



An Introduction to National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

Module B-1

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Introduction to this Module

Background

This is one of a set of training modules that provide a practical guide to the process of preparing a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and making best use of the NBSAP once it has been prepared.

The training package has been designed to be used for several types of training purposes; however its main audience is expected to be national focal points of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other national staff responsible for implementation of the Convention.

It is important that users understand that, although they identify the activities that countries should undertake and suggest ways of doing this, these modules are not intended to constitute a model that each country should follow mechanically.

The Convention itself is a framework for identifying national action to be taken in accordance with national circumstances and capabilities to meet the objectives of the Convention.

In the same way, users will need to translate the content and recommendations in these modules into activities that are feasible and appropriate to their specific national context.

In other words, while these modules are designed to help you with the process of identifying the steps to be taken to prepare your National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan or of how to update your existing NBSAP, they are only the start of the process. Only you at the national level can decide, in accordance with your particular national circumstances, what is the best way to carry out the different steps.

Those using these modules – CBD focal points, biodiversity managers and other national stakeholders – will need to be proactive and to think creatively, but realistically, about how to make sure that your National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan can become a powerful national instrument, accepted and adopted by government and all stakeholders as the basis for achieving the objectives of the Convention.

As a Contracting Party to the Convention, your country has committed itself to achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national level. Time is short, 2010 is just around the corner. The development of your National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors are urgently needed to provide the framework by which your country can meet both the 2010 target and its national commitments under the Convention.

Why these training modules are needed

The Conference of the Parties is concerned with the slow progress towards the goals of the Strategic Plan. One of these goals is that “national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors serve as an effective framework for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention”.

By establishing this goal, the Conference of the Parties stresses the importance of national biodiversity strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Convention.

It had been expected that, eleven years after the Conference of the Parties first provided advice to Parties on implementation of Article 6 of the Convention, the majority of countries would have finished the preparation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and would be engaged in revising their NBSAP on the basis of increased knowledge of national biodiversity and the experience of the first phase of implementation.

This has proved not to be the case. Available information suggests that, by the end of 2006, 124 CBD Parties had stated that they had prepared their NBSAP and a further 30 that their NBSAP was under preparation. Only a very small number of countries have reached the point of updating their initial NBSAP.

Given the central role of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in meeting the objectives of the Convention and its 2010 target, this is a serious matter that the Conference of the Parties feels needs to be urgently addressed.

The Conference of the Parties has set in place a process to review at its next meeting in 2008: the status of national biodiversity strategies and action plans; consolidated guidance for their implementation; and the barriers to implementation.

This training package

The Conference of the Parties invited relevant organizations to assist with this review of NBSAPs and, in response, the United Nations Environment Programme, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention and the United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies has developed this training package to assist countries in understanding the NBSAP and the national reporting process, to enable them to understand their obligations under the Convention of Biological Diversity and to take steps for its national implementation.

This training package is designed to be flexible and is tailored to meet the diverse needs of different countries, allowing them to select those tools and ideas that are most useful to their situation, needs and priorities.

The modules in the package are:

1. An Introduction to National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
2. How to prepare and update a NBSAP

3. Mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, plans and programmes
4. Setting national biodiversity targets, making use of the CBD framework for the 2010 biodiversity target
5. Ensuring stakeholder engagement in the development, implementation and updating of NBSAPs
6. Getting political support for the NBSAP and financing its implementation
7. Communication strategies for NBSAPs

This training package will be complemented by a series of modules on other topics related to implementation of the Convention that is being co-ordinated by the Secretariat.

What you will learn in this module

This module explains why the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is a key element of a country's implementation of its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity. It provides an overview of the background and summarizes the guidance given to Parties by the Conference of the Parties, the institutional arrangements for assisting countries, achievements so far and lessons learned. It provides an introduction to issues that will be explained in greater depth in the subsequent modules.

1. What are National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans?

Obligations on Parties to the Convention

The Convention constitutes a framework for national action to ensure the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. It considers biological diversity at three levels – the ecosystem, species and genetic levels – and requires Parties to ensure that actions to guarantee its objectives are undertaken at all levels and in all sectors, in a coordinated and cross-cutting approach

The Convention's provisions are expressed as overall goals and policies, rather than as hard and precise obligations. Specific action for implementation of the Convention is to be developed by each Party in accordance with its national circumstances and capabilities. Thus the responsibility of determining how most of its provisions are to be implemented at the national level falls to the individual Parties themselves.

