



Report to the thirty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on Migratory Species

Introduction

1. The present report, prepared by the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is a follow-up report to that prepared for the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS/Inf.9.14) and provides information on substantive UNEP support to environmental conventions and administrative support to the Convention on Migratory Species provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

I. UNEP substantive support to the Convention

A. Harmonization of national reporting

2. In response to a request made during a workshop on knowledge management for biodiversity-related conventions and agreements held in Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 7 to 9 March 2008, the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre prepared a paper on preconditions for the harmonization of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements. The paper was developed in collaboration with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and agreements, including the Convention on Migratory Species and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds. The final version was made available to the secretariats in June 2009 and can be found on the Centre's website at: <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/papers.htm>.

3. The work undertaken in the identification of potential joint core reporting elements of biodiversity-related conventions and agreements was used in a project in Pacific island countries by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts of the Government of Australia and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, which developed, with support from UNEP, a consolidated reporting template for the biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP has also provided support to, and participated in, a workshop on the harmonization of national reporting conducted by the Association of South-East Asian Nations Centre for Biodiversity, held in Hanoi from 15 to 17 April 2009.

B. Knowledge management for biodiversity-related conventions: information portal and online reporting facilities

4. Through its Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, UNEP and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, in cooperation with the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia, have created an internet portal¹ that provides access to key information on those agreements, including on articles, resolutions and decisions of their governing bodies, strategic planning documents, lists of Parties and national focal point information. This is part of a wider project on knowledge management between biodiversity-related agreements under implementation by UNEP.

1 <http://www.informea.org/>.

5. Under the same project, UNEP worked with the secretariats of the above-mentioned conventions and agreements to develop an online reporting tool. The tool includes not only an option that enables Parties to produce their national reports online but also a generator that allows for the simple creation of other online reporting tools or questionnaires.

C. Biodiversity indicators

6. The 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, a project on building the partnership to track progress at the global level in achieving the 2010 biodiversity target, is supported by the Global Environment Facility and facilitated by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. The project is aimed at supporting the global delivery of a full suite of 2010 indicators meaningful to a range of audiences in supporting policy intervention and communicating success in attaining the 2010 target. The indicators will be delivered through collaboration between 40 organizations and agencies and are intended to serve international forums, including the Convention on Migratory Species, Governments, the private and academic sectors and the media. Capacity-building on the development and use of indicators at the national and regional levels is being carried out in parallel with the global process. To promote its activities to its Parties, the Partnership secretariat produced an information document and held a side event at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species. The Red List Index and Living Planet Index were welcomed by the Convention's Scientific Council and submitted for consideration to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting. Discussions are continuing as to how the wider Partnership can support the Convention secretariat to develop a framework of indicators on the conservation of migratory species.

D. Issue-based modular approach to policymaking

7. The joint UNEP and International Union for Conservation of Nature project on issue-based modules for coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions, known as "Tematea", structures the multitude of commitments and obligations under regional and global biodiversity-related agreements in a logical, issue-based framework. There are currently six modules on priority issues for biodiversity with a seventh module on island biodiversity under preparation. The six modules are: inland waters, biodiversity and climate change, invasive alien species, protected areas, sustainable use of biodiversity and access and benefit-sharing. For each issue, the global biodiversity-related agreements are screened (in particular, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa) in addition to relevant regional biodiversity-related agreements. Although the module on sustainable use is the most relevant to the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species, relevant decisions of the Convention are to be found in each of the modules.

8. The website, including the modules and the results of the national capacity-building exercises, can be found online² where a downloadable version is also available for offline use.

E. Strengthening the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services

9. Scientific knowledge on the links between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human well-being has increased significantly since the completion of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2005. There is, however, a need to strengthen the science-policy interface to ensure that existing and emerging scientific knowledge is translated into specific policy action at the appropriate levels. In response to this need, UNEP has been facilitating discussions between Governments and relevant organizations to explore mechanisms to improve and strengthen the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. Such mechanisms include the possible establishment of an intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services, which would provide a common source of objective, accurate, authoritative and understandable information from the natural and social sciences that could be used by the scientific and governing bodies of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements to take sound and coherent decisions, particularly where they respond to common or related issues being tackled under multiple agreements.

2 <http://www.tematea.org/>.

10. To discuss these issues in detail, an initial intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder meeting on the proposed platform was convened in Putrajaya, Malaysia, from 10 to 12 November 2008. In accordance with UNEP Governing Council decision 25/10 (adopted in February 2009), the Executive Director convened a second meeting held in Nairobi from 5 to 9 October 2009. The active participation in this process of all relevant stakeholders, including the Convention on Migratory Species community, is critical for ensuring that their views are fully reflected in background documents for meetings.

11. UNEP has welcomed the Convention secretariat's constructive participation in informal discussions held on the process and looks forward to its continued participation, including as a potential vehicle for coordinating input from the Convention, related agreements and relevant partners. UNEP has also suggested to the Convention secretariat that it might be in a position to encourage participation by private sector partners.

F. Adoption of the Convention on Migratory Species Gorilla Agreement, October 2007

12. In further strengthening the role of the Lusaka Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, UNEP facilitated and supported the negotiation and adoption of a new regional agreement on the conservation of gorillas and their habitats among 10 African range states under the Convention on Migratory Species. The agreement was adopted in October 2007 and entered into force in June 2008. Its article IX, which deals with relations with international bodies dealing with gorillas and their habitats, specifically recognizes, among others, the Lusaka Agreement and its Task Force, which shall be consulted by the Gorilla Agreement secretariat on a regular basis on all matters of common interest and, in particular, in the development and implementation of the Agreement's Action Plan. This is a new avenue open to the Parties to the Lusaka Agreement and their Task Force to promote further collaboration with the Convention on Migratory Species through the Agreement with the 10 range States and possibly bring them on board in the common activities being implemented under the two agreements.

G. Use of economic instruments

13. UNEP, in close consultation with the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreement secretariats, has been active in promoting and examining the use of economic instruments in the implementation of these conventions. In April 2009, UNEP published a user-friendly training resource manual on the use of economic instruments for environmental and natural resource management. The aim of this manual is to assist in environmental decision-making and capacity-building, particularly at the national and regional levels. The manual is available at: <http://www.unep.ch/etb/publications>.

H. Great Apes Survival Partnership

14. The Great Apes Survival Partnership continues to collaborate closely with the Convention on Migratory Species and other multilateral environmental agreements. It has successfully helped to raise funds for a transboundary great ape cooperation programme that showcases the benefits that great ape conservation can bring to peace and stability. An interesting component of this work is an endeavour to link elephant and chimpanzee surveys and monitoring to reduce costs and share data – the Partnership and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants jointly submitted a proposal to the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States of America, which has recently been approved.

15. At the African elephants range States meeting held in February 2009 in Nairobi, the Partnership was requested to outline the challenges of running a type II partnership and how it could be applied to a global partnership for elephants. Elephants' role as a keystone species, which helps to attract carbon finance and other payments for ecosystem services such as water for the enhancement and sustainable management of their habitat, was highlighted by the Partnership.

16. The Partnership, together with the Convention on Migratory Species and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, declared 2009 the Year of the Gorilla with the underlying goal of supporting the implementation of the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats. Besides featuring scientific information, education and awareness-raising components, the campaign provides the scope to raise funds for conservation projects and aims to attract significant public and political support for great ape conservation. A number of activities in the field with partners and members of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums are under way.

17. The Partnership and Ramsar Convention documentary film entitled “Petit Loango Wetland, Oil or Gorillas?” about Petit Loango national park in Gabon, where gorillas and other wildlife are threatened by mineral exploration, was recently nominated as a finalist for the 2009 ROSCAR wildlife film award at the Durban Wild Talk Africa Film Festival. A preview of the film is available on the Partnership website.

I. Online information portal for great apes (ApesMapper)

18. UNEP has developed an online information portal to support great ape conservation (www.apesmapper.org). This project was carried out in collaboration with the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, the Species Survival Commission’s Primate Specialist Group, the Jane Goodall Institute and other organizations, with funding from the Arcus Foundation. The impetus for the creation of the portal was to guide the Arcus Foundation’s grant-making process, identifying priority areas and issues for on-the-ground conservation work and, at the same time, to provide a portal to serve the information needs of the much wider audience involved in great ape conservation. The first phase of the portal has been completed and is under review.

J. Collaboration between the secretariats of the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

19. Other collaborative activities between the two conventions are highlighted as follows: during the first half of 2008, the two secretariats worked on finalizing a new joint programme of work, which was adopted by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Standing Committee in July 2008 and by the Convention on Migratory Species’ Standing Committee at its thirty-fourth meeting, held on 30 November 2008. Among the proposed activities, progress has been made towards compiling a concordance list of species in the appendices of the two conventions. Discussions on the harmonization of nomenclature and taxonomy referencing are continuing. In this regard, at its ninth meeting the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species adopted new taxonomic references for terrestrial animals that correspond to those used by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

20. Close cooperation is being developed with regard to the conservation of African elephants. A meeting on West African elephant conservation was held in June 2008 to discuss the implementation of the West African Elephant Memorandum of Understanding with the relevant focal points of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants during a meeting for the African region. The first meeting of the signatories to the West African Elephant Memorandum of Understanding took place alongside a meeting on the programme on monitoring the illegal killing of elephants, held in Accra from 30 March to 3 April 2009. At this joint meeting, attended by representatives from all 13 West African States concerned, 12 transboundary joint projects were identified and are now at the fund-raising stage. These projects, developed through cooperation between the two conventions, have already demonstrated the significant role of elephant conservation actions in maintaining and reinforcing good relationships between neighbouring countries by promoting the sustainable management of elephant habitats, which should be of immediate benefit to the local human population living alongside them.

II. UNON administrative support to the Convention

UNEP Convention on Migratory Species project office in the United Arab Emirates

21. The newly established UNEP Convention on Migratory Species project office in Abu Dhabi is already benefiting from the appointment of three Professional staff (Mr. Lahcen El Kabiri, Ms. Donna Kwan and Mr. Peter Pechacek) and two General Service staff (Ms. Reema al Mubarak and Ms. Jumana Farouqa). The staff members were recently trained by staff from the United Nations Office at Nairobi in the use of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which is crucial to setting up a new office. IMIS is used by UNEP and the Convention on Migratory Species to follow up on personnel and budgetary issues through the Citrix platform and is expected to help implement the office’s workplan efficiently. Currently, the office is co-located with the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi, but is expected to move to new premises by mid-November 2009.