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EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Nairobi, 20-25 November 2005
Agenda item 16 (b)

**REPORT OF THE FOURTH MEETING OF
THE LIAISON GROUP OF THE BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS
(4 OCTOBER 2005)**

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES)
Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)
UNESCO – World Heritage Convention (WHC)

Opening of the Meeting

1. The fourth meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions (“the Biodiversity Liaison Group”, BLG) took place on 4 October 2005 in Bonn, Germany, at the HQ of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). The heads of the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) were present, as well as representatives of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), CBD and CMS. Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species, chaired the meeting. A full list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

2. The Chair welcomed the participants to the meeting. He informed the group that, due to travel difficulties, Peter Bridgewater, Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention, would not be able to participate in the meeting but had sent some written comments. Representatives of the World Heritage Convention also sent apologies.

Agenda Item 2: Options for a Global Partnership on Biodiversity

3. The CBD Secretariat highlighted relevant points arising from the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

4. Recommendation 6 of the Working Group, dealing with Cooperation, suggests consultations be carried out with relevant organisations and initiatives in order to determine future options for a global partnership on biodiversity. The recommendation places emphasis on the balanced consideration of all

three aspects covered under CBD, namely conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of the components of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. Views expressed at the Working Group indicated consensus on the following points: the Partnership should focus on implementation, it should bring in a wide range of issue-based networks and facilitate the establishment of new networks where necessary, and it should promote and foster the achievement of the 2010 target among a range of stakeholders. Some participants in the Working Group had questioned whether there was a need for a distinction between core group members and other members. The Working Group requested that options be explored for servicing the partnership.

5. The BLG emphasized the outstanding importance of involving in the partnership actors from sectors not primarily concerned with conservation. While many economic sectors use and threaten biodiversity, they often do not actively take part in conservation and sustainable use efforts. Although it is a challenge for the BLG to reach out to these stakeholders and involve them in their networks, engaging those most directly impacting biodiversity has the potential of making a real difference.

6. The group agreed that the partnership should be established at COP-8. Further delay would jeopardize its contribution to the achievement of the 2010 target.

7. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference for a Global Partnership on Biodiversity should refer not only to the CBD objectives but also to the 2010 target, adopted by the WSSD, as this target is shared with the other Conventions and reflected in some of the Conventions' strategic plans. Referring to the 2010 target will therefore facilitate the endorsement of the Partnership among parties to the different Conventions.

8. Activities of the partnership are meant to foster implementation and would include the following: mainstreaming and facilitating the wider use of tools and guidelines developed by the Conventions, including their mainstreaming in the relevant economic sectors (e.g. application of the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism by tourism operators and managers), engaging relevant players on thematic and cross-cutting issues, promoting a better understanding of biodiversity among the general public through an increased involvement of the media, and fundraising. Focus should be on implementation at the national level, but the regional dimension should also be addressed.

9. The Global Partnership on Biodiversity should have a flexible framework in terms of its own organisation and funding. The BLG discussed three basic options for servicing the Global Partnership: a secretariat could be hosted by CBD, secretariat functions could be rotated between the members of the BLG on a 2-3 year basis, or a separate body such as UNEP could service the partnership. It was agreed that the BLG should offer to take on the function of a secretariat for the Global Partnership.

10. It was proposed that the Secretariat for the Global Partnership on Biodiversity would initially be hosted by CBD, taking into account that the other Conventions currently do not have the necessary resources. The other members of the BLG will provide assistance and take on responsibility for individual issues, as agreed by the BLG. This arrangement will be reviewed after two years

11. The Biodiversity Liaison Group discussed views on other potential members of the Global Partnership and their status. Even if the distinction between core and non-core members of the partnership was still under discussion within the CBD process, the BLG reaffirmed its strong view that, for practical reasons, there would need to be a limited group of founding institutional members within the partnership in order to facilitate its work. The BLG agreed that, in addition to the five biodiversity related conventions, which should provide the Secretariat to the Partnership, the facilitating group of the Partnership could include the FAO, UNEP, UNDP, IUCN and possibly UNESCO and the World Bank. The core group members other than the BLG would not take part in the servicing of the Partnership, but rather facilitate implementation at the national level. In addition to the founding institutional members,

issue based networks should be invited to join the partnership (see for instance the Global Partnership on Paltn Conservation, the Collaborative Partnership on Protected Areas, GISP, etc.).

12. It was noted that there are several voluntary partnerships already in place that can be used as models for some aspects of the Partnership, such as the Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP), which features very well developed institutional mechanisms, International Cora Re3ff Inititative (ICRI) and the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN), or the Congo Basin Forest Initiative. Other Type II Partnerships, Work Programmes and Voluntary Initiatives should be examined. Some concerns were voiced that the strong focus on 2010 leaves a vacuum after that year. CBD pointed out that there are already working groups developing structures for beyond 2010, which will review and evaluate work undertaken and assess necessary actions for the future.

Other Matters arising from the CBD's Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention.

13. In line with Recommendation 1/C (c) of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the CBD, the BLG agreed that there is a need for more information on work undertaken by other organizations to support implementation, in order to be able to draw on the experiences of the other conventions. In particular, the role of UNEP in this regard needs to be examined.

14. The group noted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation and the follow-up requests made by the CBD Executive Secretary for information from other conventions concerning the role of secretariats and other organizations in supporting implementation of their conventions (Recommendation 1/C (c)) and of reviewing implementation (1C (d)).

15. The group noted the recommendations of the Working Group to consider the expansion of the Biodiversity Liaison Group to include FAO and other organizations (Recommendation 1/C (e)). However, it was felt that the BLG should group biodiversity related conventions only, and that an enlargement to include other UN bodies or organisations would result in the group losing focus, and thus was not considered desirable. However, it was noted that FAO and other UN agencies should be invited to participate in the partnership (see paragraph 11). Possible future participation of other biodiversity-related Conventions in the Liaison Group such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture, administered by FAO, could be considered by the BLG upon request of their Governing Bodies.

Agenda Item 3: Options for further Cooperation

16. The Group discussed the development of future work plans and options for cooperation, with a focus on a joint web portal, a follow-up to the September 2005 MDG summit, and possible avenues for facilitating scientific cooperation.

17. It was noted that the jointly prepared paper on "Options for enhanced cooperation among the five biodiversity-related conventions" would be made available to the upcoming meetings of the Conferences of the Parties of CMS, Ramsar and CBD, and possibly the General Assembly of the WHC.

18. The group welcomed the updating of the joint web pages of the BLG. The group agreed to explore the feasibility of developing a joint web portal to facilitate access to national reports of the five biodiversity-related conventions, using a similar approach to the CPF. It was agreed that CBD will take the lead on this, with support from the other conventions. Each Convention will identify a focal point for this project. The rationale for this initiative is to facilitate implementation and to give additional impetus to harmonisation of national reporting.

19. The article “Biodiversity: Life Insurance for Our Changing World”, signed jointly by the heads of the BLG, was widely distributed among delegates and NGO representatives in the UN General Assembly meeting in late September. The BLG agreed that another joint statement could be issued when the Global Partnership on Biodiversity is officially launched.

20. CITES is undertaking a comparison of the mode of work of the scientific bodies of the five conventions. It was agreed that such a review could help to identify possible ways to strengthen communication among the bodies. The BLG also considered that an informal meeting among the Chairs of their respective scientific bodies, or their representatives, would be of great benefit. A possible time for such a meeting could be on the margins of the next CBD Conference of the Parties. Of particular interest will be to compare how the scientific bodies define their role and how they find the right balance between science and politics. Further, a need to harmonize taxonomic standards and usage of scientific names between the conventions was identified.

21. CBD reported that the first draft of the Global Biodiversity Outlook would be available for review by BLG members and others shortly after this meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Other Relevant Initiatives

22. The Biodiversity Liaison Group discussed the relevance of the UNEP project on issue-based modules for biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements. The project, which identified four issues of common concern between the five biodiversity conventions as being essential to reaching the 2010 biodiversity target—namely Inland Waters, Climate Change, Invasive Alien Species and Sustainable Use—aims to structure information and facilitate implementation and reporting of the decisions of all environmental conventions and bodies.

23. A concern was expressed within the group on the amount of information the national focal points will be presented with through these modules. The information could require too much analysis in itself to be useful for implementation. Information provided needs to be analysed and evaluated beforehand, in order to be an important aid for parties in seeing through their various obligations under the Conventions, rather than simply listing all decisions and articles dealing with a given matter. The BLG suggested to wait for the outcome of the pilot project, in which the Rio Conventions try to make their databases interoperable and harmonize the terms used. If the project is a success in aiding implementation, the BLG should consider something similar.

24. The BLG noted the invitation of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) extended to CITES to attend their 11th regular session in May 2006. It was agreed that CITES should draft a reply to AMCEN on behalf of the BLG, and that this response would include an offer to send a BLG representative to the AMCEN meeting. As well, background papers on the BLG and on the 2010 biodiversity target should be prepared for distribution at the meeting. The BLG did not support the request of AMCEN to provide them with a report on implementation of the conventions in Africa, however, as this should be part of the national reporting process. Instead, African countries should be encouraged to set their own targets specifically for Africa and discuss how they can be assisted in reaching them. CMS had been invited to deliver a statement to AMCEN on the margins of the UNCCD COP in October 2005. CMS has accepted the invitation with a view to recruiting new parties to the Convention in Africa.

25. The Liaison Group postponed discussing the topic of UNEP support to the organisation of Eastern Caribbean States for developing a framework harmonized law on biodiversity. CITES will circulate a paper on the issue to all secretariats for their information.

26. In considering the Guidelines for Applying the Precautionary Principle to biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, as outlined in a note provided by Ramsar, the BLG noted that the principle should not be misused to prevent action being taken. Instead, in a conservation context, it has to stand for taking the socio-economic side into account when making decisions.

Agenda Item 5: Meetings of the Biodiversity Conventions and Role of BLG / other relevant meetings

27. The group discussed possible contributions and participation in the next meetings of the biodiversity conventions, and highlighted agenda items relevant to the BLG.

28. CMS pointed to the motto of its Eighth Conference of the Parties: “on the move to 2010” and drew attention to agenda items dealing with the migratory species index, the CMS Strategic Plan (which has great impact on cooperation), new species listings and agreements to be signed, side events like the Roundtable on Climate Change and Migratory Species and the Roundtable on Migratory Species as Vectors of Diseases, as well as the Partnership Fair. It was noted that the days with highest relevance for the other conventions would be Saturday 19 November through to Tuesday 22 November. The BLG was requested to deliver a statement to the Plenary in line with agenda item 10 b, focussing on the liaison group itself, the importance of conservation, the Millennium Development Goals, the primary responsibility of governments and the promotion of the achievement of the 2010 targets. A document will be submitted to CMS for agenda item 16 b. The BLG decided that CBD would represent the BLG at CMS COP 8.

29. It was suggested that the BLG would deliver similar messages at other relevant meetings. The statements would start out with a general introduction to the BLG itself, with the second part targeted specifically to the inviting organisation. The BLG representative would circulate his or her statement among the BLG members beforehand on a no-objection basis. The spoken address should not exceed 10 minutes and should not be too detailed.

30. For each of the upcoming relevant meetings the group decided on one or two possible representatives. CMS highlighted that they had represented the BLG already at the GRASP meeting in Kinshasa in September. CMS will also be the BLG representative at the 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of Ramsar in November. CBD will be the representative at the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of CMS. CITES is considering attending the meetings of the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment and General Council meeting, both in October 2006. CBD will be present at the 7th Session of the Conference of the Parties to CCD, and will deliver a statement on behalf of the BLG. WHC has to be contacted to find out if they themselves will make a statement on behalf of the BLG at their General Assembly. The Group emphasized the importance of representation at each other’s major meetings to demonstrate commitment to the collaboration.

31. The Annexes of Upcoming Relevant Meetings of the Biodiversity Conventions and other bodies, as attached to the report of the 3rd Meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group, should be updated and extended to 2006. They should be circulated among the secretariats of the BLG.

32. CITES reported briefly on their recent meetings of relevance to the BLG, highlighting the review of the Strategic Vision paper undertaken by the Standing Committee and plans to evaluate the effectiveness and structure of the Scientific Committees, taking into account also examples of the other conventions’ scientific bodies. A draft Programme of Work with CMS has been prepared jointly.

33. The Biodiversity Liaison Group will organize a side event to be held at the 8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CBD in March 2006 under the motto “half way to 2010”. The CMS Secretariat will take the lead on this, with contributions from the other members of the BLG. A

registration form for the side event should be submitted to CBD as soon as possible. It was agreed that the side event should take place during the first week of the Conference. A BLG booth will be set up at the Conference and the secretariats will take turns in staffing the booth. The Executive Secretaries or their representatives of all five conventions will make presentations at the side event. Selected country representatives could be asked to express their views on the Partnership and give a statement on where they stand in reaching the 2010 target. The side event will highlight the biodiversity-related conventions' activities towards achieving the 2010 biodiversity target and will also try to identify successes and failures, analyse problems, feature the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment prominently and demonstrate the political commitment of member states.

Agenda Item 6: Date and Venue of Next Meeting

34. The BLG identified some issues that need consideration at the 5th Meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group. The group would review further options considered in the jointly prepared paper on "Options for enhanced cooperation among the biodiversity related conventions" (section II.C). These include: a draft outline work plan, institutional arrangements, the various experiences with multiple listings, an ecosystem and an agreement approach, and bilateral joint work programmes to identify where one convention can learn from another. The issues will be dealt with in an iterative manner.

35. It was agreed that a meeting in early 2006 would be necessary. For reasons of economy, the group favoured Europe as location for the next meeting instead of Montreal. A tentative time and place for the next meeting would be Wednesday, 18 January 2006 in Paris. The BLG will ascertain if the meeting could be hosted by WHC. Early feedback on this date is sought from all BLG members, as it is important that the next meeting has full, high-level representation from all the member Conventions



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS):

Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary
Paola Deda, Inter-Agency Liaison Officer
Heidrun Frisch, CMS Consultant

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary
David Cooper, Senior Programme Officer, Interagency and Programme Coordination
Christian Prip, Chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA)

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

David Morgan, Chief, Scientific Support Unit

CMS Agreements:

Bert Lenten, Executive Secretary, African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)
Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary, Agreement on Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
Andreas Streit, Executive Secretary, Agreement on European Populations of Bats (EUROBATS)