

Enhancing Synergies across Global Biodiversity Conventions - Experiences from the Global South



Workshop Proceedings and Country Reports

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Foreword

Governments across the world have addressed biodiversity loss and ecosystems degradation through a number of legal, policy and regulatory frameworks and mechanisms. However, implementation of such mechanisms warrant additional guidance and support to countries to realize the internationally-agreed biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements at the national level.

To support countries in addressing such challenges, the UN Environment has been involved in a number of initiatives in capacity building in the realm of MEAs, specific to biodiversity as well as other thematic clusters. Over the past few years, UN Environment has led a multi-stakeholder process to identify options for enhancing synergies and cooperation among the global biodiversity conventions. To that effect, UN Environment organized a workshop on NBSAPs and synergies among Biodiversity Conventions held in Nairobi, Kenya from March 15-17, 2016. The workshop brought together national focal points, government representatives and biodiversity experts from countries the African, Caribbean, Latin America, Pacific regions as well as MEA Secretariats in an important, first-of-its-kind knowledge and experience sharing exercise. The select countries who participated in the workshop are all at various stages of the revision of their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) – a key instrument for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the national level.

Working towards a synergistic implementation of biodiversity MEAs reflects a changing tide in the framework of international law and governance which seeks greater coherence and efficiency in converting the written word into action. Paragraph 89 of the Rio+20 outcome document, 'The Future We Want' explicitly emphasizes the need for greater synergies among MEAs, and in enhancing implementation at global, regional and national levels. It is hoped that the country inputs and conclusions reported from the workshop builds on the body of work on synergies in biodiversity conventions and will be a critical resource for other countries to learn from both for finalizing the NBSAPs as well as the implementation.



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Introduction

Over the past decades, countries have negotiated and agreed to be bound by a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements. These efforts have put in place a comprehensive governance regime addressing the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services. However, as the number of obligations under such legal instruments has grown, so have concerns about how to implement them effectively and coherently and avoid duplication of efforts. As a result, significant efforts have already been made to improve alignment among the biodiversity-related conventions and to identify and build on opportunities for collaboration, cooperation and coordination, and such work continues.

In February 2012, in paragraph 1 of decision SS.XII/3, on international environmental governance,¹ the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognized the importance of enhancing synergies, including at the national and regional levels, among the biodiversity-related conventions, without prejudice to their specific objectives and recognizing their respective mandates, and encouraged the conferences of the parties to those conventions to strengthen efforts further in that regard, taking into account relevant experiences. In paragraphs 2 and 3 of the same decision, the Executive Director was invited to undertake, as appropriate, further activities to improve the effectiveness of and cooperation among multilateral environmental agreements, taking into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conferences of the parties, and was requested to explore the opportunities for further synergies in the administrative functions of the multilateral environmental agreement secretariats administered by UNEP and to provide advice on such opportunities to the governing bodies of those multilateral environmental agreements.

¹ UNEP/GCSS.XII/14, annex I. Available from <http://www.unep.org/gc/gccs-xii/docs/Proceedings/K1280542%20-%20e-GCSS-XII-14.pdf> [accessed on 10 August 2015].

In adopting that decision, the UNEP Governing Council considered how the efficiency and effectiveness of international environmental governance might be increased, in particular through reducing fragmentation and the potential for duplication – issues of concern raised in the first and second reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on review of environmental governance within the United Nations system.² Improving efficiency and enhancing coordination and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements was also called for in paragraph 89 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 66/288 of 27 July 2012, in which Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives recognized the significant contributions to sustainable development made by the multilateral environmental agreements and encouraged parties to multilateral environmental agreements to consider further measures, as appropriate, to promote policy coherence at all relevant levels, improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary overlap and duplication and enhance coordination and cooperation among the multilateral environmental agreements, including the three Rio conventions, as well as with the United Nations system in the field.³

Through multi-stakeholder consultations, the UNEP project entitled “Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies” led to the release in 2015 of an options paper aimed at enhancing cooperation and synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. The options paper, entitled “Elaboration of options for enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions,”⁴ was presented at the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi in May 2016, during which Member States agreed to focus further on actions related to achieving those synergies.

Through seven linked thematic areas, the options paper provided 28 options under which 88 actions were identified for various actors, including Governments, convention secretariats, UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies. Those options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors.⁵

The options presented through the UNEP options paper intended to achieve two main outcomes: (a) implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions carried out in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation among convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, and leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions; and (b) increased collaboration and cooperation in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals).

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