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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  
 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture  
 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands  
 World Heritage Convention

## **REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE LIAISON GROUP OF THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS**

**2-3 September 2013**

**EFTA Building, 9-11, rue de Varembe  
 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland**

### **BACKGROUND**

1. The present meeting focussed on the relationship between members of the liaison group of biodiversity-related conventions (BLG) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), including on how access to GEF funding could be facilitated by harnessing synergies among BLG members. It responded to the pertinent decision taken at the informal meeting of the BLG, held on 23 January 2013 at the margins of IPBES-1 in Bonn, Germany. At this meeting, participants had noted that additional funding for activities of biodiversity-related conventions other than CBD may be obtained from the GEF if the activities contribute to the achievement of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi targets. They had agreed that a joint approach by the conventions may facilitate such access to funding and that further work in this regard would be discussed at the next meeting of the BLG.
2. The meeting was organized in close collaboration with the GEF secretariat, thereby also responding to the agreement of the GEF Council at its 41st meeting, held 8-11 November 2011, *“that the GEF Secretariat would organize a meeting of Biodiversity-related conventions with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to facilitate the coordination of their priorities for possible inclusion in the GEF-6 programming strategy.”*
3. The meeting was attended by BLG members (executive heads) and other representatives from the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the International Treaty on Plant-genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) and the World Heritage Convention (WHC), as well as representatives from the secretariats of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Environment Management Group (EMG)). Annex I contains the list of participants. The Government of Switzerland provided financial and logistical support for organization of the meeting.

4. In what follows, actionable decisions or recommendations made by the meeting are highlighted in **bold**. A compilation of action items, with agreed responsibilities and timelines, is provided in Annex III.

### ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. The meeting was opened on 2 September 2013 at 9.00 a.m. by the co-chairs, Mr. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Mr. John Scanlon, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). They welcomed participants and expressed their appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for providing financial and logistical support for organization of the meeting. They noted the timeliness of the meeting in light of the replenishment process for GEF-6 being now fully under way. In emphasizing the importance of using better programmatic synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions as a means for obtaining better access to GEF funds for those conventions for which the GEF is not, or not yet, the financial mechanism, they pointed to recent relevant achievements such as the extension and amendment of the CITES Strategic Vision to 2020 to bring it into line with the timeline of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and to reflect the contribution of CITES to the Strategic Plan and relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets. They subsequently invited the representatives of those biodiversity-related conventions that do not currently have the GEF as their financial mechanism, to briefly present their priorities with regard to GEF support.

6. Priorities for GEF support were indicated as follows:

CITES: (i) better wildlife monitoring and combating of poaching and illicit trade of wildlife, in particular of elephants and rhinos; (ii) effective implementation of trade regulations for recently listed commercially valuable marine species (sharks, manta rays), in particular with regard to operationalizing legal, sustainable and traceable take (both on the high seas and within the EEZ) and addressing science and data gaps; and (iii) effective implementation of trade regulations for listed timber species, in particular with regard to ensuring legality, sustainability (i.e. through non-detriment findings) and traceability;

CMS: (i) support to habitat and species-based projects, for instance in the context of regional work and/or associated memoranda of understanding; (ii) promote implementation of smaller Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).<sup>1/</sup>

ITPGRFA: (i) support to implementing access and benefit sharing provisions with focus on sustainable agriculture and food security, in full harmony and complementary to the NP, including support to establishing national legislative frameworks for ABS; (ii) support to sustainable use of plant-genetic resources, in particular in the context of adaptation to climate change, and addressing on farm conservation and crop-wild relatives;

RAMSAR: (i) wise/sustainable use of water-related ecosystems and of the services they provide, including support for the broader application of tools such as payments for ecosystem services, and with applications in particular sectors (e.g. achieving higher water productivity in agriculture); (ii) support to the effective management of Ramsar sites;

WHC: (i) support to the effective management of world heritage sites; (ii) addressing gaps on the world heritage list; (iii) support for the implementation of decisions of the World Heritage Committee, in particular in relation to the conservation of individual sites.

