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Synergies and Cooperation

A status report on activities promoting synergies and cooperation between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in particular biodiversity-related conventions, and related mechanisms

Prepared by the

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Synergies and Cooperation: *A status report on activities promoting synergies and cooperation between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in particular biodiversity-related conventions, and related mechanisms*

This status report on recent work undertaken by individual MEAs, UNEP, other United Nations agencies, and other institutions on synergies and cooperation between MEAs should help these bodies to coordinate further activities aimed at increasing synergies, with a view to avoid duplication, to become more efficient and effective, and to improve implementation.

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¹ Note: Cooperative measures between two or more conventions or mechanisms are in most cases mentioned under one mechanism only.

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Executive Summary

Justification

1. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken on exploring synergies and cooperation between Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and in particular the biodiversity-related conventions, by a range of organisations, and a risk exists of duplication of future efforts unless all concerned are clear about the main work done so far. With the ambitious target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level, set by the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, synergy efforts become even more relevant. Preparation of a synoptic report on the ongoing work, and dissemination of this report to interested parties, is expected to help to draw attention to the breadth of work underway and help to increase collaboration in implementing this work.
2. The efforts on harmonization and synergies have received strong support from various meetings of the UNEP Governing Council, the Environmental Management Group (EMG), and from the Plan of Implementation of the WSSD. Moreover, Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of many conventions have asked for a continuation and strengthening of existing efforts.
3. This report is a desk study conducted for UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions (UNEP DEC) to review recent work undertaken by individual MEAs, UNEP, United Nations University (UNU), other United Nations agencies, and other institutions on synergies and cooperation between MEAs. The report wants to suggest ways in which these bodies might coordinate further activities aimed at increasing synergies, with a view to avoid duplication and to become more efficient and effective. The report has some focus on the biodiversity-related conventions, but looks at other MEAs as well.

Existing initiatives in synergies and cooperation

4. Most MEAs have embarked on synergistic activities with other MEAs and related instruments. Amongst the five *biodiversity-related conventions* – CBD, CITES, Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on Wetlands, World Heritage Convention - a multitude of Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation have been adopted, and a number of joint work programmes exists. Joint activities include the cooperation between subsidiary scientific and/or technical bodies and the joint collaboration in scientific assessments such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. In addition, the five conventions have established a joint website.
5. The *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD), as a treaty with a specifically wide remit, is cooperating with a large number of agreements, instruments and institutions. The CBD has identified lead partners for some of its thematic work programmes, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for the inland waters work programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for its work programme on agriculture. Other partners include the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for the CBD's work programme on dry and sub-humid lands, and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) for its work programme on forest biological diversity.
6. The *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) works with a range of partners, *inter alia* with the CBD on non-timber forest resources, incentive measures, sustainable use, and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, and with the International Whaling Commission on conservation of cetaceans and trade with cetacean specimen. Among a range of other activities, there is also, for

example, close collaboration with the Basel Convention and the Montreal Protocol, forming a 'trade cluster' of MEAs. Detailed provisions for cooperation with the CBD and other agreements are outlined in the CITES Strategic Vision.

7. The *Convention on Migratory Species* (CMS) cooperates with several other conventions and institutions, including through joint work plans with CBD and the Convention on Wetlands. In the framework of the former, efforts are being undertaken to harmonizing reporting and making case studies on migratory species available to both conventions, amongst others through a joint website. The CMS has developed an Information Management System that offers not only the information provided by the Parties to the CMS and its Agreements but also information from other conventions as well as UN agencies and other organisations.

8. The *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* works closely with a number of partners, including through joint work programmes with the CBD, the CMS and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA), the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). The Convention's Strategic Plan has incorporated provisions on harmonization and synergies and the Conference of the Parties (COP) has urged its Parties to make use of the CBD guidelines for incorporating biodiversity related issues into environmental impact assessment legislation and processes and in strategic environmental assessment.

9. The Operational Guidelines of the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (World Heritage Convention) carry provisions for the strengthening of synergies with other agreements, including the other biodiversity-related conventions. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed with the Convention on Wetlands, while a MoU with the CBD is in preparation. The Convention participates in joint initiatives such as the Great Apes Survival Project and a number of joint site-based activities.

10. A range of activities promote synergies between the three *Rio Conventions* (CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD), including a joint liaison group, established in 2001, and a joint web-based calendar of events.

11. The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) is cooperating particularly with the CBD and the UNCCD, mainly through the Joint Liaison Group. One of its recent activities has been the organisation of a workshop on synergies amongst the three Rio Conventions.

12. The *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* works with a number of partner conventions and UN agencies. The Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) is a partnership between the FAO, UNEP, UNCCD, Global Environment Facility (GEF), the UNCCD's Global Mechanism and others to provide up-to-date ecological, social, economic and technical information to guide integrated and cross-sectoral planning and management in drylands. In 2000, the UNCCD has begun a National Synergies Workshop Programme, supporting the national identification of synergies with other relevant conventions, with workshops being held in a number of African, Latin American and Caribbean, and Asian countries.

13. Supported by a number of decisions of the UNEP Governing Council and by the Strategic Guidelines for the Regional Seas, the *UNEP Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans* have established cooperative links with other MEAs and organisations, including the International Maritime Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, FAO, the CBD and the Convention on Wetlands. The Conference of the Parties to the CBD has acknowledged the core role of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans for implementing the

programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity, including on coral reefs and marine and coastal protected areas.

14. The *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*, the *Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade*, and the *Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal* are the legal regimes within the global efforts for chemical safety, represented by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). The three conventions collaborate closely, through, *inter alia*, joint projects and workshops, and the Best Available Techniques/Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP) for reducing/eliminating POPs releases from waste destruction sources. They have, in addition, developed options for clustering of chemicals and waste-related multilateral agreements. With the support of the IFCS and UNEP, a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) has been initiated. It aims at advancing the sound management of chemicals, the identification of gaps and proposing concrete projects and priorities. A major International Conference on Chemicals Management is in preparation for 2006.

15. UNEP has been playing a major role in many of the existing initiatives on harmonization and synergies. UNEP has been convening coordination meetings of convention secretariats. It also publishes a *Synergies* bulletin. Following from concerns by national governments over the burden of reporting to a multitude of MEAs, UNEP has undertaken pilot projects on a range of options for harmonized reporting in four countries. Other UNEP-supported initiatives include the protection of sturgeon resources of the Caspian Sea, the Great Apes Survival Project, and the Marine Mammal Action Plan. Another initiative with substantial UNEP input is the GreenCustoms project that develops an integrated training programme for custom officers in the field of combating illegal international trade in commodities such as ozone depleting substances, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste and endangered species. Of specific interest are the efforts of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to cooperate through, amongst others, pilot projects and develop linkages between the ozone and the climate regimes. The UNEP/UNDP/GEF Biodiversity Planning Support Programme prepared a study on 'Legislative Complementarity and Harmonization of Biodiversity-related MEAs'.

16. The *United Nations University* (UNU) has undertaken a wide range of activities promoting synergies between MEAs. In 1997, UNU established the Inter-linkages Initiative, which has held an international conference, an Eminent Persons meeting, and several regional and national workshops, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, and published a number of Policy Briefs. Case studies have been undertaken in several Pacific Island and ASEAN countries.

17. The *United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination* has the aim to further coordination and cooperation on the whole range of substantive and management issues facing the UN system. Through its High-Level Committee on Programme, it currently works on a number of issues of relevance to the environmental agenda, including the 2005 review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

18. The *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP) assists countries to maintain and sustainably use the biodiversity that underpins poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Biodiversity provides the critical 'ecosystem services' on which development depends. Thus UNDP has made *Biodiversity for Development* a primary focus of its Energy and Environment Practice. Through its 130 Country Offices operating in

166 countries UNDP directly assists countries to develop the capacity to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity in the long term. Closely linked activities on the part of its Country Offices, the UNDP Global Environment Facility (UNDP GEF), the GEF's Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), the Drylands Development Centre, the Equator Initiative, and the Biodiversity Global Programme enable UNDP to assist developing countries to deliver on their goals of implementing the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (i.e. conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing) and the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP provides its assistance to this end through capacity development, knowledge management, policy advice and advocacy.

19. The *Global Environment Facility* (GEF) is supporting interlinkages between its six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, ozone, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants. It gives high priority to multifocal projects. The Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management specifically promotes synergies between the three Rio Conventions.

20. The *World Bank* focuses its biodiversity-related work increasingly on the following themes: exploring the linkages between biodiversity and poverty, valuing biodiversity services, mainstreaming stakeholder participation in biodiversity protection, and mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral programmes and projects. The Bank works with a range of partner institutions. The Critical Ecosystem Partnerships Fund, a joint initiative of the Bank with Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the MacArthur Foundation and the Government of Japan aims to provide \$150 million over five years for the conservation of the most biologically significant and threatened areas of the world. The World Bank - World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use promotes forest conservation and the adoption of international best practices in forest management.

21. The *Commission on Sustainable Development* (CSD), at its eleventh session in 2003, invited the secretariat of the Commission to improve national reporting guidelines and questionnaires with the intention of making reporting more efficient and less burdensome on countries and more focused on implementation. The Guidelines for national reporting to CSD 12 (April 2004) encourage countries that have reported or are in the process of reporting on the Millennium Development Goals through UNDP, to make use of and build on that process in reporting on the targets relevant to the CSD-12 thematic areas of water, sanitation and human settlements.

22. Within the forest sector, the *United Nations Forum on Forests* (UNFF) is cooperating with a number of other organisations. With the CBD, cooperation is focusing on the relationship between the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity under the CBD, as well as on the linkages between the concept of the ecosystem approach and the concept of sustainable forest management.

23. The main mechanism for cooperation within the forest sector is the *Collaborative Partnership on Forests* (CPF). The CPF has embarked on a number of collaborative initiatives, including a Sourcebook on Funding Sustainable Forest Management and an Initiative on Forest-related Definitions. The CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting has analysed its members' forest-related reporting and has developed an electronic portal designed to help users find information related to national reporting on forests underway in various international organisations, institutions and instruments.

24. The *Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration* is a network of governments, organisations, communities and individuals who recognise the importance of forest landscape restoration and want to be part of a coordinated global effort. The partnership's Forest

Restoration Information Service (FRIS) plays a critical role as an information resource and in promoting information sharing among partners and other restoration practitioners.

25. The International Tropical Timber Organization, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, FAO and Eurostat have developed a joint questionnaire to collect country data on production, consumption and trade in forests products.

26. In support of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity, a *Global Partnership for Plant Conservation* was launched in 2004. Currently consisting of 15 organisations, the Partnership aims to provide a framework to facilitate harmony between existing initiatives aimed at plant conservation, to identify gaps where new initiatives are required, and to promote mobilisation of the necessary resources.

27. The *Global Invasive Species Programme* (GISP) is a partnership of several organisations and institutions, founded in 1997, with a mission to conserve biodiversity and sustain human livelihoods by minimizing the spread and impacts of invasive alien species. GISP has undertaken assessments of the global invasive species problem and developed guides and toolkits for policy, regulation, prevention and management. GISP is engaging and informing governments and stimulating action and cooperation nationally, between governments and sectors such as environment and agriculture.

28. Within Europe, a number of activities are focusing on streamlining reporting and supporting countries to fulfill their reporting requirements for MEAs and specific European or European Community regulations. In this regard, the *European Environment Agency* (EEA) has developed a *Reportnet*, which contains a Reporting Obligations Database. *The European Community Biodiversity Clearing-House Mechanism* (EC CHM) is collaborating with all member countries of the European Environment Agency (EEA) towards interrelated websites in Europe. The *European Commission* is currently elaborating an EC Framework Directive for Reporting which focuses on reporting obligations for member states of the European Union and on information supporting the national implementation of MEAs and European regulations. A pan-European collaboration on guidelines and development of biodiversity monitoring and indicators is under establishment with the EEA, the European Centre for Nature Conservation, the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, and several other interested organisations.

29. A significant part of *IUCN - The World Conservation Union's* work focuses on developing synergistic international and regional approaches. This includes synergies between particular instruments, such as a major collaborative study examining the relationship between the CBD and UNFCCC. IUCN also addresses particular biomes or cross-cutting issues, such as forest conservation, transboundary and high-seas protected areas, and invasive species. Other work areas include linkages between key international environmental concepts and critical issues in other sectors, such as biodiversity and health, sustainable livelihoods, and the development of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing. Examples for regional initiatives include the IUCN Regional Biodiversity Programme Asia's support to the harmonization of the biodiversity and climate change regimes on the regional and national level. IUCN's work in Africa includes, among others, the involvement in key processes for the revision of the African Convention on Nature Conservation, which is now more directly focused on synergies in the implementation of conservation and sustainable use conventions in the African continent.

30. IUCN is also the main force behind the *Global Biodiversity Forum* (GBF), an independent multi-stakeholder forum that holds meetings in conjunction with major conventions meetings, especially of the CBD. Many of these meetings discuss experience with and options for a synergistic approach between conventions.

31. A wide range of additional studies, reviews and workshops in support of synergies and harmonization has been conducted. Examples include the *International Institute for Environment and Development* (IIED) Briefing Paper for the World Summit on Sustainable Development on 'Knowledge Needs for Better Multilateral Environmental Agreements', addressing substantive and procedural coherence between MEAs, the *OECD Development Assistance Committee* study 'The DAC Guidelines: Integrating the Rio Conventions into Development Co-operation', and studies on the relationship between MEAs and the World Trade Organization by the *Royal Institute for International Affairs* (Chatham House). In April 2004, *TRAFFIC* convened a joint workshop with Fauna and Flora International, IUCN, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, CITES, CBD and UNEP, to promote synergies and cooperation between CITES and the CBD.

32. *Academic research* includes, for example, a publication by Leiden University on synergies between the CBD and the UNCCD in West Africa, a study on tensions and synergies between CITES and the CBD, and a publication on conflicts in international environmental law.

33. The *South Pacific Regional Environment Programme* and the United Nations University issued a handbook with information on four chemical conventions, the Waigani Convention, the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention, and the Stockholm Convention. The handbook aims to support the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste, particularly in the South Pacific region.

34. In October 2003, the *International Marine Project Activities Centre* (IMPAC), Townsville, Australia organised a conference on International Environmental Conventions and Instruments: An Open Dialogue on Responsibilities, Issues, Problems & Solutions for Pacific Island Countries and the Pertinent Conventions.

35. In March 2004, the *United Nations University* and the *South Pacific Regional Environment Programme* convened the Inter-linkages Regional Meeting on Integrated Capacity Development in the Pacific on Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in Nadi, Fiji.

