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**Synergy among multilateral environmental agreements in the context  
of national adaptation programmes of action**

**Technical paper**

*Summary*

This paper presents a synthesis of information relating to adaptation to climate change in the context of creating synergy among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), which could be useful in the preparation and implementation of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs). The paper reviews NAPA proposals and other relevant documents. It also presents relevant existing programmes and projects under the three Rio Conventions, the Global Environment Facility and its implementing agencies, and the United Nations University. The paper concludes with lessons learned and identifies possible action whereby the Least Developed Countries Expert Group can enhance the promotion of synergy among MEAs during the preparation and implementation of NAPAs.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. MANDATE.....	1–3	3
II. INTRODUCTION.....	4–5	3
III. SYNERGY AMONG MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS IN NATIONAL ADAPTATION PROGRAMMES OF ACTION (NAPAs), NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES (NAPs) AND NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS (NBSAP).....	6–11	3
A. The UNFCCC NAPA proposals .....	6–8	3
B. The UNCCD NAP process.....	9	5
C. The CBD NBSAP process .....	10–11	6
IV. PROMOTING SYNERGY AMONG MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS .....	12–28	7
A. The Global Environment Facility and its implementing agencies .....	13–17	7
B. Initiatives and cooperation between convention secretariats..	18–24	9
C. International organizations.....	25–27	10
D. Development planning .....	28	11
V. LESSONS LEARNED: OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES.....	29–32	12
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS ON ENHANCING SYNERGY AMONG MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL ADAPTATION PROGRAMMES OF ACTION PROCESS .....	33	12

## I. Mandate

1. The Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), which was established by decision 29/CP.7 in 2001, is mandated in its terms of reference to facilitate the exchange of information and to promote synergy with other multilateral environmental conventions, in the preparation and in the implementation strategy of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs).
2. At the first meeting of the LEG, in February 2002 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the LEG programme of work for 2002–2003 was discussed, and included developing recommendations on the promotion of synergy with other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) on an ongoing basis.<sup>1</sup>
3. At the fifth meeting of the LEG, in March 2004 in Maputo, Mozambique, the group noted that Appendix A “NAPAs: Seeking synergies among MEAs” of the LEG’s annotated guidelines already fulfils part of its mandate to address synergy among MEAs, but that work more aligned with the specific steps of the NAPA process was still needed in this context. This technical paper responds to this need, and is intended to present to least developed country (LDC) Parties the outcome of the LEG consideration of the issue of synergy thus far, based on information included in NAPA proposals and other sources of information, as well as on information relating to ongoing activities and initiatives undertaken by external entities.

## II. Introduction

4. Given that climate change and desertification/land degradation are major causes of biodiversity loss and that biodiversity management can contribute to climate change adaptation and to combating desertification, promoting synergy between MEAs – particularly the UNFCCC, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the three Rio Conventions – is important.
5. The aim of this paper is to present a synthesis of information relating to adaptation to climate change, in the context of creating synergy among MEAs, that could be useful in the preparation and implementation of NAPAs. The paper reviews NAPA proposals and other relevant documents, such as national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD, national action programmes (NAPs) under the UNCCD, and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It also presents relevant programmes and projects by the three Rio Conventions, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies, and the United Nations University (UNU) to identify opportunities for synergy during the NAPA process. Finally, the paper concludes with lessons learned and recommends possible action whereby the LEG can enhance efforts to promote synergy among MEAs during the preparation and implementation of NAPAs.

## III. Synergy among multilateral environmental agreements in national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs), national action programmes (NAPs) and national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAP)

### A. The UNFCCC NAPA proposals

6. Guidelines adopted by the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties<sup>2</sup> (COP) at its seventh session requested the LDCs to adopt a “complementary approach, building upon existing plans and programmes,

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<sup>1</sup> FCCC/SBI/2002/5.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 28/CP.7.

including national actions plans under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, national biodiversity strategies and action plans under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and national sectoral policies”. According to the guidelines, during the preparation process a multidisciplinary NAPA team should identify key climate-change adaptation measures that would also be responsive to needs identified under other relevant processes (e.g. UNCCD and CBD). In addition, the guidelines list synergy with other MEAs as a criterion for prioritizing identified adaptation measures.