7. During an initial round of discussion, it was noted that, in enhancing support to countries, regional approaches are sometimes more effective, such as the CITES-related support to development of legislation and electronic permitting in member countries of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) as well as CITES Parties in the Caribbean and in the Pacific; or the legislative early actions initiative of the Central African Forest Commission (Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale; COMIFAC), under the Nagoya Protocol implementation fund. It would be useful to distil lessons learned from existing efforts with a view to identify what can best be undertaken at the regional level.

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<sup>1/</sup> For an overview of MOUs under CMS, see [http://www.cms.int/publications/agr\\_sum\\_sheets.htm](http://www.cms.int/publications/agr_sum_sheets.htm).

8. It was repeatedly underscored that a significant amount of GEF-funding, and associated projects, already contribute to implementation of biodiversity-related conventions other than the CBD, with examples including (i) the Compact initiative launched in 2000 in partnership of the GEF Small Grants Programme with the WHC and the United Nations Foundation, which supports the engagement of local communities in stewardship of globally significant protected areas including world heritage sites; and (ii) the fact that USD 20 million under the adaptation fund are spent on water and wetlands – and thus support implementation of RAMSAR. Participants underlined the importance of improving understanding on these funding channels and how to access them. Reference was made to the online database of GEF projects as a useful repository of information in this regard. Upon request of a BLG member, this information could be complemented by a review of internal GEF sources with a view to prepare a compilation and analysis of GEF projects that are pertinent to the implementation of this particular convention.

9. Participants recognized the importance of biodiversity-related conventions having a coordinated approach towards providing input into the UN-wide work stream towards developing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda. The pertinent document prepared by the CBD Secretariat for the last Trondheim Conference (May 2013) could provide a conceptual basis for interaction with the Open Working Group on the SDGs, in particular for the OWG's thematic meeting on biodiversity scheduled for February 2014. Mr. Dias (CBD) informed participants of recent collaborative activities undertaken by the CBD Secretariat, including the preparation of issue briefs on biodiversity, oceans and forests for consideration by the DESA task force. **It was agreed that the CBD Secretariat would invite its BLG partners to review the first draft of the biodiversity issue brief, and to provide input into the upcoming issue briefs on oceans and forests.**

## ITEM 2. DRAFT GEF-6 BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

10. Mr. Mark Zimsky (GEF secretariat) presented the latest draft GEF-6 programming directions, with emphasis on the draft biodiversity focal area strategy. He reviewed the ten programmes of the biodiversity strategy, grouped under four objectives (improve sustainability of protected area systems; reduce threats to biodiversity; sustainably use of biodiversity; and mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into production), and how they contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi targets, as well as to implementation of individual biodiversity-related conventions. He drew attention to the fact that pertinent GEF support is not limited to the biodiversity focal area strategy as such, pointing in particular to the international waters and the land degradation focal area strategies, as well as the sustainable forest management strategy. In addition, several of the proposed signature programmes would also provide significant support, notably the ones on the Amazon basin, on commodities, on rebuilding global fisheries (“50 in 10”), and on sustainability and resilience for food security in sub-Saharan Africa.

11. He noted that almost all GEF-eligible countries have received support during GEF-5 for aligning their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi targets and that those countries that have not been able to submit a project proposal will remain eligible for such support during GEF-6. Underlining the importance of revised NBSAPs, he explained that, consistent with past practice and the GEF project review criteria, projects submitted for funding in GEF-6 will have to demonstrate that the thematic areas addressed within the project have been prioritized within the NBSAP and are appropriately aligned with the Strategic Plan and the Aichi Targets.

12. In the discussion, representatives of biodiversity-related conventions other than the CBD expressed their appreciation for the various entry points provided in the draft GEF-6 programming directions for accessing funds, and **invited the GEF secretariat to explicitly recognize, in future drafts, the potential synergies with, and contributions to the implementation of, other biodiversity-related conventions.**

13. **It was also agreed to further explore the usefulness of sending to the GEF, in due course, a collective statement of support for the GEF programming directions, including the biodiversity strategy, and for a strong replenishment.**

14. Several representatives of biodiversity-related conventions (other than the CBD) reiterated the importance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and its Aichi targets as the global framework and entry point for harnessing synergy with their respective conventions. They recalled that the Strategic Plan was adopted by CBD COP-10 as an inclusive framework which is relevant for all biodiversity-related conventions. The Strategic Plan has been recognized as such in various COP decisions or resolutions of the governing bodies for other biodiversity-related conventions. Work is under way in several conventions with a view to bringing their respective strategic frameworks even further in line with the Strategic Plan. **Participants invited the GEF secretariat to recognize, in future drafts of the GEF-6 programming directions, the inclusive nature of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets as an entry point for highlighting the programmatic synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, which could also facilitate the inclusion of pertinent activities in revised NBSAPs.** In this regard, participants also emphasized the importance of a well-coordinated national process.

#### **ITEMS 3./4. PROMOTING COUNTRY-LEVEL COORDINATION AND GEF-6 APPROACH TO COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES AMONG COUNTRY-DRIVEN PROGRAMMES**

15. Mr. Markus Lehmann (CBD) gave a presentation on promoting country-level coordination among biodiversity-related conventions. He acknowledged pertinent ideas already presented in document UNEP/CMS/Conf.10.41 and, drawing on information received from the secretariats of the other biodiversity-related convention prior to the meeting, presented overviews of (i) the activities of the other biodiversity-related conventions that contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi targets, as well as (ii) the programmatic synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions. He noted that the contributions of BLG partners are significant and go beyond the 'core' Aichi Targets 11 and 12, and there is also significant programmatic overlap. He recalled the importance of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the NBSAP revision process for achieving synergistic implementation and eligibility for GEF funding of activities that would support integrated implementation of all relevant biodiversity-related conventions in a particular country. Drawing on an internal review of revised NBSAPs received so far by the CBD Secretariat, he noted that synergies with other biodiversity-related conventions are explicitly covered in some of them but not in others, and, in concluding, presented a number of options on how to enhance synergy and cooperation at the national level.

16. The meeting recognized the need for strong NBSAP coordination at the national level that would include all relevant stakeholders including the national authorities or focal points of all biodiversity-related conventions to which a country is party, and identified a number of options to further encourage such involvement:

- **A notification could be sent to CBD Parties reiterating the importance of involving all biodiversity-related conventions in NBSAP revisions, with a synthesis of key contributions by other conventions as an annex;**
- **Complementary notifications could be sent by other biodiversity-related conventions;**
- **Guidance could be developed on key 'building blocks' for successful NBSAP revision, including the need for strong national NBSAP coordination involving authorities and focal points for all biodiversity-related conventions, for consideration by CBD WGRI-5 and COP-12;**
- **Guidance for national authorities and focal points of all biodiversity-related conventions could be prepared which shows countries how to integrate relevant issues from those conventions into the NBSAP revision process, building upon existing guides prepared by the CITES and CMS secretariats, and on the entry points for accessing funding under GEF-6;**
- **If possible there should be representation of all biodiversity-related conventions at the upcoming global workshop on Reviewing Progress and Building Capacity for the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Revision Process (11-15 November 2013, Nairobi, Kenya).**

**ITEMS 5./6. NECESSITY AND FEASIBILITY OF GEF AS THE FINANCIAL MECHANISM FOR CITES AND MOVING TOWARDS A CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP**

17. Mr. John Scanlon (CITES) provided an overview of the discussion under CITES on the necessity and feasibility of establishing the GEF as a financial mechanism for CITES, including the range of views expressed by different Parties and other actors. While a decision on this issue has been deferred to CITES COP-17, which will take place in South Africa in 2016, the CITES secretariat was requested to continue to explore, in collaboration with the GEF and CBD secretariats, a closer working relationship with the GEF to address CITES priorities within the context of its Biodiversity Strategy, and consistent with the mandates of CITES and the GEF.

