



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة · 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT · PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

UNEP INFORMATION NOTE TO THE 2nd MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF AFRICAN- EURASIAN MIGRATORY WATERBIRDS (AEWA)

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INTRODUCTION

1. This paper prepared by the Division of Environmental Conventions in UNEP, gives information about substantive UNEP support to environmental conventions including AEWA. *Comments from the Standing Committee would be welcome, particularly on the scope to include AEWA in future pilot projects for the harmonisation of reporting; and on issues of governance and administration.*

UNEP SUBSTANTIVE SUPPORT TO BIODIVERSITY-RELATED MEAs

(i) *Tenth meeting of secretariats of multilateral environment agreements*

2. The tenth meeting of multilateral environment agreement secretariats was held on 8 and 9 March 2004 in Nairobi. This meeting was attended by the executive secretaries of all the UNEP-administered conventions and Agreements, as well as those of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. The following proposals were discussed:
 - (a) Systematic contact should be established between UNEP and secretariats of the multilateral environment agreements. Annual or biannual meetings between UNEP and the secretariats could be organized to coincide with the preparation of UNEP's work programme. These would preferably be held back-to-back with the meetings of the Environment Management Group to promote synergies with the intergovernmental organizations represented there. Those meetings could be complemented with bilateral meetings between UNEP and the secretariats of multilateral environment agreements;
 - (b) Focus areas for UNEP should be established. UNEP should focus on areas where it has comparative advantages in terms of human and financial resources such as transboundary issues, capacity-building and institution-building at the national level, work on compliance and enforcement at the regional and national levels, trade and the environment, outreach and public awareness and identification of joint programmes of work;

(c) UNEP could provide political support to the multilateral environment agreements by facilitating communication between the environment and other related areas, improving public participation and access, preparing a research data base on gaps and emerging issues, examining potential conflicts between multilateral environmental agreements and presenting linkages between the agendas of international meetings, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and multilateral environmental agreements;

(d) UNEP could provide practical support by establishing an interdivisional task force within UNEP to coordinate and enhance activities in support of the multilateral environment agreements and by providing an assessment of progress on the implementation of decisions of previous multilateral environment agreement meetings that had called for UNEP action, as well as to identify successes and failures;

(e) UNEP could strengthen regional delivery through capacity-building and training activities, national level coordination and implementation of the environmental components of sustainable development frameworks at ministerial level. Further, UNEP could follow-up decisions taken by the Parties, provide assistance in the development of subregional and regional collaboration mechanisms through subregional and regional ministerial forums, and use regional workshops on multilateral environment agreements, as in the Regional Office for Europe, with the participation of multilateral environment agreement secretariats, politicians, experts and other stakeholders;

(f) UNEP could improve coherence among multilateral environment agreements by ensuring that experiences gained in one multilateral environment agreement could be passed on to others. Convention secretariats should make case studies available to each other and to UNEP; and

(g) Issue-based modules should be developed to support the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions. This project, which would initially involve countries in Africa, would assist countries in implementing the multilateral environment agreements to which they are party by providing them with structured information on cross cutting topics. Specific products in the form of issue-based modules on cross cutting topics would be developed to deliver this information. The project would aim at developing a system that could be applied to any cross cutting topic of any combination of multilateral environment agreements. As the biodiversity multilateral environment agreements, Ramsar , CITES and CBD, are interested in this approach and as biodiversity is one of the priority topics of WSSD and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the project would initially focus on cross cutting issues among biodiversity related conventions. In order to improve the implementation of all biodiversity commitments and to maintain a high level of political momentum for biodiversity protection, the initial phase of the project would include other processes in addition to the biodiversity conventions, such as those of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, when relevant to the topics chosen.

(ii) *Harmonisation of National Reporting*

3. Following the completion of the four country-based pilot projects financed by UNEP, with a donation from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a draft summary report entitled “Harmonization of information management and reporting for biodiversity-related treaties” was published UNEP-WCMC in February 2004 and is available on their web site (www.unep-wcmc.org).

