

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Annual Report

**Report of the Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)
to the Annual Meeting of the UK Global Environmental Change
Committee (UK GECC)**

2005 - 2006

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**12th Meeting of the Global Environmental Change Committee
3 October, 2006**

**Location: Room 8a/b, Ashdown House,
123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE**

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee – Chairman's Report

Remit of the GBSC

The remit of the GBSC is to inform UK science strategy relating to global biodiversity and sustainable use. The focus of the sub-committee is on the science underlying the key global issues. The focus of discussions held on agenda items are on the implications for research strategy and views of members are sought on all substantive items.

Meetings and attendance

The GBSC have met seven times to date, three times since the last report (Feb 21, May 16 and Aug 23). Additionally, the GBSC organised a special one day workshop on 3 Feb to evaluate the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and discuss its key messages, knowledge gaps and policy implications (see paragraph below). Meetings have been well attended and there is now a regular representative from DfID and each of the research councils (NERC, BBSRC, ESRC).

GBSC Programme of Work

The GBSC drew up a detailed work programme based on its Terms of Reference, in June 2005. Discussion and review of this programme of work has taken place at each subsequent GBSC meeting.

Following a substantive discussion at the May 2006 meeting a sub-group was formed to consider a paper on international biodiversity related conventions. This is due to report back to the Nov meeting.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

The MA was introduced to the GBSC by a presentation from Neville Ash, (UNEP-WCMC) in February 2005. Following discussion, the GBSC decided to take forward the issue of gaps in science and research needs.

As knowledge gaps were identified it was agreed that the GBSC should identify a process for addressing them. It was considered important that this task be carried out in a fully integrated manner. The idea of a workshop to discuss the emerging biodiversity research needs from the MA evolved from the June 2005 meeting.

On 3 February 2006 the GBSC held an MA workshop at the Royal Horticultural Halls in London. The aim of the workshop was to develop an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the MA, including those elements that can be used to support policy development; those elements that should be approached more cautiously; and to prioritise science gaps requiring action. The event was attended by 53 participants from Government departments and agencies, research organisations, academic and research institutes.

The GBSC produced a report from the MA workshop which is available at http://www.ukgecc.org/dvl/Biodiversity_MEA.htm. One part of the report is a set of non

consensus recommendations which were based on a synthesis of the discussions held at the workshop and could be used to inform follow-up actions by various actors.

At the August 2006 meeting, the GBSC discussed some of the activities members were taking with in relation to the workshop recommendations. The group is currently preparing a comprehensive list of these activities which will be posted on the GECC website in due course.

Climate change and biodiversity

The GBSC invited Dr Richard Betts, Manager of Ecosystems and Climate Impacts at the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research, to its meeting in February 2006, to give a presentation on climate change. Uncertainties in climate change science and potential impacts for biodiversity were considered. Following a substantive round-table discussion it was agreed that a working group should be formed to discuss the possibility of an event with the aim of improving understanding of the biodiversity-climate change linkages.

The working group includes some GBSC members and several nominated experts in climate change and/or biodiversity. This group has met twice (April 28 and July 25) and is in the process of producing a proposal to the Royal Society for a 2-day science policy meeting to be held in May 2007. The focus of this symposium would be managing biodiversity to mitigate climate change and its effects and the aim would be to raise the profile of biodiversity and its role in relation to climate change. The event would most likely be by invitation only and it would include eminent speakers from developed and developing countries.

Ocean acidification

The GBSC invited Dr Carol Turley, Head of Science at Plymouth Marine Laboratory, to its meeting in February 2006 to give a presentation on ocean acidification with a particular focus on gaps in the research. Following the presentation there was a substantive round-table discussion. Whilst no conclusions could be drawn at that stage, the GBSC agreed to the formation of a working group to agree and rank the research priorities, with scientific and policy justification. The working group is currently being established and will include nominated science and policy experts relating to ocean acidification. A research priorities paper will be the key output from this exercise.

Invasive Alien Species

A presentation on invasive alien species and threats to biodiversity was made by Sean Murphy (co-ordinator of Invasive Species Initiatives, CABI) during the GBSC meeting in May 2006. This global issue is a major factor driving biodiversity loss and it is characterised by a lack of data. Following a substantive discussion the group concluded that further consideration was needed to identify priorities and guide future funding decisions.

A paper was prepared by a sub-group, led by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. This has built on the discussions at the May meeting, and proposes a small number of international invasive alien species issues that would benefit from UK-funded research. This will be discussed at the GBSC meeting in November.

DIVERSITAS

GBSC invited Dave Raffaelli, Environment Department, York University to the meeting in August 2006, to present the work of the DIVERSITAS Science Programme, focusing on bioSUSTAINABILITY (one of the core projects of DIVERSITAS). GBSC members have

been asked to consider how their work links to that of bioSUSTAINABILITY and DIVERSITAS in general, and how they can use the outputs from the Programme.

Links to BRAG

Through a shared Secretariat, GBSC has strong links to the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group. The two groups have a number of shared members, and each provides a verbal and written report to meetings of the other.

Future discussion items

The GBSC has identified a number of issues for consideration at future meetings, including:

- BiodivERsA – guest speaker, Coenraad Krijger (The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, Den Haag) has been invited to November meeting, to provide an overview of the ERA-Net, particularly the work package focusing on cooperation with developing countries.
- Issues concerning the sufficiency of national capacity – this is one of the GBSC Terms of Reference. A preliminary discussion at the August 2006 meeting identified the need for further consideration of this item, to identify areas where the UK science base would benefit from greater capacity, in particular though not necessarily limited to the UK's Overseas Territories.
- ERFF – invite representative to give a presentation on activities and overlaps with GBSC, and how the group can engage with ERFF.
- ERA-Nets – identify key ERA-Net projects to invite to future GBSC meetings.