Recommendations

36. Overall, a great deal of experience and expertise has been gained from the existing initiatives towards synergies and cooperation between MEAs. The level of inter-linkages differs between the MEAs, with several conventions having progressed substantially in this regard, particularly on the institutional and policy-making level. A number of recommendations is provided here that could give a focus to further initiatives. It is important to recognise, however, that the identification and implementation of synergies is a process that needs to be implemented in accordance to the identified needs, the ongoing processes and available resources of each MEA. The individual recommendations provided here do not apply to all conventions, and their implementation would in many cases require additional resources.

- Convene regular meetings of groups of related conventions in the form of joint liaison groups.
- Establish links between information management systems, on issues such as species or sites. Links to websites such as the one of the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism would be particularly useful.

- Harmonize terminology and classification, including common taxonomies, glossaries, lists of abbreviations, definitions and terminology, and further cross-convention standards. Seek, for example, taxonomic synonymy for taxa protected by different MEAs.
- Share case studies and best practices by making them available across MEAs in a coordinated and standardised way. This could develop into a 'Best Practices Library'.
- Develop thematic partnerships around shared areas of concern, including not only MEAs but also other relevant organisations.
- Enhance cooperation of subsidiary scientific and technical bodies of MEAs building on mutual invitations to actively participate in relevant meetings, and regular meetings of the chairs of these bodies.
- Develop a modular approach to implementation of MEAs where the information on specific topics could be held in one place and being made available for the implementation of as well as reporting to a range of conventions and mechanisms.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral harmonization initiatives, such as the GreenCustoms project, the initiatives between the climate and the ozone regimes, and the ones between the biodiversity-related conventions and the regional seas conventions and programmes.
- Further promote the harmonization of reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions, by building, *inter alia*, on the results of the UNEP pilot projects, specifically:
 - Consider a more harmonized scheduling of reporting timetables
 - Harmonize, where relevant, the structure of reporting formats
 - Develop a consolidated Biodiversity Reporting Manual
 - Consider regional assistance to governments for their national reporting
 - Develop national coordination units and national biodiversity databases/clearing-house mechanisms
 - Link reporting to biodiversity-related conventions to the reporting on the State of the Environment
 - Further test the modular approach to reporting and the consolidated reporting.
- Further develop harmonization between site-based agreements, including joint definitions and criteria, shared standard data forms, joint site-based activities and demonstration projects, and joint missions to threatened sites.
- Build the capacity of national MEA focal points and all staff involved on the national level.
- Establish synergy mechanisms for national MEA focal points, including regular information exchange, regular meetings, shared information management facilities. Subject to sufficient resources, a national conventions coordination office and integrated MEA implementation strategies are further options to strengthen a streamlined and harmonized approach to MEA implementation at the national level.
- Gather the emerging experience on national and regional synergy workshops.
- Continue UNEP's supporting role to MEAs and countries, through facilitating and promoting the consolidation of existing activities and expansion into new areas,

particularly regarding coordination meetings between convention secretariats and establishing and coordinating specific harmonization and synergy projects.

- Continue the UNU's role in building inter-linkages between MEAs, possibly expanding its regional remit to other regions.
- Develop a joint UNEP/UNU work programme on MEA synergies and harmonization.
- Integrate synergies and harmonization into donor priorities and allow for linking of responses to global environmental threats to national poverty reduction and other development plans.
- A workshop or an electronic consultation could agree on further practical steps to promote synergies between MEAs.

Introduction

*The global environment is naturally synergistic*².

Justification

37. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken on exploring synergies and cooperation between Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and in particular the biodiversity-related conventions, by a range of organisations, and a risk exists of duplication of future efforts unless all concerned are clear about the main work done so far. There are two major international targets that make synergy efforts even more relevant. The first is the ambitious target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level, set by the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity and subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The other target has been developed under the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7³: 'Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources'.

38. Preparation of a synoptic report on the ongoing work, and dissemination of this report to interested parties, is expected help to draw attention to the breadth of work underway and help to increase collaboration in implementing this work.

Mandate

39. The *World Summit on Sustainable Development* (WSSD) in August/September 2002 underlined the need to strengthen collaboration within and between the United Nations system and other relevant international organisations, to encourage effective synergies among multilateral environmental agreements, and for increased scientific and technical cooperation between relevant international organizations⁴.

40. At its first meeting on 22 January 2001, the *Environmental Management Group* (EMG)⁵ discussed the issue of harmonization of national reporting and agreed to establish an Issue Management Group (IMG) dealing with this issue (Decision 3). UNEP was invited to serve as task manager, focusing on biodiversity-related conventions while considering the relevance of biodiversity-related aspects of other MEAs. A note by the UNEP Executive Director on Harmonization of Information Management and Reporting for Biodiversity-related Treaties, which was discussed at subsequent meetings of the EMG, included a range of recommended actions. Also, an Action Plan for Harmonization and Streamlining of National Reporting and Information Management to Support the Implementation of Global Biodiversity-related Conventions was envisaged by EMG.

² United Nations University. 1999. *Inter-Linkages – Synergies and Coordination between Multilateral Environmental Agreements*. Tokyo.

³ MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

⁴ WSSD Plan of Implementation, Paragraph 42

⁵ The Environmental Management Group (EMG) is chaired by the Executive Director of UNEP and includes among its members the specialised agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system and the secretariats of MEAs. The EMG focuses on environment and human settlement issues, in the context of the linkages between environment and development. The most important goal of the EMG is to achieve effective coordination and joint action in key areas of environmental and human settlements concerns.

41. Several MEAs carry provisions for collaboration with other conventions and agreements⁶. Various decisions by *Conferences of the Parties* (COPs) to the biodiversity-related conventions have requested the continuation of the work on harmonization and synergies. For example, the 6th COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in decision VI/20, welcomed ‘the work of the United Nations Environment Programme on the harmonization of environmental reporting’ and encouraged its continuation and ‘urged Parties to take steps to harmonize policies and programmes, at the national level, among the various multilateral environmental agreements and relevant regional initiatives, with a view to optimising policy coherence, synergies and efficiency in their implementation, at the national, regional and international levels’.

National reporting and benefits of harmonization

42. A key issue for harmonization is Parties’ reporting obligations to MEAs. As MEAs have multiplied, the number of reports and other information required from parties to those agreements have also increased significantly. Many countries, both developed and developing, have regularly expressed concern about the burden this imposes.

43. Reporting to MEAs serves a variety of purposes:

- Reports allow the governing bodies of agreements to assess implementation so as to be in a position to make rational decisions on future priorities and needs, and to provide, or guide the provision of, additional support where it is required.
- Reports may contain very specific information. For example the CITES annual report is very specific in providing the information necessary to determine the nature and volume of legal trade (also providing indication of potential illegal trade).
- Contracting parties are also frequently asked to provide other information beyond regular reports, such as expanded detail on specific issues, case studies and experiences, in order to support development of advice to contracting parties, and to promote the sharing of information between parties.
- Apart from the concern of reporting burden, there are strong concerns that the full value of the information gathered is not being realised due to limited access and lack of comparability. Multipurpose use of information provided in national reports (e.g. for national, regional or global assessment and planning) would be of significant benefit to national governments as well as facilitating interagency approaches and actions.

44. Streamlining of reporting could significantly increase the time and resources allotted to implementation. Thus, benefits of harmonization of reporting could accrue to all stakeholders, including national governments, MEA secretariats and governance bodies, and civil society.

⁶ For example, a specific mention for collaboration can be found in Articles 7.2(1) and 8.2(e) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Articles 5 and 24(d) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Articles 8.1 and 23(d) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Scope and definitions

45. This report is a desk study conducted for UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions (UNEP DEC) as part of UNEP's efforts to analyse the potential for synergies and harmonization between MEAs and to suggest a number of recommendations for implementing cooperative arrangements. It has a specific but not exclusive focus on the five global biodiversity-related conventions: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and World Heritage Convention (WHC). This focus stems from the advanced nature of cooperation among these conventions, which exhibit a wide range in terms of scales, funding mechanisms, parties, scope and complexity, making the biodiversity-related treaties a good example of the overall trend in synergies between MEAs. However, without aiming for a complete coverage, the paper explores synergies within other sets of environmental agreements, in particular the Rio Conventions, the regional seas agreements, and the chemicals agreements. Therefore, the conclusions and recommendations intend to address not only the biodiversity-related conventions, but a wider range of MEAs.

46. After looking at the relevant activities of the biodiversity-related conventions and other MEAs, the paper outlines efforts of United Nations agencies, and other institutions, mechanisms and organisations. The paper finishes with conclusions and suggested recommendations.

47. A thorough review of synergistic activities on the national level is, despite its significance for the implementation of the conventions, beyond the scope of this paper and is therefore only referred to in the form of examples.

48. For the purposes of this paper, the following *definitions* apply. The terms are clearly not mutually exclusive:

- *Synergies*: Synergies include all activities that aim at enhanced collaboration of MEAs especially through linking processes in a way that increases the effects of the sum of the joint activities beyond the sum of individual activities, and thus making efforts more effective and efficient.
- *Harmonization*: The harmonization of information management and reporting is defined as those activities that lead to a more integrated process and greater potential for sharing information.
- *Inter-linkages*: Inter-linkages include synergies and coordination between MEAs.
- *Streamlining*: The streamlining of processes such as national reporting are defined as those mechanisms that make each individual reporting process or a joint, integrated process easier, and more efficient and effective, or more straightforward for contracting parties to implement.

Aim

49. This status report on recent work undertaken by individual MEAs, UNEP, other United Nations agencies, and other institutions on synergies and cooperation between MEAs is aimed at suggesting ways in which these bodies might coordinate further activities and increase synergies, with a view to avoid duplication, to become more efficient and effective, and to improve implementation.

50. *Note that cooperative measures between two or more conventions or mechanisms are in most cases mentioned under one convention only.*

Existing initiatives in synergies and cooperation

Biodiversity-related conventions

Joint activities

Joint programmes of work

51. Over the last years, the biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Convention on Wetlands, World Heritage Convention) have adopted more and more joint work programmes with other conventions and mechanisms. Amongst the biodiversity-related conventions, the following *joint programmes of work/joint work plans* exist:

- CBD and Convention on Wetlands
- CBD and CITES
- CBD and CMS
- CMS, African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA) and Convention on Wetlands.

52. In addition, the *CBD* has developed joint programmes of work with the following conventions and mechanisms:

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- Global International Waters Assessment
- Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

53. A joint work plan between *CITES* and CMS is under development. The *CMS*, with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement, has adopted an additional joint work programme with Wetlands International. The *Convention on Wetlands* has adopted additional joint programmes of work with the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP).

Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation

54. Memoranda of Understanding or Cooperation often provide the formal framework for enhanced cooperation between different bodies. The last years have seen an increase in the number of MOUs and MoCs being established between the biodiversity-related conventions and other mechanisms. Among the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions, the following *MoUs or MoCs* have been established:

- CBD and CITES
- CBD and CMS
- CBD and Convention on Wetlands
- CBD and World Heritage Centre⁷ (in preparation)
- CMS and Convention on Wetlands
- CMS and CITES
- CMS and UNESCO (regarding World Heritage Convention and the Man and the Biosphere Programme)
- Convention on Wetlands and World Heritage Convention.

⁷ The UNESCO World Heritage Centre is responsible for the coordination of all actions related to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

55. In addition, the Secretariat of the *CBD* has established MoUs or MoCs with some 30 organisations and institutions, including, *inter alia*:

- Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention and the SPAW)
- UNCCD
- Council of Europe as Secretariat of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats
- The Coordinating Unit of the Mediterranean Action Plan (Barcelona Convention)
- The Coordination Office of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA)
- International Plant Protection Convention (in preparation).

56. *CITES* has concluded Memoranda of Understanding with a number of conventions and organisations including the Basel Convention/Montreal Protocol, IUCN, TRAFFIC, the World Customs Organization, Interpol, and the Lusaka Agreement Task Force. In addition, *CITES* is preparing Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation with UNEP and FAO.

57. The *CMS* has established additional Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation with the following bodies:

- UNCCD
- International Whaling Commission
- Wetlands International
- IUCN.

58. The *Convention on Wetlands* has established Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation with some 25 organisations and institutions, including:

- UNCCD
- Cartagena Convention
- Barcelona Convention.

Joint scientific activities

59. The *subsidiary scientific bodies* of a number of the biodiversity-related conventions cooperate by mutual invitations to their respective meetings. The CBD *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change concluded a report *Interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change: advice on the integration of biodiversity considerations into the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol*. The report was welcomed by the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). Both conventions have encouraged their Parties to make use of it as a relevant source of useful information for their national purposes.

60. The *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)* is designed to support the needs of, *inter alia*, the CBD, UNCCD, CMS and the Convention on Wetlands, which are represented on the board of the MA. The Assessment focuses on ecosystem services and their relation with human well-being, as well as the responses that might be adopted at local, national and global scales. This approach is expected to produce results, which enable the conventions to draw conclusions in a synergistic manner, providing for cooperative responses to the findings.

Joint websites

61. The five global biodiversity-related conventions have established a joint website⁸. Besides information on the individual conventions and the recognition of the need for collaboration, the website offers links to the following features of the websites of the individual conventions: home page, overview of history, convention text, list of Parties, national focal points, COP meeting documents, calendar of events, contact information, and frequently-asked questions.

62. There is also a CBD-CMS joint webpage on case studies on migratory species⁹. Frequently, the webpages of the biodiversity-related conventions provide links to the other conventions, in the case of the CBD also to the UNFCCC and the UNCCD.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Cooperation with other conventions and mechanisms

63. The *Strategic Plan* of the CBD, adopted in decision VI/26, identifies the following strategic goal: 'The Convention is fulfilling its leadership role in international biodiversity issues', with, *inter alia*, the following strategic objectives:

'...1.2. The Convention is promoting cooperation between all relevant international instruments and processes to enhance policy coherence.

1.3. Other international processes are actively supporting the implementation of the Convention, in a manner consistent with their respective frameworks'.

64. This reflects the wide remit of the CBD and hence, the convention has established a growing number of MoU/MoC and joint work plans with other agreements and institutions, especially for the implementation of the major CBD work programmes. The CBD's leadership role has gained specific significance in the light of the 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, as outlined in the CBD Strategic Plan and endorsed by the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The CBD COP 7 in 2004 invited UNEP-WCMC to support the CBD Secretariat in facilitating the compilation of information necessary for reporting on achievement of the 2010 target.

65. The *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* has been recognised by the CBD COP as a lead implementation partner for wetlands. A third Joint Work Plan between the conventions, for the period 2002-2006 is being implemented. This recognises that synergy exists across all CBD coverage, and includes joint actions under each of the CBD's ecosystem themes and cross-cutting issues. Under the plan, a joint *River Basin Initiative* is being further developed, and the two conventions collaborated in the review and preparation of the revised programme of work on inland water biological diversity adopted by CBD COP 8, and in the preparation of rapid assessment methodological guidance for inland waters and marine and coastal ecosystems. Further work on the convergence of criteria and classification of inland water ecosystems is under development.

