

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

GECC Sub-Committee Minutes

2 November 2004

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**GECC SUB-COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES
MINUTES: 2nd November 2004**

Attendees:

Miles Parker (Chair) Defra
Glenys Parry, Defra
Karen Dickenson, Defra
Andy Stott, Defra
Mike Waldoock, CEFAS
Wyn Jones, JNCC
Richard Ferris (Secretariat) JNCC
Elizabeth Moore (Secretariat) JNCC
Peter Crane, Kew
Johannes Vogel, Natural History Museum
Clare Rushowski, BBSRC
Joanna Drewitt, Scottish Executive

Apologies:

Rob Bowman/Nicola Stewart, FCO
Pamela Kempton/Phil Newton, NERC

Agenda Item 1: Terms of Reference and Mode of Operation

A brief background to the Global Environmental Change Committee (GECC) was given and the Sub-Committee were asked for feedback on the formation of this group. There was general endorsement of the establishment of the Sub-Committee. The focus on international biodiversity issues was considered important as was Defra's role in co-ordinating these activities. The draft terms of reference were agreed subject to review in the light of experience.

ACTION POINT 1/1: **Secretariat** to revisit the terms of reference at Sub-Committee meeting in May 2005

There was a discussion on the membership of the Sub-Committee. Suggestions for additional members included Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (RBGE), Tyndall Centre, Central Science Laboratory, the Environment Agency, DCMS (as corresponding members) and Marine Division in Defra. The engagement of the Genetic Resources Team at Defra was considered useful as was involvement of WCMC for specific meetings of the Sub-Committee.

ACTION POINT 1/2: **JD** to consider the role of RBGE and report conclusions to Secretariat by 31 December 2004.

ACTION POINT 1/3: **GP** and **MP** to consider who to invite from Defra Marine Division and inform Secretariat by 31 December 2004.

ACTION POINT 1/4: **Secretariat** to follow up attendance at future meetings by representatives from DFID, FCO, NERC and the Royal Society.

Agenda Item 3: International Conventions

The paper on international conventions was introduced and members were asked to identify any omissions from column 1 to 3. It was suggested the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture should be added. It was considered important to focus collectively on the science needs of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Gaps in our knowledge include implications for agricultural biodiversity in relation to World Trade Organisation changes; the UK's role in the follow up to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA); and tracking progress to the 2010 targets. It was agreed that text in Column 3 should refer to UK's international, rather than domestic commitments.

The need for a fifth column was discussed. This could provide a high level view identifying which organisations have expertise and are contributing to each Convention, plus an indication of whether they would like to do more. It was suggested that the focus should be on responsibilities in the UK for global commitments. The fourth column could be divided into what is already being done (i.e. science advice and research already occurring) and what is missing/what more might we want to do.

- ACTION POINT 3/1: **ALL** to populate the fourth column at the programme level with details of major commitments in each area pertinent to the Terms of Reference and a description of other needs not being met. This information should be submitted to the Secretariat by 31 December 2004
- ACTION POINT 3/2: **Secretariat** to collate responses and re-circulate paper by 31 January 2005.

There was a discussion about how to handle European programmes within the Sub-Committee. It was agreed that this was a grey area where some EU programmes would be more appropriate to the remit of the Sub-Committee than others, for example treaties which do not fit into UK delivery but are part of the UK's global delivery responsibility. It was decided that the group will need to establish the boundary on these issues as it evolves.

Agenda Item 4: CBD SBSTTA Agenda

The SBSTTA paper was introduced and it was noted that this was based on the draft agenda since the agenda for SBSTTA has not yet been published. Furthermore, the date for the next SBSTTA meeting has not been fixed and it may be moved to Montreal in March 2005.

The theme of island biodiversity was discussed. The UK has not nominated a representative for the expert group since it was not considered a priority area and places are limited. It was suggested that although the UK is an island and is likely to suffer from problems such as invasive species and climate change, it was appropriate not to get directly involved at this stage since these issues are being considered under other CBD initiatives. There will be an opportunity

for the UK to feed into discussions based on the expert report on substantive issues following the expert group meeting due to be held in mid-December 2004 and also through the EU preparatory meeting for SBSTTA.

It was agreed that the UK has responsibilities to its island dependent territories and that engagement with FCO would be important to ensure they are kept informed of the issues. A representative from the overseas territories will be invited to attend the SBSTTA meeting once the date and venue are confirmed.

ACTION POINT 4/1: **GP** to ensure output from SBSTTA expert group on island biodiversity is relayed to next meeting of UK Government and UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum in January 2005.

It was noted that at the next SBSTTA meeting there will be a presentation on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and follow-up to the CBD CoP7 focal areas for development of indicators. It was agreed that the Sub-Committee could feed into this process by, for example, looking at the 2nd Global Biodiversity Outlook which will be discussed at CBD CoP 8 in May 2006. An outline will be considered by SBSTTA 10. In the short-term SBSTTA will review 13 indicators recommended for immediate testing. There are gaps for indicators that need further development, especially those concerning sustainable use, ecosystem goods and services and benefit sharing. In the long-term there is a need to mobilise the science community beyond the 2010 target to allow more robust assessment of changes to biodiversity. UK scientists and institutions have an important contribution to make.

ACTION POINT 4/2: **GP** to circulate documentation on MEA, GBO and indicators (when available) for comments from the group.

ACTION POINT 4/3: **ALL** to provide written comments on GECC GBSC (04) 04 paper to Secretariat by 31 December 2004

It was noted that the Royal Society meeting proceedings are now in press and should be published in January 2005 and these could be shared with the Sub-Committee to feed into the process. It was felt important to engage others with data, in particular the NGO community as well as the Natural History Museum and Kew.

ACTION POINT 4/4: **PC** to provide AS with an advance copy of the Royal Society paper when available.

It was suggested that we need a better understanding of what UK institutions are doing in terms of global biodiversity assessment and it would be useful to have information about the level of investment and who is involved.

ACTION POINT 4/5: **CR** to contact relevant staff in Research Councils to produce short information note (maximum 2

sides A4) on research programme priority setting processes and timetables by 8 January 2005.

The importance of indicators at a global level was emphasised and it was agreed that the Sub-Committee needs to focus on the global rather than the national level. We will have a clearer idea of what is happening with international biodiversity policy and science in the UK as a consequence of the follow up to the international conventions paper.

It was noted that agricultural biodiversity would not be a main CBD theme until CoP9 (2008), however there will be some work on genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs) and food and nutrition (as part of the Millennium Development Goals). The UK has supported a precautionary approach to GURTs while emphasising their potential to restrict gene flow and these will be considered at SBSTTA 10 (early 2005). The paper on food and nutrition will be circulated in due course. Climate would not be discussed in detail but the Terms of Reference for an Expert Group on climate change will be discussed at SBSTTA 10 (February 2005). The focus is likely to be on adaptation to climate change rather than mitigation as previous reports have covered that.

ACTION POINT 4/6: **Secretariat** to invite Martin Parry from the Tyndall Centre to discuss climate change at the May or August 2005 meeting as appropriate.

ACTION POINT 4/7: **GP** to provide a list of CBD work programmes to Sub-Committee with an indication of priorities and those we are not engaged in by 3 December 2004

The chair concluded that the Sub-Committee would provide a sounding board for SBSTTA papers as they emerge.

Agenda Item 5: Future programme of work

The paper on the work programme was introduced and it was noted that this was not a comprehensive list of events and work blocks and it would need refining. Most of the big events were included and it was agreed that it would be helpful to circulate information about smaller more specific events.

ACTION POINT 5/1: **Secretariat** to ensure Defra GWD circulate the forthcoming events list to all members of the Sub-Committee by 30 November 2004 and ensure we are kept informed of changes as appropriate.

The Sub-Committee were invited to comment on the work programme. It was suggested that EU Presidency events and the G8 Presidency be added. The need to flag up how UK Presidencies will be used to be proactive on biodiversity issues was discussed.

The Sub-Committee was advised that there will be no opportunity for getting biodiversity onto the agenda for the G8 Summit but there may be limited

possibilities if there are any relevant Ministerial events¹. The suggestion was made that we use the information which will be collated from the international conventions paper to inform other publications about biodiversity and this could be included in delegate packs for the UK Presidencies.

ACTION POINT 5/2: **Secretariat** to find out what products have been produced by the GECC and the GECC Marine Sub-Committee and assess what we might be able to produce for the UK Presidencies in 2005. Report back to the next Sub-Committee meeting in February 2005.

A number of additional areas for the work programme were suggested and these will be discussed by Defra and the Secretariat before drawing up a revised work programme and several draft agendas for circulation to the Sub-Committee in advance of the next meeting.

ACTION POINT 5/3: **Secretariat** to discuss work programme with Defra and decide how to address themes by 15 December 2004.

ACTION POINT 5/4: **Secretariat** to circulate a set of possible agendas along with a revised work programme for agreement by 31 January 2005.

ACTION POINT 5/5: **Secretariat** to canvas for date for next meeting which will be held end February 2005 and notify members by 15 December 2004.

Agenda Item 6: AOB

The Sub-Committee was given an overview of the French Biodiversity Symposium, organised by the French Research Ministry on 24-28 January 2005 in Paris. There will be one and a half days of plenary followed by one and a half days of working groups. France is keen on a body like the IPCC for biodiversity and this is likely to feature in discussions on governance. This will, however, be limited to one working group. There will be many others on e.g. biodiversity assessments, agricultural biodiversity and urban ecology. The UK has yet to make a decision on this issue but considers biodiversity to be much more complex than climate change and more international scientific collaboration on biodiversity is required which falls short of an IPCC type group. Further details including the agenda can be found at <http://www.recherche.gouv.fr/biodiv2005paris/en/index.htm>

¹ It has since been announced that there will be a joint Environment/Development Ministerial event focussing on climate change and illegal logging