

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Strategic matters

Cooperation with other organizations

OPTIONS TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION, COLLABORATION AND SYNERGIES BETWEEN
CITES AND THE OTHER BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 16th meeting (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 16.11 and 16.12 on *Cooperation of CITES with other biodiversity-related conventions*, which directs the Standing Committee to:

...with support of the Secretariat, explore further options to strengthen cooperation, collaboration and synergies between CITES and the other biodiversity-related conventions at all relevant levels, including through their respective programmes of work and Secretariats; [and]

...further pursue this work and report at the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

3. At CoP16, the Conference of the Parties also adopted Resolution Conf. 16.4 on *Cooperation of CITES with other biodiversity-related conventions*, in which it:

ENCOURAGES Parties to consider further opportunities to strengthen the cooperation, coordination and synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at all relevant levels; and

RECOMMENDS that Parties further strengthen the cooperation, coordination and synergies among the focal points of the biodiversity-related conventions and other partners at the national level to enhance coherent national-level implementation of the Convention.

4. Furthermore, the Vision statement in the CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2020¹ and Goal 3 on Cooperation between CITES and other biodiversity-related conventions both address the issue of synergies, with the Vision and Goal 3 stating:

Vision: Conserve biodiversity and contribute to its sustainable use by ensuring that no species of wild fauna or flora becomes or remains subject to unsustainable exploitation through international trade, thereby contributing to the significant reduction of the rate of biodiversity loss and making a significant contribution towards achieving the relevant Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Goal 3: Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss and to achieving relevant globally-agreed goals and targets by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive.

¹ Resolution Conf. 16.3 on CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2020.

5. With regard to *globally-agreed goals and targets*, paragraph 89 of the Annex to United Nations General Assembly Resolution [66/288](#) on *The future we want* states:

We encourage parties to multilateral environmental agreements to consider further measures, in these and other clusters, 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.

Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats

6. At the first session of the Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Nairobi, 2014), Decision 1/12, on [Relationship between the United Nations Environment Programme and multilateral environmental agreements](#) was adopted which stated:

1. *Welcomes the step taken by the Executive Director to establish a task team, which has commenced consultations on the effectiveness of administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme and a number of multilateral environmental agreements;*
2. *Requests the Executive Director to continue his efforts in these matters and to ensure that a final report is submitted to the next session of the open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives, with a view to putting the issue before the United Nations Environment Assembly;*

7. In February 2014, the Executive Director of UNEP established a Task Team on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements and Programmatic Cooperation between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats (the Task Team) to carry out an internal review of the recommendations provided by past consultations between UNEP and the Convention Secretariats, their follow-up, and the current state and level of effectiveness of the administrative arrangements and programmatic cooperation in view of pertinent new UN system-wide and UN Secretariat-wide administrative requirements, as well as the desire to continuously improve the results-based delivery of UNEP.

8. The Task Team comprised representatives of the Convention Secretariats and the relevant offices of the UNEP Secretariat. The CITES Secretariat, through its representatives, chaired the Working Group on the Effectiveness of Administrative Arrangements between UNEP and UNEP-administered Convention Secretariats. The Task Team commenced its consultations on 3 February 2014 and met six times thereafter. The Working Groups worked via electronic means and submitted its final report to the Chair of the Task Team on 31 August 2015.

9. The final report on the Task Team was submitted to the Executive Director of UNEP on 24 October 2015 and it included several recommendations related to changing the process for consultation and interaction between UNEP and the Secretariats, the implementation of Umoja and the continuation of a UNEP-Multilateral Environmental Agreement (UNEP-MEA) consultative mechanism. The Executive Director will now make his recommendations to the next session of the United Nations Environment Assembly to be held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 May 2016.

Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG)

10. UNEP, with funding from Switzerland, also led another synergies process entitled *Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies*. The Secretariat participated in meetings convened by UNEP in Interlaken, Switzerland on 26 to 28 August 2014 and a follow-up meeting in Château de Bossey in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2015. The Secretariat also issued two Notifications in relation to this process, in May 2014 and March 2015² and contributed towards, and reviewed, the minutes of the meetings and the draft publication. This process resulted in the publication of a sourcebook entitled: *Sourcebook of opportunities for enhancing*

² *Notification to the Parties No. 2014/023 of 14 May 2014 on Questionnaires regarding synergy in implementing the global biodiversity-related Convention; and Notification to the Parties No. 2015/017 of 23 March 2015 on Synergy in implementing the global biodiversity-related conventions— document for review and comment*

cooperation among the Biodiversity-related Conventions at national and regional levels.³ Within this framework, several activities have been organized to discuss possible modalities related to strengthening cooperation, collaboration and synergies between CITES and the other biodiversity-related conventions. Many of these modalities are discussed under the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG), among other fora.

11. In this regard, at its 10th meeting, hosted by the CITES Secretariat, the BLG discussed more coordinated interaction with the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), with an MoU between the BLG and IPBES is being prepared, and also issued a *Joint statement by the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions on the occasion of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit*⁴ which states, in part:

As we embark on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must ensure that our work is truly transformative and puts this new integrated approach into action. The global challenges we face are cross-cutting issues that will require us to work with many different partners and stakeholders, across different entities, governments and sectors. The decisions taken by Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions represent a ready-made foundation upon which a rapid response to the challenges of sustainable development can be made.

12. Such an integrated approach as recommended by the Joint statement of the BLG is further reflected by the efforts to establish a BLG Communications Liaison Group to discuss public awareness, education and communication on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The BLG Communications Liaison Group is also discussing the possible development of a global communications strategy.
13. The BLG also held a meeting in September 2013 which focussed on the relationship between members of the BLG and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), including on how access to GEF funding could be facilitated by harnessing synergies among BLG members. The CITES Secretariat has provided preliminary inputs to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on the format and process for incorporating the needs of CITES Parties into the CBD guidance to the financial mechanism, in line with the implementation of CBD decision XII/30 (part A on synergies). The CBD Secretariat has agreed to send a formal communication to the heads of the biodiversity-related Conventions in order to inform on the modality for providing inputs to the CBD's report of the group of Five Experts on the funding needs for GEF-7, which will be finalized in early 2016. This should result in a more coordinated process for the GEF to consider the priorities of all of the BLG members in developing its programme.
14. The Secretariat, through the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (IKM Initiative), is discussing with other biodiversity-related conventions cooperation in the use of online reporting systems. Such cooperation would include use and joint enhancement of the online reporting system developed by UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), sharing of technical platforms, and shared maintenance costs. More information on the use of technology to aid reporting by Parties is available in document SC66 Doc. 30.2 on *Special reporting requirements – report of the working group*.

Cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

15. The Secretariat continues to discuss with the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, focusing on how to assist Parties in finding synergies within their national implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. For example, CITES is leading the organization of joint regional CoP preparatory workshops for CITES CoP17 and CBD CoP13, to take place in mid-2016. The activity is supported by the European Union under the thematic programme on Global Public Goods and Challenges (GPGC), 2014-20, priority area 1, component 4, "International environment and climate governance". One of the aims of the activity is to catalyse a coordinated approach among the Secretariats of biodiversity-related conventions, especially CITES and the CBD, which would in turn encourage coordinated implementation of biodiversity-related conventions at the national level. The CoP preparatory workshops would also allow countries to consider how the biodiversity-related conventions could be linked more effectively to their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.
16. The Secretariat has also participated in meetings to implement CBD Decision XII/6, paragraphs 6 and 7, on *Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives* where it decided to:

³ <http://www.unep.org/ecosystemmanagement/Portals/7/Documents/cooperation-sourcebook-biodiversity-conventions.pdf>

⁴ https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/disc/coop/BLG_Statement_SD_Summit_25-09-15_final.pdf

