

Views on issues to be addressed by the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Review of the Implementation of the Convention

Submission by Canada

Decision VII/30 (23) establishes an Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Review of the Implementation of the Convention. It calls for a consideration of progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan. To identify and overcome obstacles to effective implementation of the Convention, Parties should consider both decision VII/30 and the Strategic Plan itself contained in decision VI/26 (Annex).

1. Communication, education and public awareness

Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan aims at achieving a better understanding of the importance of biodiversity and of the Convention, and broader engagement across society in implementation. It calls for all Parties to implement a strategy for communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA), and to promote public participation in support of the Convention (4.1). It calls for involvement of indigenous and local communities in implementation (4.3), and engagement of key actors and stakeholders, including the private sector, in implementation through partnerships (4.4).

Creating effective CEPA strategies, and linking CEPA to broader engagement and involvement of the public and of key actors, remains a serious gap in implementation of the Convention. While decision VI/19 (Annex) contains a programme of work for a Global Initiative on CEPA, progress to date has been limited. Achieving actual results (i.e., slowing the rate of loss of biodiversity) requires public awareness, engagement and buy-in to the goals of the Convention, leading to change in societal behaviour.

The CEPA programme of work has not been reviewed. It has not likely yet resulted in the identification and engagement of key actors, and effective public outreach, required for effective implementation.

An agenda item focused on CEPA could address, *inter alia*:

- communications from the Secretariat; including the range of communication products used, the frequency at which they are issued, and ways and means of simplifying the Convention and COP decisions and making them more accessible and “user-friendly” (e.g., an ecosystem approach sourcebook);
- communicating with public/policy makers in general - communication products are few and issued infrequently
- ways of building a CEPA network, such as assessments of key public/policy makers who should be engaged, the role of Parties and National Focal Points (NFPs) in maintaining decentralized but linked registries, and relevant non-government initiatives;
- a clear set of objectives and desired outcomes for a CEPA network; and

- guidance for Parties who are developing domestic CEPA strategies, and who must communicate to the public and to a broad range of decision makers in biodiversity-relevant government ministries, local and indigenous communities, civil society groups, and industry.

While the second bullet under issue 4 (Cooperation with other conventions and organizations) mentions a possible “global partnership”, there are national dimensions to this issue as well, and it should be clearly linked to decision VI/19 on CEPA. We therefore suggest a separate discussion on “Communication, education and public awareness, including strategies for involvement and engagement of the public and key actors in implementation.”

2. Exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise in support of implementation of the Convention

Article 18 (Technical and Scientific Cooperation, paragraph 2) calls on Parties to promote technical and scientific cooperation in implementing the Convention. Article 17 deals with Exchange of Information, and Article 16 with Access to and Transfer of Technology. The new programme of work on Transfer of Technology and Technology Cooperation (decision VII/29) addresses these articles in part, but is mainly focused on enabling access to technologies as opposed to exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise.

Article 12 deals with Research and Training. It mentions programmes to provide support for the specific needs of developing countries. As the Convention moves into an implementation mode, there is a growing demand for training workshops to build capacity in developing countries by providing access to knowledge and technologies relevant to conservation and sustainable use.

A number of existing processes under the Convention involve the exchange of scientific knowledge in an implementation context – notably the SBSTTA and the ad hoc technical expert groups (AHTEGs). The SBSTTA is charged with providing “timely advice relating to... implementation,” and an AHTEG is specifically examining implementation of the programme of work on forest biological diversity. Other relevant processes under the CBD include expert groups and liaison groups convened by the Secretariat, and the supporting rosters of experts. Convening meetings of experts is essential to ensure that the decisions of the COP are scientifically sound, but does not directly address the need to build national capacity for effective implementation, as through hands-on training workshops.

Formal processes for engaging scientists in knowledge exchange are linked to products and tools for disseminating knowledge, such as meeting reports, the CBD’s technical report series, and the Global Biodiversity Outlook. Parties have also created formal links to broader scientific assessments, such as the forthcoming Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

The relevance of knowledge exchange to Article 13 on Public Education and Awareness should also be noted. Exchange of knowledge and expertise is the second programme element of the Global Initiative on CEPA (decision VI/19, Annex), and represents the basis for the global CEPA network described in the first programme element.

A review of experience to date with exchange of scientific information under the Convention would benefit Parties in both the specific context of making the Convention's existing processes more effective, and in the general context of addressing Articles 12, 13, 17 and 18.

This review could examine, *inter alia*,

- ways and means for the Convention to facilitate training workshops for capacity building in developing countries, as through partnerships;
- use of the Global Biodiversity Outlook to stimulate a broader discussion on exchange of scientific knowledge and expertise in support of Convention implementation;
- key knowledge gaps concerning status and trends in biodiversity that affect the prospects for successful Convention implementation, and ways to engage the scientific community in identifying and addressing these gaps;
- ways and means of linking the results of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment to implementation of the CBD's programmes of work; and
- the development and use of rosters of experts, including the feasibility of creating a distributed network through engagement of relevant scientific organizations and national and thematic focal points, and linking this network to the Global Initiative on CEPA.

3. Shifting from process to outcomes

The Strategic Plan states (paragraph 13), "better methods should be developed to objectively evaluate progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan." This is echoed in decision VII/30, paragraph 27. Parties have repeatedly stressed the need to move from activity-based to outcome-based reporting on implementation.

This raises a question as to whether the right processes are in place to support this shift. Excellent progress has been made in developing the provisional global framework of focal areas, goals, targets and indicators; but supporting processes are needed to make these meaningful. The 2010 target and the associated framework of goals, targets and indicators should be a central focus of the meeting Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

An agenda item on shifting from process to outcomes could include *inter alia*:

- An examination of whether the Convention's programmes of work are sufficiently focussed on outcomes, including a review of the targets identified and their ability to enable an assessment of the success of the programmes of work .

- An examination of the mechanisms in place to determine success. Are they adequate? Do we need process indicators to facilitate ongoing evaluation?
- A focus on the role of national reporting in the transition from process to outcomes. Is the format of the national report conducive to a focus on outcomes? Are mechanisms in place to translate the results of the national reports to an assessment of effectiveness? Can reporting done for the CBD be harmonized and streamlined with reporting for other Conventions? How can Parties better describe and assess actions that are helping to achieve the objectives of the Convention, even if these actions may not have been specifically linked to NBSAPs?
- A discussion on processes needed to ensure continual feedback from indicators and an adaptive approach. Currently the Biodiversity Outlook is the only mechanism for reporting out on the indicators. A mechanism to facilitate ongoing updating of the indicators and incorporation of the results into the POWs may be necessary. As well, the results of biodiversity assessments completed by processes outside the CBD provide valuable input into the success of the CBD. Do we have adequate mechanisms to ensure that these results are used in implementation of the CBD?