18. As an important element in establishing a closer working relationship with the GEF, participants noted that it could be useful to put arrangements in place which would enable the communication of pertinent recommendations of other biodiversity-related conventions to the GEF in a well-coordinated and effective manner. In this connection, Mr. Markus Lehmann (CBD) provided a brief presentation on one possible arrangement consisting of the following steps:

1. The COP of the BLG partner adopts pertinent GEF-related recommendations/advice, and requests its Secretariat to transmit such recommendations/advice to the CBD and its Secretariat;
2. The CBD Secretariat, upon receipt, includes the recommendations/advice received into the pre-session documentation for the appropriate agenda item, for consideration by pertinent bodies of the CBD and, eventually, by the CBD COP;
3. Upon consideration, CBD COP may decide to make a verbatim transmission of the recommendations/advice to the GEF or may decide to transform the recommendations/advice into its 'own' GEF guidance.

**19. Participants agreed to further explore the feasibility of such an arrangement with a view to preparing a related proposal for consideration by CBD WGRI-5 and COP-12.**

20. Mr. Robert Lamb (UNEP/EMG) provided an update on the UNEP project "synergies among the biodiversity related Conventions through increasing coordination and cooperation in the mobilization of financial resources to enhance synergies among biodiversity-related conventions". He explained that this project, funded by Switzerland, is complementing a larger ENRTP project – undertaken by UNEP and funded by the European Commission – which seeks to enhance cooperation among UNEP, other host institutions, the secretariats of biodiversity-related conventions and national authorities or focal points in achieving effective and synergistic implementation of such biodiversity-related conventions. The Swiss-funded project mentioned above seeks to develop an analytical report as well as guidelines or a resource book on the development and submission of integrated project proposals to GEF and other donors. A kick-off workshop will take place in the margins of CBD SBSTTA-17, on Sunday 13 October 2013.

21. Annex II contains a project summary as provided by Mr. Lamb.

**ITEM 8. CLOSURE**

22. The meeting expressed its appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for the provision of financial and logistical support.

23. After the usual exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed by the co-chairs at 1.P.M. on 3 September 2013.

*Annex I***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

CBD	Mr. Braulio Dias, Executive Secretary Mr. Neil Pratt, Senior Programme Officer Mr. Markus Lehmann, Economist
CITES	Mr. John Scanlon, Secretary-General Ms. Marceil Yeater, Chief, Legal Affairs & Trade Policy Mr. Juan Carlos Vasquez, Communications and Outreach Officer
CMS	Mr. Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary
Ramsar	Mr. Christopher Briggs, Secretary-General Mr. Lew Young, Senior Regional Advisor for Asia-Oceania
World Heritage Convention	Mr. Guy Debonnet, Chief, Special Projects Unit
ITPGRFA	Mr. Kent Nnadozie, Senior Technical Officer
GEF	Mr. Mark Zimsky, Coordinator of the Biodiversity Program and Senior Biodiversity Specialist, Natural Resources Ms. Yoko Watanabe, Senior Biodiversity Specialist
UNEP/EMG	Mr. Robert Lamb, Senior Programme Officer

*Annex II***PROJECT SUMMARY*****Synergies among the biodiversity related Conventions through increasing coordination and cooperation in the mobilization of financial resources***

Over the past few decades, Governments have adopted numerous multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) covering a wide range of issues. Each of these agreements is independently negotiated, and managed by its own governing body which has resulted in each country facing a complex range of seemingly unconnected obligations and a growing reporting burden. To improve international governance, the UNEP Governing Council and the Conferences of the Parties of various MEAs have repeatedly called for enhanced cooperation among MEAs. For example, in its Decision on Cooperation with international organizations and initiatives the CBD COP11 “recognizes the importance of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related Conventions, in particular at national and regional level, building on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020” and further in the same decision “Requests the Global Environmental Facility and invites other Financial Mechanisms to support projects and activities to improve synergies among relevant multilateral agreements”.