6. *Subject to the availability of resources, to establish a regionally balanced informal advisory group, composed of two members per region, selected by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on the basis of nominations by Parties, to prepare, in consultation with the Secretariat, prior to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, a workshop with the task to prepare options which could include elements for a possible road map, for Parties of the various biodiversity-related conventions to enhance synergies and improve efficiency among them, without prejudice to the specific objectives and recognizing the respective mandates and subject to the availability of resources of these conventions, with a view to enhancing their implementation at all levels; and invites the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions to participate in the informal advisory group*
7. *With a view to engaging the other biodiversity-related conventions in the workshop referred to in paragraph 6 above, while recognizing the respective mandates of these conventions, invites the executive heads of the other biodiversity-related conventions to facilitate the participation of representatives of Parties to their conventions, through their standing committees, bureaux or other processes, as appropriate; representatives of each of the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions; observers, including the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, as the organizations which provide the secretariats to such conventions; as well as representatives of indigenous and local communities.*
17. In support of the above, the Secretariat participated in a meeting organized by the CBD (Geneva, 17-18 September 2015) to discuss the participation of representatives of Parties, through their standing committees, bureaux and representatives of Secretariats, in the workshop referred to in paragraph 6 of CBD Decision XII/6. Minutes of these meetings were circulated to the Chair of the Standing Committee who will provide advice on possible participation in the workshop. At the request of the CBD, the Secretariat has also issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2015/062](#) of 23 November 2015 concerning the preparations for this meeting.

Cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

18. Other areas of collaboration include a joint CITES and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) post, made possible by the Government of Germany. This joint staff is assisting CITES and CMS in implementing their joint programme of work, 2015-2020,⁵ which includes activities related to: harmonization of species specific information; joint activities addressing shared species and issues of common interest; implementation and fundraising; and, outreach and capacity-building.
19. The CITES and CMS Secretariats have also cooperated on technical issues, especially on the use of the CITES meeting registration database and online reporting systems. These discussions have led to cost-savings related to development of the systems and allowed each Secretariat to benefit from lessons learned in the development and implementation of such systems.

Additional areas of cooperation

20. The MEA IKM Initiative, co-chaired by the CITES Secretariat, has provided to the biodiversity-related conventions an additional platform to discuss options related to joint technical activities, use of common data vocabularies, development of metadata standards and adoption of information exchange protocols. The goal of the Initiative is to develop information and knowledge management tools to assist Parties in better meeting the obligations under their respective conventions. The result of these activities can be found on the IKM InforMEA web portal (www.informe.org).
21. The Secretariat is also cooperating with biodiversity-related conventions to increase cooperation on outreach and communication strategies, the establishment of the BLG Communications Liaison Group being a case in point. The support provided by the biodiversity-related conventions to disseminate information on and participate in events related to the United Nations World Wildlife Day is a good example of the cooperation achieved.
22. Additional areas of cooperation, including activities related to capacity-building, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Service and the Global Biodiversity Facility, with

⁵ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/disc/sec/CITES-CMS-wp-en.pdf>

other biodiversity-related conventions are addressed under various agenda items and related discussion documents for the present meeting.

23. Participation in the synergies processes led by UNEP, and to a lesser extent the CBD, have absorbed a considerable amount of staff time and the Secretariat is seeking further guidance from the Standing Committee on how much effort should be devoted to such processes.

Recommendation

24. The Standing Committee is invited to consider the information provided in this report, provide guidance to the Secretariat on how much effort it should devote to such synergies processes, and endorse the draft decision to be submitted for consideration to the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in the Annex to this document.

Directed to the Parties

- 17.XX. The Parties are encouraged to participate in activities to strengthen synergies at the national level among biodiversity related conventions.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 17.XX. The Standing Committee shall, with support of the Secretariat, explore, as appropriate, any options to strengthen cooperation, collaboration and synergies on activities related to the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity and its Aichi Targets and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, between CITES and the other biodiversity-related conventions members of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, at all relevant levels, including through their respective programmes of work and report, as necessary, to the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.