CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA
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Forty-first meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 8-12 February 1999

SYNERGY BETWEEN THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS (DECISION 10.63) AND
RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

This document deals with the report of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC)

Background

1. Over the past 12 months, the CITES Secretariat has been co-operating in the preparation of this report undertaken by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC). This project was jointly funded by the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on Migratory Species (funds provided by the Government of Belgium), and Wetlands International, as well as CITES and the World Heritage Convention. UNEP has also provided resources and input.

2. Following consultations with all of the secretariats involved, a draft report was prepared and reviewed at a workshop held in Geneva on 27-28 April 1998. A revised draft of the report was circulated to the secretariats and the final version was then prepared.

3. Attached for the consideration of members of the Standing Committee is the main body (31 pages) of the full report, 105 pages in total. Copies of the full report will be available at the meeting of the Standing Committee.

Key issues arising from the report

4. To assist the members of the Standing Committee to gain a rapid understanding of the content of the report, the Secretariat has prepared the following executive summary, more detailed than that provided on page 2 of the WCMC document.

   • Section 1 (pages 5-6) introduces the project and states the project's mandate.

   • Section 2 (pages 7-13) reviews the information needs of the secretariats and Conventions and how this information flows among the secretariats and from the Parties to the respective Convention secretariat.

   • Section 3 (pages 15-16) reviews the current information management capacity of each secretariat and common issues and needs.

   • Section 4 (page 17) summarizes the options for harmonization.

   • Section 5 (pages 19 – 28) presents the recommendations for implementation in detail.

   • Section 6 (page 29) examines the issues for implementing the report.

- Section 7 (page 31) gives the conclusions.

5. There are a number of recommendations contained in Sections 5 and 6 which require consideration at this meeting of the Standing Committee. The Secretariat has reviewed these and presents the following comments.

From the report

Section 5 – Implementation recommendations

Section 5.1 – Developing a harmonized convention information resource (see Figure 4 on page 20 for a graphical representation of this proposal).

i) Harmonize cover sheets to provide standard information for all documents submitted by contracting Parties and handled by the secretariats. The minimum information needed is suggested in Figure 5 on page 21.

   Secretariat – supports this recommendation in principle although there is concern about the additional work this would generate if it were applied to all documents.

ii) Adopt a standard thesaurus of keywords for searching through the documents. This relates to 5.1.i) above and will allow for the development of a meta-database and an inter-Convention search engine across web sites.

   Secretariat – supports this proposal.

iii) Harmonize web sites – It is proposed that the Conventions' web sites have agreed core information as suggested in Figure 6 on page 22. This would not restrict the creativity and development of web site facilities specific to the needs of each Convention.

   Secretariat – the CITES web site already has these standard elements.

iv) Develop a meta-database, available on each web site. This would allow users to search for key topics or words and find the standard cover sheets (see 5.1.i) above).

   Secretariat – supports this proposal.

v) Develop an inter-Convention search engine to allow users to have the capacity to locate relevant documents held by any of the five Secretariats.

   Secretariat – supports this proposal.

Costs are estimated to be US$ 50,000-100,000 (see page 23). This does not include staff time for setting up this structure. For the Secretariat, there is the question of the staffing costs for completing standard cover sheets and word keying for a huge volume of documents already stored on the web site.

Section 5.2 – Streamlining national reporting to, and implementation of, conventions (see Figure 7 on page 23).

i) Review and clarify reporting requirements of each Convention. In this preliminary phase, the specific reporting requirements for each Convention would be clarified. This would identify areas of common information among the national reporting requirements for the five Conventions and develop a model for the proposed modular reporting approach.

> **Secretariat –** considers this to be a necessary precursor to what is proposed in the following stages.

ii) Prepare an integrated handbook for national reporting, based on stage (i) which suggests how information could be arranged into thematic modules covering all national reporting needs through one process.

> **Secretariat –** supports this proposal in principle, although the approach suggested is one for the Parties to consider at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

iii) Pilot testing of the handbook and modular reporting in ten countries from different parts of the world, in order to determine whether they are practical and result in reduced labour costs for the Parties.

> **Secretariat –** supports the principle of pilot testing.

iv) Capacity building related to national biodiversity information banks and information technology. With the proposed modular reporting (if this is established), many countries would need training and assistance to put co-ordination mechanisms and technology in place.

> **Secretariat –** considers this to be a long-term need, assuming that the Parties wish to pursue this approach to national reporting and that the pilot tests are positive.

The costs are: (i), US$ 30,000 per secretariat; (ii), US$ 250,000 which has been proposed as a GEF PDF B funding application; (iii) and (iv), US$ 2-5mio, subject to the results of the project (ii).

Section 5.3 – Developing a lessons-learned network (see Figure 8 on page 26).

i) Select lessons-learned from existing Secretariat documents. This would require an internal review of documents and, especially, national reports.

> **Secretariat –** supports this in principle, although there is concern about the additional workload this would generate.

ii) Develop a prototype lessons-learned web site either as a separate web site or as part of an inter-Convention web site.

> **Secretariat –** supports this proposal.

iii) Establish links to lessons-learned sites of development agencies and national lessons-learned web sites.

Secretariat – supports this proposal.

iv) Link the lessons-learned sites to the CBD clearing house mechanism.

> **Secretariat** – considers that this is only one part of the final set-up stage. All Conventions' web sites serve as clearing houses to a greater or lesser extent and should be seen to be equal players with CBD.

Cost: For (ii), US$ 50,000-100,000. No estimates have been made for other stages or for operating costs.

Section 6 – Overall process issues

The report proposes three processes to achieve the implementation recommendations.

1. Establish a high-level harmonization steering committee.
2. Establish a joint scientific panel.
3. Establish a joint information and technology working group.

The CMS secretariat hosted a preliminary meeting of the information management and technology staff in September/October to consider the issues raised under Section 5.1 – "Developing a harmonized convention information resource" (see above). The scientific issue of adopting a standard approach to species names and taxonomy would fall under the aegis of the proposed joint scientific panel, formed from the chairmen of the scientific bodies under each Convention.

Overall assessment

6. The Secretariat believes that WCMC has done an excellent job in reviewing the information management needs and challenges of these five Conventions. The recommendations described under paragraphs 5.1 and 5.3 would seem to be worth pursuing, and the Secretariat is well placed to respond positively to these aspects of harmonization, although added work will be created.

7. The recommendations relating to harmonized national reporting are considerations of general policy for the Convention and warrant consideration at the 11th COP.

8. The final paragraph of the report in Section 7 (page 31) notes the interest shown in this project by the other major environmental Conventions, namely the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The Secretariat believes that the immediate involvement of these Conventions in the further development of these concepts is highly desirable.

<u>Recommendations</u>

9. The Secretariat makes the following recommendations for the Standing Committee's consideration:

    I.   that the Standing Committee endorse the Secretariat's continued involvement in furthering the implementation of the recommendations contained in Sections 5.1 and 5.3 of the WCMC report – namely those relating to the development of a harmonized Convention information resource and a lessons-learned network, respectively.

    II. that the Standing Committee:

         a) endorse, in principle, the recommendations contained in Section 5.2 of the WCMC report relating to actions to streamline national reporting, and

         b) request the Secretariat to prepare for consideration at COP11 an agenda paper with an accompanying draft decision. The paper should look in detail at the possible long-term implications of these recommendations for CITES, whether they should be supported by the other biodiversity-related Conventions, as well as the resources required to pursue the actions recommended in Section 5.2, and

         c) strongly endorse the recommendation that the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification be encouraged to join the five other Conventions in the development of this project.