



Convention on
Biological Diversity

An Introduction to National Reporting

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MODULE A-3

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List of acronyms

What you will learn in this module:

This module discusses the importance of National Reporting and the preparation process. It provides information concerning the importance of the process and provides a check list to assist Parties. It also provides highlights of the Guide to preparation of the Fourth National Report.

The module briefly discusses how eligible Parties can access GEF funding toward preparation of National Reports.

Further information on National Reporting and access to the Guide to preparation of the Fourth National Report are available through the Convention website: www.biodiv.org

1. What are National Reports?

National Reports are the official documents by which Parties report to the Conference of the Parties on the measures they have taken to implement the Convention in their respective countries, and the effectiveness of these measures in achieving the objectives of the Convention.

National reporting is the only unqualified obligation under the Convention to be undertaken by Parties.

Article 26 of the Convention states:

“Each Contracting Party shall, at intervals to be determined by the Conference of the Parties, present to the Conference of the Parties, reports on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the provisions of this Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this Convention”.

2. Why do Parties need to prepare National Reports?

The process of national reporting is essential to the proper functioning of the Convention and, when properly carried out, will provide substantial benefits both to the Convention as a whole and to the country concerned. National reporting is essential because:

- The Convention is essentially a framework for **national action**. Parties will implement its provisions in accordance with their individual national capacities, circumstances, priorities and institutional frameworks.
- **Without a process of national reporting** and access to the information contained in the reports, the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies have **no way of evaluating the state of implementation** of the Convention. They will be unable to identify common problems encountered by Parties, lessons learned that can be made more widely available, or priority issues that need to be addressed by the Convention.
- The process of national reporting provides Parties with an important opportunity to plan for further implementation of the Convention based on reviews undertaken in the process.
- Information contained in national reports provides an important source for preparing publications such as the Global Biodiversity Outlook, as well as for research conducted by a multitude of stakeholders, including research institutions, students, and NGOs, to name a few.

Through Article 26 of the Convention, Parties are obliged to report on the **measures taken for implementation of the Convention and their effectiveness**. In other words, the focus of the reporting is national implementation. It is because the country is required to provide information on **outcomes** that the Conference of the Parties is able to assess the status of implementation, identify issues that need to be addressed, and provide appropriate guidance to Parties and relevant organizations that can support national implementation.

3. When is the next National Report Due?

The Conference of the Parties decided that Parties should submit their national reports every four years.

The fourth national reports are due 30 March 2009 (decision VIII/14).

This is a mandatory deadline decided by the Conference of the Parties. It is essential that Parties adhere to the deadline so that the information provided can be used by the Secretariat in preparing for the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will assess progress towards the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target. Where possible, Parties are encouraged to submit the national reports ahead of the deadline.

Should any Party anticipate that it may encounter any difficulty in completing their report by the above-mentioned deadline, they are invited to advise the Secretariat well in advance so that the Secretariat could help identify ways to assist Parties, where appropriate, in overcoming obstacles to the preparation of national reports.

4. What information should be included in a National Report?

The information required in National Reports is determined by the Conference of the Parties and reflected in Guidelines prepared by the Secretariat.

Guidelines for the preparation of the fourth National Report were adopted by Decision VIII/14. These guidelines were developed in part to help provide a complete picture of national implementation of the Convention. Therefore, information is to be provided in a narrative form rather than the questionnaire format used previously.

The format requires that information is provided in 4 chapters focusing on:

Chapter I, Overview of Biodiversity Status, Trends and Threats - Parties are requested to provide an analysis or synthesis of the status and trends of and major threats to, various components of biodiversity in their country. This should provide a succinct overview of biodiversity status, trends and threats sufficient to inform decision makers, rather than an exhaustive assessment.

Chapter II, Current Status of National biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans – Parties are requested to provide an overview of the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans or other programmes and plans developed and adopted to implement the Convention. The focus should be on assessing the extent to which actions identified in NBSAPs have been implemented. Parties should also assess the effectiveness of the strategy and identify obstacles encountered in implementation. Furthermore, Parties are asked to report on how NBSAP implementation is linked with the implementation of articles and provisions of the Convention as well as thematic programmes of work and cross-cutting issues adopted under the Convention.

Chapter III, Sectoral and cross-sectoral integration of mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations – Parties are asked to describe their efforts to integrate biodiversity issues into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. The focus should be on describing the extent to which biodiversity has been mainstreamed into relevant sectors and more

importantly, mechanisms and measures put in place to implement these strategies and plans. In addition to relevant sectors, Parties should report on how they synergize implementation of related conventions as well as employ the ecosystem approach for the implementation of the Convention. Donor countries should also report on how biodiversity has been incorporated into their development cooperation programmes.

