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NATIONAL REPORTING UNDER THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS

Note by the Executive Secretary

INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 8 of decision [XIII/27](#), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity requested the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, to develop, subject to subsequent endorsement by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meetings of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing, proposals for the alignment of national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols, and to report on progress to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting.

2. In paragraph 9 of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions, and the [United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre](#) (UNEP-WCMC), to explore options for enhancing synergy on national reporting among these conventions and to report to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its second meeting.

3. The present document¹ has been prepared in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties and in collaboration with the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and Rio conventions, and UNEP-WCMC. A brief overview of ongoing processes to further integrate the Convention and its Protocols is provided, for context, in section II. Section III discusses the alignment of national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols, while section IV explores options for enhancing synergy on national reporting with the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions. Section V briefly considers the funding implications of alignment and synergies in reporting. Suggested recommendations are provided in section VI. To facilitate coherent decisions across the three governing bodies under the Convention, relevant draft recommendations are addressed to all three bodies.

I. INTEGRATION AMONG THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS

4. A gradual process is under way to bring the Convention and the two Protocols closer together in order to facilitate integrated implementation by Parties and to maximize synergies among the three instruments while respecting their distinct standing with specific obligations for their respective contracting Parties. To further advance this integration, the Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 2 of decision [XIII/26](#), requested the Executive Secretary to continue using, where appropriate, integrated approaches in proposing agenda items and organizations of work, in the preparation of documents, and in

* [CBD/SBI/2/1](#).

¹ An earlier version of the present document was available for peer review from 5 to 30 March 2018, and comments were considered in finalizing the present document.

the planning and implementation of intersessional activities, and especially in addressing common cross-cutting areas, such as capacity-building, national reporting, the administration of clearing-house mechanisms, communication, education and public awareness, resource mobilization and financial mechanisms, with a view to achieving synergies in the consideration of issues and efficiency in processes related to these areas under the Convention and the Protocols.

5. Apart from the integration of reporting processes considered in the present document, progress in integration between the Convention and its Protocols is also being considered under agenda items 8 (resource mobilization), 10 (capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer), 14 (enhancing integration under the Convention and its Protocols with respect to provisions related to access and benefit-sharing, provisions related to biosafety, and provisions related to Article 8(j) and related provisions) and 15 (review of the effectiveness of the processes under the Convention and its Protocols).

6. Furthermore, in decision [XIII/1](#), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to prepare, in consultation with the Bureau, a proposal for a comprehensive and participatory preparatory process and timetable for the follow-up to the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#), taking into consideration that the work must cover the Convention and its Protocols, as appropriate. This matter will be considered under agenda item 16 (preparation for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020).

II. ALIGNING OF NATIONAL REPORTING UNDER THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS

7. In decision XIII/27, paragraph 8, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to take into account the following elements when preparing proposals for the alignment of national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols:

(a) Synchronized reporting cycles for the Convention, the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol, with common deadlines for submission of the reports after 2020;

(b) A common approach to the format of the national reports under the Convention and its Protocols;

(c) Gradual integration of the reporting facilities available in the [clearing-house mechanism](#), the [Biosafety Clearing-House](#) and the [Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House](#);

(d) Appropriate cross-linkages between future strategic plans of the Convention and its Protocols with a view to facilitating alignment in reporting to the Convention and its Protocols;

8. These elements are each addressed, in turn, in this section, which focuses on opportunities for a gradual alignment of national reporting processes and explores options arising from the elements listed in the decision, while taking into account the following considerations:

(a) The Convention and its Protocols are distinct legal instruments with specific obligations for their contracting Parties;

(b) National reports provide essential information at a specified point in time to enable the respective governing bodies to keep implementation of the instrument under review and to make decisions on future direction;

(c) Information requirements in the reporting format depend on the focus and goals of implementation strategies adopted under each instrument at a given time;

(d) Consequently, distinct reporting formats have been developed under each instrument to fulfil need for specific information requirements;

9. In addition, the following considerations have been taken into account with respect to online reporting tools and clearing-houses. Online reporting tools:

- (a) Have the potential to streamline the submission of information to the Secretariat while at the same time ensuring Party ownership of information and reports submitted;
- (b) Facilitate the sharing of information through the clearing-house mechanisms of the Convention and its Protocols and the opportunity to keep this information up-to-date;
- (c) Enable pre-filling portions of the report for which information already exists elsewhere, in particular in earlier reports under the Convention and its Protocols;
- (d) Enable harvesting of the information provided by countries through their reports to populate other relevant sections of the clearing-house mechanisms;
- (e) Facilitate the wider sharing of reported information with other conventions and processes, where this is relevant and appropriate.

A. Synchronized reporting cycles with common deadlines after 2020

10. To date, national reports under the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol have been scheduled at intervals of approximately four years, enabling the respective governing bodies to review at every second meeting progress in the implementation on the basis of information provided by Parties. National reports under the Convention had deadlines in 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2018. National reports under the Cartagena Protocol had deadlines in 2007, 2011 and 2015 (with an interim report in 2005 prior to the first national report). In accordance with decision [CP VIII/10](#), the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol at its ninth meeting is expected to consider the reporting format for the fourth national report on the basis of documentation prepared for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.² The interim national report under the Nagoya Protocol had a deadline of November 2017, and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol is also expected to consider the intervals for reporting at its third meeting, in November 2018.

11. Synchronized reporting cycles for the Convention, the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol would imply the preparation in parallel of these reports by countries, thereby facilitating coordination of the preparation process and potentially bringing together any support activities such as capacity-building and the mobilization of financial resources. At the national level, synchronized reporting could facilitate a more integrated implementation of the three instruments, for example through joint planning and review processes and a more cross-cutting consideration of related issues. It could also contribute to the effective use of resources for the preparation of these reports, for example through joint stakeholder consultations. At the level of governing bodies, common deadlines for the submission of the reports would ensure that the review of implementation of the three instruments could be done in a more integrated manner during the concurrent meetings of the governing bodies of the Convention and its Protocols, and, as appropriate, by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation in preparation for these meetings.

12. The deadline for the three reports should be set in such a way as to inform a timely review of the implementation, possibly at mid-term, of the [post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#) while providing sufficient time for the full analysis of the information contained in the reports. A possible way forward would be to synchronize the reporting cycles under the Convention and its Protocols after 2020 by setting a common deadline for the submission of the national reports, for example in 2023, with approximately four-year reporting intervals thereafter. Such a deadline would enable the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its seventeenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol at its twelfth meeting, and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its sixth meeting to draw on the national reports in order to provide guidance on the further implementation of the three instruments in the context of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

² CBD/SBI/2/13.

13. Furthermore, a deadline in 2023 would align well with the reporting cycle under the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol. It would, however, represent a long gap from the 2017 interim national report on the Nagoya Protocol. If a deadline for the synchronized report of 2023 were to be agreed by all three governing bodies, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its third meeting might wish to also consider possible ways of addressing this gap, including the possibility of inviting Parties to update the information provided in their interim national reports in 2019, as appropriate, and to request any new Parties (as well as any Parties that have not already submitted their interim national reports) to submit a national report by 2019.³

B. Common approach to the format

14. The formats for the national reports under the Convention and the Protocols need to be designed in such a way as to facilitate the transmission of information and its analysis according to the requirements of the respective instrument at the particular time. Largely as a result of this, the formats under the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol have evolved over time. Among other things, this has had implications for the use of automated analytical tools and the ability to aggregate information across individual reports.

15. Consideration of common approaches to the reporting formats might focus on:

(a) Favouring questions with binary, numerical, multiple-choice or otherwise quantifiable responses to facilitate the analysis of disaggregated data (for example, by gender, geographic region, or economic integration area), identification of trends over time, and the use of graphic tools to display results;

(b) Providing appropriate space for entries in narrative format which can contextualize the quantitative information;

(c) Pre-filling fields with the latest information available elsewhere in the clearing-house mechanisms of the Convention and its Protocols and/or with information provided in previous reports, as appropriate, and allowing the users to verify or revise such entries;

(d) Favouring the use of cross-references — through, among other things, hyperlinks and document uploading — to relevant information stored elsewhere, such as national websites, publications and reports submitted under other instruments;

(e) Coordinated questions across the convention and its protocols relating to implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, recognizing that this is expected to address the Convention and its Protocols.