66. For the programme of work on marine and coastal biodiversity, a number of cooperative arrangements have been concluded. An example is a joint study by the Secretariat of the CBD and the United Nations Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea on the relationship between the CBD and the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS) with a view to enabling the CBD SBSTTA to address the scientific, technical and technological

⁸ www.biodiv.org/convention/partners-websites.asp

⁹ www.biodiv.org/other/cs.aspx

issues relating to bioprospecting of genetic resources on the deep seabed beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The collaboration with other mechanisms on the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs is highlighted in the box below.

67. For the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity, as adopted by COP 6 in 2002, the CBD has intensified its cooperation with the *United Nations Forum on Forests* (UNFF) and the Secretariat has sought collaboration with other members of the *Collaborative Partnership on Forests* (CPF, see below). Within the CPF, the CBD Secretariat serves as a focal agency for forest biodiversity and traditional forest-related knowledge. The CBD Secretariat also plays an active role in the CPF's work on streamlining forest-related reporting to reduce the reporting burden on countries (see further information below under the section on forest sector programmes). COP 6 requested the CBD Executive Secretary to undertake an assessment of the relationship between the proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the activities of the CBD forest work programme. In the context of reporting on the implementation of the forest work programme, COP 6 also asked the Executive Secretary to consider the need to minimise the reporting burden on Parties by taking into account reporting under the UNFF and other international mechanisms.

68. A joint work programme for the period 2001-2005 was established with the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (UNCCD), with a view to facilitate the implementation of the programme of work on dry and sub-humid lands. The joint work programme is supported by an *Ad hoc* Technical Expert Group, consisting of experts of both conventions. A core component of the programme is the facilitation of the integration of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the CBD with National Action Programmes under the UNCCD. The CBD Executive Secretary has designated a liaison officer to join the UNCCD Liaison Office in New York.

69. A particularly close cooperation has been established with the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (FAO). The FAO is the lead partner for the CBD work programme on agricultural biological diversity and also leading on the International Pollinator Initiative and the International Soil Biodiversity Initiative. The FAO is also a major player in the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC, see below). The CBD is working with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture acting as the Interim Committee for the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

70. In addition, the CBD has a joint work programme with the *Convention on Migratory Species* (CMS), which is scheduled for 2002-2005. It aims at, *inter alia*, addressing migratory species in NBSAPs and reducing the level of redundancy and duplication between national report formats of the two conventions. The CMS has been recognised by the COP as the lead partner in conserving and sustainably using migratory species over their entire range. The CBD Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) has received and disseminated case studies on several issues concerning the agendas of the two conventions. In addition, COP 7 of the CBD endorsed the format for the third national reports, which contains specific questions on migratory species.

71. There is a joint work plan with *CITES*, with common work areas including incentive measures for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biodiversity, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) and non-timber forest resources. A Memorandum of Cooperation between the CBD and the World Heritage Centre which administers the *World Heritage Convention*, is in preparation.

72. Of major importance is also the close cooperation with the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) as well as *UNEP* and the *IUCN* Commission

for Education and Communication in implementing the Programme of Work for the Global Initiative on Communication, Education and Public Awareness, adopted by COP 6 in 2002.

73. Recently, CBD COP 7 in February 2004, requested the Executive Secretary to invite the secretariats of the other biodiversity-related conventions (CITES, Ramsar, CMS and World Heritage Convention) to form a liaison group to enhance coherence and cooperation in their implementation.

Proposed Global Partnership on Biodiversity

74. COP 6 in 2002 adopted the Strategic Plan of the CBD, containing the ambitious target of achieving, 'by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level'. In light of this target, the CBD Open-ended Inter-Sessional Meeting on the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Conference of the Parties up to 2010, in March 2003, recommended that the Conference of the Parties, at its seventh meeting, request the Executive Secretary to develop a global partnership on biodiversity comprising the major biodiversity-related organisations, with the Secretariat of the Convention facilitating the process in order to enhance synergies, avoid duplication of efforts and improve implementation of biodiversity-related agreements. COP 7 in February 2004, accordingly, requested the Executive Secretary to examine options for a flexible framework between all relevant actors, such as a global partnership on biodiversity, in order to enhance implementation through improved cooperation. There is a number of models for such a partnership, including the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation, and 'type II' partnerships discussed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Cooperation with other conventions and mechanisms

75. CITES Resolution Conf. 10.4 called upon the secretariat of CITES and the CBD to coordinate their programme activities particularly through the UNEP coordination meetings and suggested that Parties, as appropriate to their national circumstances and to encourage synergy, take measures to achieve coordination and reduce duplication of activities between their national authorities for each Convention. A joint work plan has been agreed with the CBD.

76. CITES invited the CBD to participate in the CITES Bushmeat Working Group, and CITES participated in the CBD liaison group on non-timber forest resources, contributing expertise particularly on bushmeat. CITES also participated in the elaboration of proposals for the application of ways and means to remove or mitigate perverse incentives at the CBD workshop on incentive measures in June 2003, while inviting the CBD to participate in the CITES technical workshop on economic incentives and wildlife trade policy. CITES also contributed to the development of the CBD Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity. In addition, CITES is a significant partner for the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC, see below), which the CBD adopted at its 6th Conference of the Parties in 2002, particularly for target 11 ('No species of wild flora endangered by international trade').

77. Currently, *Memoranda of Understanding* with UNEP and with FAO are in preparation, as well as a *joint work programme* with CMS, building on the Memorandum of Understanding

between the two conventions. Further cooperation with the Convention on Wetlands is under preparation.

78. Close cooperation exists between CITES, the Montreal Protocol and the Basel Convention, forming a 'trade cluster' of MEAs. These agreements have concluded a Memorandum of Understanding on combating illegal trade and have participated in a series of regional capacity-building workshops for port enforcement officers. They have also worked, together with UNEP's Environment and Trade Branch, to develop a more coordinated approach to and position on environment and trade¹⁰.

79. Recalling the determination of the Contracting States that international cooperation is essential for the protection of certain species of wild fauna and flora against over-exploitation through international trade, CITES resolution 11.4 called for further strengthening the collaboration with the International Whaling Commission and the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling regarding the conservation of cetaceans and the trade with cetacean specimens. Resolutions 12.4 and 12.57 to 12.59 established a strengthened relationship with the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources regarding the trade in toothfish.

80. In addition, CITES has been involved in the development of guidance for planners on the harmonization of biodiversity legislation and has contributed to the UNEP guidelines and manual on compliance with and enforcement of MEAs.

Strategic Vision: Provisions on synergies

81. The Convention, at COP 11 in 2000, adopted the *Strategic Vision* through 2005. It provides for a close working relationship with UNEP and close cooperation and synergies with related conventions and agreements. The CBD is named specifically when the Strategic Vision recognises that 'the missions of CBD and CITES are closely related, thus necessitating a high degree of cooperation and synergy'.

82. The Strategic Vision is accompanied by an *Action Plan*, outlining action points for each objective. Relevant action points include:

- Develop a mechanism to ensure transfer and exchange of information between CITES and relevant conventions, agreements and associations for species of concern.
- Consider the criteria and decisions of other conventions, agreements and associations when considering the proposals to amend the appendices, draft resolutions and decisions.
- Encourage other conventions, agreements and associations, when making their decisions, to consider the criteria designed and decisions made by CITES Parties.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Cooperation with other conventions and mechanisms

83. The Convention on Migratory Species cooperates with other conventions through a number of instruments. Joint work programmes have been concluded with the CBD, jointly with the Convention on Wetlands and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement, and with Wetlands International. Amongst the Memoranda of Understanding, the one with UNESCO establishes a framework for cooperation between the CMS and UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme as well as the World Heritage Convention in the field of

¹⁰ See also the GreenCustoms Project below.

conserving migratory species and the world's natural heritage and biodiversity with a view to identifying synergies and ensuring effective cooperation in joint activities. Plans exist for the development of a Joint Work Plan for the practical implementation of the MoU.

84. Following a request by CBD COP 6 and CMS COP 7 in 2002, the CMS Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC supported the CBD Secretariat in developing a format for CBD Parties to report, through their national reports, on the extent to which they address migratory species at the national level, and on cooperation with other range states as part of on-going efforts to harmonize national reporting requirements of the biodiversity-related conventions. Both conventions also invited Parties and international organisations to submit case studies on migratory species and their habitats, relevant to the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues under the CBD as specified in the CBD-CMS joint work programme. As of January 2004, the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism has made some 35 case studies on migratory species from 15 countries available on the CBD website. CMS COP 7 invited the CMS Secretariat to collaborate with the CBD Secretariat in generating guidance to integrate migratory species into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, and on-going and future programmes of work under the CBD.

85. The 7th Conference of the Parties to the CMS, in 2002, made reference to the Guidelines for Incorporating Biodiversity-related Issues into Environmental Impact Assessment Legislation and/or Processes and in Strategic Environmental Assessment, endorsed by decision VI/7 of the CBD, and urged the Parties to the CMS to make use of them (resolution 7.2).

Initiatives to harmonize between convention and agreements

86. Under the Convention on Migratory Species, various cooperative arrangements for the conservation of species of Appendix II, ranging from Action Plans and Memoranda of Understanding to formal Agreements, are promoted. The CMS and those arrangements with reporting requirements are working on harmonising their respective reporting requirements with a view to avoid duplication and repetition and to make the reports complimentary. An example for the efforts of harmonization with other conventions is the draft 'Guideline on avoidance of introduction of alien species of waterbirds' of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) under the CMS that has brought its terminology in line with the CBD terminology.

CMS Information Management System

87. The CMS Information Management System was established by COP 6 in 1999 and is maintained by UNEP-WCMC. This system brings together the data from various expert organisations, the knowledge generated within the CMS and other biodiversity agreements such as CBD, CITES, Bern Convention and European Community Directives, and the information provided by the Parties to CMS through their National Reports. It offers four categories of information at the CMS website:

- Information about species listed in the CMS Appendices
- Information about species groups and issues of special interest to CMS
- Information about Parties to CMS, with links to the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) of each Party.
- Information provided by parties to CMS on specific themes, such as implementation of resolutions and recommendations and the mobilisation of financial and technical resources.

88. There are plans to extend the links to information held by further conventions and institutions.

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)

Cooperation with other conventions and mechanisms

89. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has taken a lead in progressing collaboration between conventions, notably with the *CBD*. Through three successive joint work plans, this work has moved from identification of common issues, through sharing of information and guidance adopted by each convention, and the adoption also by Ramsar of guidance prepared by the *CBD*, to joint development of guidance for use under both conventions.

90. For the *CBD*, the Ramsar Convention collaborated in the review and preparation of the revised programme of work on inland water biological diversity, adopted by *CBD COP 7*, and a number of supporting information papers and materials, including on harmonizing criteria and classifications for inland waters, the status and trends of inland waters, and in preparation of guidance for the rapid assessment of inland waters and marine and coastal ecosystems.

91. The Ramsar Convention has established a number of other joint work plans and Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation. *COP 8* in 2002 endorsed the *joint work plan* for 2003-2005 with *CMS* and the *CMS African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA)*. The plan is operationalising the Memorandum of Understanding between Ramsar and *CMS* which identified five areas of cooperation: joint promotion; institutional cooperation; joint conservation action; data collection, storage and analysis; and new Agreements on migratory species and species with unfavourable conservation status. The plan contains a provision that the secretariats share the methodology and database design for handling and analysis of national reports to their respective Conferences of the Parties and to review opportunities for harmonising questions on common issues in the design of their national report formats for Ramsar *COP 9* and *CMS COP 8*.

92. While the joint work plan with the *South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)* focuses on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in Pacific island countries, the joint work plan with the *Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)* of *UNESCO*, initially covering the years 2002-2003, addresses those sites that could be or have been designated as both, Wetlands of International Importance under Ramsar and Biosphere Reserves under *MAB*. The plan is to promote four specific areas:

- Cooperation between secretariats and scientific and technical subsidiary bodies and working groups,
- Identification and designation of sites,
- Site management planning, assessment and monitoring,
- Communication, education and public awareness.

Decision on CBD guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment

93. The Ramsar *COP 8* in 2002, in resolution VIII/9, urged the Ramsar Parties to make use of the *CBD* guidelines for incorporating biodiversity related issues into environmental impact assessment legislation and/or processes and in strategic environmental assessment, developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity and endorsed by the *CBD COP* in decision VI/7, with annotations for the Ramsar context. The Ramsar resolution followed up from the provision of the *CBD – Ramsar joint work plan 2000-2001* which encouraged close cooperation in taking forward the conventions' respective programmes on impact assessment

and minimizing adverse impacts, in consultation with IUCN and the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA).

Strategic Plan provisions on synergies

94. The Ramsar Strategic Plan for 2003-2008 addresses collaboration with other institutions under operational objective 19. It asks for strengthened cooperation and synergy especially with the three Rio Conventions, CMS, the World Heritage Convention and CITES and for participation of the Convention on Wetlands in the joint liaison group of CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD. It also puts a focus on the implementation of existing Memoranda of Understanding with regional seas conventions. Partnerships are being called for with various UN bodies, including UNEP and UNDP. Resolution VIII/5 of COP 8 further focused on the national level when urging Contracting Parties to make renewed efforts to increase collaboration at the national level between the institutions and focal points responsible for the implementation of MEAs, including through ensuring their participation in National Ramsar or Wetland Committees, so as to foster synergies and harmonization.

World Heritage Convention

Operational Guidelines: Provisions on synergies

95. The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), in 1977 (with a number of subsequent updates) adopted Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention. Number 139 of the guidelines stresses that the World Heritage Committee 'has recognized the collective interest that would be advanced by closer coordination of its work with other international conservation instruments. These include the 1949 Geneva Convention, the 1954 Hague Convention, the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the Ramsar Convention, and CITES, as well as other regional conventions and future conventions that will pursue conservation objectives, as appropriate. The Committee will invite representatives of the intergovernmental bodies under related conventions to attend its meetings as observers. Similarly, the Secretariat will appoint a representative to observe meetings of the other intergovernmental bodies upon receipt of an invitation. The Secretariat will ensure through the World Heritage Centre appropriate coordination and information-sharing between the Committee and other conventions, programmes and international organizations related to the conservation of cultural and natural heritage'.