Article 6 of the Convention

Article 6: General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use

"Each Contracting Party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities:

- (a) Develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the Contracting Party concerned; and*
- (b) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies."*

The implementation of the CBD requires mobilization of both information and resources at the national level. It involves obtaining reliable information about national biodiversity and its status and trends. In particular, it involves identifying the components of biodiversity important for its conservation and sustainable use and activities that may have significant adverse impacts on biodiversity.

As a first step, the CBD requires Parties to develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, or to adapt existing plans or programmes for this purpose (Article 6(a)). At the same time, the CBD also requires Parties to mainstream biodiversity into relevant cross-sectoral plans and national decision-making (Article 6(b)).

Article 6(a) acknowledges that some countries may already have developed national plans or programmes that address conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and that these can be

adapted as necessary to provide the national biodiversity planning instrument needed to implement the Convention within the country.

However, those countries that had existing plans or programmes when the Convention entered into force were mainly industrialized countries. Most developing countries and countries with economies in transition have responded to the obligation contained in Article 6 by starting a new biodiversity planning process.

Article 6 is one of only two unqualified (i.e. mandatory) commitments in the Convention. (The other is the obligation to submit periodic national reports on implementation (Article 26)).

The two elements of Article 6 are intimately linked. The development of a national biodiversity strategy and action plan is not an end in itself, but the necessary first step to integrating the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into sectoral and cross-sectoral planning, and into national decision-making generally (Articles 6(b) and 10(a)). Such integration is often referred to as ‘mainstreaming’.

Article 10: Sustainable Use of Components of Biological Diversity

“Each Contracting Party shall, as far as possible and as appropriate:

(a) Integrate consideration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources into national decision-making. [...]”

At the same time as the overall framework of the CBD was being negotiated, the idea of meeting this particular obligation by means of an integrated, multi-sectoral, participatory instrument for national biodiversity planning crystallized into the concept of the national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

Module 2 will consider how to prepare and update a NBSAP. However three important points should be stressed right from the beginning:

- Although the NBSAP can take the form of a single biodiversity planning document (and many countries have chosen this form), this does not necessarily have to be the case. The NBSAP can also be conceived as comprising a basket of elements – for example: laws and administrative procedures; scientific research agendas; programmes and projects; communication, education and public awareness activities; forums for inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholder dialogue – which together provide the means to meet the triple objectives of the Convention, thereby forming the basis for national implementation.
- The Convention requires countries not just to prepare a national biodiversity strategy, but to ensure that this strategy is incorporated into the planning and activities of all those sectors whose activities can have an impact (positive and negative) on biodiversity. This is what is meant by ‘mainstreaming’ – all relevant sectors of government, the private sector and civil society working together to implement the strategy. It is difficult to conceive of effective action plans without such multi-stakeholder commitment to and ‘ownership’ of the NBSAP process. It is for this reason that the NBSAP should be seen

as a multi-stakeholder process, with other stakeholders being brought into its development as early as possible.

- The NBSAP should be a living process by which increasing scientific information and knowledge gained through the monitoring and evaluation of each phase of implementation feed back into a permanent strategy review process. This should result in periodic updating and revision of the NBSAP.

2. What guidance has the Conference of the Parties given Parties?

The Conference of the Parties is the governing body of the CBD process. It comprises all the Parties to the Convention and meets every two years, or as needed, to review progress in the implementation of the Convention, consider amendments and the adoption of Protocols to the Convention, and adopt programmes of work to achieve its objectives.

The decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its meetings constitute guidance to Parties on how to implement specific provisions of the Convention.

Guidance on national biodiversity strategies and action plans

The Conference of the Parties considered Article 6 for the first time at its second meeting (1995). Parties were encouraged to collaborate with relevant organizations and, if so desired, to take into consideration existing guidelines¹.

Since its second meeting, the Conference of the Parties has issued additional guidance on the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans in a large number of decisions relating to specific programmes of work of the Convention, and on some crosscutting issues².