7. Based on the guidelines, the secretariat reviewed 35 NAPA project documents that were submitted to the GEF for funding, to assess the extent to which they made reference to synergy among MEAs. The reviewed NAPA proposals included:

- (a) Eight from small island developing States (Cape Verde, Kiribati, Maldives, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu)
- (b) Six from Asian LDCs (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Yemen)
- (c) Twenty-one from African LDCs (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia).

8. In line with the guidelines, many NAPA proposals highlight institutional and process-related ways in which they will promote synergy among their NAPAs and other MEAs. The following examples illustrate some of these efforts:

- (a) Regarding the institutional set-up of the NAPA process, all of the reviewed proposals included a plan to establish a multidisciplinary team representing the country’s key sectors, to ensure that NAPAs are integrated and cross-cutting. In addition, many countries seek different institutional ways to involve focal points from other MEAs. For example, in Mali and Burkina Faso the UNCCD and CBD focal points are part of the steering committee, and in Gambia the focal points are members of the NAPA Country Team. Malawi envisages the following high-level political oversight and coordination for integration of the NAPA process: the Cabinet Committee on the Environment will approve the final NAPA document; the National Council on the Environment will review the draft NAPA document; the Malawian World Summit on Sustainable Development Committee, coordinated by the Environmental Affairs Department, will be consulted; and the PRSP Co-ordination Committee will review the NAPA document. This process will ensure broad consistency between the objectives of the NAPA and other environmental and developmental priorities
- (b) To ensure a complementary approach, all countries will take existing action plans, such as the NAPs and the NBSAPs, into account when identifying adaptation options. A few countries, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen, plan to establish synergy assessment task forces to prepare, inter alia, technical reports on synergy between adaptation and MEA activities. In accordance with the NAPA proposals of these countries, the reports will “(i) assess synergies (and potential barriers) between climate change adaptation measures and those measures already positioned in the national dialogue through the MEA processes, (ii) identify a set of adaptation activities that can satisfy multiple objectives, and (iii) scope out institutional linkages that can provide the makings of a NAPA implementation framework”. Ethiopia’s NAPA proposal has identified potential measures that would enhance synergy with other established or

planned national action plans of other MEAs in the following sectors: crops, grasslands and livestock, forests, water resources, wildlife and human health

- (c) A number of LDCs have planned or are planning institutional steps to provide a national policy framework to better integrate the objectives of MEAs and to promote synergy with national development planning. For example, Samoa has launched its National Environment Management Strategies, which include a Climate Change Policy and a National Policy on the Conservation of Biological Diversity. In Djibouti and Lesotho, environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development are integrated in various development plans and programmes. Their NAPAs aim at identifying the gaps in current scientific knowledge in terms of integrating adaptation concerns into specific sector policies
- (d) Regarding capacity-building, in Vanuatu the outcome of a national capacity self assessment (NCSA) overseen by a climate change/biodiversity committee will feed into the development of the NAPA, which will take into account relevant information and recommendations arising from the NCSA project, thus integrating capacity-building needs identified in the context of other MEAs
- (e) On mainstreaming into sustainable development, the Lao People's Democratic Republic proposal recognizes that the NAPA process will be critical for understanding the link between climate change and sustainable development, to ensure that the NAPA is linked to the larger framework of community development. Within its mainstreaming framework, Burkina Faso's strategy is aimed at increasing consistency and leveraging synergy between the various projects and programmes while addressing specific constraints encountered in prior planning frameworks. Though Djibouti and Lesotho have already integrated environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development into various development plans and programmes, there is a recognition that their NAPAs need to address the gaps in current scientific knowledge in terms of integrating adaptation concerns into specific sectoral development plans.

#### **B. The UNCCD NAP process**

9. NAPs under the UNCCD are developed in the framework of a participatory approach involving local communities, which spells out the practical steps and measures to be taken to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in specific ecosystems. Given their focus on ecosystems, they offer entry points for seeking synergy with climate change adaptation and overall sustainable development:

- (a) In Eritrea, a key goal of the NAP is to create synergy with other strategic planning processes. Two critical functions, which the NAP process will address, include upstream support in policy and institutional development and mainstreaming dryland concerns in the development efforts of various ministries
- (b) In Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the NAPs emphasize the key links between the causes and problems relating to biodiversity loss and desertification, and the links between these two problems. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo's NAP, a specific link is made between the NAP and the NBSAP, suggesting the potential for concerted action
- (c) Gambia's NAP is part of the Gambian Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II) and the country's Vision 2020 Strategy and objectives. In this light, its objectives are centred on addressing the objectives of the Rio Conventions in a harmonized way. Indeed,

implementation of the NAP is guided by the principle of ensuring coordination with national action plans under the CBD and UNFCCC, as well as with GEAP II

- (d) In the NAP developed by Lao People's Democratic Republic, links are made between desertification, biodiversity and climate change, recognizing the need to address these together, as they are related. The sectoral emphasis on lands and forests, agricultural biodiversity management and sustainable use should ensure harmonized implementation of the NAP
- (e) Malawi's NAP states that the country intends to protect fragile areas, such as slopes and river banks, in order to control avalanches and siltation, and improve wood supply through afforestation and reforestation using the most suitable indigenous and exotic species. All riverine areas need to be planted with trees, and cultivation should be restricted to 50 metres away from river banks. These conservation activities need to be planned and implemented jointly with specialists in biodiversity conservation and climate change. The NAP states clearly that it is only through working together that meaningful synergy will be achieved among the Rio Conventions
- (f) Niger's NAP discusses the need to address desertification and biodiversity together, and also recognizes the linked causes of desertification, including climate change. Addressing desertification in Niger is also linked to addressing biodiversity in the country, as drought has contributed to considerable losses in biodiversity. For purposes of sustainable economic development, the NAP presents an integrated approach and reinforces links between agriculture and desertification issues. The NAP also includes the development of a harmonized legal framework to address all these aspects and suggests that there is a key link between adapting to climate change and addressing desertification in the country
- (g) Uganda's NAP focuses on addressing biodiversity in the context of addressing desertification. The NAP emphasizes the need to harmonize the legal frameworks for all the MEAs in the context of the development of laws for sustainable land use
- (h) Yemen's NAP recognizes the linked causes of desertification and seeks to address desertification in a manner that seeks coordination, integration and harmonization with and among complementary programmes, such as water resource management, biodiversity management, including agroforestry, and measures to address poverty alleviation and sustainable development
- (i) Zambia will promote a close working relationship among different national focal points of multilateral conventions in order to help address severe land degradation problems. The Zambian NAP has not only elaborated and documented the causes and effects of land degradation but also analysed various programmes operating in Zambia that have a sustainable development component and hold potential for synergy with the NAP.

### **C. The CBD NBSAP process**

10. Under the CBD, Parties are obligated to develop NBSAPs to show how the Convention is implemented. Some NBSAPs recognize potential synergy between biodiversity and climate change (and in some cases also desertification) and put forward intentions or initiatives to possibly exploit the synergy, for example:

- (a) Bhutan's NBSAP presents forestry as a focus for synergy between the UNFCCC and the CBD. Bhutan's initiatives in carbon storage and sequestration, and a continued focus on

forest preservation and reforestation, are opportunities to contribute to the objectives of both of the conventions;

- (b) Cambodia's NBSAP proposes a series of strategic objectives and priority actions, whereby climate change is recognized as a key threat to biodiversity. The NBSAP addresses the linked nature of implementing commitments under both the CBD and the UNFCCC. In addition, the NBSAP notes that Cambodia's NAPA will include various adaptation measures that are based on vulnerability and adaptation assessments in priority sectors, such as agriculture, land-use change and forestry, and in coastal zones;
- (c) The NBSAP of the Democratic Republic of the Congo notes an initiative that will address both biodiversity and climate change. The project will build capacity and spread new technology in order to reduce pressure on forests, encourage sustainable biodiversity use and improve air quality in the long term;
- (d) Guinea's NBSAP notes that some methods of wood harvesting damage natural habitats and contribute to climate change, soil degradation and loss of biodiversity. The demand for wood and charcoal in the capital Conakry, for example, and other large population clusters in the interior, is straining forest resources. The strategy, therefore, focuses on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, which will also help in addressing climate change;
- (e) The Maldives's NBSAP recognizes that the country's tuna fishery and tourism industry are expected to be affected by the predicted rise of global mean temperature and sea level. The national action plan for climate change would also help to conserve local biodiversity.