16. At the same time, it may be noted that the Protocols, in contrast to the Convention, include provisions with specific procedural obligations, and that, for this reason, some differences in the reporting formats will need to be maintained.

C. Gradual integration of the reporting facilities

17. The clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House represent essential tools for technical and scientific cooperation and the exchange of information as well as enabling the review of the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, and compliance with obligations under the Protocols. Significant efforts are being undertaken to develop a common infrastructure for the three clearing-houses as part of the implementation of the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols in line with the framework for a communications strategy, as requested in paragraph 15(i) of decision [XIII/23](#).

³ These considerations would be discussed under item 11 (monitoring and reporting (Article 29)) of the [provisional agenda](#) of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol.

18. The online reporting tools for the sixth national report under the Convention, the financial reporting framework, and the interim report on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol are already parts of the clearing-house mechanism's information submission service that use the new infrastructure, while other parts of the clearing-house mechanism, the [Convention's website](#) and the entire Biosafety Clearing-House are gradually being migrated to this new infrastructure. Technical details, including on common portal accounts, design and access are available in the updated web strategy⁴ requested in paragraph 15(j) of decision XIII/23 and supporting technical documentation on its implementation.

19. Efforts are being pursued to apply the most advanced and appropriate analytical tools across all instruments and to display information in ways that are more user-friendly, interactive and suitable for communication across the various web pages of the Convention and its Protocols as well as other relevant web pages and portals. To date, as part of this integration:

(a) The Biosafety Clearing-House and ABS Clearing-House offer a report analyser tool which allows users to select sections or questions of interest, compare results by region or country and visualize the number of responses and averages. The analyser was used in the third assessment and review of the Cartagena Protocol to compare information between the latest national reports against baseline information submitted four years prior. The analyser will also allow future national reports on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol to be compared with the interim national report in order to gauge and visualize progress. The analyser tool can be applied to information that is provided in binary, numerical, multiple-choice or otherwise quantifiable formats across all reporting processes under the Convention;

(b) Geographic display of information has been implemented for the financial reporting framework and for the sixth national report under the Convention.

20. The process of integrating reporting facilities is continuous and gradual. Ultimately, it aims to offer seamless access to all information facilities related to the reporting processes under the Convention and its Protocols and to provide operational consistency for the submission, retrieval, analysis and communication of information derived from national reports. At the same time, it will provide a consistent approach to restricting access while reports and/or submissions are in development and ongoing confidentiality where this is necessary. Consideration will also be given to integrating the decision-tracking tool⁵ with reporting facilities.

21. To align the guidance provided by the Informal Advisory Committees for each Clearing-House, draft joint modalities of operation are being considered under item 10 of the agenda of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation. Meanwhile steps have already been taken to increase interaction between the Informal Advisory Committees, including through joint sessions.

D. Cross-linkages between future strategic plans of the Convention and its Protocols

22. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020 (decision [BS-V/16](#)) will expire at the end of the decade. Considerations on the process for the follow-up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity are being discussed under agenda item 16, and it should be noted that the discussion should cover the Convention and consider its Protocols as appropriate (decision XIII/1, para. 34).

23. The way in which a post-2020 global biodiversity framework and any tools guiding the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols are interlinked would be expected to have implications for the choice of solutions for the alignment of the reporting format under the Convention and its Protocols.

⁴ See CBD/SBI/2/9.

⁵ See CBD/SBI/2/11 (addressed under agenda item 12).

24. It will therefore be essential to clearly articulate how any future global biodiversity framework and associated tools will guide the respective implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. A logical and detailed understanding of the interlinkages and associated implementation of the respective instruments could help to facilitate a more integrated review of implementation of the Convention and its Protocols through, among other things, better alignment of reporting formats and associated reporting tools, such as indicators.