The Conference of the Parties addressed national biodiversity strategies and action plans most comprehensively at its sixth meeting (2002), when it urged Parties³:

- To develop and adopt national biodiversity strategies and action plans, where they have not yet done so;
- To give priority to the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as well as benefit-sharing, into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies, in accordance with Article 6 of the Convention;
- To identify priority actions in national biodiversity strategies and action plans and other relevant national strategies;
- To implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans; and to periodically revise them in the light of the experience of implementation;
- To establish national mechanisms or consultative processes, with particular regard, where appropriate, to the special needs of indigenous and local communities, for coordinating, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and periodically revising national biodiversity strategies and action plans;

¹ Decision II/7.

² This guidance is summarized in Module [** “Useful Resources”]. [SCBD: complete or delete as appropriate]

³ Paragraph 2 of decision VI/27 A

- To identify constraints and impediments to implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, and to reflect them in the national reports;
- To make their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, including periodic revisions, available through their national clearing-house mechanism and the Convention website.

At its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties also adopted a Strategic Plan for the Convention⁴. One of the four goals is that “national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors serve as an effective framework for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention”.

In particular, this goal aims to ensure that:

- Every Party has effective national strategies, plans and programmes in place to provide a national framework for implementing the three objectives of the Convention and to set clear national priorities;
- Biodiversity concerns are being integrated into relevant national sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.
- The priorities in national biodiversity strategies and action plans are being actively implemented, as a means to achieve national implementation of the Convention, and as a significant contribution towards the global biodiversity agenda.

At its seventh (2004) and eighth (2006) meetings, the Conference of the Parties adopted a framework for monitoring implementation of the Convention and achievement of the 2010 target. This framework includes global goals and targets.

The Conference of the Parties has emphasized that the goals and targets of the framework adopted should be viewed as a flexible framework within which national and/or regional targets may be developed. It has invited Parties and Governments to develop national and/or regional goals and targets, and, as appropriate, to incorporate them into relevant plans, programmes and initiatives, including national biodiversity strategies and action plans.⁵

However, although the Conference of the Parties has provided general guidance on national biodiversity strategies and action plans, it has also acknowledged that there are a number of shortcomings in the total body of guidance developed.

At its eighth meeting (2006), the Conference of the Parties decided to consider, at its ninth meeting (2008), “consolidated guidance for the development, implementation and evaluation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the effective integration of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors”⁶.

⁴ Decision VI/26.

⁵ Decisions VII/30 and VIII/15.

⁶ Decision VIII/8

It requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a synthesis/analysis of obstacles encountered, lessons learned, effectiveness of policy instruments and strategic priorities for action, and to make this compilation and synthesis/analysis available to regional and/or sub-regional meetings to be held prior to the ninth meeting, and to the second meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation (July 2007).

It also requested the Working Group on Review of Implementation to consider the information compiled by the Executive Secretary and to review the status of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, their implementation and updating, and the extent to which biodiversity concerns are effectively integrated into relevant sectors and have been effectively mainstreamed in accordance with Article 6(b) of the Convention.

Box 1

The current period between COP-8 and COP-9 (2006-2008) is therefore one of analysis and review of the status and effectiveness of NBSAPs and of the guidance so far provided to countries by the Conference of the Parties.

The preparation of these Modules and the feedback gained from training courses involving CBD focal points, biodiversity managers and other national stakeholders in the period prior to COP-9 will contribute to this review.

3. What are the institutional arrangements for assisting countries with NBSAPs?

There are several actors involved in supporting countries with the preparation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. These include the Conference of the Parties, the CBD Secretariat, the Global Environment Facility and its Implementing Agencies, and potentially a series of other actors – international and national – who have expertise, mandates or resources that enable them to contribute.

However it cannot be repeated often enough that these are supporting actors and that the country itself has to play the leading role. As a Contracting Party, a country has committed itself to implementing the provisions of the Convention and fulfilling its objectives at the national level, thereby contributing to collective efforts to meet the objectives of the Convention and the goals and targets of its Strategic Plan at the global level.

Each country is obliged to develop and implement its NBSAP and submit national reports on its efforts to implement the Convention and the outcome of these. The country is therefore required to be proactive in meeting these obligations, calling upon the assistance of other actors when required, but taking the lead itself.

The Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties is the governing body of the CBD process. It comprises all the Parties to the Convention and meets every two years, or as needed, to review progress in the implementation of the Convention, consider amendments and the adoption of Protocols to the Convention, and adopt programmes of work to achieve its objectives. It may establish such subsidiary bodies as may be required⁷.

As described above, the Conference of the Parties has provided ongoing guidance to Parties concerning the preparation of NBSAPs and national reports since its second meeting in 1995.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The principal functions of the Secretariat are to prepare for and service meetings of the COP and other subsidiary bodies of the Convention, and to coordinate with other international bodies⁸.

To facilitate its work, the Secretariat has developed partnerships with a wide variety of UN agencies, environmental conventions and non-governmental organizations to provide technical input and assistance.

In preparation for meetings of the Conference of the Parties or subsidiary bodies (such as the WGRI) that will consider matters relating to NBSAPs, the Secretariat will prepare background

⁷ Article 23 of the Convention

⁸ Article 24 of the Convention

documentation providing updates and syntheses, assessing lessons learned and highlighting issues to be considered.

The Global Environment Facility

The GEF is the institutional structure which carries out the operation of the financial mechanism for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity⁹. As such, the GEF functions under the guidance of, and is accountable to, the Conference of the Parties which decides on policies, program priorities and eligibility criteria for the purposes of the Convention.

The GEF reports to each meeting of the COP on its implementation of the guidance. From 1991 to 2005 total GEF allocations to the biodiversity focal area were almost \$2.1 billion, with a further US\$4.4 billion mobilized in co-funding (from counterpart funding, bilateral agencies, other development institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations).

The GEF is, therefore, a significant source of international financing for protected areas, and it will continue to be so in the coming years. The 2002-2006 GEF replenishment, agreed in mid-2002, totalled \$2.92 billion, and roughly US \$552 million of this was programmed for biodiversity projects in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The 2006-2010 replenishment will be \$3.13 billion.

GEF ‘enabling activities’ in biodiversity have focused on assisting countries to prepare their national biodiversity strategies and action plans and/or their national reports to the CBD. GEF funding for this purpose can be available to countries through expedited procedures, under which proposals not exceeding \$450,000 in total can be approved by the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the GEF on the basis of simple project briefs; proposals exceeding \$450,000 are considered under the normal project cycle of the GEF.

Most project proposals are submitted by the GEF Secretariat to the Council for decision. However, in the case of enabling activity support, most decisions will be taken by the Chief Executive Officer of the GEF. Here the role of the GEF Secretariat is to provide guidance to the Implementing Agencies and to ensure that the proposals received conform to guidelines for funding biodiversity enabling activities.

Although the CBD Secretariat is kept informed by the GEF Secretariat of proposed enabling activity proposals to assist countries with preparing NBSAPs and national reports, the CBD Secretariat is not involved in the preparation of such proposals nor the decision-making process.

The GEF has so far approved Enabling Activity funding for the preparation of NBSAPs and national reports for 144 eligible Parties to the Convention¹⁰. Of these, 51 are in Africa, 34 in the Asia-Pacific region, 33 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 26 in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.

The GEF Implementing Agencies

⁹ Article 21

¹⁰ <http://www.gefonline.org/projectList.cfm> as of 22 February 2007.

The Implementing Agencies of the GEF are UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank.

For countries preparing their NBSAPs and national reports, the Implementing Agencies will be the main entry point into the CBD process and the principal source of assistance. In particular, the Implementing Agency in question will assist the national body responsible for preparing the NBSAP and/or the national report with the preparation of a proposal for enabling activity funding from the GEF and with the execution of the various steps in each process.

Of the 144 countries that have received enabling activity funding, UNDP is the Implementing Agency for 91 countries, UNEP for 32 and the World Bank for 21.

Other actors

Preparation of both the NBSAP and the national report are intended to be multi-stakeholder processes.

In addition to the Implementing Agencies, there are a number of international and regional organizations, inter-governmental and non-governmental, that have expertise, mandates or resources that enable them to assist countries with NBSAPs.

Such inter-governmental organizations include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations University (UNU), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and others, including regional organizations.

Non-governmental organizations include the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), the World Resources Institute (WRI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and others.

At its last meeting the Conference of the Parties specifically invited a number of these organizations to assist with the development, implementation, evaluation and updating of national biodiversity strategies and action plans¹¹

Amongst the national stakeholders that should be involved in the preparation and implementation of NBSAPs and the preparation of national reports, there will probably be several organizations – such as scientific institutions, non-governmental and community organizations, private sector bodies, other national and sub-national government agencies – that possess knowledge and expertise that should be incorporated into national biodiversity planning.

¹¹ Decision VII/8

4. What sources of guidance are available?

The main published sources of guidance are listed below. A more detailed discussion of their recommendations will be found in Module 2.

However, these guidelines were developed in the early stages of the CBD, when most countries were starting the process of developing their NBSAP. As most countries have finished preparing their NBSAP, or at least are on the way to completion, these guidelines may not be as relevant as they were when first produced – although they may continue to be useful reference sources for the process of revising and updating NBSAPs.

UNEP Country Studies

The first guidelines to assist Parties in meeting the obligation in Article 6(a) to ‘develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity’ were the “Guidelines for Country Studies on Biological Diversity” published by UNEP in 1993¹².

The Guidelines identify a four-step process for the implementation of Article 6 of the CBD:

1. *Take stock*
2. *Set priorities and prepare action plans*
3. *Take action*
4. *Evaluate*

A fifth step is *national reporting on measures taken* to implement Article 6 called for under Article 26 of the CBD.

The Guidelines relate only to Step 1 – the stocktaking exercise – and identify twenty guiding principles. These will be discussed in Module 2.

WRI Guidelines

In light of the experience of the initial Country Study process and of other national biodiversity planning initiatives, the World Resources Institute, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and UNEP developed “National Biodiversity Planning: Guidelines Based on Early Experiences around the World”¹³, published in 1995, which examined the experiences of sixteen national and one regional biodiversity planning processes and contained ‘An Illustrative Biodiversity-Planning Process: The Basic Steps’. These guidelines were recommended to Parties by the Conference of the Parties, as noted above, and have been widely used in the development of many NBSAPs.

¹² <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-01/information/sbstta-01-inf-03-en.pdf>

¹³ <http://pubs.wri.org/nationalbiodiversityplanning-pub-2667.html>

The WRI Guidelines are perhaps the most widely referred-to guidelines, and are based around a seven-step biodiversity planning process:

1. *Getting organized*
2. *Assessment (country study)*
3. *Developing a strategy*
4. *Developing a plan of action*
5. *Implementation*
6. *Monitoring and evaluation*
7. *Reporting*

The Guidelines argue that biodiversity planning is a cyclical and adaptive process and illustrates this by showing the seven steps as a flow chart with feedbacks into steps 2, 3 and 4. This chart has been extensively reproduced.

GEF Guidelines

The Conference of the Parties also requested the GEF to facilitate urgent implementation of Articles 6 and 8 by making funding available to developing countries for development of NBSAPs¹⁴. The GEF responded by preparing the Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities¹⁵, including the ‘expedited procedures’ fast track mechanism for funding biodiversity enabling activities. Except for the National Reports, the GEF rejected the idea of large ‘umbrella’ projects administered by Implementing Agencies to support biodiversity planning in favour of free-standing national enabling activity projects. In so doing it reaffirmed that biodiversity planning should be explicitly country driven.

The GEF defines ‘enabling activities’ in biodiversity as: “[Activities] that prepare the foundation to design and implement effective response measures to achieve Convention objectives”.

Biodiversity Planning Support Programme

The Biodiversity Planning Support Programme (BPSP) was a multi-donor initiative implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with core financing from the Global Environment Facility¹⁶.

By 1996 it was clear that many countries were having difficulties effectively implementing the multi-sectoral planning approach called for by the CBD and required under the enabling activities criteria. The BPSP was designed to respond to needs recognized by the Parties for strengthening national capacity to prepare and implement the NBSAP.

The programme had three components, implemented at global and regional level:

¹⁴ Decision II/7, paragraph 6

¹⁵ http://www.thegef.org/Documents/enabling_activity_projects/documents/Revised_Operational_Criteria_for_EA-June_1997.pdf

¹⁶ The Governments of Norway and Switzerland also provide co-financing

- Information gathering and dissemination: specialized information on biodiversity planning and issues related to the CBD was compiled, translated as appropriate, and distributed to national planning teams. The programme sought to establish user-friendly mechanisms at the regional level to foster regular and ongoing information exchange including web sites, electronic mail list-servers, and help lines.
- Guidelines and best practice experience: UNEP developed guidelines, training modules and facilitated dissemination of "best practice" experience. In particular, it commissioned a series of thematic studies, each focused on one aspect of sectoral integration, in line with the issues emerging from National Reports and guidance from the Conference of Parties to the CBD. Thematic issues addressed by the programme were the integration of biodiversity into: the national agriculture sector; the national fisheries sector; the national forestry sector; the national tourism sector; integration of biodiversity with environmental assessment procedures; improved use of economic tools in national biodiversity planning; improved financial planning for national biodiversity strategy and action plans; and harmonisation of legal obligations under biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements. Each thematic study included some or all of the following: a bibliography of relevant literature; a series of national case studies; a workshop report; and an overall synthesis report.
- Regional exchange and thematic workshops: the BPSp organized regional exchange and thematic workshops to promote intra-regional and global exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise.

The BPSp also brought together existing guidelines and models for NBSAP preparation. This material is still available on the BPSp website.¹⁷

¹⁷ www.undp.org/bpsp

5. What has been achieved so far?

As of October 2006, 124 Parties had informed the CBD Secretariat that they had completed their NBSAPs. The Secretariat is aware of another 30 Parties that have prepared drafts, have national biodiversity strategies and action plans awaiting government approval, or where the NBSAP is currently under preparation. Three Parties have so far revised their original NBSAP.

Reliable information is hard to come by. The channel for transmission of information by Parties about the status of implementation of the Convention, including information on the status of NBSAPs, is the national report. The system of national reporting, and access to the information contained in the reports, enables the Conference of the Parties to evaluate the state of implementation of the Convention, identify common problems encountered by Parties, consider lessons learned that can be made more widely available, and identify priority issues that need to be addressed by the Convention.

However, in the case of both the second national report (due in 2001) and the third national report (due in 2005) less than two thirds of Parties submitted national reports. In 2006 the Conference of the Parties, concerned about the lack of information available for the review of NBSAPs planned for 2008, invited Parties to provide information on:

- The status of NBSAPs, their implementation and updating;
- The extent to which biodiversity concerns have been effectively mainstreamed;
- The main obstacles to implementation of the Convention at the national level¹⁸.

By the end of 2006 only about ten per cent of Parties had responded.

Thus we do not currently have a reliable basis on which to assess the overall status of NBSAPs nor the problems that countries may be facing in the development, implementation and updating of their NBSAP and in mainstreaming the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The use of these modules and the information to be gathered at the regional workshops and other training sessions to be held prior to COP-9 will hopefully help to clarify the status of NBSAPs and identify issues that need to be further addressed.

Lessons learned

The Biodiversity Planning Support Programme was developed in the period 1997-1998 as a response to a number of difficulties that had been identified and that were, it was felt, beyond the technical and managerial support provided by the GEF Implementing Agencies. These included: inadequacy of existing information, materials and guidelines; a scarcity of appropriate expertise and experience; and difficulties in dealing with the complex and multi-sectoral nature of biodiversity planning.

¹⁸ Decision VIII/8

In addition, country stakeholders pointed to a general lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding of what biodiversity is and its importance. This in turn undermined the political support required for an effective BSAP process and made it difficult to integrate biodiversity issues into other sectoral planning and management activities.

Later, upon adopting the CBD Strategic Plan in 2002, the Conference of the Parties identified a series of obstacles to the implementation of the CBD.¹⁹ This list of obstacles was based on the review by the COP of analyses provided by the Secretariat of the information submitted by Parties in their national reports on their implementation of the Convention.

The most recent information available comes from the third national reports. Although less than half the Parties submitted a report able to be electronically analysed, raising methodological questions about the representativity of the analysis, the information in these reports is valuable because it is the expression of the experience of 93 of the 190 Parties.

In reflecting on the challenges and obstacles to implementation, the majority of these Parties considered that the following constituted medium or high obstacles in their country to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention:

- Limited public participation and stakeholder involvement
- Lack of horizontal cooperation among stakeholders
- Lack of mainstreaming and integration of biodiversity issues into other sectors
- Inadequate capacity to act, caused by institutional weakness
- Lack of adequate scientific research capacities to support all the objectives
- Lack of public education and awareness at all levels
- Loss of biodiversity and the corresponding goods and services it provides not properly understood and documented
- Lack of financial, human, technical resources

These issues are at the heart of the NBSAP process; they form a set of key issues which the strategy and action plans should seek to address.

These obstacles cannot be addressed by the environment ministry or the 'biodiversity community' alone. The NBSAP is the vehicle to address these obstacles; but through a participatory and multi-stakeholder process.

What is happening on NBSAPs in the period up to COP-9 in May 2008?

As previously explained, the Conference of the Parties is now taking steps to consolidate its guidance for the development, implementation and evaluation of NBSAPs and for the effective mainstreaming of biodiversity. This review process is currently underway and the results will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties in 2008.

¹⁹ See Annex 2 below

The information that is lacking and the questions that need to be addressed are:

- Obtaining a global overview of NBSAP status and development:
 - Number – how many Parties have national (or regional) biodiversity strategies and action plans? Are these completed or in development?
 - Scope – do NBSAPs cover implementation of all aspects of the Convention (e.g., the three objectives, programmes of work and cross-cutting issues, 2010 target and Strategic Plan)?
 - Updates – in the cases where Parties have updated NBSAPs, what useful lessons are there on the changes to the original NBSAPs that the countries have made?
 - Goals and targets – have Parties developed national and/or regional goals and targets²⁰, and integrated these goals and targets into NBSAPs and other relevant plans, programmes and initiatives?²¹
 - Process – what useful lessons on the development and updating of NBSAPs can be drawn from the types of process followed? In particular, have these involved all relevant ministries and stakeholders (including local and indigenous communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector)?
- Assessing implementation:
 - Priorities and achievements – what areas/activities have been assigned priority by Parties, and where have significant outcomes been achieved?
 - Measures – what are the most common/successful policies, programmes, activities, and other measures put in place to advance implementation, and to monitor implementation?
 - Obstacles – what are the obstacles to implementation?
- Integration of biodiversity into other sectors:
 - Achievements – in what sectors is there evidence of consideration of biodiversity issues (including the adoption of biodiversity-related goals and targets), and what have been the facilitating factors?
 - Obstacles – what are the obstacles to integration?²²
- Ways and means to overcome obstacles:
 - Review of options – identification of existing facilitating factors, support mechanisms, and approaches;
 - Strategies – identification of existing mechanisms, of opportunities for synergies among these, and of gaps in available support.

Achieving the 2010 biodiversity target

Parties have committed themselves to achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at global, regional and national level. National biodiversity strategies and

²⁰ In line with decision VII/30

²¹ Integrating the 2010 Biodiversity Target into NBSAPs and making use of the CBD framework of goals, targets and indicators will be examined in Module 4

²² Mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors will be examined in Module 3

action plans and the mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns into relevant sectors should serve as the effective framework for national implementation of the Convention.

The current challenge is to gain an overall picture of the status of NBSAPs and the extent to which countries have been able to mainstream biodiversity issues into national planning and productive sectors, and the obstacles they are encountering.

At the same time, a coordinated effort to build the capacity of countries to develop, implement and update NBSAPs is being undertaken. These training modules and the regional workshops and other training sessions to be held form a key part of this capacity-building effort.

These two activities are inter-linked: the participation of focal points and other NBSAP stakeholders in the capacity-building activities will generate a much better picture of the status of NBSAPs and mainstreaming and the obstacle encountered. This better understanding will enable capacity building activities to be more sharply focused on the key issues identified by countries.

In this way, by the time the Conference of the Parties meets in May 2008, all countries should be better equipped to develop and implement their NBSAP, making it the main instrument for achieving the objectives of the Convention at the national level.

At the same time, the Conference of the Parties should be in a position to provide Parties with consolidated and up-to-date guidance for the development, implementation and evaluation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

This will pave the way for a sustained effort in the period up to 2010 to make NBSAPs the effective national instrument for biodiversity planning in all Parties, thereby offering a realistic possibility for achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss.

List of Acronyms

BPSP	Biodiversity Planning and Support Programme
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties (to the CBD)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IUCN	World Conservation Union
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNU	United Nations University
WGRI	Working Group on Review of Implementation (of the CBD)
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature