

# Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

## GECC Sub-Committee On Global Biodiversity Issues Minutes

May 2007

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**GECC SUB-COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES  
MINUTES: 15 MAY 2007**

*Attendees:*

Miles Parker, Defra  
Andy Stott, Defra  
Sarah Nelson, Defra  
Andrea Leedale, Defra  
Eimear Nic Lughadha, RBGK  
Alan Paton, RBGK  
Nick Dulvy, Cefas  
Chris Baker, NERC  
Elizabeth Moore, JNCC (Secretariat)

***Agenda Item 1: Introductions and Apologies***

Apologies were received from Glenys Parry, Defra, Amanda Read, BBSRC, Ian Bainbridge, SE, Richard Ferris, JNCC (Secretariat), Pamela Kempton, NERC, Izabella Kosiell, DfID, Shaun Earl, FCO, Sarah Moon, Defra, Eric Blencowe, Defra, Sharon McAuslan, Defra, Gary Grubb, ESRC, Rachel Garthwaite, Royal Society, Marcus Yeo, JNCC, Mary Gibby, RBGE, Chris Lyal, NHM.

***Agenda Item 2: Work programme***

Emerging scientific questions concerning global biodiversity issues (ToR 3)

Andy Stott (Defra) noted that the CBD SBSTTA12 meeting in early July will consider where to include emerging scientific issues on the agenda of SBSTTA13 in February 2008. Currently biofuels is on the emerging science issue agenda for SBSTTA12 and the SBSTTA Bureau have proposed two possible topics; the impact of avian flu on biodiversity and the decline of amphibian species in the context of the 2010 target.

Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) referred to a number of other emerging scientific issues which had been identified by other GBSC members. These included the impact of climate change on coral reef systems and adjacent human communities, impacts of biodiversity loss on ocean ecosystem services and reversibility/tipping points and the threat to biodiversity of mountain ecosystems.

**ACTION 2/1:** Andy Stott (Defra) to circulate a note of the emerging science issues for SBSTTA and ALL to provide comments to Andy by 12 May

Work programme (GECC GBSC (06)07)

Miles Parker noted the need to update the work programme. The group discussed each of the 8 Terms of Reference (ToR), noting where progress had been made and where there might be a need to re-visit the original ToR.

**ACTION 2/2:** Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) to update the work programme and circulate an updated version to GBSC members.

***Agenda Item 3: Synthesis of activity following recommendations from MA workshop and IMoSEB***

Follow up to recommendations from GBSC MA workshop (GECC GBSC (07)03)

The Secretariat provided a partial update of activities undertaken relating to the recommendations coming out of the MA workshop from JNCC and Sarah Moon (Defra). It was agreed that it would be useful for all members to update the paper.

**ACTION 3/1:** Secretariat to re-circulate MA recommendations paper and ALL MEMBERS to update with activities in relation to the recommendations.

Miles Parker (Defra) noted that the next logical step following an updated paper would be to undertake an analysis in terms of whether the activities really address the recommendations, and identify where there may be gaps. Andy Stott (Defra) noted that the recommendations were a mix of UK and international, and some of the recommendations go beyond the remit of the GBSC. He also commented that the paper was useful in its own right and gave the example its use in informing the Environmental Audit Committee's Inquiry into the MA. It was agreed that a small working group be formed to consider the best way to proceed with the analysis, and that this group should include Andy Stott and Sarah Moon (Defra) and Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat).

**ACTION 3/2:** Andy Stott (Defra) to speak with Sarah Moon (Defra) about her involvement and role in the working group analysing the MA recommendations paper. Andy, Sarah and Elizabeth Moore to agree best way to conduct analysis and produce a paper for the Aug GBSC meeting which highlights the areas relevant to GBSC, what is being covered adequately and what areas require further work.

#### Draft briefing for discussion at SBSTTA

Andy Stott (Defra) introduced his paper on the implications of the findings of the MA on the work of the CBD which will be discussed at SBSTTA12 in July. The group were asked to note the issue and endorse the UK objectives.

Miles Parker (Defra) commented on the need to be clear of the desired outcomes of the process. Andy Stott (Defra) noted that there could be significant improvements from the original MA by investing in the process. A more scientifically robust report could be produced due to improvements in data quality, the methodology around evaluation and scenarios.

**ACTION 3/3:** Andy Stott (Defra) to re-write the UK objectives for SBSTTA discussion on MA and circulate it to GBSC members for comments to be received in advance of SBSTTA.

#### IMoSEB

Andy Stott (Defra) introduced his paper on the note of the European consultation meeting on proposals for an international mechanism on scientific expertise on biodiversity (IMoSEB), Geneva, 26-28 April. The outcome was the development of a framework which would operate at a global level and build on existing scientific networks (i.e. a network of networks). There would be a small governing board established from the chairs of the conventions scientific advisory bodies, plus scientists nominated by ICSU. This mechanism would operate in two ways. From the top down, bodies such as the CBD and the Ramsar Convention would identify the need for scientific advice and assessment. The governing board would have an advisory group made up of existing members from which a panel would be created to conduct the assessment. From the bottom-up, scientists would feed up to governing body to feed into the conventions. This should improve the quality of scientific advice into existing intergovernmental mechanisms (i.e. global conventions).

Miles Parker (Defra) gave endorsement to this suggested mechanism as a welcome idea to explore and encouraged further updates to ensure the GBSC is kept posted on how this progresses.

***Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the last meeting***

The minutes of the last meeting were taken as a true and accurate record of the last meeting.

***Agenda Item 5: Actions and matters arising***

The actions had either been completed or were in hand.

***Agenda Item 6: Review of the GBSC 2004-2007 and Annual report to GECC***

Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) gave a presentation on the potential scope of the GBSC performance review. Members were reminded of the GBSC's remit and ToR, and a framework for the review was suggested, based on the recent UK BRAG review.

Members discussed the proposal and agreed that this would be a timely and necessary exercise. It was felt that this process should not be too onerous and that a report of the results should be fed into the main GECC meeting which is held in October.

The Secretariat's suggestion of a small working group was not considered feasible since it was felt that the review would be better conducted primarily by the Secretariat. However all members would need to engage with the process to ensure a holistic and meaningful outcome.

**ACTION 6/1:** Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) to prepare and circulate questionnaires gathering stakeholder perceptions of the GBSC's added value, past successes and failures, relevance of the ToR, membership, reporting structures and working methods of the group and the Secretariat. Results of questionnaires to be discussed at August GBSC meeting.

***Agenda Item 7: Ocean acidification paper***

Andrea Leedale (Defra) provided an introduction to the paper which had been revised since it was last circulated and discussed at GBSC in November 2006. Several groups are looking at the issue of ocean acidification internationally and at the European level. Most research focus's on individual species and species' responses. Most of the research is disparate and groups are working in isolation of one another since there is no central funding in place.

The ocean acidification working group were not keen to pinpoint research priorities since there would be too many to list. The approach taken was to identify key knowledge gaps. Some of the key findings are the lack of information about species responses to changes in ocean pH, also a lack of information about the sub-lethal effects and how different life-cycles will react. More experimentation is needed on combined effects and validation of models is also required.

The group commended the paper and recommended that possibilities for publication should be explored. Suggestions for publications included Nature, Marine pollution journals, and Science. Members agreed to circulate the paper within their parent organisations, following minor amendments which Andrea would make and re-circulate the paper when complete. The chair noted that GBSC should review progress at the November GBSC meeting to see what action had been taken.

**ACTION 7/1:** Andrea Leedale (Defra) to update the ocean acidification paper and circulate to GBSC. All members to circulate within parent organisations. Andy Stott to consider putting paper forward to SBSTTA as emerging science issue and promotion opportunities at SBSTTA side event on the Royal Society and GBSC workshop.

**ACTION 7/2:** Andrea Leedale (Defra) to explore possibility of publishing ocean acidification paper. Report back on progress to Aug GBSC meeting.

Nick Dulvy (Cefas) provided an update on the ICES workshop *The Significance of Changes in Surface CO<sub>2</sub> and Ocean pH in Shelf Sea Ecosystems*, which was held 2-4 May. The first day focussed on the physical evidence and highlighted the need for standard methods of measurement. The opportunity of routine and regular measurements on ocean-going ferries was explored which would provide much needed data for research. It was suggested that Nick feed information from the event into Andrea Leedale's paper and circulate his presentation to GBSC members.

**ACTION 7/3:** Nick Dulvy (Cefas) to provide information from the ICES workshop for use in Andrea Leedale's ocean acidification paper. Nick to circulate his presentation on the ICES workshop to GBSC members.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Climate change event**

Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) provided an update on progress towards the event which is to be held at the Royal Society 12-13 June. A final programme for the joint Royal Society and GBSC workshop was tabled. The event is now fully booked and the Secretariat will circulate the delegate list to GBSC members for information. The speakers have been briefed and are currently submitting abstracts of their presentations which will be compiled into a booklet for delegates. The briefing for the breakout groups is being finalised and will be circulated to the chairs shortly. There will be a side-event about the workshop at SBSTTA12 in July and details of this are being finalised by Karen Dickinson (JNCC) and Steph Godliman (Defra).

It was noted that the budget for the workshop is extremely tight, despite the generous contributions from the co-sponsors. One of the reasons for this is the amount of work involved in liaising with delegates coming from the Least Developed Countries. Miles Parker (Defra) and Sarah Nelson (Defra) noted that they could provide contacts within the British Council who would be good for the Secretariat to approach for possible assistance with the project.

#### **Agenda Item 9: BRAG report**

Members had received a written update on the work of the UK BRAG and they were encouraged to look at the revised website which had recently been launched.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Diary/meeting dates**

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 August at DfID in London. The Secretariat will find a suitable date for the November GBSC meeting which is likely to be held at Defra in London.

#### **Agenda Item 11: AOB**

Members had received a written update from Andy Stott (Defra) on the note of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) meeting held in Germany, 4-7 May

which was provided for information. The recommendations for priority research topics for the EU Biodiversity Strategy of most relevance to the GBSC came out of the biodiversity research and the global perspective break-out group. Twelve priorities were identified and it was noted that it would be worth-while considering these in more detail at the next GBSC meeting.

**ACTION 11/1:** Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) to circulate recommendations from the EPBRS biodiversity research and the global perspective breakout-group and to add this to the agenda for the August GBSC meeting.

Members had received a written update from Amanda Read (BBSRC) concerning BBSRC systematics initiatives. RBGE provided comments for the meeting and welcomed these initiatives. The group were interested to note the Research Councils Systematics Symposium which will be held 29 August at RBGE.