III. OPTIONS FOR ENHANCING SYNERGY ON NATIONAL REPORTING AMONG BIODIVERSITY-RELATED CONVENTIONS AND RIO CONVENTIONS

25. As noted in the introduction, the Conference of the Parties, in decision XIII/27, requested the Executive Secretary to explore options for enhancing synergy on national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions. In this respect, the Conference of the Parties requested consideration of the following possibilities:

- (a) Common sets of indicators, where appropriate;
- (b) Common reporting modules on shared issues;
- (c) Interoperability of information management and reporting systems;
- (d) Harmonization of tools for national reporting.

26. In addition, in decision [XIII/24](#), the Conference of the Parties invited the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions to further strengthen cooperation and coordination at the global level within their respective mandates and enhance synergies among themselves, to encourage mutually supportive decisions, pursue their efforts to align their own strategies with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to support the implementation of the options for action by Parties contained in annex I to the decision and the road map contained in annex II. The road map includes a section dedicated to “enhancing management of and avoiding duplication related to information and knowledge, national reporting, monitoring and indicators” (section C). The [informal advisory group on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions](#), established pursuant to decision XIII/24, considered national reporting in reviewing the road map at its first meeting, on 17 and 18 December 2017. The report of the group will be considered by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation under agenda item 11.⁶

A. Common sets of indicators

27. In decision XIII/28, the Conference of the Parties emphasized the advantages of aligning the indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and those of the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant processes, noted that shared indicators must be reviewed to determine the degree to which they are suitable for each use, and stressed the role of the [Biodiversity Indicators Partnership](#) in this regard.

28. The Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and its website have been instrumental in promoting the availability of indicators and their potential multiple uses for the biodiversity-related conventions, the Sustainable Development Goals, and potentially the other Rio conventions. This has included the use of indicators at global and national scales. It has also promoted thematic and geographical disaggregation of indicators, as well as the development of new indicators, thereby adding value to the existing data and generating new evidence.

29. The list of indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 annexed to decision XIII/28 contains a total of 40 indicators used or being developed for assessing progress towards the 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The significant use of common indicators reflects the representation of biodiversity-relevant elements across many Sustainable Development Goals and points to the multiple connections and nexus areas between biodiversity and other matters addressed in the 2030

⁶ See CBD/SBI/2/10/Add.1.

Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁷ This facilitates the use of the same indicators by multiple institutions and processes and points to the value of disaggregation of global data sets (such as the indicators based on the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#)) to provide targeted information for multiple policy processes.

30. Several indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals are under active development involving a range of partners, including the Secretariats of biodiversity-related Conventions and Rio conventions and other partners. This includes the development, by [UN-Water](#) under the leadership of the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO) of an indicator for Target 6.6 (“By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes”). It also includes the development, by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests under the leadership of the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO), of an indicator for Target 15.2 (“By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally”). For further details on collaboration among the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, see CBD/SBI/2/10/Add.2 (considered under agenda item 11).

31. With regard to Target 15.3 (“By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world”), the Conference of the Parties, in decision [X/35](#), requested the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the secretariat of the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD) and, as far as possible, the secretariat of the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), as well as other relevant partners, to, inter alia, identify common indicators between the UNCCD ten-year strategic plan ([A/C.2/62/7](#), annex) and the [2010 biodiversity target](#) and Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

32. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, in recommendation [XIX/4](#), paragraph 10, called for continued collaboration with (a) the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goals indicators under the [United Nations Statistical Commission](#), in order to reflect the multiple links between the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets, and the Sustainable Development Goals and (b) with UNCCD on the further operationalization of the three land-based progress indicators (trends in land cover, trends in land productivity or functioning of the land, and trends in carbon stock above and below ground) set out in UNCCD decision 9/COP.12.⁸

33. UNCCD, in collaboration with FAO, the [United Nations Statistics Division](#), United Nations Environment Programme, UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity developed the methodology for the indicator “Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area” and its three sub-indicators (land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks), which has been accepted by the Inter-agency and Expert Group as a Tier II indicator. The indicator is now being used by more than 100 countries participating in the [UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme](#). From 2018 onwards, and every four years thereafter, the UNCCD reporting process will contribute to the follow-up of progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In line with UNCCD decision 15/COP.13,⁹ the information compiled in national reports will be used by the UNCCD secretariat, in its capacity as custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 15.3.1, to contribute to the overall follow-up and review by the [High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#). The indicator is also included in list of indicators for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 contained in decision XIII/28.

