

**Global biodiversity mechanisms:
a thematic review of recent developments and future evidence needs**

Strand Palace Hotel, London 20th May 2009

Final Plenary Session Working Group Report

May 2009

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Session 3: Final plenary

Ian Bainbridge thanked the rapporteurs, all participants for constructive discussions, and all those involved in setting up the meeting; the briefing papers in particular, were a valuable resource.

The final session of the day was chaired by Martin Brasher, Deputy Director Biodiversity Programme at Defra. He echoed Ian's comments on the briefings and stated he was delighted that the meeting was happening; it had first been discussed during the previous round of CoPs, four years previously. It is clear that there is a need to get Conventions to work together more effectively, not least due to the increase in costs of running them – the impact of recent exchange rate changes alone had been to increase the total cost incurred by UK government by more than £400,000, so best value for money is crucial. A number of recurring themes arose in the previous feedback session, including the science policy interface, economic valuation, and how can the UK provide a lead.

Discussion in the final plenary centred around the following subjects.

- Currently biodiversity subsidises trade, a paradigm that needs to be re-thought. Can the MEAs work together to use the results from the TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) to put into context the cost and values of biodiversity in providing ecosystem services? The Government is very interested in the TEEB study, and the opportunities it offers for developing a 'green economy', but it is not clear how the results will be able to be applied.
- In considering how the MEAs should work better together, this really requires consideration of how parties (who form the MEAs as groupings of countries), can be more consistent in the resolutions adopted at CoPs, and how Parties can implement what they agree to at meetings. MEAs do have differences, but they also are trying already to look at harmonised implementation – e.g. for reporting on the 2010 target.
- There may be an opportunity for government(s) to look at the decisions of CoPs as opportunities – for example might there be cost savings as a result of more effective policy making. This is done to some degree already, but there is probably more that can be done in terms of the evaluation of the benefits of policies.
- A question was raised about the possibility / opportunity for rationalising MEAs, or making them work more efficiently? This is difficult; there is a cost of holding large meetings across the globe on a regular basis, but that needs to be balanced against the potential risk of loss of impetus at that global level if meetings are held too infrequently or are unsuccessful. It is important that there is time for implementation between meetings and less frequent meetings may mean more money for implementation. One way in which progress might be made faster is to think about the information base on which decisions about implementation are made – there should be good opportunity to do this in the UK.

- Governments implement Conventions, and this will lead to degrees of consistency within them, but more integrated thinking is needed. That was why the themes for the day were chosen to be cross-cutting. It is important that the day's discussion do not peter-out, but are the start of doing work differently, to bring in other policy sectors. One particular beneficiary may be that implementation in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories can be enhanced, as they may be in the best position to benefit from, for example, the CBD. Another is how any post-2010 target, overarching across the MEAs, may be worded.
- There are perhaps two key areas which came out of all of the workshop sessions – boundaries, and communication. Boundaries are helpful in some instances, in making a subject discrete and achievable, but we also need to work across boundaries, for example when looking at the value of ecosystem services. In promoting the results of the MEA deliberations, and in taking results from one to another, more consideration needs to be given to communication issues, and especially clarity of language. Clearly writing down what we as UK are trying to achieve is an important step.
- The follow-on from this workshop may therefore be to identify over the next few years, between Government, its agencies and NGOs, a strategic UK agenda and priorities in preparation for the next round of MEA meetings. This can be both in terms of disseminating what is happening, and the policy needs for science evidence / capacity development, and also in terms of informing the general public what is going on. If this results in a good process, it could be shared with other countries in the next round of CoPs.

Peter Bridgewater, Chair of JNCC, closed the conference by thanking participants for taking part energetically. The nature of the audience, with a cross section of both Governmental and non-governmental actors had helped to inform discussions. Peter highlighted the following as take-home messages:

- silos, do exist, and it is important we find effective ways of moving knowledge between them;
- a better science-policy interface at both national and international levels is needed and clarity of information and translation is needed in either direction. JNCC has a key role here;
- whilst having just a single biodiversity MEA might be ideal, that situation doesn't exist at the moment, working between Conventions was thus necessary;
- the TEEB report is an opportunity which must be seized, to bring out the benefits that biodiversity provides to people's everyday lives;
- there continues to be an issue of resources and focus for involvement in MEA processes by the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies;
- more working together is necessary, at national and international levels; a strategic UK approach to the next round of MEA meetings, based on a thematic approach, is clearly desirable.

Following the close of the conference, Baroness Young launched [*An Atlas of Wader Populations in Africa and Western Eurasia*](#), recently published by Wetlands International.