

Summary report

Informal Meeting of the Consortium of Scientific Partners (CSP) on Biodiversity

Hyderabad, India, 10 October 2012

The Executive Secretary of the CBD convened an informal meeting on the margins of COP-11 to follow up on observations made in a brainstorming discussion held on 17 April 2012 in Panama, where participants highlighted the opportunity for the CBD to make much better use of the potential offered by the individual and collective strengths of the member institutions of the CSP. The Aide-memoire of that meeting is accessible at <http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/consortium/meetings/csp-brainstorming-panama-2012-04-17-en.pdf>.

Participants

The following individuals participated in the meeting: Maïté Delmas and Jean-Patrick Le Duc (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle de France), Hesiquio Benitez (CONABIO-Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad, Mexico), Natasha Ali (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) Yeon-soon Ahn, Jin-Han Kim and Hae Lim Kim (National Institute of Biological Resources, Korea), Peter Wyse Jackson (Missouri Botanical Garden), Christoph Häuser (Museum für Naturkunde – Leibniz Institute for Research on Evolution and Biodiversity of Berlin, Germany), Horst Korn (The International Academy of Nature of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation), Anthea Stephens and Mahlodi Tau (South African National Biodiversity Institute), Chris Lyal (The Natural History Museum (United Kingdom)), Carlos Manuel Rodriguez Echandi (INBio, Costa Rica), Brigitte Baptiste (Humboldt Institute, Colombia), Leonard Hirsch (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, USA), Marianne Schlessler (The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences), Braulio Dias, Robert Höft and Junko Shimura (CBD Secretariat).

Summary of main discussion points

SBSTTA-16 highlighted the need for enhanced technical and scientific cooperation in accordance with Article 18 of the Convention as well as emphasizing the implementation of Target 19 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (“By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied”) as a key towards enabling Parties to achieve all other Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

So far, capacity-building support under the CBD has been offered mostly through workshops, dissemination of guidelines and tools but without follow-up. CSP activities focused on training activities of CBD delegates. What would be needed in future is a more structured and continuous support at regional/subregional level to support implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The CSP should have a more prominent role by contributing to enhanced cooperation, facilitating access to data and information, including high quality scientific documentation, taking into account the particular strengths of CSP members. Upscaling the contributions of CSP members would be urgent to ensure that all efforts are made to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The CBD Secretariat could facilitate such activities of CSP members by providing specific guidance on the types of activities needed, by providing a suitable enabling environment through links to relevant regional political organizations and by supporting access to resources.

The outcomes of COP-11 provide an opportunity to enhance the utility of the CSP in supporting (i) capacity building on scientific and technical aspects linked to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020; (ii) outreach, communication and awareness raising about biodiversity and (iii) the advancement of scientific research and sharing of knowledge. The CBD Secretariat needs to be more pro-active and provide guidance on ways in which Consortium members can most effectively support the implementation of the Convention.

Immediate action to be undertaken

- CBD Secretariat to draft a letter for review by participants and representatives of other CSP members that would be addressed to the respective heads of the member institutions to formally solicit contributions by CSP members in light of the developments under the Convention since COP-10. At the same time, the original MoU which pre-dates the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity should be updated.
- CBD Secretariat to provide further guidance on its needs/expectations vis-à-vis the CSP.
- CBD Secretariat to make arrangements that ensure continuity in communicating with and servicing the CSP.

Actions to be explored

- CSP to consider a strategic expansion of its membership, taking into account gaps in geographic coverage (e.g. Australia, Brazil, China) and opportunities for rallying political support (e.g. access to EU funding).
- It would be useful to map activities of CSP members both geographically and sectorally. This could include an inventory/register of skills and tools as a basis for a gap analysis as well as a demonstration of the activities undertaken by CSP members. Among the products and activities that can serve to showcase the CSP are the work on the World Flora Online and the Invasive Alien Species Portal in addition to training sessions for delegates at the margins of major CBD meetings. The Environment Management Group has mapped UN and other partners with regard to their activities in addressing the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (see <http://www.unemg.org/Portals/24182/Documents/IMG/Biodiversity/cop11/flyer%20IMG%20mapping%20report.pdf>) and this could serve as a template for mapping CSP activities.
- CSP to consider and start planning soon activities that will be held at the margins of COP-12 in Korea. This might also be a suitable venue for a general assembly of the Consortium (SBSTTA-17 could be an alternative).
- CSP to explore the feasibility of a suite of workshops on the architecture needed for information management.
- CSP to make use of flagship events, such as the annual International Day for Biodiversity (22 May) as well as the link to the UN Decade on Biodiversity. The themes for such events and their preparation need to be planned well in advance. Also it would be worthwhile planning ahead for an event at a forthcoming SBSTTA meeting.
- CSP to examine support towards new National Biodiversity Museum being established in Hyderabad as a legacy to COP-11.

Other issues discussed

- There is a growing number of partnerships with partial overlaps (e.g. Global Partnership for Plant Conservation, Global Taxonomy Initiative, Global Invasive Alien Species Information Partnership, etc.).

- The Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF, a member of the GTI coordination mechanism and the IAS partnership) as well as the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (CETAF), were mentioned as organizations that might be invited to consider joining the CSP.
- CSP members have a lot of capacity on citizen science (e.g. SANBI has platforms for citizen science (Biodiversity Advisor <http://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/bioplan/assessment.asp>) through which the large amount of biodiversity information is made freely available to support biodiversity management, research, policy, planning and monitoring.
- While (sub-)regional activities are effective in sharing experiences, guidance and tools and promoting best practice in implementation of the biodiversity agenda, some CSP members have established partnerships at national level as part of ongoing programmes.
- It is important to invest in communicating messages to other sectors/communities in a suitable way. Also the translation of products into a range of different languages is very helpful.
- How can the CSP help create awareness about biodiversity using ‘novel’ communication tools/platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter etc.).
- There are assessments of the effectiveness of different approaches to engage the public in biodiversity activities and/or generation of awareness about biodiversity, which can be built on. CSP members could share their experiences and lessons learned in this regard.
- The concept of ‘communities of practice’, i.e. active collaboration of like-minded scientists towards a common objective, is increasingly effective with regard to the application of biodiversity informatics tools or the access to and use of biodiversity observations. CSP members could have a role in this practice. They could also engage in activities in which the COP called for collaboration with national or regional centres of excellence (e.g. decisions XI/2 and XI/3).
- Information about local biodiversity (as opposed to a focus on exotic wildlife) can be used very effectively to enhance awareness about values of biodiversity. MNHN can share their experience.
- Linkages between cultural and biological diversity are of interest to many people. The CBD and UNESCO have developed a joint work programme. Instituto Humboldt has established a unit on this interface.