⁷ See General Assembly [resolution 70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

⁸ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Conference of the Parties, twelfth session, decision 9/COP.12 on “leveraging of synergies among the Rio conventions and promoting partnerships with other international agencies and bodies” (see [ICCD/COP\(12\)/20/Add.1](#)).

⁹ Ibid., thirteenth session, decision 15/COP.13 on “improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties” (see [ICCD/COP\(13\)/21/Add.1](#)).

34. While the guidelines for the sixth national report, in section IV, request Parties to describe how their contributions to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals, a more explicit alignment of reporting on elements common to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals should be envisaged in the future. This also applies to the voluntary national reviews undertaken in the context of the High-level Political Forum, as discussed in the document on mechanisms to facilitate review of implementation (CBD/SBI/2/11).

35. The majority of the indicators used by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) for the regional and global assessments on biodiversity and ecosystem services are from among those listed in decision XIII/28. The additional indicators may also be of interest for the Convention, and the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership will continue to attract indicator providers to the partnership.

36. It is expected that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, once developed, would have implications for the future use and suitability of indicators as well as their relevance across multiple instruments and processes. In addition, further opportunities for the development of suitable indicators arise from advances in knowledge and the availability of new data streams. It is therefore appropriate that the list of indicators should be kept under review in accordance with decision XIII/28.

B. Common reporting modules on shared issues

37. The purpose of exploring common elements in the national reports under different biodiversity-related instruments is to obviate multiple reporting by countries of the same information. A publication prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme with the support of the European Union, Switzerland and Finland¹⁰ identifies possible options for enhancing synergies in reporting, including: (a) exploring the possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and developing and testing such an approach by addressing the identified benefits; (b) exploring coherence in reporting through supporting indicator development and monitoring; (c) further developing online reporting and information management systems and continuing working to ensure their interoperability; (d) continuing support for reporting processes through joint capacity-building activities; (e) increasing reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions.

38. The first option above was further supported by a detailed study undertaken by UNEP-WCMC and NatureConsult with the support of Switzerland.¹¹ The study found that a modular approach to reporting could foster synergies at national, regional and global levels by highlighting interlinkages between different processes, taking advantage of similarities and overlaps in the information submitted through separate reporting processes, and by organizing the activities and information required, into a series of modules of relevance to several processes, so as to avoid having to reproduce the same information in several reports. Following a detailed review of the reporting processes and guidelines/formats of all the biodiversity-related conventions, the study noted that national reports of all the biodiversity-related conventions will contribute information to assessment of progress towards the Aichi Targets. For example, the national reports under the [Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals](#) (CMS) and the [Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat](#) are expected to broadly contribute information of relevance to each Aichi Biodiversity Target. The reporting processes under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) can contribute substantial information that can be used for reporting against Aichi Biodiversity Target 12, in particular; however, through their implementation reports, Parties to CITES are also expected to produce information of relevance to Aichi Biodiversity Targets 1-4, 6, 12 and 14-20. The reporting template for national reports under the [International Treaty on](#)

¹⁰ United Nations Environment Programme, [Elaboration of Options for Enhancing Synergies among Biodiversity-related Conventions](#), March 2016.

¹¹ United Nations Environment Programme–World Conservation Monitoring Centre and NatureConsult, “Elements for a modular reporting against the Aichi Biodiversity Targets”, Final report – August 2016 (issued for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as [UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/24](#)).

[Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture](#) (ITPGRFA) indicate that Contracting Parties to the Treaty will report on issues of relevance to Aichi Biodiversity Targets 2, 9, 11-14 and 18-20. Under the [World Heritage Convention](#), States Parties will produce information of relevance, primarily for Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 but also, through their periodic reports, for Targets 1, 4-5, 8-14 and 18-20 (p. 37).

39. The Workshop on Synergies among the Biodiversity-related Conventions held in Geneva in February 2016¹² identified options for global actions for common reporting, which included determining different and common elements of the reporting for each biodiversity-related convention, building on the work undertaken by UNEP-WCMC and others.

40. The [Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions](#) at its [14th meeting](#), held in August 2016, discussed options for increasing synergies in reporting to the Rio conventions. The Group agreed that there was a need for a permanent working subgroup to take up issues related to the synergies in reporting, among others, though it noted that more coordination was needed to establish such a subgroup and to initiate its work. This was in the context of the recognition by the Joint Liaison Group at its [12th meeting](#), held in January 2013, that having a single template for reporting under the three Rio conventions would be hardly achievable and ultimately of limited impact because of convention-specific information to be provided by country Parties, differences in reporting entities and related reporting obligations, and differences in reporting and review time frames under the three conventions.

41. The main work on synergies among the Rio conventions in the past two years has focused on the development of indicators as elaborated in sub-section A above.

C. Interoperability of information management and reporting systems

42. The purpose of promoting interoperability of data sets and reporting systems is to facilitate the reuse of information entered in one place and thereby obviate multiple reporting by countries of same information. It also justifies investing in more complex analytical tools that combine information from different platforms.

43. InforMEA, the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environment Agreements (www.informea.org) harvests information from over 20 multilateral environmental agreements in order to present it in an integrated way. The portal offers a facility for searching texts of multilateral environmental agreements and governing body decisions, internationally agreed goals, national legislation and jurisprudence, and provides detailed Party and Treaty profiles with ratification status, focal point information, national reports and action plans. InforMEA is facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme, financially supported by the European Union and steered by the InforMEA Initiative, which includes over 30 global and regional multilateral environmental agreements, and benefits from the involvement of five United Nations entities and the [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#).

44. During the past year, InforMEA has continued its work to integrate information from MEAs and other sources into a single interface. As an active member of InforMEA, the Convention shares Parties' national reports and NBSAPs with the portal. Over 1,000 CBD national reports and NBSAPs are available through the portal. This automated sharing allows for increased access to information of national reports from all relevant MEAs and InforMEA is planning to look at opportunities for increasing access to the content of reports to facilitate the enhanced use of reported information.

45. The InforMEA Initiative is also involved in the Data and Reporting Tool (DART) project, whose goal is to create collective national working spaces that will help organize, share and maintain documentation in the context of national reports. The use of the same working space by several reporters is expected to foster communication and cooperation at the national level and to facilitate the reuse of information in the spirit of "enter once, reuse several times". Integrating national biodiversity information

¹² For meeting documentation, see <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/BRCWS-2016-01>

in one place may also be of value in the context of analysing information related to multilateral environmental agreements against the Sustainable Development Goals and ultimately demonstrating the contribution of multilateral environmental agreements towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As DART is hosted on InforMEA, it will draw on the InforMEA infrastructure, which supported by many participating multilateral environmental agreements and institutions, and its approach to connecting data sources.

46. As suggested by the European Commission, the online reporting tool for the sixth national report under the Convention has been made interoperable with the [European Union Biodiversity Target Cross-Linking Tool](#), considering that both tools serve the same process: the delivery of national/regional information of progress in implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The Target Cross-Linking Tool is aimed at supporting users/countries in the maintenance and organization of key components, such as cross-linkages between national, European and global biodiversity strategies and indicators used at the national level, thus facilitating reporting under not only the Convention on Biological Diversity but also other biodiversity-related conventions.

47. The Secretariat is looking at options to make the online reporting tool of the Convention interoperable with the online reporting tools or systems being used by other biodiversity-related Conventions and the Rio conventions so that relevant data and information can be exchanged or shared among the different systems.

