

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

**Paper on Biodiversity Multilateral
Environmental Agreements Key themes
and issues**

September 2008

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**Global Environmental Change Committee-Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee
Paper on Biodiversity Multilateral Environmental Agreements
Key themes and issues**

Background

One of the suggestions following the Review of the GBSC, undertaken in 2007, was the need for an annual work plan. The GBSC agreed that in order to provide some focus the work plan should, in part, be informed and respond to the needs of the agendas of the key conventions and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Key themes and issues from the biodiversity MEAs

In April 2008, at the first GBSC meeting following the Review, the GBSC considered how it could contribute to international MEAs in the future. It was suggested that the GBSC should identify the common issues, themes and gaps from all the biodiversity MEAs by the end of 2008. As a starting point, the Secretariat should circulate the agendas and key themes for discussion at the September GBSC meeting. Details of the meetings of the major MEAs and a weblink to the agendas can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Major meetings of multilateral environmental agreements in 2008

Convention/MEA and website	Date of meeting	Location of meeting	Lead
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) CoP9 http://www.cbd.int/cop9/	19-30 May 2008	Bonn, Germany	Eric Blencowe Defra
African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) MoP4 http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop4_docs/mop4.htm	7-11 September 2008	Antananarivo, Madagascar	John Clorley Defra
IUCN World Conservation Congress http://cms.iucn.org/news_events/events/congress/index.cfm	5-14 October 2008	Barcelona, Spain	David Parker CCW
CMS initiative to develop an agreement on African-Eurasian Migratory Raptors http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/raptors/raptor_meeting.htm	20-22 October 2008	United Arab Emirates	John Clorley Defra
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands CoP10 http://www.ramsar.org/index_cop10_e.htm	28 October - 4 November 2008	Changwon, South Korea	Simon Hopkinson Defra
Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) CoP9 http://www.cms.int/bodies/cop_mainpage.htm	1-5 December 2008	Rome, Italy	Trevor Salmon Defra

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) CoP 14 http://unfccc.int/meetings/items/2654.php	1-12 December 2008	Poznań, Poland	Last year HoD Hilary Benn, Chris Dodwell Acting Head Defra
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In addition to the MEAs identified in table 1, the following Conventions and MEAs are also of relevance to the GBSC:

- CBD SBSTTA, next meeting May 2009
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, next Scientific Committees (Animals & Plants) in spring 2009 and CoP15 in January, 2010
- World Heritage Convention, no information on meetings available
- Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), no information on meetings available (Standing Committee typically in December annually)
- OSPAR, Biodiversity Committee meeting February 2009, Commission meeting June 2009
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, no information on meetings available

Reference should be made to a paper prepared for the June meeting of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC 08 D10), *Conferences and meetings of the parties to multilateral environmental agreements in 2008: common themes and approaches*¹. This paper identified a number of cross-cutting themes from the Conferences and Meetings of the Parties to which the UK is party, taking place between May and December 2008 (see table 1). These cross-cutting themes are as follows:

- Climate change and biodiversity
- Ecosystem services and human health
- Biofuels
- Avian influenza and other wildlife diseases
- Invasive alien species
- Overseas Territories.

Thematic approaches

The JNCC is evaluating the use of a thematic approach as a means of focusing its effort and better integrating its work across a number of internal programmes. The themes it has used are based on the direct drivers of biodiversity loss identified in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment as modified by the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity. These include habitat transformation, over-exploitation, invasive alien species, pollution and climate change; the 'others' category, including disease, is not being addressed directly (disease will be considered under invasive aliens). The GBSC may wish to consider using this approach as an aid to consider how gaps in MEA science might be grouped.

¹ <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4345>

Key Questions

Since the UK will have delegations attending the meetings listed in Table 1, the GBSC could consider, for the UK, what are the key themes that cut across MEAS, what evidence the UK requires to support the development of UK policy lines at these various meetings and what are the significant gaps in evidence that restrict the development or effectiveness of UK policy lines. These questions could be directed to the Heads of Delegation, either before the meetings or as a follow-up. In this way, the GBSC could identify the gaps in the UK's needs for MEA science. Such gaps should be considered not only in the context of UK needs at the current suite of MEA CoPs but also in terms of what evidence we need to gather over the next three years to inform our approach to the next cycle of CoPs. As such the exercise should also incorporate a horizon scanning element.

Process

The GBSC needs to consider are how to identify the emerging issues of the MEAs and which of these emerging issues the group can address. The GBSC Secretariat could establish a process following each MEA meeting whereby they obtain a report from the Heads of Delegation on the outcomes of the meeting and they seek views from the MEA leads on the focus and likely progression of the MEA at the subsequent meeting.