of synergies.
- Decisions by governing bodies providing the necessary mandates on these steps toward increased synergies could be taken consistently across the conventions.

In order to provide guidance for all these efforts toward improved synergies, an **intergovernmental working group** should be established, consisting of Party and secretariat representatives and mandated by all the conventions (see below). It would allow proceeding from an *ad hoc* and sporadic approach to a systematic and system-wide approach to developing synergies. This could follow the example of the *Ad Hoc* Joint Working Group of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Such a group would ensure that all these efforts remain controlled and owned by Parties. The Working Group could also suggest consistent decisions across the conventions.

The suggested global – regional - national level synergy process would need to be kept under **review**. This review would be undertaken by the governing bodies of the conventions involved but could also be part of the role of the UNEP Governing Council and the wider IEG process. These could advise the conventions process, assisted by the Environment Management Group. The review process could involve adaptations to the process and agreeing on new directions of the synergy process, resulting from the experience and understanding gained, and responding to new challenges and opportunities.

Figure 3 demonstrates a model of the key players in the synergies process and their interactions.

Figure 3: A model for the key players in the synergies process and their interactions



9. Suggested next steps for synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions

In order to start further enhancing the governance of biodiversity between the six biodiversity-related conventions and treaties, a number of short-term enabling steps could be taken. The UNEP Governing Council (GC) could establish an **intergovernmental working group** that would be responsible for developing synergies. The GC could invite the bureaus of the COPs to the biodiversity-related MEAs to name Party and secretariat participants (see box 1). Being party-driven, this working group would have the strength to move the synergies agenda forward, through providing input to the decisions and resolutions taken in this regard by the governing bodies of the conventions. Crucially, an intergovernmental working group on synergies would need sufficient funding in order to operate efficiently although increased coherence is expected to bring cost-savings in the long term.

BOX 1: An intergovernmental working group on synergies between the biodiversity-related conventions

Composition: Representatives of Parties and secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and treaties and, as appropriate, relevant intergovernmental organisations

Objective: Review of the synergies process; development of recommendations and preparation of consistent decisions for the governing bodies of the conventions

Process of establishment of the working group:

- Decision by the UNEP Governing Council (GC) to establish the group
- Invitation by the UNEP GC to the bureaus of the governing bodies of the conventions to send Party and secretariat representatives to the working group
- Supporting decisions or resolutions from the governing bodies of the conventions

The **core function of the intergovernmental working group** would be to review a number of programmatic **issues** and prepare consistent decisions and resolutions for the governing bodies (and the Standing Committees or equivalent bodies where appropriate) of the six conventions in terms of mandating and advising the synergies process. Based on national priorities, the following programmatic issues could be covered:

- Harmonizing monitoring schemes
- Harmonizing reporting schemes
- Harmonizing assessments
- Targeting policy-relevant research
- Integrating structures for scientific advice
- Enhancing information exchange
- Integrating communication and awareness tools (e.g. by creating a joint website)
- Integrating funding
- Integrating technical assistance

The intergovernmental working group could also include various other functions. These could include the following:

- Inform the International Environmental Governance process, including the Environment Management Group, the UNEP Governing Council and the wider IEG process, of the synergies process.
- Agree on a joint approach to other relevant MEAs such as the Rio Conventions (UNCCD, UNFCCC) and processes, such as IPBES, e.g. by establishing the biodiversity-related conventions as one joint partner in the IPBES process.
- Establish technical working groups on issues of common interest, such as national reporting, water, or capacity-building, including technical experts from the secretariats, Parties and relevant organisations.
- Develop a joint approach to funding for biodiversity-related MEAs (an issue that has not been addressed in detail in this report). This could include developing GEF as a funding mechanism for all the biodiversity-related MEAs.

At a later stage, after successfully dealing with programmatic issues, Parties might wish to extend synergies to include also administrative issues that currently might be considered difficult to achieve. These could include the following:

- Pooling general administrative arrangements
- Pooling legal advice functions
- Integrating policy-making approaches and structures
- Introducing joint budget cycles

The **Biodiversity Liaison Group**, backed as appropriate by the governing bodies, could facilitate the process in various ways. This could include the following:

- Enable effective participation of CITES, CMS, ITPGRFA, Ramsar Convention and World Heritage Convention in the regional and subregional workshops on NBSAPs that are undertaken in following up on the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, with a view to enable the national focal points to these conventions to effectively participate in the NBSAP processes at Party level. The collaboration of the conventions through the newly established Aichi Biodiversity Targets Task Force provides a good foundation for this cooperation.
- Prepare MEA calls for regional support to Parties' efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, through mobilizing support from the UNEP Regional Offices and other regional and national UN offices (*e.g.* FAO, UNDP, UNESCO) as well as existing (sub)regional cooperation mechanisms and potentially the creation, through such mechanisms, of regional support centres.

Within the wider **International Environmental Governance process**, the following steps could be undertaken in the short to medium-term:

- The **Environment Management Group** could address the synergies process through its Issue Management Group on biodiversity, with the aim of embedding the process within the wider UN process and informing other conventions and agencies of progress in the synergies process.
- A particularly significant milestone for the MEA synergies process is set by the **UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio+20)**. It has the institutional framework for sustainable development on its agenda, which includes international environmental governance. The MEA

synergies process could be further considered and advice delivered by the conference and its follow-up process.

- **Donors** such as the **Global Environment Facility** could consider strengthening the provision of funding for the synergies process in developing countries. For the GEF, this could happen under the existing mandates for funding of capacity-building, national reporting and others in the focal area of biodiversity.

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