Synergies in the implementation of international site-based agreements and programmes

96. A range of international and regional agreements and programmes have come into effect which designate or recognise specific sites nominated by national governments or some other appropriate bodies at the national level. Several sites are designated under more than one of these agreements. Over the last years, a range of collaborative measures have been established between some of these agreements in order to improve implementation and to avoid confusion and duplication of work.

97. The World Heritage Centre and the Ramsar Convention Bureau have undertaken joint missions to threatened sites, which are both World Heritage and Ramsar sites.

98. In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNCCD and the Convention on Wetlands, the Okavango Ecosystem and the Lake Chad Basin, both designated as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, have been identified as areas where joint activities can be developed.

99. The joint programme of work between the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme and the Ramsar Convention carries a number of relevant measures regarding sites that are designated or qualify for designation under both agreements:

- Development of projects for the co-management of jointly designated sites, especially the implementation in the Caribbean area of demonstration projects to illustrate the joint delivery of the requirements of Ramsar, MAB, and the SPAW Protocol of the Cartagena Convention.
- The establishment of partner agreements to assess the status of those sites wholly or partially designated as Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves and those joint sites also designated as World Heritage sites.
- The identification and review of the status of those areas that include wetland ecosystems designated only as Biosphere Reserves, and work with the relevant Ramsar authorities and MAB Committees to encourage the designation of those meeting Ramsar designation criteria as Ramsar sites, and *vice versa*.
- The review of the criteria and supporting guidance for selecting and designating Ramsar sites and Biosphere Reserves, the preparation of guidance on the joint application of the criteria for sites qualifying under both instruments.

100. In order to designate an Area of Special Conservation Interest for the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention, governments must deposit a standard data form with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. This form is based on the database designed for Natura 2000, the sites network under the European Community Birds and Habitats Directives; it can be completed electronically and the software permits the transfer of data collected by other regional projects.

101. A collaborative project, currently under development, between the European Environment Agency, UNEP-WCMC and the Council of Europe to build a Common Database on Designated Areas aims at streamlining information on protected sites from national to European level, within three components: sites designated under national systems, sites designated under European Union regulations, sites under international designations. The

database is accessible through the European Nature Information System (EUNIS) at the European Community Clearing House Mechanism.

102. The European Environment Agency, which has a mandate to annually collect information from European countries on Natura 2000 sites amongst other things, has been concerned with opportunities for using harmonized definitions and classifications to reduce national work in providing information, and to facilitate international reporting and assessment. This includes compilation of information on national and international protected areas jointly with UNEP-WCMC and the Council of Europe, and development of common habitat or classification systems.

Other MEAs and programmes

Joint activities of the Rio Conventions

103. In 2001, a *Joint Liaison Group* was established between the three 'Rio Conventions', the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands participates with an observer status. The group consists of the heads of the Secretariats and other officers of the three conventions and the chairs of the subsidiary bodies, and draws on the experience of other organisations as needed. It aims to enhance coordination between the three conventions and to explore options for further cooperation. In particular, the group collects and shares information on the work programmes and operations of each convention, including the roles and responsibilities of the secretariats, and any relevant scientific and technical bodies or expert groups; the types of activities under each convention; and potential areas of cooperation, possible joint activities, and differences in mandates. The group held its fifth meeting in January 2004.

104. The Rio Conventions have developed a *joint web-based calendar*¹¹, listing the events and meetings relevant to all three conventions. The secretariats are also pursuing the preparation of common information products, which would be available on their respective websites.

105. On the invitation by the government of Italy, the secretariats of the CBD and UNCCD, in cooperation with the secretariat of the UNFCCC, held a *workshop on Forests and Forest Ecosystems: Promoting Synergy in the Implementation of the three Rio Conventions*, from 5-7 April 2004 in Viterbo, Italy. The workshop's goal was to encourage the implementation of specific actions at the local level on forests and forest ecosystems and further develop synergistic processes in this sector in order to contribute to a more effective implementation of the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

106. The Secretariat of the UNFCCC organised two *workshops* in July 2003 to examine synergies among the Rio Conventions. The workshops, hosted by the government of Finland, consisted of a Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) workshop on possible synergy and joint action with the other MEAs and a Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) workshop on enhancing cooperation between the Rio Conventions. In addition to UNCCD and CBD, the Convention on Wetlands also participated, as well as representatives from a number of international organisations. The workshops identified a range of options for strengthening cooperation in areas such as exchange of information, technology transfer, education and outreach, research and systematic observation, capacity-building, national reporting, and climate change impacts and adaptation. A number of issues for further consideration were discussed, including national level actions, coordination among convention secretariats, and activities for focal points. The workshops also examined the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change and highlighted the use of the ecosystem approach as a framework for activities contributing to the objectives of the three Rio conventions and an instrument to achieve synergy. The importance of implementing synergistic approaches on the national and local levels was stressed.

¹¹ <http://unfccc.int/calendar/rioconv/index.html>

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

107. As a follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Convention on Migratory Species, a joint work plan between UNCCD and *CMS* is currently in preparation.

108. The *Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands* (LADA) is a partnership between the FAO, UNEP, UNCCD, GEF, Global Mechanism and others to provide up-to-date ecological, social, economic and technical information, including a combination of traditional knowledge and modern science, to guide integrated and cross-sectoral planning and management in drylands.

109. The UNCCD secretariat is also in the process of testing pilot initiatives for integrating the *climate change* dimension, in particular as it relates to carbon sequestration activities, in UNCCD sustainable development projects through afforestation and reforestation schemes. The secretariat has entered into consultations with possible donors and recipient countries in order to facilitate this process.

110. The UNCCD is currently embarking on a *National Synergies Workshop Programme* with the following broad objectives:

- To strengthen current coordination at local level, including the exchange of information, in order to achieve optimal use of domestically available resources.
- 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.
- To catalyse local level approaches to synergy among the stakeholders, and 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.

111. The national synergy workshop programme was launched in late 2000. Workshops have been held in a number of African, Latin American and Caribbean, and Asian countries, including subregional workshops, with more workshops under preparation.

112. The UNCCD is involved with the UNDP-managed *Global Drylands Imperative* (GDI), an informal network of institutions, organisations and individuals interested in the implementation of the UNCCD. The GDI has issued a series of challenge papers related to drylands and desertification and holds regular events at meetings of the UNCCD and other conventions. One GDI paper, *Increasing Capabilities Through an Ecosystem Approach for the Drylands*, specifically highlights the synergies between the UNCCD and the CBD.

The Joint Implementation Strategy of Burkina Faso for the Rio Conventions

113. In 2002, the government of Burkina Faso published a joint implementation strategy for the three Rio Conventions. Its global objective is 'to contribute to promote natural resources management and to assure social and economic development for Burkina Faso on sustainable ecological bases'. The specific *objectives* include:

- create a real synergy between the three conventions
- create a real synergy between the three conventions plans of action and the other existing planning frameworks
- stabilise the concentrations of greenhouse gases at a level preventing any dangerous anthropogenic disturbance of the climate system
- control desertification and mitigate the effects of drought and/or desertification
- preserve biological diversity and assure a fair distribution of the profits generated by its exploitation to the different actors.

114. Five main *strategic lines* were identified:

- the building of national capacities at different levels (local authorities, regions, central government) as well as within the different social strata (rural producers, vulnerable groups, economic operators, government agents etc.)
- the integration of concerns related to the three conventions in the planning processes of the different sectors of the national economy
- the re-reading of the on-going programmes and projects according to the requirements stated by the three conventions and their plans of action
- the development of the domains of intervention promoting synergy between the three conventions
- the promotion of town and country development as a way to achieve a harmonious development of the country.

115. For each of the following *domains of intervention* of the strategy, the current situation, pursued objective and expected results are identified:

- improvement of soils productivity/sustainable and integrated management of natural resources
- promotion of renewable energy sources and less polluting energies
- poverty control and improvement of population living conditions
- reinforcement of scientific, technical and research cooperation at subregional and international levels
- reinforcement of actors capacities.

116. As an annex, the document presents a synopsis of the national implementation plans of the three conventions (National Plan of Action under the UNCCD, National Strategy under the UNFCCC, National Strategy and Action Plan under the CBD).

Man and the Biosphere Programme

117. UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB) develops the basis, within the natural and the social sciences, for the sustainable use and conservation of biological

diversity, and for the improvement of the relationship between people and their environment globally. Since the mid 1970s, the MAB Programme has developed the biosphere reserve concept, as areas designated upon submission of governments, to undertake MAB work. The biosphere reserve concept brings together three functions: conservation of biological diversity, promoting sustainable development and encouraging scientific research, monitoring, environmental and education. A zonation system (core, buffer and transition area) helps to integrate biosphere reserves into the wider land-/seascape. Collectively, all biosphere reserves form the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, which is governed by a 'soft law', the Statutory Framework for Biosphere Reserves, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 1995. This Statutory Framework makes provision for a periodic review of biosphere reserves at ten year intervals, allowing the national authorities concerned to analyse the extent to which each biosphere reserve is responding to the Seville Strategy. The 'Seville Strategy' also gives a vision and a set of goals and implementation indicators. Biosphere reserves are often viewed by countries as 'living laboratories for sustainable development'. As of February 2004, there are 440 biosphere reserves in 97 countries. The MAB Programme serves to help implementing Agenda 21 and other site-based agreements and thus has embarked on a range of joint activities, consisting of innovative research initiatives, capacity building and communication. MAB collaborates with the five biodiversity-related conventions. As concerns the *CBD*, MAB is a key partner for the CBD Global Initiative on Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness, the CBD programmes of work on mountain biodiversity, forests, and protected areas. Biosphere reserves are in many ways an embodiment of the Ecosystem Approach of the CBD. A joint website has been developed with the *Convention on Wetlands*¹², making available information about the world's wetlands that are both, biosphere reserves under MAB and Wetlands of International Importance under Ramsar. In addition, several joint activities are being implemented (see box on 'Synergies in the implementation of international site-based agreements and programmes'). As concerns the *World Heritage Convention*, some 75 biosphere reserves are wholly or partially World Heritage sites, the best complimentary of these two instruments being when the core area of a biosphere reserve is a World Heritage site. The multiple function and zonation approach of biosphere reserves can thus serve to better protect the World Heritage values in the long term. The same applies for Ramsar Wetland sites and Natura 2000 areas in the European Union.

118. In collaboration with the Secretariat of the UNCCD, UNESCO-MAB has developed an *Environmental Education Kit on Desertification*, targeted to teachers of primary school education and their pupils, aged 10-12 years old. A number of *dryland-related seminars and workshops* have been organized by MAB in collaboration with the UNCCD and other institutions. UNESCO is also a sponsoring agency with UNEP of the Great Apes Survival Project (see below).

Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

Decisions of UNEP Governing Council on regional implementation of global treaties

119. Decision 28 adopted by the UNEP Governing Council at its 21st session, in 2001, requested the Executive Director to use global meetings of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans and other cost-effective consultative mechanisms in the further strengthening of the Regional Seas Programme and for building synergies and collaboration among environmental agreements. Decision 28 also encouraged close cooperation of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans with the CBD, CMS and CITES. The 22nd session of the Governing Council in 2003 set out the elements of a global strategy for the Regional Seas based on the view of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as an instrument for and contribution to sustainable development, and as a platform for the regional

¹² <http://www.unesco.org/mab/ramsarmab.htm>

implementation of global conventions. The Council asked for strengthened cooperation between the regional seas programmes and international initiatives and organisations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, FAO, CBD and the Barbados Plan of Action on Small Island Developing States.

Strategic Guidelines for the Regional Seas

120. Further, the Fifth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas, held in Nairobi, Kenya, 26-28 November 2003, agreed on a set of Strategic Guidelines for the Regional Seas, with the objectives of increasing contribution to sustainable development, enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of the Regional Seas, enhancing the visibility and impact of the Regional Seas in global policy making, strengthening monitoring and assessment of the marine and coastal environment, and, importantly, increasing the use of Regional Seas as a platform for developing common regional objectives, promoting synergies and coordinated regional implementation of relevant MEAs, global and regional initiatives and responsibilities of UN Agencies such as the IMO, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the IOC of UNESCO, and FAO, as well as other international actors.

Cooperation with other mechanisms

121. The CBD COP, in decision V/3, sought for possible further collaboration with the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, including the development of joint work programmes. Decision VII/5 (of the CBD COP 7 in 2004) on the programme of work on marine and coastal biological diversity identifies Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans as the main implementers of CBD at the regional level, and decision VI/3 highlights the role of the Regional Seas in implementation of the CBD work plans on coral bleaching and physical degradation and destruction of coral reefs. In addition, CBD SBSTTA recommendation VIII/3 on marine and coastal biodiversity highlights the need for identification of joint programmes of work, based on regionally elaborated criteria for the establishment and management of marine and coastal protected areas under Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans.

122. Consequently, a number of Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation have been developed, and both the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) and its Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), and the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), have signed MoUs with the Convention on Wetlands and the CBD (see also the box 'Synergies in the implementation of international site-based agreements and programmes' above). The UNEP Regional Seas Coordination Office is also developing joint activities on a global level with MEA Secretariats.

Chemical cluster of MEAs

Global efforts on chemical safety

123. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, are legal regimes within the global efforts to promote chemical safety. Beyond these MEAs, these efforts are represented by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the Inter-Organization Programme

for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), the latter comprising the chemical programmes of FAO, International Labour Organization (ILO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNEP, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and World Health Organization (WHO). IFCS and IOMC grew out of Agenda 21¹³.

Cooperation between Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel

124. The Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions developed, for the fourth meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group on International Environmental Governance (2001) options for clustering of chemicals and waste-related multilateral agreements. An Issues Paper identified enhanced programmatic and functional cooperation as potential short to medium term measures while activities such as integration of programme support services were regarded as more distant objectives. The paper outlined existing activities, further potential, approval requirements, and possible net benefits of clustering activities in the following cooperation areas: capacity-building, science and technology, legal, institutional, reporting/monitoring, information/outreach and awareness-raising, and programme support services.

125. The three conventions have since undertaken a number of synergistic activities, including:

- regional and subregional workshops on the integrated implementation of the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm Conventions
- joint projects in areas such as PCB inventories and obsolete pesticide stockpile inventories
- the initiation of a feasibility study and case studies to investigate the possible use of the Basel and other regional centres to support the Stockholm Convention
- development of technical guidance on destruction of POPs-containing waste
- Best Available Techniques/Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP) for reducing/eliminating POPs releases from waste destruction sources
- mutual support of workshops and projects between the three conventions.

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

126. At its seventh Special Session in February 2002, UNEP Governing Council decided that there is a need to further develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM) and endorsed the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 as the foundation of this approach (Decision SS.VII/3). The Executive Director was requested to work with relevant intergovernmental groups and other stakeholders to review current actions to advance the sound management of chemicals, identify gaps and propose concrete projects and priorities. The strategic approach is to promote the incorporation of chemical safety issues into the development agenda.

127. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM PrepCom 1) was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok in November 2003. PrepCom 1 was the first substantive step in the SAICM process, which is to culminate in a final International Conference on Chemicals Management in 2006. The conference and its preparatory sessions will be convened jointly by UNEP, the IFCS and the IOMC. The development of SAICM was

¹³ The Basel Convention predates the IOMC, but relates to it by virtue of its close relationship with the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002.

United Nations Agencies

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP policy in support and coordination of MEAs

128. The Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP (1997) identifies one of the core elements of the *UNEP mandate* as being to develop ‘coherent interlinkages among existing international environmental conventions’. This is further supported by Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 and several UNEP Governing Council Decisions.

129. Further to adoption of UN General Assembly decision 52/445, the Secretary General established the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, chaired by the UNEP Executive Director. The task force recommended that UNEP continue to support *joint meetings of heads of convention secretariats* in order to ensure complementarity and synergy, and that arrangements be made for periodic joint meetings of representatives from conventions to address cross-cutting issues. The task force report was submitted to the UN General Assembly as an annex to A/53/463, and noted in resolution 53/242.

130. Accordingly, UNEP has been convening *meetings of convention secretariats* to promote coordination between them, and has also organized several expert meetings on collaboration and inter-linkages. UNEP’s priorities for work in this area include: promoting information exchange amongst secretariats; strengthening collaboration amongst the conventions’ scientific and technical bodies; revitalising support to the regional seas conventions and action plans; making international trade and environmental regimes more compatible; and streamlining national reporting. UNEP produces a *Synergies bulletin*¹⁴, which aims to promote collaboration on environmental treaties.

131. The UNEP *Environment and Natural Resources Information Network* helps to build capacity for making the environmental assessments needed for state of the environment reporting. It promotes cooperative networks at the regional level that can serve as conduits for the flow of data and information needed for regional and global assessments, policy making and planning.

132. At its ninth meeting, February 1999, the *UNEP Governing Council* called upon Parties to the MEAs and the COPs ‘to give due consideration to ways and means to strengthen coherent interlinkages among relevant conventions’ and emphasized that UNEP ‘should intensify its catalytic role to stimulate and support collaboration among multilateral environmental conventions and international processes related thereto with a view to strengthening of coherent interlinkages among such conventions and processes in line with the decisions of their respective conferences of the parties’.

133. The UNEP Governing Council, at its Seventh Specials Session/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, February 2002, adopted the following *recommendations on MEAs* from the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (UNEP/GCSS.VII/6):

134. ‘While taking fully into account the autonomous decision-making authority of the conference of the parties, considerable benefits could accrue from a more coordinated approach to areas such as scheduling and periodicity of meetings of the conferences of the parties; reporting; scientific assessment on matters of common concern, capacity-building,

¹⁴ www.unep.ch/conventions/synergies/synergiesmag.htm

transfer of technology; and enhancing the capacities of developing countries before and after the entry into force of legal agreements to implement and review progress on a regular basis by all parties concerned. Biennial meetings as well as shorter duration of conference of the parties should be promoted as well as the need to consider, as far as possible and practical, back-to-back or parallel conference of the parties meetings... In the future, careful consideration should be given to the effectiveness and resource efficiency of establishing additional subsidiary institutions of the conference of the parties, and the co-location of future multilateral environmental agreement secretariats should be encouraged, and where possible in developing countries, with a view of enhancing collaboration and effectiveness. Enhanced coordination at the convention level will also require improved coordination of positions at the national level concerning multilateral environmental agreements. Priority should be given to synergies at the country level, including the provision of means of implementation'.

135. UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions, with UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment, have commissioned a publication on *Global Environment Outlook-3 (GEO-3)* and the MEAs: synthesis and synergies. The publication aims to highlight regional and global developments regarding the MEAs in the context of GEO-3. An emphasis will be placed on documenting the existing range of coordination and harmonization between the MEAs.

UNEP policy in support of cross-cutting issues

136. UNEP has been undertaking a number of initiatives, which relate to issues that are cross-cutting between conventions.

137. In 1997, CITES, as a major player in the management of sturgeon, placed all species of sturgeon on Appendix II of the Convention, following the dramatic fall of catch level in the Caspian sea which is supplying some 90% of the world's caviar catch. In 2001, UNEP convened an inter-agency meeting to assist the Caspian states (Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan) to protect sturgeon resources and meet their obligations under CITES. This was followed by a high-level meeting later that year between UNEP, CITES, the Caspian Environment Programme, the European Union and the Caspian littoral states. The meeting agreed on a one-year action plan which included halting sturgeon fishing in the Caspian Sea for a limited period, called on CITES and Interpol to take specific measures to address the illegal trade in caviar, and asked the Caspian Sea states to agree on a joint management plan for sturgeon fishing.

138. The Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP) is a partnership between UNEP, UNESCO and a range of organisations, including CBD, CITES, CMS, World Heritage Convention and a number of non-governmental organisations, with the aim to address the alarming decline of the great apes. The project builds on the expertise of the partners such as the CITES and CBD work on bushmeat. While recognising the autonomy of the initiatives of the project partners, the purpose of the Great Apes Survival Project is to provide a framework into which all the individual conservation efforts of governments, wildlife departments, academics, NGOs, UN agencies and others can be layered to ensure maximum efficiency, effective communication and successful targeting of resources.

139. Another longstanding topic handled by UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions - the Marine Mammal Action Plan (MMAP) - is also a cross-cutting issue relevant to several MEAs especially CITES, International Whaling Commission (IWC), CBD and CMS. A recent cross-cutting activity of the MMAP was UNEP's response to the Sakhalin Energy Investment Company's (SEIC) approach to UNEP for support on the monitoring of the highly endangered western gray whales. UNEP's consultations with CITES, the IWC and IUCN ultimately led to a consolidated reply to SEIC and to the endorsement of already existing IWC-led initiatives.

140. UNEP is supporting the cooperation of global MEAs as well as the Regional Seas Programmes in implementing and monitoring programmes and partnerships to conserve coral reefs and improve the socio-economic prospects for dependent human populations. A UNEP/WWF brochure on Conventions and Coral Reefs¹⁵ illustrates the different global MEAs, Regional Seas Programmes and related mechanisms that work on coral reef issues. For more information on coral reef activities see the box below.

Harmonization of national reporting: pilot projects

141. In October 2000, UNEP convened a workshop to explore ideas for a more harmonized approach to national reporting to international agreements and to develop pilot projects for testing these ideas at national and international levels. The workshop was attended by representatives of eight convention secretariats, eight countries and several international organisations involved in exploring the potential synergies between international agreements and programmes. Following the recommendations of the workshop, UNEP has been implementing a series of national pilot projects to assess different approaches to harmonized reporting for the global biodiversity-related treaties. These pilot projects covered: consolidated reporting to a range of agreements; modular reporting approaches; and the link between reporting to international agreements and the state of environment reporting process. An additional pilot project addressed information management to support delivery of reports, and assessed the support that might be valuable from regional organisations. The pilot projects have recently been concluded and a final report by UNEP-WCMC has been prepared.

Linkages between ozone and climate change regimes

142. The Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the COP of the UNFCCC have included decisions on joint efforts between the climate change and ozone regimes. One recent example is the MOP Decision 14/10 and the COP Decision 12/CP.8 on relationships between efforts on stratospheric ozone and the global climate system. It requested the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Technology and Economic Assessment Panel (TEAP) to prepare a joint report on perfluorocarbons/hydrofluorocarbons to be finalised by early 2005. Also, pilot projects are attempting to address climate change, ozone protection and other environmental issues in an integrated manner, such as the Solar chill project to provide vaccines conserved in portable solar-powered refrigerators to remote areas of developing countries.

GreenCustoms Project

143. The GreenCustoms Project is a joint initiative between the World Customs Organization (WCO), Interpol, CITES, the Basel Convention, and UNEP Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics's OzoneAction Programme. It builds on the range of existing training initiatives of these partners in the field of combating illegal international trade in commodities such as ozone depleting substances, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste and endangered species. The 2002-2003 work plan for the initiative 'Implementing an Integrated Training Program for Custom Officers' was launched during The Environment Forum organised by the WCO on 5 June 2002 on the occasion of the World Environment Day.

144. A common agenda under integrated training will ensure that trainees receive balanced instruction on critical elements of the Basel and CITES Conventions, and the Montreal Protocol. Special training modules will be created by blending together the modules currently

¹⁵ See http://www.unep.org/PDF/Conventions_CoralReefs_optimized.pdf

being used by the individual convention secretariats. Manuals will be compiled and field-tested by customs officials, to supplement the training they receive under this programme. These will include a 'Green Customs Manual', a collaborative initiative of the convention secretariats, and a manual to facilitate the implementation of UNEP's Guidelines on Compliance and Enforcement of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as adopted by the UNEP Governing Council in February 2002. Based on the experience of CITES with an interactive CD-ROM, UNEP will develop distance and internet learning techniques for integrated training, in order to reach as many customs officials as possible, and ensure that the highest possible level of training is maintained. It is also developing a compliance and enforcement manual, which it plans to use to train enforcement personnel, including customs officials.

Harmonization of legal obligations under biodiversity-related MEAs

145. . . In the framework of the UNEP and UNDP-implemented and GEF-funded Biodiversity Planning Support Programme, UNEP and the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD) prepared a study on 'Legislative Complementarity and Harmonization of Biodiversity-related MEAs'. A workshop in London in May 2001 was attended by representatives of the biodiversity-related treaties and nine countries. The objective of the workshop was to discuss key areas of overlap and synergy between the biodiversity-related conventions, as part of a programme to:

- facilitate a harmonized, integrated and cost-effective approach to implementing the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions at the national level,
- contribute to improving policy, legal and administrative coordination at national level in order to comply effectively with international obligations,
- publish and dissemination of a set of best practice guidelines on coordinated implementation of biodiversity-related conventions at national level.

146. The study consists of a synthesis report, a discussion document, an information document, and country case studies from Cuba, Hungary, India, Kenya and Peru¹⁶.

¹⁶ The study is available at <http://www.unep.org/bpsp/HTML%20Files/TS-Legal.html>.

Synergies in the conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs

147. Coral reefs cover around 284,300 km² of tropical shallow waters in more than 100 countries and territories. These coral reef ecosystems are well known for their high biological diversity and their importance in providing essential physical, economic and social goods and services to more than one billion people. It is therefore no surprise that there is a large and diverse community concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of coral reefs, comprising more than 25 intergovernmental conventions and organisations and over 150 NGOs. Given the spectrum and number of players involved, bilateral and multilateral coordination and harmonization of activities via joint work programmes is essential to avoid duplication and make best use of limited resources in the efforts to reverse the global decline and degradation of coral reefs. As an example, coral reefs are an integral part of the joint activities between the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention as demonstrated by a recent publication '*Coral Reef Protected Areas in International Instruments by the World Heritage Convention, World Network of Biosphere Reserves and the Ramsar Convention*'.

148. However, most of these cooperative arrangements and agreements are limited by the mandates and remits of the individual partners, and have to focus on specific threats to coral reefs, or specific geographical regions, which are addressed by all. In 1994, the international community recognised that the complex nature of coral reefs required a more inclusive, overarching co-ordination. The *International Coral Reef Initiative* (ICRI) was established as a dedicated body to fulfil this role.

149. ICRI is a voluntary, informal network which aims to raise awareness of coral reefs and associated ecosystems with a view to catalysing best strategies for the conservation and sustainable development of coral reefs and related coastal ecosystems. ICRI allows all coral reef stakeholders from national, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, academia and the private sector to come together in an open and equal forum. The aims are to exchange information and experiences, to discuss current and emerging issues relating to coral reefs, and to review coral reef activities carried out at national, regional and global levels. This enables ICRI to improve the coordination and harmonization of member activities and, via strategic documentation and calls for action, to advise external bodies and the international community on gaps, interrelations and potential synergies in the work on coral reefs.

150. ICRI operates as a global umbrella for coral reefs. Pooling resources on smaller scales can also result in positive synergies. UNEP's remit and mandate with respect to coral reefs requires the active involvement and support of various international bodies and partnerships. In 2000 UNEP responded by establishing a small, dedicated Coral Reef Unit (CRU). The CRU was to ensure the internal, cross-divisional coordination of UNEP's coral reef work, and to act as a focal point within the UN system for guidance on coherent policies and concerted action on coral reefs. It soon became apparent that the work of CRU would benefit from a close contact with other UNEP-facilitated coral reef programmes. In May 2003, the unit was re-located to the UNEP-WCMC to complement the Centre's marine & coastal programme and the co-located International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN) Co-ordinating Unit. In July 2003, the Centre was also appointed to support the Joint UK/Seychelles Secretariat in the administration of ICRI. Each of the four partners has distinct yet complementary objectives that cover a range of coral reef stakeholders and issues, including policy and scientific assessment, management and capacity building, conservation and outreach. Together they constitute 'Corals @ UNEP-WCMC', and working along side under one roof enables them to address the plight of coral reefs using innovative, interdisciplinary and synergistic approaches, essential for achieving the common goals.

United Nations University (UNU)

UNU Inter-linkages Initiative

151. As part of the process of moving beyond Rio and the WSSD, the Inter-linkages Initiative was developed by the United Nations University in 1997 and is nowadays focusing on practical activities such as integrated capacity development. The Inter-linkages Initiative is an approach to managing sustainable development that promotes the integration of solutions at a practical level. It encourages a greater connectivity between ecosystems and societal performance, which is based on the recognition that environmental management is strongly related to human behaviour at all levels of natural and human interaction.

152. On a practical level, the initiative is based on the assumption that improving the implementation of existing environmental mechanisms does not necessarily require new instruments, but rather a greater level of coherence among tools already available.

153. The outputs include applied research and case studies, policy dialogues and workshops, capacity development activities, information management and virtual networking, and process consulting and policy design. The Initiative has held an International Conference on Inter-Linkages: Synergies and Coordination between MEAs, Japan, July 1999, an Eminent Persons Meeting on Inter-linkages in 2001, as an input to the WSSD agenda, as well as a number of regional workshops, consultations and follow-up activities in Asia and the Pacific.

154. Following up from a workshop in Malaysia, February 2001, ASEAN, UNU and UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, in 2002, undertook a case study in the ten ASEAN countries on the negotiation and implementation of MEAs and their inter-linkages, specifically focused on:

- an assessment of the status of ratification, implementation arrangements, problems and constraints regarding MEAs in ASEAN member countries,
- identification of opportunities and constraints in promoting synergies in MEA implementation regionally and nationally,
- a proposal for the promotion of synergies and effectiveness in implementation of MEAs.