The present project responds directly to these and other similar decisions and will complement initiatives on the revision of the NBSAPs and the coherent implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The objective of the project is to strengthen the cooperation and synergies among the National Focal Points of the biodiversity-related Conventions and the GEF Focal Points through the promotion of an integrated framework for resource mobilization. The six major biodiversity-related Conventions concerned are: the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) and World Heritage Convention.

The outcomes of the project will be non-prescriptive guidelines for National Focal Points on developing GEF project proposals that generate synergies and enhance cooperation among the biodiversity-related Conventions at the national level. The guidelines will be prepared based on desk reviews and interviews with national focal points of the various biodiversity-related conventions, and with experts from Convention Secretariats. The proposed contents of these guidelines will be discussed at an initial workshop in the margins of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, together with the best means of developing the guidelines and in promoting their future use. The aim is to ensure that the proposed guidelines are useful, and that they draw effectively on currently available resources. Future workshops will review the work being undertaken, and provide feedback on the draft outputs before launch of the guidelines in 2014 at the CBD Working Group on Review of Implementation.

This project, which is supported by the Swiss Government, is being conducted as an integral part of a larger UNEP project on “Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”. The larger project is supported through funds from the European Union.

*Annex III*  
**ACTION ITEMS**

Item	Timeline	Owner
Invite BLG partners to (i) review the first draft of the biodiversity issue brief, and (ii) to provide input into the upcoming issue briefs on oceans and forests.	(i) invitation sent, with deadline 9 September 2013 for submission of first comments; (ii) tbd	CBD Secretariat, with input to be provided by other biodiversity-related conventions
Recognize, in future drafts of the GEF-6 programming directions, the inclusive nature of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 as well as the potential synergies with, and contributions to the implementation of, other biodiversity-related conventions.	Discretionary; next draft	GEF secretariat
Further explore the usefulness of sending to the GEF a collective statement of support for the GEF programming directions, including the biodiversity strategy, and for a strong replenishment	After the 10-11 September GEF-6 replenishment meeting	All BLG members, to be coordinated by CBD Secretariat and in consultation with the GEF secretariat
Notification to CBD Parties reiterating the importance on involving biodiversity-related conventions in NBSAP revisions, with a synthesis of key contributions as an annex	Immediate	CBD Secretariat, with input from other BLG members
Complementary notifications by the other biodiversity-related conventions	As soon as notification above is sent	Other biodiversity-related conventions
Guidance on key 'building blocks' for successful NBSAP revision, including the need for a strong national NBSAP coordination involving focal points of biodiversity-related conventions, for consideration by CBD WGRI-5 and COP-12	Final draft by February 2014	CBD Secretariat
Guidance for national focal points of other biodiversity-related conventions on how to integrate relevant issues into	discretionary	ITPGRFA, RAMSAR, WHC



<p>NBSAP revision process, and on the entry points for accessing funding under GEF-6 (building upon existing guides from CITES and CMS).</p>		
<p>Representation of biodiversity-related conventions at the upcoming global workshop on Reviewing Progress and Building Capacity for the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Revision Process.</p>	<p>Invitation communicated on 6 September. Meeting will take place 11-15 November 2013</p>	<p>Other biodiversity-related conventions</p>
<p>Prepare a pre-session document and draft recommendation for WGRI-5 (June 2014) proposing an arrangement whereby GEF-related recommendations of other biodiversity-related conventions could be channelled to the GEF through the CBD process of providing guidance to the financial mechanism</p>	<p>February 2014 for a final draft</p>	<p>CBD Secretariat in consultation with other biodiversity-related conventions and the GEF secretariat</p>

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