



UNITED  
NATIONS



## Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.  
GENERAL

FCCC/SB/2003/1  
18 September 2003

Original: ENGLISH

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### SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

Nineteenth session

Milan, 1–9 December 2003

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

### SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Nineteenth session

Milan, 1–9 December 2003

Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

## COOPERATION WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 4, PARAGRAPHS 8 AND 9, OF THE CONVENTION

#### PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 4, PARAGRAPH 8

#### Report of the workshops on possible synergy and joint action with the other multilateral environmental conventions and agreements, and on enhancing cooperation with other conventions

#### Note by the secretariat

#### Summary

Two workshops were organized by the secretariat in response to a mandate by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth session, and a mandate by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice at its seventeenth session. Participants discussed ways to increase the effectiveness of activities with other conventions and multilateral agreements.

International organizations presented their approach to promoting synergy between conventions. Representatives from Parties briefed participants on their national experiences on cooperation between conventions. Participants highlighted the importance of avoiding duplication of work and promoting cost-effectiveness, coherence and complementarity of the objectives of different conventions.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Mandates**

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 5/CP.7, paragraph 36, requested the secretariat to organize a workshop, before its ninth session, on possible synergies and joint action with the other multilateral environmental conventions and agreements and to report the results of this workshop to the COP at its ninth session.
2. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its seventeenth session, requested the secretariat, in cooperation with other members of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), to organize a workshop as a first step in the process of enhancing collaboration between the conventions. It agreed that the objectives of this workshop should be to prepare guidance to the national focal points of each convention and to contribute to enhancing coordination and communication between them; and to identify options to increase cooperation and capture synergies between the conventions using existing channels, particularly the exchange of information, in areas such as technology transfer, education and outreach, research and systematic observation, capacity-building, reporting, and impacts and adaptation.

### **B. Possible action by the subsidiary bodies**

3. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) may wish to take note of the information provided in this note and provide guidance as appropriate.
4. The SBSTA may wish to take note of the information contained in this report and determine what additional actions it wishes to undertake, and/or whether a COP decision is warranted. The SBSTA may also wish to consider the report of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on biodiversity and climate change, referred to in paragraph 24 below, and any additional information provided by other conventions, and decide on any appropriate next steps.

## **II. PROCEEDINGS**

5. The workshops were organized by the secretariat in Espoo, Finland, from 2 to 4 July 2003. The SBI workshop ran from 2 July to noon on 3 July, and the SBSTA workshop from noon on 3 July through to the end of 4 July.<sup>1</sup> They were hosted by the Ministry of the Environment, Finland, with financial support from the Governments of Finland, Italy, Norway and Switzerland.
6. Sixty-three representatives from Parties and organizations attended the workshops. Twenty-eight representatives were nominated by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, including two from Parties with economies in transition, and 19 by Parties not included in Annex I. Representatives from Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) were included among the participants, based on nominations from the secretariats of the CBD and the UNCCD. In addition, 12 representatives from international organizations and three from non-governmental organizations attended the workshops.
7. The workshops were officially opened by Ms. Sirkka Hautajarvi, Secretary General of the Ministry of the Environment, Finland, who welcomed participants to the workshops and highlighted the importance of promoting synergy between the Rio Conventions – the UNFCCC, the CBD and the UNCCD. Ms. Daniela Stoycheva, Chair of the SBI, and Mr. Halldor Thorgeirsson, Chair of the SBSTA, described the objectives of each workshop and indicated the expected results.

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<sup>1</sup> The agendas of the workshops are available on the UNFCCC web site (<http://www.unfccc.int>) under the link sessions/workshops.

**A. SBI workshop on synergy and joint action with the other multilateral environmental conventions and agreements**

8. Ms. Stoycheva chaired the workshop. The first segment was devoted to presentations on activities to achieve synergy from the perspective of an environmental convention. Presentations were made by representatives from the CBD, the UNCCD and the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971; hereinafter referred to as the Ramsar Convention).

9. The second segment of the workshop consisted of presentations from international organizations on their approaches to synergy and further cooperation. These organizations included the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the United Nations University (UNU), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), IUCN – the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

10. On the second day, four working groups were formed to discuss approaches, challenges and opportunities for further collaboration among multilateral environmental agreements and conventions. Rapporteurs for each working group later participated in a panel discussion on these topics.

**B. SBSTA workshop on enhancing cooperation between conventions**

11. Mr. Thorgeirsson chaired the workshop and opened discussions with a summary of the process undertaken by the SBSTA in relation to cooperation between the Rio Conventions. Mr. Thorgeirsson noted that the word “synergy” is used and interpreted in different ways by different people. In the context of this workshop, “synergy” means cooperation that leads to more effective activities.

12. Six presentations on national experiences were delivered during the first segment of the workshop. These presentations summarized major developments within some countries relating to policies and/or activities to enhance cooperation between conventions.

13. After these presentations, the workshop was divided into four panels on cross-cutting areas under the Rio Conventions: (a) technology transfer, education and outreach, and capacity-building, (b) reporting, (c) impacts and adaptation, and (d) research and systematic observation. Each panel was opened with a keynote presentation, which was followed by discussions on the cross-cutting area, with five to six representatives from different countries participating in each panel. The workshop was closed with a general discussion on further steps needed to enhance cooperation between the Rio Conventions, including possible activities to be undertaken by national focal points.

**III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SBI WORKSHOP ON POSSIBLE SYNERGY AND JOINT ACTION WITH THE OTHER MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS AND AGREEMENTS**

**A. General issues**

14. Participants recognized that synergy within and between the multilateral environmental conventions and agreements is a natural step in the evolution of the implementation stage. The need for efficient collaboration arises from concerns about possible duplication of work and inefficient allocation of resources, and from the perception of potential conflicts resulting from the mandates and activities of each agreement. It was generally agreed that promoting synergy is most important at national and local levels, where implementation takes place. However, there was some discussion on steps that could be taken at the international level to encourage further collaborative efforts at the national and local levels.

15. Some participants pointed out that one effective way to encourage collaborative efforts at a national level is to adopt an issue-specific and stepwise approach. Additional principles that should

guide the work towards synergy could include cost-effectiveness, avoiding duplication of efforts, adding value, coherence, and complementarity of objectives.

16. Participants underscored the importance of the “ecosystem approach”,<sup>2</sup> as an instrument to achieve synergy. In the context of the CBD, the ecosystem approach has proved conducive to joint efforts with the Ramsar Convention, the UNCCD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other institutions, given their similar interest in the health of the global ecosystem. In fact, participants noted that the protection of biological resources is an area where joint efforts could be pursued. On the other hand, actions undertaken in the context of each convention should also give consideration to the needs of local populations and their livelihoods.

17. Representatives from the UNFCCC, the CBD and the UNCCD noted that as each convention moves into the implementation phase of its activities, there are growing calls from Parties to promote further cooperation between them. Participants also noted the fact that governments promote different approaches in different conventions, but highlighted that adopting a coherent approach to the achievement of different environmental objectives could improve efficiency in implementation of each convention and, thus, reduce costs. Some participants pointed out the existence of concerns, at the national level, that actions to promote synergy in the implementation of the mandates of the Rio Conventions could result in reducing the overall amount of aid available for individual national projects.

18. Many presenters recognized the considerable work done to date to achieve synergy, such as in the areas of capacity-building, reporting, funding and public awareness and education. As a result, a number of participants urged that such cooperation should not be promoted “for the sake of synergy”, but rather, that work should be undertaken with concrete and practical steps to allocate resources more efficiently as well as to minimize overlaps and redundancies.

19. Some participants pointed out that environmental activities are often driven by obligations to, and resources from, international agreements, rather than by issues of highest priority in the country. These obligations may distort sustainable development objectives and may also create difficulties in assimilating all activities within one national strategy. Efforts at synergistic implementation of the multilateral conventions and agreements that work from the bottom up, and can be integrated into national development priorities, stand a greater chance of success.

20. Participants noted differences in the use of terminology among the multilateral conventions and agreements, arising from the different objectives and interpretation of the scientific information. In fact, this was seen as a major obstacle to effective cooperation. In addition, it was noted that not all countries are parties to all conventions, a fact which needs consideration when undertaking efforts to achieve synergy between conventions.