155. In 2001 and 2002, UNU undertook, together with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), *case studies* in four Pacific Islands: Palau, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Cook Islands; and with and the ASEAN Secretariat a regional case study in the ASEAN. The goal of the studies were to identify the benefits of using the inter-linkages approach in MEA management as well as to identify where the gaps and opportunities lie in the promotion of synergies for increasing the effective and efficient implementation of MEAs. The rationale behind the case studies is to assess, jointly with the respective national governments and stakeholders involved, institutional and legal frameworks to negotiate, ratify and implement MEAs. The findings and recommendations are shared with the national stakeholders, other countries in the regions, regional bodies, as well as the convention secretariats, in order to improve mutual responses to challenges at hand. In 2003, the UNU expanded the Initiative's reach to South Asia, starting with national case studies in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, with further studies in this region to follow.

156. Based on the studies' recommendations, follow-up activities such as regional partnerships on integrated and coordinated capacity building for MEAs have been started in the Pacific, the ASEAN and in South Asia, together with various partners.

157. Publications include a series of *Policy Briefs*, such as:

- Inter-Linkages: Synergies and Coordination among Multilateral Environmental Agreements (1999)
- Inter-Linkages between the Ozone and Climate Change Conventions (2001)
- National and Regional Approaches in Asia and the Pacific (2002)
- Pacific Islands Case Studies (2002)
- Inter-Linkages in Financing Sustainable Development (2002)
- Environmental Governance in Papua New Guinea (2003).
- Environmental Governance in Bhutan (2004)
- Integrated Capacity Building in the ASEAN (2004)
- Handbook on Key Linkages among the Rio and other Conventions (2004).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

158. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assists countries to maintain and sustainably use the biodiversity that underpins poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The poor, especially in rural areas, depend on biodiversity for food, fuel, shelter, medicines and livelihoods. Biodiversity also provides the critical 'ecosystem services' on which development depends. Thus UNDP has made *Biodiversity for Development* a primary focus of its Energy and Environment Practice.

159. Through its 130 Country Offices operating in 166 countries UNDP directly assists countries to develop the capacity to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity in the long term. Closely linked activities on the part of its country offices, the UNDP Global Environment Facility (UNDP GEF), the GEF's Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), the Drylands Development Centre, the Equator Initiative, and the Biodiversity Global Programme enable UNDP to leverage change at the local, national, regional and global levels.

160. UNDP leverages change at three levels:

161. Local level: supporting community efforts, and particularly those in biodiversity rich areas, to reduce poverty and conserve biodiversity through sustainable livelihood activities, community-to-community learning exchanges, providing advice for small business 'startups', transferring lessons from community levels to the local and national authorities which establish the policies and enabling environments for these practices. UNDP works at the local level through the Equator Initiative, the GEF Small Grants Programme (with more than 3,000 biodiversity-related projects by local NGOs and community-based organisations supported with over \$58 million in 73 countries of operation), and UNDP GEF projects (with over \$1.9 billion of grants and cost-sharing resources provided for biodiversity-related projects in over 140 countries to assist developing countries to protect the global environment). In addition, UNDP's Drylands Development Centre works to reduce poverty in the dry areas of the world through programming for biodiversity-friendly dryland development at the country level and knowledge sharing and outreach on sustainable land management.

162. National level: mainstreaming biodiversity, ecosystem services, protected areas and other commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) into national governance and production systems, including social, economic and policy frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals Country Reports, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, National Sustainable Development Strategies, National Human Development Reports; key sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and energy; and through partnerships with the private sector in areas such as greening the coffee, cacao and tourism industries and innovative financing mechanisms.

163. Global level: mainstreaming biodiversity into global social, economic and policy frameworks and mechanisms such as processes designed to achieve the Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs), the WTO, the UN Millennium Project, Human Development Reports, and harmonization with other multilateral environmental agreements including the Clean Development Mechanism. At the same time, UNDP works to help the CBD, multilateral and bilateral organisations, NGOs, other civil society organisations, and the private sector incorporate the MDGs in their efforts. UNDP also manages global change as it impacts biodiversity and ecosystem services as a result of climate change, alien invasive species, biotechnology, etc.

164. In addition, UNDP provides advocacy and analysis on key biodiversity-related issues through partnerships with the Conservation Finance Alliance, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Ecoagriculture Partners, Global Biodiversity Forum, Group of Likeminded Megadiverse Nations, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Poverty and Environment Initiative, and other strategic initiatives.

165. UNDP's also collaborates closely with Conservation International, the CBD Secretariat, Fauna & Flora International, IIED, IUCN, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, SwedBio, The Birdlife Partnership, The Nature Conservancy, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, UNESCO, UN Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Resources Institute, WWF, and others.

166. UNDP is committed to building public-private partnerships for biodiversity. Examples include the UNDP/Swiss Re/ Center for Health & the Global Environment of Harvard Medical School (CHGE) partnership initiative on the biodiversity, economic and health dimensions of climate change, and the *Footprint Neutral* programme with Swiss Re.

Further United Nations agencies and related institutions¹⁷

United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination

167. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination has the aim to further coordination and cooperation on the whole range of substantive and management issues facing the UN system. Chaired by the Secretary-General of the UN, CEB consists of the Executive Heads of the 28 member organisations – UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies as well as the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions. The CEB addresses its issues through two committees, the High-Level Committee on Management and the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP). The HLCP currently works on a number of issues of relevance to the environmental agenda, including the 2005 review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. At its 6th session in September 2003, HLCP considered, *inter alia*, inter-agency collaboration in the implementation of the WSSD Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The report to the session contains an inventory of existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms and collaborative arrangements and joint projects in the areas of freshwater, water and sanitation, energy, oceans and coastal areas, sustainable consumption and production, and biodiversity and sustainable ecosystem management¹⁸.

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

¹⁷ The United Nations Forum on Forests is being reviewed under Forest Sector Programmes below.

¹⁸ The inventory is contained in the Appendix to Annex V of the report of the 6th session of the HLCP, see <http://ceb.unsystem.org/hlcp/documents/Session.Reports/ceb-2003-7.pdf>.

168. The Global Environment Facility is supporting interlinkages between its six focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, ozone, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). In four of these areas, the GEF receives or is expected to receive in future guidance from MEAs: CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and the Stockholm Convention. Therefore, the GEF Operational Strategy stresses that ‘GEF projects integrating several focal areas have the potential to multiply global benefits from GEF interventions’. The Operational Strategy advises to avoid supporting activities in one focal area that jeopardise potential activities in another focal area. Multifocal projects continue to be given high priority in GEF funding, and the GEF envisages substantial resource allocation to such cross-cutting projects in the 2004–2006 business plan.

169. The Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management includes as one of the strategic considerations: ‘Promote synergies among the program priorities on sustainable land management of the UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC, and other relevant conventions in projects developed for GEF funding, as well as with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) of which the GEF is a member’.

170. Under capacity-building, the Operational Programme outlines: ‘GEF incremental assistance may specifically focus on providing coordination support for the following baseline actions to facilitate the implementation of country-driven priorities:

- Harmonization, if necessary, of sustainable land management priorities identified in action programs such as national environment action programs, National/Sub-Regional/Regional Action Programs (NAPs/SRAPs/RAPs) to combat desertification, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, national communication for UNFCCC, and National Adaptation Programmes of Action, and forest action programs.
- Integration of country-driven desertification and deforestation prevention and control priorities outlined in national environmental action programs, NAPs/SRAPs/RAPs, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, national communication for UNFCCC, and forest management action plans into national development plans, PRSPs, and/or CDF [Comprehensive Development Framework]’.

171. GEF is providing funding to 45 countries to conduct national capacity self assessments (NCSAs) that focus on cross-sectoral capacity-building needs. The NCSA programme requires that national focal points for all the Rio Conventions be consulted in preparing the NCSA projects, and encourages wide stakeholder participation.

172. Regarding POPs, it is expected that the GEF will require that not only the Stockholm Convention, but also the Basel and the Rotterdam Convention are ratified in order for countries to be eligible for project funding. GEF will specifically support the integrated implementation of the three conventions.

The World Bank

173. The World Bank, the world’s largest financier of biodiversity, focuses its biodiversity-related work increasingly on the following themes: exploring the linkages between biodiversity and poverty, valuing biodiversity services, mainstreaming stakeholder participation in biodiversity protection, and mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral programmes and projects. The Bank seeks to strengthen its biodiversity policies and project performance by involving a broad range of public and private stakeholders in protecting biodiversity resources. To do so, the Bank has strategically partnered with organisations that are rich in conservation experience. These partners are well placed to secure participation from in-country stakeholders and local communities that have a significant stake in protecting biodiversity. The Bank has built and continues to strengthen partnerships with other

multilateral environmental agencies, bilateral donors and international NGOs who also work toward effective and increased biodiversity protection. Some key examples include the following.

174. The *Critical Ecosystem Partnerships Fund* is a joint initiative of the Bank with Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the MacArthur Foundation and the Government of Japan. It was launched in 2002 and aims to provide \$150 million over five years for the conservation of the most biologically significant and threatened areas of the world.

175. The *World Bank - World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Alliance for Forest Conservation and Sustainable Use* was launched in April 1998. It promotes forest conservation and the adoption of international best practices in forest management. Within this framework, the Bank and WWF will work with governments, the private sector, and civil society to significantly reduce the loss and degradation of all forest types worldwide.

176. In addition, the World Bank is providing key support to several other joint initiatives by agencies and organisations, *inter alia* the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (see above) and the Global Invasive Species Programme (see below).

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

177. Consistent with paragraph 38.13 of Agenda 21, the Secretary-General has made a number of recommendations concerning the streamlining of national reporting (E/CN.17/1997/6), including the establishment of reporting calendars, which the Commission has actively implemented in its subsequent reporting cycles following acceptance of the report by the Commission (Decision 5/103).

178. The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its eleventh session in 2003, invited the secretariat of the Commission to improve national reporting guidelines and questionnaires with the intention of making reporting more efficient and less burdensome on countries and more focused on implementation, in consultation with Governments, United Nations organisations and secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements, and to report to the Commission for its consideration.

179. The Guidelines for national reporting to CSD 12 (April 2004) encourage countries that have reported or are in the process of reporting on the Millennium Development Goals through UNDP, to make use of and build on that process in reporting on the targets relevant to the CSD-12 thematic areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. The CSD Secretariat offered to track relevant information that had already been submitted to another UN agency.

Other institutions and initiatives

Forest sector programmes

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

180. Raising the awareness of sustainable forest management and facilitating the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action are at the heart of the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. The UNFF was established in October 2000 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The Forum has universal membership and serves as the key intergovernmental body for comprehensive, international forest policy dialogue and formulation at the global level. UNFF is supported by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), consisting of fourteen international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats that have substantial programmes on forests (see below).

181. While UNFF provides a framework for action, it is neither an implementing body nor a financing mechanism to support implementation on the ground. Implementation is primarily the responsibility of countries, through their national forest programmes and related policy processes. Countries have agreed to consider the IPF/IFF proposals for action within their national context. An important function of the UNFF is to enhance cooperation and policy and programme coordination, particularly through the CPF. The UNFF Secretariat collaborates closely, to the extent practicable, with relevant organisations of the UN system and other relevant international and regional organisations, institutions and instruments to improve information exchange and cooperation in areas of common concern. One area of collaboration related to biodiversity is between UNFF and CBD. UNFF at its fourth session to be held in Geneva from 3 to 14 May 2004 will address the following:

- Clarifying the concept of the ecosystem approach and the concept of sustainable forest management;
- Management, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of forest biological diversity;
- The relationship between the IPF/IFF proposals for action and the expanded programme of work on forest biological diversity under the CBD.

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and its joint initiatives

182. Fostering greater coordination and collaboration systemwide within the United Nations is a challenging task. However, when it comes to forest issues considerable efforts have been made over the last few years to enhance cooperation and coordination. An innovative partnership, consisting of 14 major forest-related international organisations, both within and outside the UN system, was established in 2001. Collectively, building on the comparative advantage of its members, the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) supports the implementation of sustainable forest management worldwide.

183. Since the establishment of the Partnership, significant and increasing collaborative activities have been demonstrated. Never before have these organizations worked so closely together in assisting countries and co-sponsoring and co-organising meetings and workshops, on a variety of issues such as national forest programmes, criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, wildfires, mangroves, forest restoration and projects in low forest cover countries. This cooperation provides the needed link from international recommendations to concrete activities that enhances action on the ground.

184. Jointly the Partnership has embarked on a number of initiatives, including:

- Sourcebook on Funding Sustainable Forest Management: to make information accessible through an on-line searchable database;
- Initiative on Forest-related Definitions: to foster a common understanding of terms and definitions.

185. In 2002, CPF established a Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting. It includes FAO, ITTO, UNEP-WCMC as well as the secretariats of CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and UNFF. Its mandate focuses on reducing the reporting burden of countries and improving efficiency of reporting. It has analysed its members' forest-related reporting to identify potentials for streamlining forest-related reporting. As part of this process, the task force has established an electronic portal¹⁹ designed to help users find information related to national reporting on forests underway in various international organisations, institutions and instruments and on activities, which could help streamline this reporting. The portal aims to provide easy access to country reports, reporting requirements, questionnaires/formats, reporting schedules and synthesis reports. The Task Force is currently working on the development of a Forest Reporting Information Service which aims to facilitate access to reported information on forests and to lead to increased consistency in information reported and help reduce the reporting burden.

Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration

186. The Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration is a network of governments, organisations, communities and individuals who recognise the importance of forest landscape restoration and want to be part of a coordinated global effort. Partners include IUCN–World Conservation Union, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Forestry Commission of Great Britain, the Government of Kenya, the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), the Program on Forests (PROFOR), CARE International, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), the Secretariat of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). The partners will learn from one another's experiences and identify, undertake and support forest landscape restoration activities. The Forest Restoration Information Service (FRIS) plays a critical role as an information resource and in promoting information sharing among partners and other restoration practitioners. The partnership will serve as a model of how the international forest community can move constructively from dialogue to action by linking policy and practice.

Joint Forest Sector Questionnaire

187. ITTO, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), FAO and Eurostat have developed a joint questionnaire to collect country data on production, consumption and trade in forests products. While the questionnaire asks countries to provide information on production and trade of wood products only once, the organisations involved use the information in various ways for reporting to their own constituencies.

