

Response to notification: ‘Updating or Revision of the Convention after 2010’ (SCBD/ITS/DC/LC/64383)

Introduction

The Conference of the Parties (COP) at its ninth regular session, in adopting Decision IX/9 on the revision of the Strategic Plan of the Convention after 2010, invited Parties and observers to submit further views on the revision and updating of the Strategic Plan. Following the notification issued by the CBD Secretariat on 7th July 2008, this paper, from the Steering Group on Linking Conservation and Poverty (SGLCP) is a response to this invitation.

Decision IX/9 requests the Working Group on the Review of Implementation to prepare a revised and updated Strategic Plan, including a revised biodiversity target, drawing upon the points mentioned in the preamble to the decision. This submission focuses on paragraph (f) of the preamble which states that ‘[the revised and updated Strategic Plan should:] Highlight the importance of biodiversity for poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, taking into account that conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity should contribute to poverty eradication at local level and not harm the livelihoods of the poor’.

The number and structure of the submission follows the numbering of the questions in the Secretariat’s web-based consultation.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses (including gaps and inconsistencies, if relevant) of the existing Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity?

The importance of biodiversity conservation and a healthy environment to the livelihoods of the poor is widely recognized. Many poor people are directly dependent on the various goods and services that ecosystems provide, benefit from using or marketing wild products for food, fuel, medicines, and shelter and derive important cultural and religious values from various elements of biodiversity.

Recognising these linkages, in April 2002, the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) committed themselves to ‘achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level *as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth*’. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and has been incorporated as a new target under the Millennium Development Goals.

These linkages are recognized in the existing strategic plan (“Biodiversity - the variability within and among living organisms and the systems they inhabit - is the foundation upon which human civilization has been built. In addition to its intrinsic value, biodiversity provides goods and services that underpin sustainable development in many important ways, thus contributing to poverty alleviation”).

Recognition of these linkages is a significant strength of the existing Strategic Plan.

2. What lessons have we learned from the implementation of the existing Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the local, sub-national, national, regional or global levels?

In practice the link between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation made in the 2010 target has not yet been achieved. This is noted by the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention. In its recommendations to COP 9 the group notes ‘the inadequate mainstreaming of biodiversity... in national development and poverty eradication strategies’. The development of a new Strategic Plan represents an opportunity to strengthen the link and to better address the ‘missing half’ of the 2010 target.

Poverty reduction is arguably the dominant development agenda. Therefore the more that conservation activities demonstrate the contribution of biodiversity to poverty reduction, the better are the chances of the integration of biodiversity conservation into cross-sectoral development programmes.

It is important to recognise the distinction between the contribution of biodiversity to poverty reduction and the impact of conservation activities on poverty. Biodiversity and related ecosystem services underpin the livelihood security of rural communities. Adapted protected area management, for example, now provides for more community participation, thus decreasing the risk of resource conflicts and increasing sustainability at the landscape level. However, activities designed to enhance biodiversity conservation have also resulted in unintended negative impacts on rural communities, not only from displacement or restrictions connected to protected areas, but also from incentive mechanisms such as PES, which benefit the richer at the expense of the poor.

3. What should be included in the revised and updated Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity?

A variety of statements and commitments have been adopted by international conservation institutions that, directly or indirectly, concern the linkages between conservation and poverty reduction. What is currently lacking is an overarching principle that sets out clearly the expectations on conservation organisations and agencies with regard to the effects of conservation activities on the poor. Such a principle would provide a clear and supportive framework under which more specific commitments and guidelines (whether focused on individual countries, ecosystem types or areas of conservation activity) would find a place.

The SGLCP is proposing the following principle for inclusion in the revised strategic plan and the replacement biodiversity target.

- In situations where conservation activities affect people at the local level, those activities should strive to contribute to poverty reduction and, at the very minimum, should do no harm.

Replacement biodiversity target

The SGLCP propose that the revised biodiversity target should include the commitment that ‘where conservation activities affect people at the local level, those activities should strive to contribute to poverty reduction and, at the very minimum, should not harm the livelihoods of the poor’. This commitment would represent a significant improvement on the looser formulation found in the 2010 target. It sets out in a clear and general way, the responsibilities of conservation in relation to poverty reduction.

Revised Strategic Plan

The SGLCP propose that the revised Strategic Plan should include the following objective: ‘Where conservation activities affect people at the local level, those activities strive to contribute to poverty reduction and, at the very minimum, do not harm the livelihoods of the poor’. If the revised Strategic Plan retains the structure of the existing plan (but see below in response to 16.2), then this objective could appear under either Goal 1 or 3.

16.2 Is there a need to add new goals and objectives? If yes, list them and explain whenever possible. In particular is there a need to add strategic goals and objectives that will ensure closer links with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in light of the fact that the 2010 biodiversity target was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly, and incorporated as a new target under the MDGs?

Arguably one reason why the CBD has struggled to achieve its targets is that conservation has not been sufficiently mainstreamed across other sectors (agriculture, forestry, fisheries, transport, energy, health, poverty reduction etc.). The CBD strategic plan presently has four goals, three of which include an objective that relates to mainstreaming – at global/regional level (1.5), national level (3.4), and within the private sector and other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) (4.4).

The SGLCP propose a new goal, focussed on mainstreaming, and including the objective of striving to contribute to poverty reduction, which pulls together these existing objectives. By making biodiversity conservation and development mainstreaming a goal, this would help to raise the profile of biodiversity mainstreaming and the priority which it is given. The new Goal and Objectives would read as follows:

Goal 5: Biodiversity conservation is effectively mainstreamed into policy and practice and across all sectors at local, national, regional and international level.

5.1 Biodiversity concerns are being integrated into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies at the national, regional and global levels.

5.2 Key actors and stakeholders, including the private sector, are engaged in partnership to implement the Convention and are integrating biodiversity concerns into their relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

5.3 Where conservation activities affect people at the local level, those activities strive to contribute to poverty reduction and, at the very minimum, do not harm the livelihoods of the poor.

Steering Group on Linking Conservation and Poverty (SGLCP)

This paper is submitted on behalf of SGLCP, which is an informal group made up of individuals from a range of governmental, inter-governmental, non-governmental and research institutions, concerned with conservation and development (including: BirdLife International; Care International; Fauna & Flora International; German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, International Institute for Environment & Development; IUCN Species Survival Commission; IUCN Task Force on Protected Areas, Equity and Livelihoods; The Nature Conservancy and UNEP-WCMC). The group was born from two workshops on the Isle of Vilm, Germany, in 2006 and 2007 on conservation and poverty. One of its focuses has been the links between conservation and poverty reduction within the CBD. It has held two side events at CBD meetings on this topic, at SBSTTA 13 in Rome in February 2008, and at COP 9 in Bonn in May 2008. These meetings have involved representatives of indigenous and local peoples, development organisations and conservation organisations and government agencies. SGLCP has also prepared a motion on conservation and poverty for the IUCN World Conservation Congress (held in October 2008) that was passed unanimously. This submission therefore emerges from an extensive process of dialogue and consultation between different sectors of government and society, including scientific and academic bodies, indigenous and local communities and stakeholders.