

Harmonization of Information Management and Reporting for Biodiversity- Related Treaties

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- This project is being run under the aegis of UNEP's World Conservation Monitoring Centre in Cambridge, UK
- This is still an on going project.

Workshop in Cambridge October 2000

- Establishment of pilot projects in four countries: Ghana, Indonesia, Panama, Seychelles
- The five treaties involved are:
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- Ramsar Convention
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Mandates

- COPs of four of these conventions have endorsed the move towards increased harmonization reporting:
- Resolution VII/4 of the Ramsar Convention (May 1999)
- Resolution 6.5 of the COP of Convention on Migratory Species (November 1999)
- Strategic plan and report adopted by COP to CITES (April 2000)
- Decision V/19 of the COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity (May 2000)

Overcoming barriers to harmonization (1/2)

- Full harmonization of reporting and information management amongst the MEAs and related agencies cannot be achieved instantly. Some of the potential barriers to success include
- At the national level
 - fragmented responsibility for national biodiversity information management
 - limited understanding of the link between reporting and efficient implementation of MEAs
 - lack of sufficient communication between implementers on the ground and national focal points or administrative authorities
 - differing focal points and stakeholders involved in the implementation of different MEAs at the national level
 - jurisdictional conflicts in implementation of MEAs on the ground
 - limited funding and human resources for information management
 - different reporting formats, timing and purposes

Overcoming barriers to harmonization (2/2)

- At the international level
 - limited funding and human resources for information management
 - lack of capacity to participate in so many fora on harmonisation and interlinkages of MEAs
 - danger of duplication and overlapping considering the number of agencies and organisations carrying out activities related to this issue
 - uncertainty or debate that makes standards (such as taxonomies) difficult to achieve
 - differing economic, legislative, social, administrative, and statistical systems of contracting parties
 - different reporting formats, timing and purposes

Overcoming the barriers

- clear understanding of the purpose and benefits at all levels
- interagency cooperation
- multi-national cooperation
- information and experience sharing
- wide consultation with stakeholders
- progressive and incremental steps through pilot projects that solve practical problems
- adoption of tested procedures for wider implementation

Definitions

- Streamlining: as those mechanisms that make each individual reporting process or an integrated process easier or more straightforward for contracting parties to implement.
- Harmonisation: as those activities that lead to a more integrated process and greater potential for sharing information.

Benefits

To national governments

- encourage identification of a consolidated list of obligations cross-sectorally
- identify national priorities on implementation of MEAs in a holistic manner
- encourage participation of all levels of government in implementation and reporting
- improve awareness of national obligations and compliance of MEAs
- improve ability to assess achievement of treaty objectives and set future priorities
- identify gaps in national legislation and policies
- identify ways to avoid duplication of efforts between institutions
- facilitate preparation of national strategic plans to implement MEAs
- reduced burden of meeting reporting requirements of treaties

Benefits

To MEA secretariats

- encourage and support governments in the implementation of their own national priorities
- timely receipt of national reports improved efficiency of information management
- improved ability to coordinate interagency programmes of work, through sharing of information and experience
- improved linkages with international environmental monitoring agencies, major data custodians, and regional treaties
- improved basis for decision making by COPs, subsidiary bodies and secretariats

Each pilot project has a unique task to test one of the harmonization concepts recommended by the Cambridge workshop:

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

Current Status of the Projects

- Indonesia: Completed. Framework accommodates reporting requirements of CBD, Ramsar, CITES and WHC
- Seychelles: Completed. Draft reports submitted to CITES, WHC and CBD
- Panama: Ongoing. First draft project report which outlines a number of recommendations.
- Ghana: There are some administrative delays which are being looked into.

Preliminary Observations

- **International level:**
- Need for a synchronization of national reporting cycles
- Need for the use of standardized nomenclature and terminology of scientific and common terms/concepts
- Development of a consolidated "Biodiversity Reporting Manual" should be considered
- Potential for developing and implementing broader joint programmes on capacity development

National level:

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

The Way Forward

- When results of these pilots become available, UNEP will:
- prepare preliminary guidelines for coordinated reporting at the national level
- outline recommendations at the international level which will be considered by the Secretariats of biodiversity related conventions and later their COPs