¹⁹ www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar

Global Partnership for Plant Conservation

188. The 6th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2002 adopted The *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* (GSPC) (decision VI/9). The Strategy contains 16 outcome-oriented targets which are in line with the CBD's general 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. The Strategy builds on relevant activities under existing initiatives, in particular the Strategic Plan and work of the CITES Plants Committee, the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources of the FAO, the Berne Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the FAO Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the Man and the Biosphere programme of UNESCO, the Global Strategy on Invasive Alien Species of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), the plant conservation programme of the IUCN Species Survival Commission, the International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation, activities of the International Association of Botanic Gardens, the WWF-UNESCO people and plants programme, and regional strategies such as the European Plant Conservation Strategy of the Council of Europe and Planta Europa.

189. In support of the GSPC, a *Global Partnership for Plant Conservation* was launched at the 7th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2004. The aim of the Partnership is to provide a framework to facilitate harmony between existing initiatives aimed at plant conservation, to identify gaps where new initiatives are required, and to promote mobilisation of the necessary resources. The Partnership builds on the work begun by the 'Gran Canaria group', an informal consortium of international and national organisations that came together in 2000 to support the development of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. The secretariat of the Partnership is hosted by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). The partnership currently consists of BioNET International, BGCI, FAO, Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), IUCN – The World Conservation Union - Species Survival Commission, King's Park and Botanic Gardens (Australia), National Botanical Institute (South Africa), Plantlife International and Plant Europa, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew (UK), Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (UK), UNEP-WCMC, and World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP)

190. The *Global Invasive Species Programme* (GISP) is a partnership, founded in 1997, with a mission to conserve biodiversity and sustain human livelihoods by minimizing the spread and impacts of invasive alien species. GISP partners include CAB International, IUCN, The Nature Conservancy, Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment, CBD, National Botanical Institute of South Africa, Working for Water, Ukuvuka Fire Stop Campaign, UNEP, IUCN Invasive Species Specialist Group, DIVERSITAS and International Programme of Biodiversity Science, and Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

191. With key support from the World Bank, GISP has undertaken assessments of the global invasive species problem and developed guides and toolkits for policy, regulation, prevention and management. GISP is engaging and informing governments and stimulating action and cooperation nationally, between governments and sectors such as environment and agriculture.

European institutions and initiatives

European Environment Agency: Reportnet, Reporting Obligations Database, and European Community Clearing-House Mechanism

192. The European Environment Agency (EEA) is working on a range of projects that are looking at reporting obligations and mechanisms at national and community level. The European Environment Information System (EEIS), as envisaged in the EEA strategy (2001), comprises EIONET (European Environment Information and Observation Network) and other relevant information systems. *Reportnet* is the supporting infrastructure that provides the basis for the EEIS. *Reportnet* addresses two issues in particular:

- Streamlining the current reporting obligations to remove redundancies and duplications, and
- Optimising institutional cooperation so that information is reported once but used by many, thus maximising efficiency.

193. *Reportnet* contains, as one component among others, the EEA Reporting Obligations Database (ROD), which provides descriptions of the requirements of data and information, including the relevant legal basis. ROD is a database containing records describing environmental reporting obligations that countries have towards the EEA, European Commission and international conventions. As a consequence, Denmark, for example, has reorganised its international reporting activities and now publishes all the reported data on a central data repository.

194. The EEA-managed *European Community Biodiversity Clearing-House Mechanism* (EC CHM) is collaborating with all member countries of the European Environment Agency (EEA) towards interrelated websites in Europe.

Proposed EC Framework Directive on Reporting

195. The EU's sixth Environmental Action Programme (2002) requires the European Commission, with the EU countries, to: 'review and regularly monitor information and reporting systems with a view to a more coherent and effective system to ensure streamlined reporting of high quality, comparable and relevant environmental data and information' and to undertake 'ex ante evaluation of the possible impacts, in particular the environmental impacts, of new policies... ex post evaluation of the effectiveness of existing measures in meeting their environmental objectives'. In this context, the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, in cooperation with the EEA and the European Commission, hosted a conference on environmental reporting and information management, 'Towards a shared vision and a shared information system', in September 2002. Amongst others, the conference addressed a proposed EC Framework Directive on Reporting.

196. The Commission's progress so far shows that three elements of relevance to international cooperation will be included in the Framework Directive proposal, namely:

- The future reporting system envisaged under the Directive will have three distinct (and to some extent overlapping) purposes:
 - Checking compliance and implementation of EU legislation at the national level (including transposition into national law)

- Monitoring progress with the state of the environment and associated socio-economic trends as the basis for assessing the effects of the implementation of EU legislation on achieving policy objectives and targets
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of EU legislation in achieving policy objectives (including cost-effectiveness)
- Principles for streamlining current reporting systems to deliver the information needed to meet the three purposes above through the identification of common policy objectives (both EU and extra-EU), information gaps, redundancies and duplication of effort
- Proposals for the design and implementation of an electronic shared information system that delivers needed information for many purposes efficiently and assures public access as required under the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

Pan-European collaboration guidelines and development of biodiversity monitoring and indicators

197. Based on the 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss as well as on the European Community's need for coordinated reporting and development of monitoring and indicators, a joint pan-European coordination is being set up among EEA, the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC), the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), UNEP-WCMC and several other organisations such as IUCN, BirdLife International and Wetlands International. These organisations will set up a pan-European workplan for developing guidance and for implementation of biodiversity monitoring and indicators.

IUCN - The World Conservation Union

198. IUCN is a relatively unique 'hybrid' institution – particularly in its membership, which comprises a combination of national governments, governmental agencies, and NGOs. Operating under a jointly developed mandate from this diverse body, IUCN has established a number of initiatives promoting synergies and harmonization between MEAs. Much of this work focuses on developing synergistic international and regional approaches with regard to particular biomes or cross-cutting issues, but some particular projects are generically focused on more general synergies among particular instruments. IUCN also has Memoranda of Understanding with a number of key institutions (including UNEP, CITES, CMS, etc.).

International and multi-regional programmes and initiatives

199. At the international level, IUCN has focused on a variety of initiatives directed at synergistic action to achieve important shared objectives. Prominent among these are several initiatives for information development and sharing, including most prominently the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, participation in key data-sharing initiatives regarding protected areas (utilising and building on the IUCN Protected Area Category System), the Business-Biodiversity Initiative, and ECOLEX (a database of international environmental law, developed and maintained under a joint agreement among IUCN, FAO and UNEP).

200. IUCN has also been very active in research and participation in the development of synergistic approaches to address particular areas of concern. Some of this work uses the conventional approach of comparing specific instruments, and determining how they can be coordinated or harmonised. An important example of this is a major collaborative study

examining the relationship between the CBD and UNFCCC, with regard to finding a balanced basis for moving ahead in the areas of forest conservation, sustainable agriculture and equity.

201. The overwhelming majority of IUCN's activities in this area, however, are undertaken at the biome level. This focus includes for example,

- the development of synergies among multinational instruments and programmes in addressing forest conservation issues,
- the evaluation of available mechanisms to support the development of transboundary and high-seas marine protected areas,
- examination of options to address gaps in the international water regime,
- in-depth work on global, regional and national regimes and requirements relating to invasive species, and
- the development of new and flexible concepts for integration of species-based and area-based approaches to international and national conservation law and its implementation.

202. IUCN has also worked consistently at addressing linkages between key international environmental/conservation concepts and critical issues in other sectors. Recent work in this area has begun to focus attention on synergies between institutional approaches to biodiversity and health, sustainable livelihoods, and the development of an international regime on access and benefit-sharing, as mandated by paragraph 44(o) of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

203. IUCN is also able to make critical contributions to synergy through the use of its unique abilities to convene and provide a neutral platform for discussions on key international environmental issues. Its separation from, but association with, UN institutional requirements and other formal governmental and multi-governmental institutions enables IUCN to operate more flexibly and to convene gatherings of experts acting in their individual capacities, where that is needed, or representing governments and other organisations, where more formal decision-making processes need flexible support.

Regional initiatives

204. IUCN works in virtually all parts of the globe, with formal regional programmes or committees in Asia, Europe (including Western European and Central and Eastern European offices); West Asia, Central Asia and North Africa; Eastern Africa; Central Africa; Southern Africa; West Africa; South America; Central America; and Oceania. Most of these regions include several national and programme/project offices in addition to the overall regional co-ordination office. There are also numerous other programmatic offices in developed and developing countries around the world. Regional programmes offer the Union the ability to apply its particular mandate and unique approach to synergy issues in a more focused way, with more detailed awareness of particular regional or national needs and objectives.

205. An example of the latter is demonstrated by activities of the IUCN Regional Biodiversity Programme Asia, focused on harmonization of the biodiversity and the climate change regimes on the national and local level. An Asia Regional Workshop on Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Climate Change was organised in Dehradun, in April 2003, in partnership with the Government of India, the Secretariats of UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD, UNDP and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

206. Another important recent example is IUCN's role in convening gatherings of African NGOs and assisting in coordinating their input into the programme on African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (African FLEG). Other work in Africa includes the Union's involvement in key processes for the revision of the African Convention on Nature Conservation – which is now more directly focused on synergies in the implementation of

conservation and sustainable use conventions in the African continent – and development of two Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocols: on Wildlife Law Enforcement, and on Forests and Forestry.

Global Biodiversity Forum

207. IUCN has been the main force behind the Global Biodiversity Forum (GBF), an independent multi-stakeholder forum with the mission to provide a mechanism to foster analysis and critical dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders on key ecological, economic, social and institutional issues related to biodiversity. Since 1992, the GBF has held 25 sessions, many of which in conjunction with meetings of the CBD. Several sessions have addressed the interlinkages between biodiversity and other agendas. These GBFs were held in conjunction with meetings of the UNFCCC, the UNCCD, the Convention on Wetlands and CITES. In August 2003, for example, the first inter-regional session of the GBF, held prior to COP 6 of the UNCCD, addressed the ecosystem approach to dryland management – integrating biodiversity conservation and livelihood security. In September 2003, the GBF was held for the first time in conjunction with the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), highlighting the relation between biodiversity, trade and sustainable development. The GBF sessions are organised by IUCN in cooperation with a varying number of convention secretariats, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations as well as government agencies.

Other studies, reviews and conferences

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

208. In preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the IIED, in collaboration with the Regional and International Networking Group (RING), published a Briefing Paper: *'Knowledge Needs for Better Multilateral Environmental Agreements: Research Partnerships for Sustainable Development'*. The paper identified research challenges regarding the substantive coherence between MEAs, including potential efforts for MEA clustering, pooled secretariats and joint negotiations which would serve the purpose of easing the negotiation preparation pressure from developing countries. In addition, the paper addresses mechanisms for improving the procedural coherence in global environmental governance, such as multi-issue panels for scientific assessment, a single location for all environmental secretariats, improved coordination between international environmental institutions, back-to-back negotiating sessions for related MEAs, and pooled reporting requirements across various MEAs.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

209. In 2002, the OECD published a study of its Development Assistance Committee (DAC): *'The DAC Guidelines: Integrating the Rio Conventions into Development Co-operation'*. The study aims to clarify the linkages between the global environmental issues, represented by the three Rio Conventions, on the one hand, and sustainable development and poverty reduction on the other. It also aims to provide insights on how development cooperation agencies can support developing countries' efforts to integrate responses to global environmental threats into their national poverty reduction and other development plans. The study identifies approaches, entry points and instruments for integrating global environmental issues into the development agenda, synergies and hard choices for sectoral development strategies and global environmental issues, and priority areas for action for integrating global environmental issues into development policies and cooperation.

Royal Institute for International Affairs

210. The United Kingdom's Royal Institute for International Affairs (RIIA), also known as Chatham House, has produced several papers, focusing particularly on the relationship between multilateral environmental agreements and the World Trade Organization (WTO):

- The Kyoto Protocol and the WTO (2000)
- Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the WTO (2003)
- The Next Trade War? GM Products, the Cartagena Protocol and the WTO (2003).

211. Another study, 'Global Environmental Institutions: Perspectives on Reform' (2002) addresses, *inter alia*, the option of clustering international environmental regimes.

TRAFFIC

212. TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, together with Fauna and Flora International, IUCN, the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, the CITES and CBD secretariats and UNEP, convened an expert workshop in April 2004 on the island of Vilm, Germany, to promote synergies and cooperation between CITES and the CBD. The workshop identified mechanisms as well as obstacles for achieving greater synergy between the two conventions, specifically in the areas of case studies and best practices; institutional cooperation; national legislation; sustainable use; access and benefit-sharing; linking site-based, thematic and species-based approaches; contribution to the 2010 biodiversity target; Global Strategy for Plant Conservation; ecosystem approach; invasive alien species; compliance and enforcement; taxonomy; incentives for research and monitoring; harmonisation of reporting; and GEF and other financial strategies.

Academic research

213. An example of the academic research on the issue of harmonization and synergies between MEAs is the report of Leiden University by M.J. Van Gelder & W.T. de Groot: 'Synergy of CBD and CCD: an inventory and analysis of opportunities for collaboration between the two Rio conventions in West-Africa' (2001). The study focuses on opportunities and constraints for improved collaboration of CBD and UNCCD in five West and Central African countries. It identifies concrete conclusions for joint actions in the field and on the institutional level.

214. A study by R. Cooney on 'CITES and the CBD: Tensions and Synergies', identifies sources of tensions between the two conventions, and reasons for more extensive synergies. Suggestions for how to implement these synergies include CITES reporting regularly to the CBD, a joint work programme, and establishing a referral system between the treaties, which could, for example, allow for allocating GEF funding for species identified by CITES to be at risk.

215. R. Wolfrum and N. Matz analysed 'Conflicts in International Environmental Law'. They focused on the law of the sea and international environmental law, including, amongst others, conflicts between the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the CBD, the relation between agreements concerning nature conservation and biological diversity, conflicts between the three Rio Conventions, and conflicts related to the regime on transport and disposal of wastes. Conclusions look specifically at issues of cooperation and international environmental governance.

Pacific Island Countries activities

216. The South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and the United Nations University (UNU) issued a *handbook* offering information on four chemical conventions:

- The Waigani Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific region
- The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal
- The Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

217. The handbook responds to the growing problems of hazardous waste, toxic chemicals and pollution, particularly in the South Pacific region and aims to support the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste.

218. In October 2003, the International Marine Project Activities Centre (IMPAC), Townsville, Australia organised a *conference on International Environmental Conventions and Instruments: An Open Dialogue on Responsibilities, Issues, Problems & Solutions for Pacific Island Countries and the Pertinent Conventions*, held in Townsville, Australia. It was conducted in conjunction with SPREP, UNU, the International Oceans Institute, CRC Reef Research Centre, and the National Oceans Office (Australia). The workshop followed a request for assistance with conventions and instruments from representatives of Pacific Island countries attending the CBD SBSTTA 8 in March 2003. The objectives of the workshop were to assist Pacific Island and Territories government officials to understand the jurisdiction and application of MEAs, especially the biodiversity-related conventions, and to allow Pacific Island countries to work in synergy to identify the issues, constraints and problems associated with acceding to and implementing the conventions. The meeting adopted recommendations for governments, MEA secretariats, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs.

219. In March 2004, the United Nations University (UNU) and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) convened the Inter-linkages Regional Meeting on Integrated Capacity Development in the Pacific on Multilateral Environmental Agreements, in Nadi, Fiji. The meeting focused on the implementation of environmental conventions in the Pacific region and highlighted the work of UNU/SPREP on interlinkages between MEAs in the region, specific country experiences, the GEF-funded National Capacity Self Assessments process, compliance and enforcement of MEAs – with particular reference to the UNEP Guidelines on Compliance with and Enforcement of MEAs; knowledge management, and regional networking.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

220. A number of *conclusions* can be drawn from the overview of existing initiatives in synergies and cooperation.

221. There has been a wide range of activities promoting synergies and cooperation between multilateral environmental agreements and related instruments over the last years. These initiatives are not restricted to the instruments themselves; many are carried out by United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organisations, including donor agencies, by academic research and non-governmental organisations.

222. Synergies and harmonization efforts have received strong support from UNEP, particularly through a range of Governing Council decisions, but also in practical terms, such as the organisation of meetings of the MEA secretariats.

223. Another significant force for synergies and cooperation has been the United Nations University, through the Inter-linkages project, including research, publications, conferences and case studies in a wide range of countries.

224. The endorsement by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) has provided further momentum to the initiatives regarding synergies, cooperation and harmonization, which is particularly important in light of the 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, as endorsed by the WSSD, and in the light of the Millennium Development Goal 7.

225. A wide range of relevant activities has been undertaken by the MEAs. They relate to decisions by the Conferences of the Parties (COPs), the institutional level, scientific cooperation, and support to the national level.

226. On the institutional level, many Memoranda of Understanding/Cooperation have been agreed between biodiversity-related conventions and other mechanisms, and several joint work plans have been established. The latter are often targeted to the secretariats' activities but many also extend to COPs, scientific bodies and the Parties. The joint liaison group of CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD provides a first experience of its kind.

227. Several conventions focus strongly on harmonization activities in their Strategic Plans.

228. The scientific bodies of many MEAs have established mechanisms of cooperation, such as presentations of other conventions at the respective meetings. Some conventions also cooperate on specific scientific projects and through the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

229. Recently, there has been a stronger focus of supporting harmonisation and synergies on the national level. Examples include the UNCCD-steered National Synergies Workshops as well as the GreenCustoms project, which involves a range of partners. Beyond the scope of this report is a closer look at national, country-driven projects, but it is worth pointing out that several Parties to conventions are gaining experience in this regard, with Burkina Faso's joint implementation strategy for the three Rio Conventions being a specifically useful example.

230. Information management and national reporting to conventions have become strong cases for harmonization efforts. The UNEP-led national pilot projects on harmonising reporting that have just been finished have pointed out obstacles and options. The CMS is

embarking on an Information Management System that takes the information of other conventions and institutions into account.

231. In summarising, a wide range of activities has been developed in support of synergies and cooperation between MEAs, and a lot of relevant experience has been gained over the past years. The level of inter-linkage differs between the MEAs, with several conventions having progressed substantially in some areas such as joint work programmes, liaison groups and harmonizing information systems. Most of these efforts have focused on the institutional level, enhancing policy coherence between the conventions. There is a need to direct more resources on synergies and cooperation on the implementation level, which is primarily the national level.

232. This report has attempted to show the existing experience and expertise from which recommendations for future work can be drawn. These are outlined below. The report would have fulfilled its purpose if it helps relevant decision-makers and staff to increase and focus their activities. There is a lot to gain, in particular in terms of avoiding the duplication of efforts, the saving of resources, and the improvement of activities to achieve implementation of the individual agreements.

Recommendations

233. *The following recommendations aim to suggest options for further action to promote synergies, cooperation and harmonization.. It is important to recognise, however, that the identification and implementation of synergies is a process that needs to be implemented in accordance to the identified needs, work programmes and priorities as well as the ongoing processes and available resources of each MEA. In this sense, it is for each multilateral environmental agreement to identify the best way forward for its own constituency. Many of the following recommendations do not apply to all MEAs – one size does not fit all. In addition, many of the recommendations, if implemented, would require the commitment of -often substantial – resources, which may not be readily available.*

Convene regular meetings

234. Joint liaison groups where the secretariats of related conventions meet on a regular basis have proven useful in the case of the Rio Conventions and could be considered by other clusters of MEAs. CBD COP 7 has recently provided a mandate for such a liaison group between the biodiversity-related conventions.

Establish links between information management systems

235. Links between information management systems between MEAs could be particularly supportive to the national implementation. These links could be established around themes such as, for example, species or sites, with links to a range of specific information systems held by agencies and organisations. Traditional knowledge could play a major role. Links to relevant websites of other conventions and mechanisms could be extremely useful, for example to the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism, which encompasses a wide range of information and offers a number of search options. Joint websites such as the existing one of the biodiversity-related conventions could be further explored and strengthened.

Harmonize terminology and classification

236. Important support for improved access to and usefulness of information would result from the development and/or sharing of common glossaries, lists of abbreviations, definitions and terminology, and the possible future adoption of cross-convention standards. For example, taxonomic synonymy for taxa protected by different MEAs would enable improved identification of, and exchange of information.

Share case studies and best practices

237. Within the files and archives of MEAs are the valuable results of case studies, research projects and successful (and unsuccessful) practices related to a wide range of issues including legislative provision, policy development, and applied aspects. A number of tools are now available to make this valuable experience more accessible. Some of these case studies are already available through individual MEA websites, but not necessarily in a consistent or coordinated manner. The suggestion is to take steps to develop a 'Best Practices Library' shared between several MEAs that provides a collection of relevant, exemplary case studies and lessons indexed and easily accessible.

Develop thematic partnerships

238. Partnerships between MEAs and other institutions have proven successful in many cases. They provide for increased collaboration between the partner institutions and help build their capacity. Such partnerships around shared areas of concern – such as forest ecosystems and agroforestry in the case of several MEAs and collaboration among members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests - should be encouraged and funds for their joint activities should be made available.

Enhance cooperation of subsidiary scientific and technical bodies

239. For certain MEAs, it has become standard practice to invite representatives of each other to their subsidiary scientific and/or technical bodies and to cooperate actively in each other's elaborations and discussions. It would be beneficial if options for such invitations as well as for regular discussions and meetings between the chairs of these bodies could be systematically explored by all relevant MEAs, to enhance the cooperation in scientific and technical matters.

Develop a modular approach to implementation of MEAs

240. The national implementation of a number of MEAs relates to common topics and themes. A 'modular' approach would identify and group the implementation requirements of relevant conventions along specific topics. For example, information on site-based approaches to conservation of biological diversity could be held in one place and being made available for the implementation of as well as reporting to a range of conventions and mechanisms. The modular approach has been recognised as a significant option and should be further developed.

Strengthen cross-sectoral harmonization initiatives

241. Of particular value are initiatives to develop synergies and harmonized approaches across sectors, for example the linkages between the ozone and the climate regimes; or between the biodiversity-related conventions and the regional seas conventions and programmes. Such collaborative efforts need not be restricted to the convention secretariats, but could include concrete initiatives such as the GreenCustoms project. A careful analysis for each convention of options in this regard, including joint work programmes and liaison groups, is beyond the scope of this study but would be worthwhile to undertake.

Further promote the harmonization of reporting to MEAs

242. National reporting to MEAs, in particular the biodiversity-related conventions, has become a major area for discussing and testing harmonized approaches and could be developed further. The UNEP-funded national pilot projects on harmonization of information management and reporting for biodiversity-related treaties have resulted in the following key recommendations:

- The Conferences of the Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions might give consideration to reviewing the reporting timetables with a view to more harmonized

scheduling, which would in particular benefit Small Island Development States and other countries with small infrastructures.

- Harmonizing the structure and questions in national reporting formats with the aim of producing a framework which could accommodate the reporting to most of the conventions could facilitate the reporting process and remove the financial and human resources burden on many countries.
- The development of a consolidated Biodiversity Reporting Manual, detailing the reporting requirements, could be considered.
- A regional approach to harmonizing national reporting could be explored, providing support from the regional level to national governments.
- National Coordination Units and national biodiversity databases/clearing-house mechanisms could facilitate the streamlining of reporting to the conventions, using on-line reporting to strengthen the participation of stakeholders.
- Linking the reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions with the reporting on the State of the Environment could be considered.
- The modular approach to reporting and the consolidated reporting, as tested by the pilot projects, could be tested in a wider range of countries.

In addition, the information provided by national reports constitutes a major source for the development and implementation of conventions and mechanisms. For this purpose, the cycle of analysing this information, feeding it back to the convention processes and making use of it is most significant.

Further develop harmonization between site-based agreements

243. The collaboration between site-based agreements could be further enhanced through a number of activities:

- Joined standard data forms for the designation and/or description of sites, using, as appropriate, the same definitions and criteria, could be developed for a number of site-based conventions and instruments, allowing for an easier sharing of information and better access to relevant information for third parties.
- Opportunities for multiple designations, under more than one agreement, could lead to more collaborative action, in particular for threatened sites and regarding the attraction of funding. For example, a Wetland of International Importance or a World Heritage Site could be protected as core area within a larger Biosphere Reserve.
- Joint missions to threatened sites, based on shared information, could involve more than two agreements, including, for example, the CMS and its agreements in cases where migratory species are involved.
- Joint site-based activities as already envisaged by a few conventions could be developed for other conventions and provide case studies for on-the-ground cooperation. Such demonstration projects could develop lessons on how synergies between agreements manifest themselves on the national and local level.
- The implementation of the site-based agreements could be integrated in the national biodiversity policies, particularly the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans.

Focus on the provision of synergies at the national level

244. Ultimately, MEAs are as successful as their national implementation. Efforts for synergies and streamlining should therefore get an increased focus on the national level, and global and regional MEAs as well as UN agencies and donors should continue to provide

support to governments in this respect. A number of areas where national synergies and cooperation efforts have begun to show their value have recently emerged:

- All relevant actors, especially staff in the relevant ministries, need adequate capacity, particularly in terms of relevant information and resources. This includes the full participation of national delegations on the regional and global level, especially for developing countries.
- National and regional synergies workshops might provide for a first approach to developing synergies and linkages and discuss the benefits of a streamlined and harmonized approach to the implementation of MEAs. Experiences in this regard, for example from the National Synergies Workshops undertaken by the UNCCD, should be gathered and analysed.
- The National Focal Points for different MEAs and related mechanisms in one country could enter into a regular exchange of information and discussion of areas of common interest. At its highest level, these meetings could discuss policy and issues, e.g. in the context of national sustainable development, ahead of meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to ensure an integrated approach and to avoid non-coordinated positions at COPs. These coordination meetings could also ensure a more integrated approach to reporting.
- A step further would be the establishment of a national conventions coordination office within government, in charge of a specific set of conventions, such as the three Rio Conventions. It would need to have the necessary authority and budgets to ensure action can take place. Such a mechanism could, amongst others, facilitate increased coordination in preparation and delivery of reports at the national level.
- Shared information management facilities such as databases would further enhance a streamlined approach to national MEA implementation.
- Development of a common approach to implementation of international conventions within a country, including working to a single integrated programme or strategy, might be seen as a goal for national harmonization efforts. This approach could be combined with any of the above-mentioned mechanisms, and would clearly lead to greater integration at the national and also the international level.

Continue UNEP's role

245. UNEP should continue its supporting role to MEAs and countries through facilitating and promoting the consolidation of existing activities and expansion into new areas, not least in the light of the 2010 target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss. There is strong potential for UNEP to work much more closely with MEA secretariats to implement many of the recommendations identified here. The coordination meetings of convention secretariats, convened by UNEP, should continue on a regular basis. Furthermore, it is important that UNEP is in a position to identify new resources for activities related to synergies and harmonization, in particular for workshops and pilot projects, including case studies, as well as making relevant information available.

Continue UNU's role

246. The United Nations University has been playing a significant role in promoting synergies and harmonization. The UNU Inter-linkages project has produced a range of research studies, has held a global conference as well as regional conferences and workshops, and undertaken case studies in a range of Asian and Pacific countries. This role could continue and probably be expanded to other regions.

Develop a joint work programme on synergies between UNEP and UNU

247. Given the substantial amount of work that both, UNEP and UNU, have undertaken to promote synergies between MEAs, an additional option would be a joint work programme on MEA synergies and harmonization between UNEP and UNU, with a view to extend this collaboration to further agencies.

Integrate synergies and harmonization into donor priorities

248. Development cooperation agencies and other donors could support developing countries' efforts to integrate responses to global environmental threats such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and desertification, into their national poverty reduction and other development plans in a synergistic way

Potential next steps

249. To further discuss the conclusions from the existing efforts in synergy, cooperation and harmonization, a workshop or an electronic consultation could be arranged between the MEAs and relevant agencies. This consultation could agree on practical further steps to promote synergies.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BGCI	Botanic Gardens Conservation International
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	see UNCCD
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CHM	Clearing-House Mechanism
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
CRU	Coral Reef Unit
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Community
EC CHM	European Community Clearing-House Mechanism
ECNC	European Centre for Nature Conservation
EEA	European Environment Agency
EEIS	European Environment Information System
EIONET	European Environment Information and Observation Network
EMG	Environmental Management Group
EU	European Union
EUNIS	European Nature Information System
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIELD	Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
FRIS	Forest Restoration Information Service
GBF	Global Biodiversity Forum
GDI	Global Drylands Imperative
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO-3	Global Environment Outlook-3
GISP	Global Invasive Species Programme
GPA	Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities
GRASP	Great Apes Survival Project
GSPC	Global Strategy for Plant Conservation
HLCP	High-Level Committee on Programmes
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
ICRAN	International Coral Reef Action Network
ICRI	International Coral Reef Initiative
IFCS	Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
IFF	Intergovernmental Forum on Forests
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IMG	Issue Management Group
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IMPAC	International Marine Project Activities Centre
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals

IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
IWC	International Whaling Commission
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MAB	Man and the Biosphere Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MMAP	Marine Mammal Action Plan
MOC	Memorandum of Cooperation
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCSA	National Capacity Self Assessments
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEBLDS	Pan-European Biodiversity and Landscape Diversity Strategy
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RIIA	Royal Institute for International Affairs
ROD	Reporting Obligations Database
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAICM	Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SPAW	Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife
SPREP	South Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TEAP	Technology and Economic Assessment Panel
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP DEC	UNEP Division of Environmental Conventions
UNEP DTIE	UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
UNU	United Nations University
WCO	World Customs Organization
WHC	Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund

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