

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Thematic Report

Reference information for major International biodiversity conventions

May 2005
(updated November 2008)

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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

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<http://www.biodiv.org/default.aspx>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The objectives of the CBD are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The agreement covers all ecosystems, ecosystem services, species, and genetic resources. The UK ratified the Convention in June 1994.

Seven thematic work programmes have been initiated. Each programme establishes a vision for, and basic principles to guide, future work; sets out key issues for consideration; identifies potential outputs; and suggests a timetable and means for achieving these outputs.

7 thematic areas:-

- Agricultural biodiversity
- Dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity
- Forest biodiversity,
- Inland waters biodiversity
- Island biodiversity
- Marine and coastal biodiversity
- Mountain biodiversity

Over and above the thematic programmes, there are a number of key cross-cutting issues, relevant to all thematic areas, which are integrated into their work programmes. These cross-cutting issues have an important role to play in bringing cohesion to the work of the Convention.

The cross-cutting issues are listed as:

- Access to Genetic Resources and sharing
- Alien Species
- Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices
- Biological Diversity & Tourism
- Climate Change and Biological Diversity
- Economics, Trade and Incentive Measures
- Ecosystem Approach
- 2010 Biodiversity Target
- Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC)
- Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI)

Plant Diversity Challenge is the UK's response to the GSPC. It was launched in February 2004, and is overseen by a steering group involving Defra, JNCC, Plantlife International, RBG Kew, SEERAD. DoE NI and NAW other participating organisations.

The strategy includes 16 outcome- oriented targets to be met by 2010. Implementing the strategy will contribute to meeting the 2010 reducing biodiversity loss target. Work underway includes national biodiversity UK BAP and 5 objectives:

1. Understanding and Documenting Plant Diversity,
2. Conserving Plant Diversity,
3. Using Plant Diversity Sustainably,
4. Promoting Education and awareness about Plant Diversity,
5. Building Capacity for the Conservation of Plant Diversity.

The GTI was established by the COP to address the lack of taxonomic information and expertise available to enable improved decision-making. Given the many competing demands for capacity building in taxonomy, activities under the GTI must be clearly linked to the implementation of the Convention. The Natural History Museum is the UK's National Focal Point for the GTI (c.lyal@nhm.ac.uk). A draft strategy for implementing the Global Taxonomy Initiative in the UK is being developed, which sets out the relevant taxonomic work that is already underway in the UK. The strategy will be used to help highlight gaps and coordinate taxonomic research in support of biodiversity conservation in the UK. A Register of Practising Taxonomists is being compiled which is intended as a repository of information on UK taxonomists and taxonomic expertise. Information from some respondents is withheld from public dissemination and is therefore not available online. However, further, more detailed information has been gathered. Contact is via the feedback form on the web page:

<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/science/biodiversity/gtinfo.htm>

Database is available: <http://intern.nhm.ac.uk/jdsml/science/uksf/>

- Impact Assessment
- Indicators
- Liability and Redress (Art. 14(2))
- Protected Areas
- Public Education and Awareness
- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Technology Transfer and Co-operation

Governance Structure and scientific element

The conference of the parties (COP) is the governing body of the CBD, and advances implementation of the Convention through the decisions it takes at its periodic meetings. The COP meets every two years, the last meeting was held in Curitiba, Brazil (20 - 31 March 2006).

The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) is a subsidiary body of the COP and reports regularly to the COP on all aspects of its work. Its functions include:

- providing assessments of the status of biological diversity;
- assessments of the types of measures taken in accordance with the provisions of the Convention; and
- respond to questions that the COP may put to the body

UK point of interaction

National focal point: Eric Blencowe, Defra Eric.Blencowe@defra.gsi.gov.uk

**CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE
ESPECIALLY AS WILDFOWL HABITAT (THE RAMSAR
CONVENTION OR WETLANDS CONVENTION)**

UK Lead: Simon Hopkinson – <mailto:Simon.Hopkinson@defra.gsi.gov.uk>

<http://ramsar.org/>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The Ramsar Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The convention covers all aspects of wetland conservation and wise use, recognizing wetlands as ecosystems that are extremely important for biodiversity conservation in general and for the well-being of human communities.

The UK ratified the convention in 1976.

Governance Structure and scientific element

The Ramsar Conference of Contracting Parties (COP) meets every three years and promotes policies and technical guidelines to further the application of the Convention.

The Standing Committee, made up of Parties representing the six Ramsar regions of the world, meets annually to guide the Convention between meetings of the COP. Note that the UK is not a member of the Standing Committee but attends as an observer.

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) provides guidance on key issues related to the application of the Convention.

UK point of interaction

Nationally, each Contracting Party designates an Administrative Authority as its focal point for implementation of the Convention.

Administrative Authority: Simon Hopkinson, International Protected Areas Team, Wildlife Habitats and Biodiversity Division, Defra, Simon.Hopkinson@defra.gsi.gov.uk

STRP National focal point: Wyn Jones, JNCC, Wyn.Jones@jncc.gov.uk

STRP Thematic Expert for Ramsar site designation and management (2006-2008): David Stroud, JNCC, David.Stroud@jncc.gov.uk

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (THE BONN CONVENTION OR CMS)

UK Lead: Trevor Salmon – <mailto:Trevor.Salmon@defra.gsi.gov.uk>

<http://www.cms.int/>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The Bonn Convention aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. Parties to the CMS work together to conserve migratory species and their habitats by providing strict protection for endangered migratory species, by concluding multilateral agreements for the conservation and management of migratory species, and by undertaking co-operative research activities.

The UK ratified the Convention in 1985.

Governance Structure and scientific element

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the CMS decision-making body. It meets every three years. Its functions are enumerated in Article VII of the Convention. For example, it reviews the Convention's implementation, adopts budgets, resolutions and recommendations, amends Appendix I and II and decides on priorities for future CMS activities.

The Standing Committee (StC) provides policy and administrative guidance between regular meetings of the COP, particularly on general policy as well as on operational and financial issues. It was created by Resolution 1.1 of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The StC consists of representatives of the Parties, in particular from each CMS region, the Depositary and a delegate representing the country that plans to host the next meeting of the COP. The StC meets at least annually.

The Scientific Council (ScC) advises the COP and the Secretariat on scientific matters and priorities for research and conservation. Its functions are enumerated in Article VIII of the Convention. The ScC consists of experts appointed by CMS Parties. In addition, the Convention provides for the appointment of a limited number of qualified individuals - appointed councillors- who are recognised experts in their field or region. The ScC presently has 8 appointed councillors whose expertise includes aquatic mammals, aquatic reptiles, birds, Asian Fauna, neotropical fauna, fish, African fauna and by-catch. Scientific Councillors participate in ScC meetings in their capacity as experts, not as governmental representatives. The ScC meets once a year.

UK point of interaction

CMS Scientific Council Member (appointed by individual parties): Colin Galbraith, Director of Science, SNH Colin.Galbraith@snh.gov.uk

Trevor Salmon, Defra: Trevor.Salmon@defra.gsi.gov.uk

CONVENTION ON THE TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FLORA AND FAUNA (CITES OR THE WASHINGTON CONVENTION)

UK Lead: Trevor Salmon <mailto:Trevor.Salmon@defra.gsi.gov.uk>

<http://www.cites.org/>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

To ensure that no species of wild fauna or flora becomes or remains subject to unsustainable exploitation because of international trade.

The UK ratified CITES in August 1976.

Governance Structure and scientific element

Conference of Parties

The Parties (member States) to CITES are collectively referred to as the Conference of the Parties. Every two to three years, the Conference of the Parties meets to review the implementation of the Convention. These meetings last for about two weeks and are usually hosted by one of the Parties. The meetings are often referred to as 'CoPs'. They provide the occasion for the Parties to:

- review progress in the conservation of species included in the Appendices;
- consider (and where appropriate adopt) proposals to amend the lists of species in Appendices I and II;
- consider discussion documents and reports from the Parties, the permanent committees, the Secretariat and working groups;
- recommend measures to improve the effectiveness of the Convention; and
- make provisions (including the adoption of a budget) necessary to allow the Secretariat to function effectively.

The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee provides policy guidance to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the Secretariat's budget. Beyond these key roles, it coordinates and oversees, where required, the work of other committees and working groups; carries out tasks given to it by the Conference of the Parties; and drafts resolutions for consideration by the Conference of the Parties [see Resolution [Conf. 11.1 \(Rev. CoP13\) Annex 1](#)].

Animals and Plants Committee

These committees of experts were established at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ottawa, 1987) to fill gaps in biological and other specialized knowledge regarding species of animals and plants that are (or might become) subject to CITES trade controls. Their role is to provide technical support to decision-making about these species. These two

Committees have similar terms of reference, detailed in Resolution Conf. 11.1 (Rev. CoP13), Annex 2, which include:

- undertaking periodic reviews of species, in order to ensure appropriate categorization in the CITES Appendices;
- advising when certain species are subject to unsustainable trade and recommending remedial action (through a process known as the 'Review of Significant Trade');
- drafting resolutions on animal and plant matters for consideration by the Conference of the Parties; and
- performing other functions entrusted to them by the Conference of the Parties or the Standing Committee

UK point of interaction

Nationally each contracting Party is required to designate one or more Management Authorities and one or more Scientific Authorities. Those for the UK are as follows.

Management Authorities:

Defra, (for CITES policy issues) Trevor Salmon: Trevor.Salmon@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Animal Health (for CITES licensing) John Hounslow:

John.Hounslow@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk

Scientific Authority (plants)

Royal Botanic Gardens, Conventions and Policy Section, Kew Noel McGough:

N.McGough@rbgkew.org.uk

Scientific Authority (animals)

International Unit, Joint Nature Conservation Committee Vin Fleming:

vin.fleming@jncc.gov.uk

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE (THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION)

UK Lead: Peter Marsden – peter.marsden@culture.gsi.gov.uk

<http://whc.unesco.org/>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The primary mission of the World Heritage Convention is to identify and conserve the world's cultural and natural heritage, by drawing up a list of sites whose outstanding values should be preserved for all humanity and to ensure their protection through a closer co-operation among nations.

The UK ratified the Convention in May 1984.

Governance Structure and scientific element

The General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention

The General Assembly meets during the sessions of the General Conference of UNESCO. During its session, the General Assembly determines the uniform percentage of contributions to the World Heritage Fund applicable to all States Parties and elects new members to the World Heritage Committee to replace the outgoing members.

The World Heritage Committee

The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, defines the use of the World Heritage Fund and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties. It has the final say on whether a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Committee can also defer its decision and request further information on properties from the States Parties. It examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed properties and asks States Parties to take action when properties are not being properly managed. It also decides on the inscription or deletion of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly for terms up to six years.

States Parties

States Parties are countries which have adhered to the *World Heritage Convention*. They thereby agree to identify and nominate properties on their national territory to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. When a State Party nominates a property, it gives details of how a property is protected and provides a management plan for its upkeep. States Parties are also expected to protect the World Heritage values of the properties inscribed and are encouraged to report periodically on their condition.

Three international non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations are named in the Convention to advise the Committee in its deliberations:
IUCN, The International Council on Monuments and Sites, The International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

UK point of interaction

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS (THE BERN CONVENTION)

UK Lead: John Clorley – mail to john.clorley@defra.gsi.gov.uk

http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/environment/nature_and_biological_diversity/Nature_protection/

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The principal aims of the Convention are to ensure conservation and protection of all wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats (listed in Appendices I and II of the Convention), to increase cooperation between contracting parties, and to afford special protection to the most vulnerable or threatened species (including migratory species) (listed in Appendix 3). To this end the Convention imposes legal obligations on contracting parties, protecting over 500 wild plant species and more than 1000 wild animal species.

The UK ratified the Bern Convention in 1982.

Governance Structure and scientific element

Monitoring the convention is the responsibility of:

- the Standing Committee, which meets once a year and brings together representatives of the contracting parties and the observers. The Standing Committee sees to it that the provisions of the convention and its appendices are applied. It examines the reports filed by the contracting parties and the files on any controversial cases, which are often reported by the NGOs. The Standing Committee adopts recommendations for improving the implementation of the convention;
- the Bureau of the Standing Committee;
- Groups of Experts on threatened species; Groups of Experts play an important role in the implementation of the Bern Convention by proposing guidelines, recommendations and action plans of threatened flora and fauna, as well as for the protection of habitats. Several groups of experts implement common strategies and action plans dealing with the protection of flora and fauna. Six groups are used to meet regularly :
 1. Group of experts on the conservation of amphibians and reptiles
 2. Group of experts on the conservation of invertebrate
 3. Group of experts on the conservation of plants
 4. Group of experts on legal aspects of introductions and re-introduction of wild species
 5. Group of experts on the conservation of birds
 6. Group of experts on large carnivores

The groups submit proposals to the Standing Committee and follow up throughout the countries the implementation of the recommendations and action plans it has adopted.

In what concerns the habitat protection, a Group of Experts on the Emerald network carries out the necessary work to implement Recommendation no.16 (1989) on Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs). The Group reviews the technical documents prepared by the experts and makes proposals to build up the Emerald Network.

- a Secretariat provided by the Council of Europe

UK point of interaction

John Clorley, Defra: john.clorley@defra.gsi.gov.uk

CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC (OSPAR)

UK Lead: Diana Linskey – diana.linskey@defra.gsi.gov.uk

<http://www.ospar.org/>

Overview of Objectives and Commitments

The Convention aims to address all sources of pollution which might affect the maritime area, as well as matters relating to the protection of the marine environment other than those relating to the prevention and elimination of pollution. An OSPAR Commission was established to administer the Convention and to develop policy and international agreements.

In July 1998 parties agreed on a new Annex V on the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area, and a new appendix 3 with criteria for identifying human activities for the purpose of Annex V. The Commission has adopted five strategies for directing its work. Measures and programmes within the Biodiversity Strategy include the identification of ecological quality objectives for the North Sea (for possible extension to the whole OSPAR area), development of lists of species and habitats in need of protection, identification and selection of marine protected areas, and the prevention and control of adverse impacts from human activities.

The UK ratified OSPAR in 1998, and Annex V and Appendix 3 in June 2000.

Governance Structure and scientific element

The work under the convention is managed by the OSPAR Commission, made up of representatives of the Governments of 15 Contracting Parties and the European Commission, representing the European Community.

The work under the Convention is guided by the Ministerial Declarations and Statements made at the adoption of the Convention and at the Ministerial Meetings of the OSPAR Commission. The work applies the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities. It is organised under six strategies:

- Protection and Conservation of Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystems
- Eutrophication
- Hazardous Substances
- Offshore Oil and Gas Industry
- Radioactive Substances
- Monitoring and Assessment

UK point of interaction

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