Chapter IV, Conclusions: Progress Towards the 2010 Target and Implementation of the Strategic Plan - Parties are asked to bring together key information or findings from previous chapters to assess how actions taken at national level have contributed to progress towards the 2010 target and the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention. Parties should focus on establishment of national targets, incorporation of targets into relevant sectors, how implementation of NBSAPs and mainstreaming contributes to progress and identification of obstacles encountered. In conclusion, Parties may wish to provide an overall assessment of implementation by highlighting impacts of actions taken for implementation, analyzing challenges and priorities ahead and making suggestions for future actions that need to be taken at various levels.

Executive Summary Finally, after Parties have completed all these chapters and appendices, they are asked to present an executive summary of the whole report, which should be concise, appealing to decision makers and the general public, and most importantly, capture key findings from the report.

In providing information on the above topics, Parties are invited to focus on:

- (a) Outcomes and impacts of actions or measures taken to implement the Convention;
- (b) Success stories and case studies if any;
- (c) Major obstacles encountered in implementation;
- (d) Actions that need to be taken to enhance implementation.

The Guidelines also provide suggestions on how to proceed with the preparation of the Fourth National Report.

The Guidelines are available in all UN languages and can be accessed at <http://www.biodiv.org/reports/guidelines.aspx?t=f>.

5. How should National Reports be developed?

Normally, the preparation of national reports is the responsibility of the National Focal Point for the Convention and involves all the relevant ministries or agencies responsible for environmental or natural resources management in each country as well as those departments responsible for cross-sectoral planning and coordination. Those involved in this process vary from country to country considering different countries have different circumstances and governance structure. Often, a “biodiversity manager” is appointed to oversee preparation of any given report.

The following checklist may assist in planning the preparation of the National Report:

√	Establish a process to prepare the report by identifying departments and stakeholders that should be involved, Based on that, build a CBD multi-stakeholder network of relevant people and organizations and establish operating procedures, a schedule of meetings that could include opportunities to establish dialogue amongst the members. It is important to include indigenous and local communities, women's groups, representatives from all government departments, education professionals, industry representatives, media, etc.
√	Designate the person or organization responsible for the overall preparation of the National Report. This may be the person designated as National Focal Point or, in some cases, another person(s) or agency may be selected.
√	Come up with a work plan that establishes a calendar with a preliminary set of milestones to chart progress toward completion of the National Report including how information will be gathered, how interviews will be conducted, how the report will be prepared and reviewed during the process.
√	Convene a national meeting to review all previous steps and agree methodology, set timetable for completion of tasks, monitoring and preparation of the final version of the report
√	Submit final version of the report to all members of the multi-stakeholder network for final review
√	Make any final changes to the report
√	Submit the final draft to the appropriate authorities for review and endorsement. This might include, for example, review by an inter-ministerial body.
√	Submit final report to CBD Secretariat by the deadline stated in the relevant COP Decision
√	Publish and publicize the report

It is important to remember that the national report is an official document being submitted by the government to an intergovernmental body, and will therefore need to comply with existing national procedures for such submissions. At the same time, and in line with the decisions of the COP, the completed report should be made widely available in the country.

If the national report is developed in the ways suggested above, a comprehensive assessment of national measures to meet the objectives of the Convention will generate much interest among stakeholders, researchers, media organizations, the general public and other groups. Consideration might be given to arranging for a public launch of the report, for example, on International Biodiversity Day (22nd May, 2009)¹. If the country has a national biodiversity clearing-house mechanism or website, the report should also be posted here.

6. Who should be involved in the preparation of the National Report?

The preparation of the national report entails undertaking an assessment of the progress achieved and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CBD. These are important activities in themselves, and should not be regarded simply as tasks required to meet the reporting obligation. The exercise comprises a stocktaking and assessment of national efforts for the

¹ This would allow sufficient time after submission to the Secretariat by the deadline of 31 March 2009 to make preparations to include a public launch of the National Report as part of IBD celebrations.

implementation of the three objectives of the CBD and, if properly carried out, will contribute to better biodiversity planning at the national and regional level.

Accurate and comprehensive collection of the relevant data will involve consultation with many stakeholder groups not necessarily directly involved with the relevant ministry such as indigenous and local groups as well as many non-government organisations, as well as other ministries and local governments. Inputs from all relevant sectors such as industry, education, agriculture, fisheries, etc. are also critical to a meaningful portrait of the status of implementation of the CBD in each country. Through a number of decisions (V/19, VI/26 and VIII/14), the Conference of the Parties has emphasized the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders in the process of preparing national reports to ensure national reports reflect comprehensively national situation.

In the cases where financial support from the Global Environment Facility has been received to facilitate the process, an implementing agency such as UNDP, the World Bank or UNEP will also be involved.

Examples of Stakeholder consultations throughout the process²

The following institutions were involved in the preparation of the third national report of Armenia: Institute of Zoology of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), Institute of Botany of NAS, Institute of Hydroecology and Ichthyology of NAS, State Agricultural University, Yerevan State University, Hrachya Acharyan University, Yerevan State Institute of Economy, Ministry of Nature Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs, etc. The experts have conducted discussions with the representatives of different government and non-governmental organizations; scientific-research institutions; international and national programs about biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use of different purposes. The members of the working group have also participated to the field scientific expeditions in a range of marzes of the republic to specify certain data and to collect updated information. The program coordinator has regularly (1-2 times per week) has organized general discussions about some arguable issues, which were actively participated by all the members of the working group. The collected information has been analyzed and input into the standard report form submitted by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The preliminary version of the third national report has been discussed during a seminar with the participation of the representatives of the Ministry of Nature Protection and other agencies (government, non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions, etc) and based on their comments and recommendations the final version of the report has been prepared.

In Ethiopia, the task force of consultants developed a draft of the third National Communication Document. This draft was thoroughly discussed, amended, and enriched by consultants in the task force in a series of meetings. It was distributed to relevant government institutions, academia, NGOs, international and private organizations, and selected community based organizations for comments prior to a national workshop. Finally, a national workshop was held, comments were thoroughly discussed and all relevant suggestions accommodated. The stakeholders who participated in the national workshop represented the following institutions/organizations.

² Taken from information provided in the 3rd National Reports

Federal Institutions:	Regional Bureaus/Institutions:
House of Peoples' Representatives (Parliament)	Regional Bureaus of Agriculture and Rural Development
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	Regional Environmental and Land Administration Authorities
Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	Regional Natural Resource and Park Management Offices
Ministry of Water Resources	Addis Ababa City Administration
Ministry of Education	Dire Dawa City Administration
Ministry of Federal Affairs	
Ministry of Justice	Universities:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	Addis Ababa University
Institute of Biodiversity Conservation	Alemaya University
Environmental Protection Authority	Bahirdar University
Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research	Debu University
Ethiopian Science and Technology Agency	Jimma University
Ethiopian Tourism Commission	Mekelle University

7. How is this information used by the CBD?

The information contained in National Reports is used by the Conference of the Parties to assess the status of implementation of the Convention. Analysis or synthesis of the information contained in the national report is undertaken by the Secretariat and is disseminated in the form of documents for review by each successive session of the COP, including intersessional meetings of its subsidiary bodies.

This analysis or synthesis assists the COP in determining priority actions and work programmes for each biennium and beyond.

The information provided by the fourth National Reports will be used to assess progress towards the 2010 Biodiversity Target: (“the target, to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss”). The third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook will be published at COP-10 and will include relevant information provided in the fourth national reports.

The National Reports are made public through the clearing house mechanism of the Convention upon receipt and are further disseminated by many stakeholder groups.

8. What assistance is available to Parties in preparation of their National Reports?

In addition to the guidelines outlined above other assistance is available to Parties in the preparation of their National Reports and is outlined below.

The CBD Secretariat

The Secretariat is preparing a manual on the preparation of the fourth national reports that will be available on the CBD website. On request to secretariat@biodiv.org, the Secretariat can also respond to requests from individual Parties for advice on the preparation of national reports. If major problems or delays in the preparation of the fourth national reports are anticipated, focal points are urged to contact the Secretariat in advance.

Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the financial mechanism of the Convention.³ It provides financial support to the eligible Parties of the Convention for qualifying projects that are developed in conjunction with the GEF Implementing Agencies as noted below. The Conferences of the Parties provides guidance to the GEF on policies, program priorities and eligibility criteria through its decisions.

Requests for financial support should be made as early as possible so that the resources can be made available soon enough. Funds are usually limited. Requests for financial support in preparation of National Reports should normally be made through the two implementing agencies: UNDP and UNEP.

GEF Implementing Agencies

The Implementing Agencies of the GEF are UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank. For GEF eligible countries preparing their national reports, the Implementing Agencies will be the main entry point into the CBD process and the principal source of assistance throughout the report preparation process.

Other actors

Preparation of both the national report and the NBSAP are intended to be multi-stakeholder processes. The reasons for this, and ways to ensure stakeholder engagement, will be examined in Module 5.

In addition to the GEF Implementing Agencies, there are a number of international organizations, inter-governmental and non-governmental, that have expertise, mandates or resources that enable them to assist countries with the preparation of national reports and 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, to name a few.

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.

³ Article 21

List of Acronyms

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
IBD	International Day for Biodiversity
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 Convention)
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature