

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

Executive Summary

26 January 2010

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GECC SUB-COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
KEY ISSUES ARISING AT 26 JANUARY 2010

Geoengineering and biodiversity

Following publication of the Royal Society report “Geoengineering the climate: Science, governance and uncertainty¹”, Georgina Mace, Director of the Centre for Population Biology at Imperial College London gave a presentation to the GBSC on geoengineering and implications for global biodiversity.

Geoengineering was taken to mean deliberate large scale interventions. Two main options were considered: Carbon dioxide removal from the atmosphere (CDR) and Solar radiation techniques (SRT). Motivation for the Royal Society report came from concerns that projections for climate change scenarios are being exceeded and top level emissions scenarios are being tracked. This elevated geoengineering up the political agenda as a way to tackle critical climate change scenarios. However, there are concerns that by focusing on geoengineering emphasis is removed from reducing CO₂ emissions. Furthermore the impacts of these techniques on biodiversity and ecosystems are not fully being considered.

During discussion it was agreed that there is a need to get biodiversity factored as an integral part of climate models. Most climate models consider average figures for precipitation, sunlight etc. but biodiversity is usually affected by extreme events such as drought, flooding etc. A better understanding of the vulnerable attributes of species and ecosystems is required to link into climate models and to inform decisions at national and international levels.

Two actions arose:

1. A subgroup will further investigate the implications for global biodiversity in regard to geoengineering and will report back key lines of action for the GBSC to take.
2. Defra will pursue the possibilities for holding a side event on geoengineering at the Convention on Biological Diversity SBSTTA meeting² in May 2010.

Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

After initial scepticism of the proposal of IPBES from a number of countries, the UNEP-WCMC led a gap analysis of the science-policy interface on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The UNEP-WCMC paper³ was considered at the 2nd Ad Hoc meeting in October 2009, at which there was greater engagement and support from governments in taking the mechanism forward. Further work on the functions of the proposed platform, its

¹ <http://royalsociety.org/geoengineeringclimate/>

² <http://www.cbd.int/sbstta/>

³ <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/resources/publications/otherpubs.htm>

governance, structure, funding and links to other organisations would be sought at a 3rd and final meeting later this year.

During discussion members noted concerns about the funding for capacity building work. It was stressed that the Global Environmental Facility was only one of several mechanisms being considered for financing this work and the UK was looking at new and innovative financing mechanisms. In terms of the capacity building function the EU view is that the platform should provide a catalytic role, looking at what existing institutions are doing and matching research and policy needs.

Members agreed that the strength of such a platform will be in providing “one voice for biodiversity and ecosystem services” and that priority biodiversity needs should be identified now so that they can be progressed as soon as the platform is in place.

Review of the GBSC Terms of Reference (ToR) and work programme

Members agreed that it would be timely to undertake an internal review of the group’s ToR and work programme in the light of various other initiatives such as the main GECC review, formation of IPBES which has some similar functions to GBSC, the GECC Global Environmental Research Co-ordination review of global research priorities and the Sutherland et al Sutherland *et al.* paper of 100 global conservation questions⁴.

A subgroup will take forward the internal review of the GBSC ToR and work programme and report back to the next GBSC meeting in summer 2010.

⁴ William Sutherland *et al.* “One Hundred Questions of Importance to the Conservation of Global Biological Diversity”, *Conservation Biology*, Vol 23, Issue 3, Pages 557-567, 22 April 2009
<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122351358/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>