D. Harmonization of tools for national reporting

48. Several biodiversity-related conventions and agreements¹³ have adopted the same online reporting system managed by UNEP-WCMC. This facilitates access and interoperability of biodiversity-related data.

49. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity decided to develop its own online reporting tool, which was operationalized in March 2017, in response to a request contained in decision [XII/29](#), paragraph 4. In the process of development of the tool, the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions as well as FAO and UNEP-WCMC were invited to test the tool and provide inputs and suggestions. Members of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism were instrumental in this process. In addition, in the online reporting tool for the sixth national report, links are provided to the national reports and relevant data sets of the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions so that countries can use or refer to relevant information contained in national reports that they have submitted under related conventions.

E. Proposed options for enhancing synergies in reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions

50. The greatest leverage and impact for enhancing synergies in reporting under the biodiversity-related conventions is at the level of alignment of goals and targets which would facilitate the identification of common indicators to support action planning and reporting of progress. The development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework provides an opportunity to promote further alignment of the Convention on Biological Diversity with the other biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions, and the proposed options described below should be considered in this context.

51. In view of the above, and on the basis of relevant work undertaken so far, in particular studies prepared by Switzerland, UNEP and UNEP-WCMC, and the InforMEA Initiative as well as suggestions from the [Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions](#), the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio

¹³ CMS and several of its agreements (Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS), Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Sharks), CITES, Ramsar, ITPGRFA and the Bern Convention.

Conventions and the informal advisory group on synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, the following options are proposed:

(a) It is essential to continue ongoing consultations among the secretariats of the biodiversity-related conventions through, among other things, mechanisms agreed by the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, while developing the post-2020 biodiversity strategic frameworks so that all the related conventions work within similar or compatible strategic frameworks where possible, which would be a fundamental step towards enhancing synergies in reporting under the related conventions;

(b) Developing or identifying a common set of indicators for reporting would be valuable for enhancing synergies in reporting and demonstrating common approaches and concerns. Relevant coordination activities undertaken so far (including CBD indicators, Sustainable Development Goal indicators, indicators for measuring the implementation of the Paris Agreement,¹⁴ indicators for the [land degradation neutrality goal](#), and the work of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership) have provided a solid basis for work in this regard;

(c) Options for common reporting frameworks will continue to be explored through, among other things, the careful analysis of the experiences and lessons learned from regional/national pilot projects implemented in this regard. Practical options to be developed will be helpful to facilitate increasing synergies in reporting under the related conventions at the national and global level. Challenges exist, however, where the responsibility for reporting falls in different ministries or national agencies;

(d) Efforts need to be made to increase the interoperability of reporting tools, data, information and knowledge management systems of the biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio conventions and relevant international organizations will enhance synergies in reporting by facilitating cross-referencing to and sharing of relevant data and information;

(e) It is increasingly important to adhere to commonly agreed definitions and metadata standards, such as species taxonomies, internationally agreed goals/targets/indicators, environmental institutions and geographical denominations, in order to ensure that information collected through different reporting systems can be meaningfully analysed at an aggregated level.

52. In further exploring options and discussing practical ways forward it would be important to consider the experiences already made in developing joint reporting templates:

(a) Between 2010 and 2012, UNEP-WCMC implemented a pilot project in six countries on integrated approaches and processes to facilitate national reporting under the Rio conventions. The project produced situational analyses, including the global analysis that explored the feasibility of joint reporting and national manuals that provided guides for future reporting, based on reviews of the experiences and lessons learned. The project also produced the joint reporting templates that were piloted in six countries. The outcomes were reviewed by the Joint Liaison Group;

(b) Between 2007 and 2010, as requested by the [Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme](#) (SPREP), Australia supported a project, spearheaded by SPREP, to streamline reporting by Pacific island countries under the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements, including CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and the World Heritage Convention. The project was designed to reduce the time and resources spent on preparing national reports under each of these Conventions by using a consolidated reporting template covering the essential reporting requirements under these Conventions. A template was developed and trialled in eight countries, which noted the benefits of using a consolidated reporting template in terms of the reduced amount of time, resources, staff and funding

¹⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, [Registration No. 54113](#).

required to prepare national reports.¹⁵ The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in decision [X/10](#), paragraph 13, welcomed this project;

(c) During the period 2011-2013, as part of a capacity-building project related to multilateral environment agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and supported by the European Union, the Secretariat of the [Caribbean Community](#) developed a harmonized reporting template covering the biodiversity-related multilateral environment agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention, CITES and the Protocol concerning special protected areas and wildlife of the [Cartagena Convention \(SPAW Protocol\)](#). The template was developed in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme and in consultation with CARICOM member States, Cuba and the Dominican Republic as well as the related convention secretariats. It was designed to allow countries to pool together different sources of information in a single template, thus reducing the duplication of efforts to collect data from different sources for preparing national reports under each of the Conventions.

IV. FUNDING IMPLICATIONS OF ALIGNMENT AND SYNERGIES IN REPORTING

53. Financial and technical support for the preparation of national reports has been provided by the Secretariat technically and by the [Global Environment Facility](#) financially, mostly through projects implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme and the [United Nations Development Programme](#). Depending on the funding needs, GEF-supported projects on national reporting have been larger under the Convention than under its Protocols. GEF enabling activities on national reporting have been, on average, smaller in size under CBD than under UNFCCC. The proposals on synchronized reporting under the Convention and its Protocols and a common reporting framework for the Rio conventions will have implications regarding the needed size of financial and technical support, and the ways in which such financial and technical support is delivered. For instance, while the use of common resources, tools and infrastructure can, in principle, reduce the resource requirements for the preparation of national reports, common reporting deadlines, on the other hand, imply a greater investment during the reporting period rather than the staggered use of resources for reports at different times. As a result, the level of support required will have to be carefully considered.

V. SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

54. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation may wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Conference of the Parties,

Emphasizing the importance of improving the alignment of national reports under the Convention and its Protocols and of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions and *noting* the progress made thus far in this respect,

Recognizing the possible role of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in subsequent national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols,

Also recognizing that the Convention and each of the Protocols are distinct legal instruments with specific obligations to their contracting Parties, and that the information provided in the national reporting formats depend on the focus and goals of implementation strategies adopted under each instrument at a given time,

1. *Decides* to commence with a synchronized reporting cycles for the Convention, the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol in 2023, and *invites* the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol and the Conference of the Parties serving as the

¹⁵ A summary report was made available to the Conference of the Parties to CITES at its fifteenth meeting (see <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/cop/15/inf/E15i-44.pdf> and <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/common/cop/15/inf/E15i-44A.pdf>).

meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol to consider, agree to and take the preparatory measures necessary for the realization of such synchronized reporting approaches and cycles;

2. *Requests the Executive Secretary:*

(a) To continue making efforts to improve and harmonize the user interface and the design of national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols, and to report to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting on the progress made;

(b) To identify, when preparing documentation related to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, any implications and options for harmonizing national reporting under the Convention and its Protocols;

(c) To continue exploring, in consultation with related convention secretariats, the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions, and on the basis of suggestions from the informal advisory group on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, options for increasing synergies in national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions, and to report on progress to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting;

(d) To contribute to the development, testing and promotion of the Data and Reporting Tool, in collaboration with the InforMEA Initiative, with a view to facilitating its use across the biodiversity-related conventions, as appropriate.

55. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation may also wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety,

Recognizing the importance of improving the alignment of national reports under the Convention and its Protocols and of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions and *noting* the progress made thus far in this respect,

Accepts the invitation of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and *agrees* to have a synchronized national reporting cycle commencing in 2023.

56. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation may also wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol,

Recognizing the importance of improving the alignment of national reports under the Convention and its Protocols and of enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions and the Rio conventions and *noting* the progress made thus far in this respect,

Accepts the invitation of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and *agrees* to have a synchronized national reporting cycle commencing in 2023.