21. With regard to coordination, participants pointed out that some developed countries have better mechanisms and higher capacity than do developing countries. However, it was underscored that those developing countries with effective interministerial processes, and where sustainable development concerns are integrated with development planning, are generally most successful in achieving synergy.

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<sup>2</sup> The ecosystem approach is a strategy for management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. It is based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies focused on levels of biological organization, which encompass the essential processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems. The ecosystem approach is the primary framework for action under the CBD, whose COP, at its fifth meeting, endorsed the description of the ecosystem approach through decision V/6. The complete text of this decision can be found at: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/decisions/cop-05-dec-en.pdf>, page 103.

22. Likewise, participants stressed the importance of establishing formal channels of communication among the national focal points of each convention and agreement. Governments that have different focal points for each convention and agreement in the same ministry may have greater ease in achieving coordination. However, they may face additional challenges in getting support from other ministries, particularly when a high level of political commitment may be needed for national collaborative efforts.

### **B. Approaches in the various conventions**

23. The need for improved coordination among the Rio Conventions has been recognized and noted in several Articles of each convention. A specific mention for collaboration can be found in Articles 7.2(l) and 8.2(e) of the UNFCCC, Articles 5 and 24(d) of the CBD and Articles 8.1 and 23(d) of the UNCCD. The Rio Conventions and others, such as the Ramsar Convention, have taken steps to promote synergy on issues of common interest.

24. The CBD representative provided an overview of collaborative efforts including those relating to the impacts that climate change and desertification have on biodiversity. Other activities include joint work programmes with the Ramsar Convention and the UNCCD, and some cooperation with FAO. In relation to climate change, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD was requested to prepare scientific advice on how biodiversity considerations could be integrated into the implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol. An Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on biodiversity and climate change was established by the sixth meeting of the COP of the CBD to assist the SBSTTA in this matter.

25. Participants noted the importance of such initiatives as the establishment of the AHTEG, which is currently preparing a report on the links between biodiversity and climate change. This report examines observed and projected impacts of climate change on biodiversity; explores links between biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures; considers approaches for supporting planning, decision-making and public discussion; and examines selected case studies. It concludes that there are many opportunities to implement mutually beneficial activities that enhance the conservation of biological diversity while mitigating and adapting to climate change, and that these opportunities are rarely realized because of lack of coordination at national and international levels.

26. Some collaborative efforts conducted by the UNCCD secretariat have focused on strengthening institutional links, supporting country-driven initiatives, and building capacity through national workshops in selected developing countries, with the objective of stimulating discussion on modalities for collaboration by various stakeholders in the implementation of the Rio Conventions. Recommendations from country Parties at these workshops included the need for more integration of action programmes, closer links between national action programmes (NAPs) under the UNCCD and national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) under the UNFCCC, and closer liaison of national focal points, which could be achieved, for example, through appropriate incentive systems at country level. As with protection of biodiversity, traditional knowledge plays an important role in efforts to combat desertification. The ecosystem approach of the CBD is also relevant for desertification.

27. Under the Ramsar Convention, there have been extensive links and collaboration with other conventions, including joint work plans with the UNCCD and joint development and mutual adoption of guidance and guidelines on technical matters. Areas in which such links can be expanded to the UNFCCC are currently under consideration. To date, collaboration with UNFCCC has focused on wetlands in the context of adaptation and mitigation. The Ramsar Convention has analysed national reports for evidence of internal coordination on conventions. Results indicate that collaboration among national focal points is lacking, governments adopt inconsistent positions on the same issues in different negotiating bodies, and there are no formalized coordinating mechanisms in some countries for synergistic implementation of activities under the various environmental conventions.

28. Under the UNFCCC, a number of collaborative steps have been taken, including through workshops where representatives from other conventions actively participate, and in the work on the least developed countries, particularly in the context of the preparation of NAPAs, which require consideration of the UNCCD NAP.<sup>3</sup> The UNFCCC secretariat is also working with FAO on a process of harmonizing forestry-related definitions and also participates in the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), a group that supports the activities of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), inter alia, through the establishment of a task force on streamlining forestry-related reporting.

29. Finally, participants highlighted the importance of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), noting the potential of this group to encourage cooperation and achieve synergy between the Rio Conventions. The JLG was seen as a group that can build on the work of each convention to maximize efficiency and coherence, and avoid duplication of work. Some participants suggested that the JLG could be requested to produce relevant documents, organize meetings and workshops, and carry out other practical tasks.

### **C. Activities to promote synergy by international organizations**

30. Seven international organizations were invited to present their activities on promoting synergy with the multilateral environmental conventions and agreements. Representatives from these organizations noted that joining efforts could contribute to sustainable development.

31. **UNEP** is facilitating pilot projects in four countries to harmonize national reporting to the five global biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention (WHC)). It has also developed a draft training manual and will hold a series of regional training workshops to enhance compliance and enforcement of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). UNEP is also working with secretariats of MEAs that have trade provisions to train customs officials; and it will soon launch a project in African countries to implement the recommendation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to improve coordination and effectiveness among MEAs.

32. **UNDP** is working to mainstream climate change adaptation into national planning priorities, and develop adaptive capacity through learning-by-doing projects, and is achieving synergy between conventions, driven by demand from national governments. UNDP is planning to undertake country case studies and regional workshops on synergy between environmental conventions and to share the resulting insights with other national governments. Barriers and challenges to cooperation, as identified by UNDP, include the tendency to focus on sectoral development rather than on broader planning; variations in institutional capacity at local and national levels; and the challenge of identifying leadership between ministries at the national level.

33. The **GEF** strives, in its overall strategic consideration, to avoid transfer of negative environmental impacts between its focal areas. In its Operational Programme 12, adopted in April 2000, the GEF enhanced this commitment. It is providing funding to 45 countries to conduct national capacity self assessments (NCSAs) that focus on cross-sectoral capacity-building needs. The NCSA programme requires that national focal points for all the Rio Conventions be consulted in preparing the NCSA projects, and encourages wide stakeholder participation. Multifocal projects continue to be given high priority, and the GEF envisages substantial resource allocation to such cross-cutting projects in the 2004–2006 business plan.

34. **UNU** presented its Inter-linkages Initiative as one of its most important activities at assessing synergy between conventions. The Inter-linkages Initiative comprises analytical research on issues and themes, including the role of links in compliance and enforcement, financing and capacity development.

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<sup>3</sup> See decision 28/CP.7 of the UNFCCC.

To date 15 national and regional case studies have been done in the Asia and Pacific region and three subregional studies have been conducted for the Pacific, South East Asia and South Asia. Based on these studies, it was found that there are inherent social challenges to achieving synergy that should be addressed, including the political structure of countries, culture, and the historical roles of national institutions.

35. **UNITAR** presented work focused on core data set needs for implementing the Rio Conventions. To this end, UNITAR is creating the necessary conditions for the establishment of a coherent and efficient institutional and technical framework to promote the development of databases for exchanging and disseminating useful information for the implementation of MEAs. This project, SISEI (Environmental Information Systems on the Internet), addresses the integrated management of data and information and is being developed jointly with a number of national and subregional entities.

36. **IUCN** is examining potential areas of synergy between the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Rio Conventions, particularly in the area of forest landscape restoration, where all of them have interests or commitments. Other IUCN activities include a recent workshop held in Dehradun, India, which gathered focal points for the biodiversity and climate change conventions from 10 countries in Asia to discuss mainstreaming these issues into national development planning. Also at the national level, IUCN is promoting the integration of biodiversity concerns into NAPAs undertaken under the UNFCCC, and integrating climate change considerations into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs).

37. **WHO** is expanding its work to include the health consequences of biodiversity loss and climate change. Paths through which climate change can impact health include temperature-related illnesses and death, and health impacts of extreme weather events. In late 2003, WHO and partners will publish a book on climate change and human health, which addresses risks and responses, and provides a set of methods to assess vulnerability and adaptation options. In addition, WHO, UNEP and Harvard University are collaborating in a forthcoming publication addressing biodiversity and health. From a health standpoint, WHO is concerned about desertification and its impacts on nutrition, population displacement, and water and food issues.

#### **IV. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS DURING THE SBSTA WORKSHOP ON ENHANCING COOPERATION BETWEEN CONVENTIONS**

38. In the SBSTA workshop, which followed the SBI workshop, participants shared national experiences and approaches to enhance collaboration between conventions; discussions covered the cross-cutting areas referred to in paragraph 13 above and further steps and activities for national focal points.

##### **A. National experiences**

39. The representative from Germany described the approach followed by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) to implement MEAs, in particular for the design and implementation of projects, for institution and capacity-building, and for training and networking. He highlighted the holistic nature of some GTZ projects currently being implemented in China, Mauritania and Tunisia. He called attention to the opportunities relating to cooperation between conventions arising from the development and implementation of NAPs under the UNCCD, NBSAPs under the CBD, and NAPAs under the UNFCCC. Activities for enhanced cooperation could include cooperation between the civil society and the government, the development of common instruments and tools, and the identification of common partners.

40. The representative from Uruguay briefed participants on the efforts made in her country to enhance cooperation between conventions, which have been channeled through Uruguay's NCSA. In



Uruguay, coordination and cooperation between conventions is facilitated by the coordination mechanism, which comprises representatives from all government ministries, the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations, and whose mandate is to collaborate in the formulation of environmental policies. She highlighted the continuous interaction of focal points of each convention on activities relating to implementation. Topics and areas that offer opportunities for enhancing cooperation could include protected areas, soil conservation practices and water resource management.

41. The representative from Cuba highlighted that the special environmental conditions of her country called for integrated environmental management, where natural resource protection and biodiversity access and management play an important role. From an institutional point of view, cooperation between conventions in Cuba take place within the Committee on the Environment, a body whose work is related to the development of policies to integrate environmental management, pollution reduction and environmental education. Experience on Cuba's hydrographical basins programme has revealed some areas in which efforts to enhance cooperation could be pursued, including soil degradation, deforestation, waste and pollution control, biodiversity and protected areas, natural disasters, and research on climate, health and education.

42. The representative from Finland presented the national experience of her country on cooperation between conventions on international, national, sub-national and local levels. Institutional frameworks for cooperation should aim at using resources efficiently and should use existing institutional arrangements as a starting point. Finland has established an interministerial committee where issues of cooperation are planned. The committee has responsibility for streamlining common tasks, and identifying and taking action on critical and common issues for cooperation, and for some additional tasks relating to monitoring and indicators. The basis for genuine cooperation should start with creating the demand by making policy makers aware of the benefits of cooperation. The creation of the demand should be followed by the identification of common issues with a view to adopting an integrated approach.

43. The representative from the United Republic of Tanzania summarized his country's experience in cooperation between conventions at the national level. Formal arrangements include the Vice-President's Office, which serves as national focal point for major conventions. In addition, informal coordination aims at information exchange and is achieved through national consultative workshops, through active participation in national meetings relating to the conventions, and through inviting stakeholders to regional meetings. Cooperation between conventions could be facilitated with the enhancement of focal points' capacities. Additional efforts could also be made on technology transfer, with national workshops and with the establishment of national databases and networks.

44. The representative from Hungary mentioned the use of strategic planning in Hungary's approach to enhancing cooperation between conventions. In Hungary, this process is facilitated by the Department of International Relations of the Ministry of Environment and Water. Activities aim to enhance cooperation and consider environmental, policy, institutional, financial and public participation aspects. Strategic planning has been used by Hungary to develop environmental programmes under the UNFCCC, the National Drought Strategy under the UNCCD, the National Biodiversity Strategy under the CBD and the National Afforestation Programme. Cooperation between conventions requires policy coherence, institutional coordination and the strengthening of the scientific basis used for decision-making.

## **B. Panel discussions on cross-cutting areas under the Rio Conventions**

### **1. Technology transfer, capacity-building, and education and outreach**

45. The panel discussion began with a presentation by Mr. Jerry Velasquez (UNU), who stressed that most opportunities for collaboration arise from the implementation of the conventions. Activities at the local level could include cooperation in the development of incentives, promotion of information

management, and awareness programmes. At the international level, cooperation could be promoted through sharing information on technologies and approaches, and through the establishment of networks and databases. Channels to implement these actions could include the development of workshops, partnerships, web sites, joint outreach programmes, and awards. Although technologies implemented in the context of each convention and country may differ, methodologies and institutional arrangements for the transfer of technologies could be similar. For this reason, approaches guiding national action for cooperation could be based on experiences shared at the international level.

46. The panel comprised representatives from Ghana, Norway and the Philippines, who highlighted the importance of capacity-building and technology transfer for the implementation activities of the Rio Conventions.

47. Participants suggested fostering procedures to ensure interaction among focal points, as well as between focal points and decision makers, both in the development of coherent negotiating positions, and in the implementation of their obligations. Suggestions included developing and promoting mechanisms that enhance cooperation and communication between national focal points and convention secretariats, including through national-level workshops.

48. Some participants stressed that work on technology transfer, capacity-building and education and outreach should aim at enabling actions at the local level. The role of the NCSAs was highlighted during the discussions and was seen as one of the main channels for cooperation on capacity-building. These assessments could be broadened to address concerns relating to the coordinated implementation of the Rio Conventions.

49. Other participants noted that technology transfer and capacity-building are key factors for the implementation of the Rio Conventions, and that enhanced cooperation in these areas is important for achieving the objective of each convention. They stressed the role of the international community in mobilizing resources to increase capacity at the national and local levels, and called attention to the role of multilateral research and policy-related organizations in channeling these resources.

50. Discussions underscored the usefulness of establishing general frameworks to guide technology needs assessments, as well as the importance of enabling environments and capacity development as means for implementation. Some participants stressed the role of the government in such frameworks and suggested that these frameworks be developed taking into consideration sustainable development principles. Other participants noted the need to involve the private sector, given its role in technology development and transfer.

51. Participants pointed out that the framework for technology transfer developed under the UNFCCC could serve as a basis for developing a common approach between the Rio Conventions and suggested the development of tool boxes for technology transfer and guidelines for identifying technologies and possible users. Some participants stated that frameworks for technology transfer should be developed on the basis of a broad analysis in order to avoid negative impacts on the social and ecological environments where the technology will be transferred.

52. Participants recognized that an increased level of awareness and education efforts to identify ways to enhance cooperation and its positive effects on development, are important elements common to the Rio Conventions and could be pursued at the national level. It was suggested that best practices in this area, and under all conventions, need to be identified, disseminated and promoted. This could also include the exchange of information on ecosystem impacts, mitigation tools and pilot projects.

## 2. Research and systematic observation

53. Mr. William Westermeyer (Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) secretariat) presented information on recent activities relating to research and systematic observation, and noted that many of the data needed to understand climate change and climate variability may be also relevant for the purposes of understanding biodiversity, desertification and land degradation. He underscored that the full implementation of global observing systems for climate requires the commitment of all nations to adhere to principles of free and unrestricted exchange of data. Recommendations from the GCOS second adequacy report to the SBSTA may be relevant for cooperation in the area of research and systematic observation. Among others, these include the design and implementation of integrated global information-related products and the establishment of an international mechanism for developing standards for terrestrial observing systems. The second adequacy report also highlights the importance of data exchange and capacity-building, and the need for improving systems for earth observation.

54. The panel comprised representatives from China, Finland, Sweden and Togo, who shared their views and ideas on cooperation on monitoring, and on the overlap and possible actions towards unifying monitoring methodologies and systems.

55. Participants noted the existing overlap in the needs and efforts for monitoring and research in the context of the Rio Conventions. Some participants indicated that, given the similarity of data requirements under each convention, opportunities arise for common research and monitoring. As an example, some participants indicated the relevance of forestry-related data for processes such as the UNFF and the Rio Conventions, noting that forestry could be an area in which the Rio Conventions could cooperate.

56. It was noted that current observing systems and research efforts are yet not sufficient to meet the requirements of all the Rio Conventions, particularly in developing countries where lack of technical capacity and resources is a limiting factor. Some participants referred to the many independent research and monitoring initiatives undertaken within developing countries, and called for more coordination at the national level. They also noted that the degree of standardization of observation systems is higher at the national level, and thus efforts should be made towards standardization at the international level.

57. With a view to using technical, financial and human resources more efficiently, some participants proposed the regionalization of monitoring; although the needs for equipment and trained personnel are enormous, available technology and human resources could be used to serve more than one region and purpose. They stated that developing common technical criteria for monitoring may be a difficult task, but noted that the possibility of such an undertaking should be studied. Other participants indicated that developing a core set of data of common interest, which serves as a source of information for the Rio Conventions, could be a practical way to enhance cooperation.

58. Some participants called for the establishment of forums for information exchange, where technicians and policy makers could liaise and exchange views on the needs for research and systematic observation to better support decision-making. The summit on earth observation, held in Washington on 31 July 2003, was cited as an example of such forums.

## 3. Reporting

59. Mr. Vijay Samnotra (UNEP) opened the discussion by briefing participants on the efforts made by UNEP to harmonize the management and reporting of information for biodiversity-related treaties. Some barriers to harmonizing data and reporting include, at the national level, fragmented responsibilities, limited understanding of the link between reporting and efficient implementation of each convention, lack of sufficient communication between implementers, and limited funding and resources. At the international level, barriers to harmonization include limited funding and lack of capacity to attend

technical meetings. Additional barriers include differing reporting formats, timings and uses of the information. Some of these barriers could be overcome through interagency cooperation, information sharing, standardization of nomenclature and the development of consolidated manuals for reporting.

60. Representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Belgium, Colombia, Hungary and Switzerland participated in the panel and shared their views relating to cooperation between the Rio Conventions in the area of reporting. Participants focused their interventions on the burden of reporting on national agencies, on the opportunities for enhanced cooperation, and on the benefits resulting from interactions of focal points in this area.

61. Participants noted the distinction between activities at the national and local levels, and at the international level. The national level involves efforts to coordinate data gathering and analysis, to develop clear and specific tasks relating to implementation, and to increase awareness. Participants suggested that in order to reduce the burden on different agencies, actions should be undertaken to better coordinate the flow of information between the local and sub-national levels, and to increase cooperation and interaction between focal points and bodies in charge of preparing reports. Suggestions for coordination at the international level included streamlining the contents of the reports, identifying global common areas for reporting, and synchronizing the submitting of information.

62. Participants underscored the importance of making the reports relevant for the national and the local levels, and indicated that the information contained in these reports could be used strategically at the sub-national and local levels. For example, this information could support regional and local policy-making, or be used by universities and schools where analysis of this information could be included within the programmes of study.

63. Streamlining and harmonization of reporting was also seen as an important task to be undertaken. Participants discussed the reporting requirements under the different conventions, noting that under the UNFCCC, data play a major role, whereas the UNCCD and the CBD place more emphasis on qualitative information. Actions toward harmonizing and streamlining could include the identification of possible overlaps of information and data, and the use of common terms and definitions. Some participants suggested that a group of experts could be established to develop these tasks. Other participants suggested supporting and building on ongoing initiatives; the task force on streamlining forestry-related reporting, an initiative under the CPF, was cited as an example.

#### 4. Impacts and adaptation

64. Mr. Avani Vaish (GEF) opened the panel discussion on adaptation with a presentation on the approach used by the GEF. Despite the lack of projects on adaptation as such, most of the projects currently financed by the GEF have secondary benefits that relate to adaptation, for example, those implemented in arid and semi-arid ecosystems, coastal and marine areas, and mountains, and those dealing with agrobiodiversity, sustainable land management, and integrated land and water management.

65. Representatives from Bolivia, Canada, Namibia, New Zealand and Norway participated in the panel, and discussed the opportunities for enhanced cooperation resulting from the assessment of impacts and the design and implementation of adaptation strategies.

66. Participants noted that adaptation is a cross-cutting issue because climate change could affect biodiversity, desertification and land degradation. Some participants stated that adaptation could only happen under the broader concept of sustainable development. In the context of enhancing cooperation between the Rio Conventions, adaptation projects and actions could be designed and implemented with a broader scope, for example, by taking into consideration the ecosystem approach.

67. Local capacity and local knowledge were seen as important elements of adaptive capacity. Some participants noted the particular role of local scientific capacity, and that efforts to include this knowledge in the design and implementation of adaptation strategies could be considered.

68. Some participants suggested that opportunities for promoting cooperation and to achieve synergy could be found by regionalizing the assessment of impacts. The establishment of multisectoral research programmes was suggested in this context. Additional recommendations included consideration of the ecosystem approach, major involvement of local stakeholders in the assessment of impacts and on the design of projects and activities for adaptation, enhanced policy coordination, and the scaling up of local knowledge into regional and national action plans.

## V. ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

### A. National level actions

69. Participants noted that the primary motivation for cooperation should come from the national and local levels, where conventions are implemented. For this reason, decisions should be taken as close as possible to the level at which they will be implemented. It was stressed that it is Parties themselves who are responsible for ensuring coherence among conventions.

70. Potential opportunities for cooperation may exist at both the policy level (e.g. national policy makers) and the implementation level (e.g. grassroots level, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders). **Inter-ministerial processes** could be established in order to involve multiple focal points for identifying ways to achieve synergy. These processes could involve multiple stakeholders, including scientific and academic communities. Strong legal and institutional frameworks are also important elements in the implementation of the Rio Conventions and achievement of synergy between them.

71. The **development of national sustainable development strategies** is an important point of intervention for “mainstreaming” the implementation of MEAs. Accordingly, the processes to promote synergy should be integrated with regular planning and policy-making processes, including sectoral planning. These efforts should be designed in accordance with national circumstances and should demonstrate how the achievement of synergy can contribute to sustainable development. Participants acknowledged that the ecosystem approach in the national implementation of the Rio Conventions has proven to be successful, and as such could serve as a model for future action.

72. At the implementation level, projects should be designed to meet the multiple objectives and mandates of each convention, while ensuring that their specific requirements are met. Some participants suggested that **project proposals could have clearance from the all focal points**, as has been done in the context of some projects financed by the GEF. Moreover, the GEF itself and some other multilateral and bilateral donor agencies are giving strong preference to projects with multiple, cross-cutting objectives and benefits. However, some participants noted that project developers may not always welcome such preference as it may place more constraints on the successful implementation of activities.

### B. Coordination among convention secretariats

73. Participants noted that the establishment of the JLG is an important step in the process of fostering joint action and enhancing cooperation between conventions. Given the level of understanding and information relating to the political process of each convention, continuous cooperation and communications between secretariats should be promoted. Under its current mandate, **the JLG could undertake further tasks** on identification of activities and actions including, for example, preparation of technical papers, and workshops.

74. There were also suggestions that synergy and cooperation could also be extended to **trade agreements**. Participants pointed out that the bodies of environmental and trade agreements should

cooperate and be treated on an equal footing, following the “mutual supportiveness” principle adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

75. The recent increase of attention within the UNFCCC to the issue of adaptation to a changing climate has strengthened the demand for synergy with other conventions, because many of the issues involved in adaptation are closely related to **land degradation and biodiversity issues**.

### **C. Activities for focal points and issues for further consideration**

76. In relation to **guidance for focal points**, discussions centred on practical activities rather than on guidance. Participants noted that the UNFCCC could only provide guidance to its national focal points, but acknowledged the usefulness of the exchange of views and discussions during the workshop and invited focal points to the other Rio Conventions to consider the workshop report and the issues identified therein.

77. Focal points could be invited to **actively share information** and to liaise on a regular basis to discuss issues relevant to all Rio Conventions, including reporting, capacity-building and technology transfer. Some participants suggested that other focal points could be invited to participate in this exercise, in particular, GEF focal points.

78. Several participants suggested the development of a list of areas where focal points could cooperate. Some participants suggested the development of a **checklist to guide focal points** in these matters. Responsibility for developing such lists could rest with the focal points themselves, the secretariat or the JLG. Some participants called for flexibility and suggested that such a list should aim to identify opportunities and should not be prescriptive.

79. Participants suggested the development of a **thematic approach** for cooperation, which could contain activities and opportunities for achieving synergy in a streamlined way. Such a thematic approach could be directed to the identification of activities relating to the cross-cutting areas of work identified in each panel.

80. Other suggestions for further steps included regional and international workshops (some under the auspices of the JLG), the establishment of partnerships for cooperation under the cross-cutting areas of work, and development of pilot exercises and projects for cooperation.

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