The draft report summarizes the outcome of the four pilot projects, makes recommendations for follow-up at international level, and sets out guidelines for national level harmonization of reporting and related work.

4. Eight conventions and international programmes, including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the International Whaling Commission, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, and the Man and the Biosphere Programme were covered by one or more of the pilot projects.

The pilot project reports as a whole demonstrated that:

- (a) The so-called “modular” approach to harmonized reporting is practical and should be replicable in both developed and developing countries;
- (b) As well as facilitating more collaborative working between conventions focal points at the national level, efficient application of harmonized reporting should also release scarce resources for other conservation-related activities; and
- (c) Further progress in realizing the benefits of harmonized reporting depends on synchronization of reporting cycles and the development of reporting formats to facilitate the modular approach.

The draft report was considered at an expert workshop promoting CITES-CBD cooperation and synergy held at Vilm, Germany from 20 to 24 April 2004. The workshop proposed that:

- (a) Conference of the Parties/Meeting of Parties should be asked to give a clear mandate to allow Parties to meet **their biennial reporting obligations under a harmonized** format to be agreed with the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.
- (b) The Conference of the Parties to CBD and the other biodiversity-related conventions should be asked, at future meetings, to meet their reporting obligations under a harmonized format;
- (c) UNEP should continue to convene and facilitate the process and seek further endorsement for its role by Governments at the next meeting of the UNEP Governing Council in February 2005;
- (d) UNEP should convene a follow-up workshop to consider the outcomes of the four pilot studies and refine the guidelines for the Parties; and

- (e) One or more developed and additional developing countries should also conduct pilot studies of harmonized reporting, taking into account the results of the follow-up workshop beginning in January 2005.
5. A follow-up workshop as recommended in subparagraph (d) above was held in Belgium on 22 and 23 September 2004, funded by a donation from the Belgian authorities. UNEP hopes that all biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements will participate in the workshop.
6. Reporting requirements under the CMS Agreements, including AEWA, were not included in the pilot projects at this stage **since none of them are Parties to the Agreements**. Negotiations are still on going with one AEWA Party (UK) which could take part in a possible second phase of pilot projects. Inclusion of the reporting requirements of the CMS Agreements in future pilot projects will be explored.

The Standing Committee is invited to consider how that issue can be addressed effectively including the recommendation in subparagraph (a) above on biennial reporting obligation.

(iii) ***Information support to Conventions by the Information Unit of on Conventions, UNEP/DEC***

7. UNEP, in co-operation with IUCN, is developing ECOLEX – a Web-based information service on environmental law. Over 480 environmental treaties, including CITES, CBD, CMS, Ramsar and the Lusaka Agreement, are now available on-line at <http://www.ecolex.org>. The future development of ECOLEX will be focussed on increasing access to national legislation, soft law and literature. IUCN's fauna database will also be available on-line. Plans are underway to include FAO in the ECOLEX consortium. *The views of the Standing Committee will be appreciated on how the DEC/IUC could provide support with regard to future Meeting of Parties.*

(iv) ***UNEP- WCMC Support to AEWA***

8. UNEP-WCMC have provided a range of support for AEWA over the last six years including:

(a) **Design and development of the AEWA web site** <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/AEWA/>
The first three phases were created with financial support by the Dutch and German governments. Currently the site contains general information on the agreement, displayed in English and French. The agreement text is now also available in Russian and Arabic. Furthermore, the site contains species information, including images and sound, and information on the conservation status. Additionally a pilot Internet Map Server has been developed to provide an interactive tool for users to retrieve information from multiple sources, including protected areas, species information and Important Bird Area data from BirdLife International.

(b) **Design of AEWA species flyway posters**

The first AEWA Flyway poster was designed in 1998 using the Red Knot <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/species/animals/birds/flyway/calcan.htm> to demonstrate the extent and value of the Agreement. Two more AEWA Flyway posters have been completed at UNEP-WCMC (Brent Goose and an African duck species).

