

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

**Strand Palace Hotel, London 20<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

Island Issues (especially Overseas Territories & Crown Dependencies)  
Working Group Report

May 2009

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## Island Issues – Working Group Report

### Island Issues (especially Overseas Territories & Crown Dependencies) [[ppt feedback](#)]

**Chair:** Jack Ward (Department of Conservation Services, Bermuda)

**Participants:** Ian Bainbridge (SNH), Juliet Brodie (Natural History Museum), Vincent Fleming (JNCC), Sarah Fowler (Naturebureau International), Harriet Gillet (UNEP-WCMC), Jerry Harrison (UNEP-WCMC), Louise Magris (States of Jersey, Planning and Environment Department), Elizabeth Moore (JNCC, rapporteur), Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF), Richard Selman (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, IoM), Andy Tully (Defra), Tony Weighell (JNCC), Dominic Whitmee (Defra), James Williams (JNCC).

#### 1. Key implementation requirements

The group discussed the relevance of MEAs to the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (hereafter referred to collectively as 'the Territories'). It was noted that the agreements are a useful lever to encourage politicians and others to undertake nature conservation work. It was noted that there were a number of Territories who had not signed up to some of the MEAs and that the Territories could be encouraged to ratify more of the MEAs. The benefits to the Territory of joining the MEA would need to be made explicit in plain English, along with any obligations of relevance to the territory. The need to consider Territories at an early stage in the process of signing up to an MEA was noted.

The group agreed that there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about the MEAs in the Territories and it would be useful to get experts who are familiar with the MEAs to convey information to the local decision makers. This was done for the Ramsar Convention and resulted in all the Territories ratifying that Instrument. The MEAs set out global priorities and are a strong mechanism which the territories can use for identifying economic indicators of livelihoods, sustainability and well-being which are issues of relevance to the territories. The importance of clear communication and the need for information in an island context was stressed.

#### 2. Key emerging issues

The way in which the Territories engage with the major meetings of the MEAs was discussed. A representative from a Territory can join the metropolitan UK delegation, however, hitherto the cost has been funded by the Territory and the information and experience gained only benefits that Territory. A process could be developed whereby clear island specific guidance is provided in sufficient time for the Territories to feed into the MEA meetings, and information relevant to the Territories is fed back to the Territories following the meetings. This would minimise the reporting burden and maximise the opportunities for the Territories to engage with the MEAs.

The issues of funding and capacity were discussed. It was noted that the Territories are not included in the definition of Small Island Developing States used by a number of MEAs including the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>1</sup> and that funding therefore has to come either from metropolitan UK or from the Territories themselves. Sustainable sources of funding are hard to secure. The problem is exacerbated by the split of responsibilities in metropolitan UK across multiple departments. The group agreed the need for a focal point on biodiversity for the Territories from metropolitan UK.

Given the constraints the territories face, the group agreed that there is a need to make better use of existing networks and to share information and expertise as much as possible. This is a focus of the work of the JNCC's OT Research Programme<sup>2</sup>. The group agreed that there was value in promoting successful examples of work in the Territories, for example the work in the south Atlantic to successfully reduce bycatch of albatrosses and petrels. This could help raise the profile of the MEAs in the Territories and raise the profile of the Territories in metropolitan UK.

The group identified sustainable management of fisheries as an emerging issue for a number of Territories. Initial investment in fishery protection can subsequently re-pay itself through income from fishing licences (e.g. South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the Falkland Islands). But it is hard to get that initial investment and without it illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing is able to continue, stocks aren't managed sustainably and the Territories lose vital income. It was agreed that research on the economic costs and benefits of the management of these and other marine issues would be useful with links to valuation of ecosystem services.

### **3. Evidence and Research needs**

It was noted that there is a general lack of baseline survey in the territories and a poor awareness of the high levels of endemism, particularly in the marine environment. These are all powerful arguments for economic valuation of ecosystem services. It was also noted that there is lots of disparate information about the territories but this information needs processing. For example there are a number of taxonomic collections in metropolitan UK institutes which could be made more widely available and would be a valuable summary of resources in the territories. The problem is finding capacity (and expertise) to do this.

### **4. The interface between science and policy**

The group noted the short-term nature of the political agenda which is often reactive and hard for science to influence. The lack of continuity of Ministers and staff at different levels in the Territories and metropolitan UK poses problems in terms of communication and awareness of the MEAs, as well as a commitment to conservation. It was noted that initiating novel research is hard to do given policy constraints. The direction of priorities in the Territories is often consistent with metropolitan UK, for example on invasive alien species. Funding for projects on this issue is driven by metropolitan UK priorities.

### **5. Priorities from global, European and UK perspectives**

It was noted that the Territories can achieve a lot through the advantage of their small size, and they can and should be used as models to celebrate success. The Territories are also good examples at a small scale of the ecosystem approach and links between ecosystem services and civil society are often much clearer and easier to understand and value. The priority is to clearly communicate best practice and key messages about MEAs between the Territories and metropolitan UK and as well as between Territories and share information and tasks to maximise capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://bch.cbd.int/thesaurus/term.aspx?termid=4596>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4113>