11. Review of the existing action plans under the UNCCD and the CBD reveals that although many LDCs highlight the links between climate change, biodiversity and desertification/land degradation, cooperative initiatives are not represented in detail. Where cooperation is elaborated, it generally concentrates on mitigation benefits in the areas of land use, agriculture and forestry. These mostly double as adaptation benefits, hence their relevance to the NAPA process.

#### **IV. Promoting synergy among multilateral environmental agreements**

12. There are a number of initiatives, funded by bilateral or multilateral donors, that address more than one convention and are examples of potentially fruitful cooperation under the NAPA process.

##### **A. The Global Environment Facility and its implementing agencies**

13. The GEF, in its focal areas, operational programs and strategic priorities, has moved towards formally recognizing some links between thematic areas. Its two programmes, "Sustainable Land Management" (OP#15) and "Integrated Ecosystem Management" (OP#12), are specifically directed at "bringing synergy between three of the GEF focal areas (i.e. Biodiversity, Climate Change, and International Waters) and land degradation to optimize multiple benefits". Projects include:

- (a) "*Community Based Integrated National Resources Management: Improving Ecosystem Integrity and Rural Livelihoods*" in Ethiopia. This GEF-International Fund for Agricultural Development/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations project aims at stopping the degradation of natural resources, improving productivity, broadening the livelihood base of the farming population and reducing vulnerability from, and enhancing capacity for adaptation to, climatic shocks, through the restoration of the integrity of the ecosystem and watershed management

- (b) *“Multi-Sectoral Mechanism and Incentives for Sustainable Land Management”* in Bhutan. This GEF–World Bank project, currently in the GEF pipeline, seeks to promote innovative mechanisms to enhance sustainable land management practices with local, regional and global environmental benefits. By doing so, the project will promote and enhance synergy between the UNCCD, the UNFCCC and the CBD. It is expected that the project will demonstrate integrated landscape management approaches in selected sites, to help government and other stakeholders address issues of competing demands on the land resource, assess land carrying capacity and articulate a plan for its rational allocation and management
- (c) *“Coping with Drought and Climate Change: Best Use of Climate Information for Reducing Land Degradation and Conserving Biodiversity”* will address climate change, biodiversity and desertification issues in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Zimbabwe. This GEF–United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project, now in the pipeline, will promote an integrated ecosystems management approach that hinges on better use of local and scientific knowledge of climate in farming and herding. It offers farmers/herders options for long-term drought management as alternatives to emergency responses
- (d) *“Landscape-Level Biodiversity Conservation in Nepal’s Western Terai Complex”* seeks to establish effective management systems and build capacity for the conservation and sustainable use of Nepal’s Western Terai landscape complex (including two protected areas, Royal Bardia National Park and Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve). The sustainable land management components of this GEF–UNDP project include the empowerment of local communities to practice sustainable, biodiversity-friendly, natural resource and land-use management and pursue diversified livelihoods.

14. In addition, the GEF Business Plan in 2003 introduced the Strategic Priority “Piloting an operational approach to adaptation” with an initial allocation of USD 50 million. Under this strategic priority, the GEF will fund projects that include: (i) activities within a natural resources management context, and (ii) adaptation measures that provide other major development benefits (e.g. relating to water, energy, health, agriculture, biodiversity).

15. The Small Grants Programme (SGP), which is managed by the GEF and UNDP, aims to deliver global environmental benefits in the GEF focal areas through community-based approaches. Under the SGP, each participating country develops a country programme strategy, which adapts the SGP global strategic framework to specific country conditions. SGP country strategies take into account existing national biodiversity and climate change strategies and plans, as well as those relating to national development and poverty eradication.

16. At a broader level, the GEF focuses on enhancing the coordination among focal points of the various MEAs. Along these lines, the GEF National Dialogue Initiative, which was started in January 2004, seeks to assist participating countries through a multi-stakeholder dialogue process to achieve greater mainstreaming of GEF activities into national planning frameworks and to enhance coordination and synergy among the GEF focal areas and convention issues at the national level. LDCs that hosted a Country Dialogue Workshop include: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda and Senegal.

17. Through its Capacity Development Initiative, the GEF supports cross-thematic NCSAs to identify country-level priorities and needs for capacity-building to address global environmental issues (in particular biodiversity, climate change and land degradation). The NCSA process is seen by many as a key opportunity for synergy among MEAs because of its consideration of common and cross-cutting



issues among the Rio Conventions and links to other socio-economic issues. Given that NCSAs are nationally driven and self-prioritized, they can reveal both opportunities and gaps in relation to synergy among MEAs. NCSAs offer a key opportunity for helping countries to integrate MEA planning into sustainable development planning and serve to engage the donor community to respond to the identified areas of synergy.

### **B. Initiatives and cooperation between convention secretariats**

18. Recognizing the numerous links between the conventions, the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at its fourteenth session (July 2001) endorsed the establishment of a Joint Liaison Group (JLG), made up of representatives of the secretariats of the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD, in order to enhance coordination between the three conventions, including the exchange of relevant information; and to explore options for further cooperation between the three conventions, including the possibility of a joint work plan and/or a workshop. Meetings of the JLG have included the participation of heads and members of the secretariats of MEAs, as well as chairs of the subsidiary bodies under the conventions' respective Conferences of Parties (COPs).

19. Based on mandates agreed at COP 7 and SBSTA 17, two workshops were held on "Synergy and joint action with the other multilateral environmental conventions and agreements" and on "Enhancing cooperation between conventions" (Espoo, Finland, 2–4 July 2003), at which the following priorities were identified:

- (a) Integration of action programmes of environmental conventions – poverty reduction, science and education, agriculture, forestry, energy and water supply
- (b) Closer links between NAPs and NAPAs in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas
- (c) Liaison between focal points of the conventions and the GEF operational focal points to enhance integrated project development and programme management
- (d) Appropriate incentives at the country level to promote institutional arrangements for coordination and responsiveness by respective COPs and secretariats
- (e) Technical and financial strategic alliances
- (f) Increased number of national synergy workshops, which provide opportunities for synergy and cooperation between the conventions
- (g) Identification of the key prerequisites for synergy.

20. In addition, the UNCCD process launched a National Synergies Workshop Programme in 2000 with the following broad objectives: (i) to strengthen current coordination at the local level, including the exchange of information, in order to achieve optimal use of domestically available resources; (ii) to facilitate policy dialogue with the key stakeholders, in particular with the donor community, in order to attract financial resources in support of concrete actions for effectively addressing common objectives of the sustainable development conventions; (iii) to catalyse local-level approaches to synergy among the stakeholders; and (iv) to help in identifying the common threads in the issue areas covered under the environment-related treaties to which the individual country is a signatory. National workshops were held in some LDCs, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Additional national workshops are under preparation in the following LDCs: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Niger and Yemen. To improve the cooperative implementation of the conventions there is a need to first strengthen local capacities and coordination among key actors at the national level and to elaborate guidelines on methodological issues regarding synergy.

21. Besides the above-mentioned synergy workshop programme, the work plan of the UNCCD Group of Experts<sup>3</sup> for 2003–2006 includes efforts to enhance synergy and prevent duplication of efforts in United Nations conventions. This includes making recommendations relating to adaptation, reviewing conventions for potential synergy, conducting interviews with representatives of major conventions, and developing mechanisms for exchange of information with other conventions.

22. The CBD process considers climate change and biodiversity as cross-cutting issues. In a technical paper entitled “Inter-linkages between Biological Diversity and Climate Change”, the CBD secretariat details the complementarity between the goals of the Rio Conventions, especially because climate change could contribute to biodiversity loss, and one of the obligations under the CBD is to identify and address such threats. Consequently, the CBD process created a new Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Biological Diversity and Climate Change in February 2005, which is tentatively scheduled to meet for the first time in September 2005. This group is mandated to undertake a supplementary assessment of the integration of biodiversity considerations in the implementation of climate change adaptation activities, and subsequently to prepare guidance under the thematic areas of the CBD, for use in planning and/or implementing activities to address adaptation to climate change and links between climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and land degradation and desertification.

23. One area identified by the convention secretariats for promoting synergy among MEAs is land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF). Conservation and sustainable use of forests and forest ecosystems are key to maintaining biodiversity, adapting to climate change and combating desertification. Synergy in the conservation and sustainable use of forests is already sought within the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, an interagency partnership of 14 major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats, which aims to support the United Nations Forum on Forests and its member countries and to enhance cooperation and coordination on forest issues. In addition, a workshop on “Forests and forest ecosystems: Promoting synergy in the implementation of the three Rio Conventions”, which took place in Italy in April 2004, discussed topics such as “synergies through forest landscape management” and “ecosystems services and poverty reduction”. The workshop was an important opportunity for galvanizing collaborative initiatives among the national focal points of the Rio Conventions.

24. To capture synergy under LULUCF, the ecosystem approach<sup>4</sup> provides a flexible framework for the integrated management of land, water and living resources and facilitates the implementation of climate change adaptation projects that also contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use.

### **C. International organizations**

25. The United Nations Environment Programme’s strategy on adaptation to the impacts of climate change focuses on activities that support capacity-building for adaptation to assessed regional changes in

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<sup>3</sup> The Group of Experts was established in 2001 under the auspices of the Committee on Science and Technology and UNCCD COP, at its fifth session, to identify and integrate science and technology in decision-making for facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

<sup>4</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.

temperature and precipitation. The strategy also includes projects that demonstrate links between carbon sinks, adaptation and sustainable development; and public awareness and insurance programmes to reduce risks from extreme events, as well as risks to human health, natural resources and unique ecosystems.

26. UNDP intends to explore the optimization of synergy in a practical manner through pilot projects with a focus on the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD. These projects will first identify entry points for synergy between conventions with regard to implementation and reporting, through a desk study on respective national action plans and communications for each MEA, as well as lessons from the NCSA process implemented through the GEF. A demand-driven demonstration project on optimizing synergy at the local level will be implemented with a focus on strengthening sustainable livelihoods, drawing links between climate change adaptation and mitigation, introducing risk management strategies, such as insurance, and incorporating overlaps and coordination between convention obligations into economic and planning instruments. UNDP will also explore the possibilities for replication of the pilot projects. From these pilot projects, UNDP aims to create links between local action and national policies and a global mandate for optimizing synergy between MEAs and other conventions at the country level.

27. In 1999, the UNU launched the “Inter-linkages Initiative” with the aim of promoting a better integrated approach towards sustainable development through synergy and coordination among MEAs. The 2002 “Synergies and Coordination among MEAs: Pacific Islands Case Study” concluded that one of the key problems in the implementation of MEAs is the lack of linkage and synergy between domestic environmental issues and the objectives of MEAs and actions they require to be addressed. For example, in Vanuatu limited capacities and human resources prevent the establishment of an international law division within the State Law Office and the incorporation of MEA objectives into the national legal framework. Given the importance of capacity-building for promoting synergy, UNU and the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme organized a regional workshop for “Integrated capacity development in the Pacific on MEAs” in Fiji in 2004. The workshop concluded that at the national level proper information flow and management within agencies or ministries and among stakeholders involved in policy planning and actual implementation are critical. Thus, the improvement of availability and accessibility of information and data relating to various MEAs, respective policies, planning processes and implementation activities in the countries should be strengthened. UNU is currently working on national and regional case studies in 10 African countries with the aim of assessing the implementation of MEAs; identification of constraints in the management of these MEAs; and proposing solutions towards effective implementation of MEAs.

#### **D. Development planning**

28. PRSPs provide a framework for domestic policies and programs, as well as for foreign assistance, with the overall aim of reducing poverty. Written by the countries themselves, PRSPs are comprehensive and results-oriented documents. PRSPs link environment and poverty in two major ways: first, poverty alleviation should not damage the environment of the poor; and second, improving environmental conditions can help to reduce poverty. However, a 2004 World Bank assessment of the integration of environmental concerns into PRSPs showed that the average level of integration of different environmental objectives and sustainable development is low. Countries that performed above average included Cambodia, Mozambique, Yemen and Zambia. Benin and Uganda demonstrated good practices in implementing their Poverty Reduction Support Credits (PRSC), which are financial instruments to help implement the PRSPs. Both countries include environmental specialists in their PRSC team and include key environmental indicators in several sectors. The assessment concluded that PRSPs should draw more effectively on existing national environmental action plans and similar resources.

## **V. Lessons learned: opportunities and obstacles**

29. Based on the above programmes and activities, a number of opportunities and obstacles can be identified, which are important to guide the NAPA process. There are many efforts undertaken at the international level for increased cooperation and exchange of information. Regarding the harmonization of action plans under the various conventions, in 2004 the CBD, by its decision VII/2, requested “the review of the NBSAPs in order to harmonize them with the NAPs under UNCCD, with a focus on poverty alleviation and inter-sectoral integration. While doing so, it would also be useful to consider the NAPAs under the UNFCCC, specifically focusing on areas of synergy”.

30. However, more important than harmonizing is the actual planning and implementation of the conventions’ action plans at the national and local level. A good example for planning is Burkina Faso’s 2002 Joint Implementation Strategy for the three Rio Conventions, which aims at creating synergy between the three conventions, their plans of action and other existing planning frameworks. To this end, the strategy envisages the integration of concerns relating to the three conventions in the planning processes of the different sectors of the national economy, as well as the rereading of ongoing programmes and projects according to the requirements stated by the three conventions and their plans of action.

31. Regarding synergy in implementation, close cooperation among national MEA focal points is paramount. Likewise, MEA objectives can be successfully incorporated in national and local development planning, as demonstrated by Samoa’s National Environment Management Strategies. Unfortunately, such activities are often affected by a lack of capacity and human resources. As a result, there are few initiatives to set up systematic communication networks among the conventions’ national focal points and involved ministries for the preparation and implementation phases of NAPAs. In some cases, financial and institutional territoriality hinders exchange of information and joint initiatives. Activities such as CCD’s national synergy workshops, UNU’s inter-linkages initiative and the GEF’s National Dialogue Initiative are designed to help overcome some of these problems.

32. Another obstacle is the absence of methods and tools to successfully recognize and act upon synergy among MEAs. To this end, the GEF’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel has developed a conceptual design tool to help recognize existing links and to incorporate them into project design to improve the delivery of global benefits and the sustainability of GEF projects. Project types include: protected areas; ecosystem management; renewable energy and international waters. This tool could benefit the NAPA process, for example in prioritizing adaptation activities by looking at the positive and negative effects of activities on biodiversity, climate change, land degradation, international waters and persistent organic pollutants.

## **VI. Recommendations on enhancing synergy among multilateral environmental agreements within the national adaptation programmes of action process**

33. Based on the lessons learned and in order to support the preparation and the upcoming implementation of NAPAs, the LEG has considered using its mandate to achieve the following:

- (a) As part of its planned work on ranking and prioritization, the LEG could give consideration to developing methods and tools to incorporate synergy and address inconsistencies with other MEA priorities in the prioritization of adaptation activities
- (b) The LEG could explore possibilities of information exchange, cooperation and even joint work programmes with expert groups outside the UNFCCC system, in particular CBD’s Ad hoc Technical Expert Group on Biological Diversity and Climate Change and

UNCCD's Group of Experts, given their similar work plans on practical issues relating to enhancing synergy between the three conventions

- (c) The LEG could also investigate possibilities for its members to attend synergy-related workshops and to establish contacts, for example under UNU's inter-linkages initiative, which could provide valuable insights for the work of the LEG and the NAPA process as a whole
- (d) Finally, based on the above experiences and a review of completed NAPAs, the LEG should consider expanding its role in promoting synergy among MEAs during the NAPA implementation phase.

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