(c) **Reports and Participation in AEWA**

UNEP-WCMC on behalf of the CMS Secretariat synthesises reports to CMS and related agreements. UNEP participated in various meetings of AEWa including the MOP-1, as well as Technical Committee meetings, the 1st Standing Committee Meeting held in Bonn, in November 2003, as well as advising the secretariat on various issues.

(v) *UNEP Guidelines on Enforcement and Compliance with MEAs*

9. An Intergovernmental Working Group of experts on Enforcement & Compliance took place at UNEP Headquarters at Nairobi attended by 78 Governments. UNEP facilitated the participation of developing countries and countries in transition. This working group of experts considered and finalized the draft guidelines which were submitted to the Special Governing Council session scheduled at Cartagena in February 2002.
10. The draft UNEP manual on compliance with and enforcement of multilateral environment agreements is currently being revised, taking into account useful comments and recommendations received during the five regional workshops held so far. The manual was expected to be finalized by the end of September 2004. The draft will be translated into Arabic, French and Spanish to enable UNEP test the manual in the three upcoming regional workshops for Latin American countries, French-speaking African countries and Arabic-speaking countries, which will take place in the first quarter of 2005. The guidelines are non-binding and in no way affect or alter the parties' obligations to multilateral environmental agreements. The text is available on <http://www.unep.org/DEPI/Compliance-and-Enforcement/>.

(vi) *WSSD, International Environmental Governance and the MEAs*

11. At its seventh special session, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, in its decision SS.VII/1 of 15 February 2002 on international environmental governance, adopted a report of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance containing recommendations on the subject of strengthening international environmental governance, and decided to review the implementation of those recommendations at its 22nd session, following the outcome of WSSD. It also decided to consider further measures for strengthening UNEP. Subsequently, in the implementation of decision 22/17, part I, and decision SS.VII/1 and the recommendations therein of the Intergovernmental Group of Ministers or Their Representatives on International Environmental Governance considered at the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eighth special session, held in 2004 in Jeju, Republic of Korea. The issue of support to MEAs including their Agreements such as AEWa was discussed.

12. A significant proportion of UNEP activities contribute to supporting the implementation of global and regional multilateral environmental agreements including AEWA. This includes development of relevant instruments, provision of administrative support to convention secretariats, provision of advisory services or technical assistance to individual Parties (for example, in enhancing relevant national legislation or institutions and promoting scientific cooperation or good practice), project implementation support services, including those funded through the Global Environment Facility, and awareness-raising among government officials and relevant stakeholders at the national, subregional or regional levels. UNEP has been addressing synergies and interlinkages among multilateral environmental agreements including AEWA. In addition to the work of UNEP, there have been a number of pilot projects and other activities addressing synergies among multilateral environmental agreements in recent years, for example under the auspices of the United Nations University, as well as bilateral initiatives between the conventions themselves. In 2003, UNEP commissioned a synopsis of all relevant initiatives undertaken so far, which is being compiled by WCMC.
13. UNEP's vision of coordination hinges on a partnership approach among the multilateral environmental conventions, UNEP and other intergovernmental organizations in the implementation and operationalization of "4 Cs" - Coordination, Coherence, Compliance and Capacity building. The centerpiece of the coordination process is the implementation of the conventions at the national level.
14. UNEP's papers summarize the various challenges vis-à-vis the MEAs. These are:- efficient use of collective resources--information, financial and expertise; reduction of duplication and overlaps; emphasis on programme and policy coherence; and averting uncoordinated sectoral initiatives. At the national level which is the focus of implementation of MEA activities, the concerns are for reduction of governments' burden of reporting under different MEAs; assisting governments in establishing priorities and allocating resources in an era of limited budgets; and supporting governments in coordinating preparations/monitoring to reinforce decisions taken under various MEAs and intergovernmental processes.

Members of the Standing Committee may wish to comment on the role of the CMS Agreements Unit, which already co-locates AEWA, ASCOBANS and the EUROBATS with the CMS Secretariat in Bonn. UNEP regards this as a pioneering project where results should inform the debate on MEAs governance in the IEG process and in line with the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation.