



**UN Biodiversity Conference
High Level Segment**
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Mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being

Introduction

Biodiversity is essential for human well-being, and for sustainable development. Yet while some progress has been made towards achieving the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010, countries are still not on track to meet most of the targets of the Strategic Plan. The fourth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO-4) report published in 2012, and subsequent assessments, have concluded that significant additional action is needed to address the continuing loss of biodiversity, and to achieve the Strategic Plan.

In order to make the necessary shift, the political importance of biodiversity needs to be understood at the highest levels. Government policies and business practices need to adopt more innovative approaches that recognize the value of biodiversity for economic and social prosperity.

A central means to achieving this shift is to take actions to mainstream and integrate biodiversity in relevant sectors, including agriculture, forests, fisheries and tourism, as well as in cross-cutting national policies such as development plans and processes, budgets, and economic policies.

The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 13), and the high-level segment (HLS), will focus on these issues. The HLS, taking place before the official opening of the COP, provides an important opportunity to send a strong political message on these issues to the COP.

This background note provides an overview of the concept of “biodiversity mainstreaming”, why these four sectors are of particular importance for biodiversity, and linkages to other key policies, such as development and finance, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and other relevant international processes such as climate change.

What is “mainstreaming” of biodiversity?

The importance of biodiversity for social, economic and other priorities is very clear. Biodiversity underpins the food we eat, materials for the homes in which we live in, the ecosystems that provide healthy and reliable water supplies, and resilience against the impacts of climate change. Biodiversity supports jobs, economic security and development. Biodiversity is also central to many religious, cultural and social values. However, many of these important roles of biodiversity often go largely unrecognized and are not widely understood.

Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) recognized in 1992, when the Convention was adopted, that in order to halt biodiversity loss, the values of biodiversity and the causes of its loss needed to be better understood and addressed. The Convention calls on countries to integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. These



kinds of actions are often referred to as “biodiversity mainstreaming” which is generally understood as ensuring that biodiversity, and the services it provides, are appropriately and adequately factored into the policies and practices that impact it. Sectoral mainstreaming deals with actions that can be taken which are specific to a particular sector, such as agriculture. Cross-sectoral mainstreaming deals with actions that cut across all sectors, such as national budget and development planning processes, and economic incentives and measures.

Mainstreaming is also strongly embedded in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which establishes a ten-year framework for the entire United Nations system for action related to biodiversity by all countries and stakeholders. The Strategic Plan is comprised of a shared vision, a mission, strategic goals and 20 ambitious, yet achievable, targets that are collectively known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Integrating biodiversity within specific sectors

Agriculture, forests, fisheries and tourism heavily depend on biodiversity and its components, as well as on the ecosystem functions and services which biodiversity underpins. However, these sectors also impact on biodiversity in various direct and indirect ways. These impacts are contributing to the global decline of biodiversity. This decline has negative impacts on these sectors and more broadly erodes prospects for sustainable development, including with respect to food and water security, and poverty eradication.

The demand for the goods and services produced by these sectors is projected to increase over the coming decades as a result of population growth, increasing average wealth and other demographic changes. Therefore mainstreaming biodiversity considerations within these sectors is essential in ensuring the continued vitality and viability of these sectors, as well as stemming the loss of biodiversity that underpins these sectors and sustainable development more broadly.

Why the food and agriculture sector?

Biodiversity and agriculture are strongly interrelated. Biodiversity is at the origin of all crops and domesticated livestock and the variety within them, and is the foundation of ecosystem services essential to sustain food production, nutrition and human well-being. When managed sustainably, agriculture can also contribute to wider ecosystem functions such as the maintenance of water quality, soil moisture retention, carbon sequestration and pollination, among others. However, the food and agriculture sector is estimated to account for some two thirds of the recent and projected loss of terrestrial biodiversity, mainly due to land-use change. The loss of biodiversity undermines current and future increases in agricultural productivity. Meeting global food demands in a sustainable way is achievable, but it will require significant actions to change some existing policies and practices.

Why forestry?

Forests represent one of the most important repositories of terrestrial biodiversity. Tropical, temperate and boreal forests offer a diverse set of habitats for plants, animals and micro-organisms, and provide food, goods and services that are crucial to human well-being. Productive activities in the forest sector play a vital role in promoting economic growth and represent an integral part of many national economies. However, economic activities can often result in deforestation, forest fragmentation and degradation. Managing forests



sustainably is essential in order to ensure their long-term viability and ensure that the biodiverse flora and fauna that forests support continues to thrive.

Why fisheries and aquaculture?

Marine, coastal and inland ecosystems host a variety of aquatic biological diversity that greatly contributes to the economic, social and cultural aspects of communities around the world. The fisheries and aquaculture sector supports food security and the livelihoods of 10 to 12 per cent of the world's population. Fisheries also play an integral role in certain coastal cultures and traditions. However, fishing directly impacts biodiversity through the removal of fish and the modification of marine habitats, and overfishing and destructive fishing practices constitute the main drivers of biodiversity loss in the marine environment. Sustainable management of fisheries is critical to ensure the long-term viability of this sector, which at the same time supports healthy ecosystems that sustains economic, social and cultural values.

Why tourism?

Tourism and travel is a major economic activity worldwide, accounting for 9 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. Nature-based tourism relies on biodiversity and diverse ecosystems to attract tourists. Tourism can contribute directly to the conservation of sensitive areas and habitats through a variety of activities such as park-entrance fees and by raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity. However, tourism can also negatively impact biodiversity if land and resources are strained by excessive use. A multi-stakeholder approach in planning and managing sustainable tourism is fundamental to ensure that the tourism industry decreases its impact on the environment while meeting its increasing demand.

Concrete actions to enhance the mainstreaming of biodiversity within these sectors have been identified in the preparations for COP 13. The background notes prepared for the HLS on each of these sectors summarizes some of the most important actions that could be taken to more effectively mainstream biodiversity.

Mainstreaming biodiversity in cross-sectoral policies and actions

It is important to underscore that the mainstreaming of biodiversity cannot happen only at a sector level. Effective mainstreaming has to occur at different scales and within different tiers of government that involve cross-sectoral policies and processes, such as development planning, economic incentives, budgeting and urban planning,

Although the HLS will focus mainly on the four specific sectors, effective mainstreaming in these and other sectors also requires effective cross-sectoral policies and tools, including:

- Development and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes, e.g. spatial planning
- Environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental assessments
- Incentive and other economic/fiscal measures
- Ecosystem accounting and valuation
- Sustainable consumption and production
- Resource mobilization
- Effective institutional arrangements and governance mechanisms



Effective mainstreaming will require the engagement of many different types of stakeholders, including the business sector, academia, indigenous peoples and local communities, and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, making the shift to policies and practices that effectively incorporate the importance of biodiversity will require raising the awareness of political leaders, as well as the business sector.

The relevance of other international processes for mainstreaming of biodiversity

A number of key international processes are relevant to biodiversity and will have major implications for national actions for implementation of the Convention and of the Strategic Plan and achievement of the Aichi Targets. These include:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

On 25 September, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the outcome, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Biodiversity features prominently in the 2030 Agenda and is reflected throughout the targets associated with the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda provides an important platform for taking actions that will directly contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan. As countries move towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this will also provide a major opportunity for mainstreaming of biodiversity, and the achievement of the Strategic Plan.

Climate change

The ability of Parties to implement the Convention and the Strategic Plan effectively and achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets is closely tied to climate change. Healthy biodiversity and ecosystems are essential to combatting climate change, and, at the same time, climate change is already impacting negatively on biodiversity. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), at its twenty-first meeting, in Paris, adopted an agreement to address climate change effectively with a view to keeping global temperature increases within 2 degrees or lower. The agreement will have major implications for work under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Others

There are many on-going international processes that are also relevant to the mainstreaming of biodiversity within and across sectors at the national level, including the Strategic Objectives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.

Conclusion

There is no question that integrating biodiversity values into other sectors and in cross-cutting policies is essential to achieve the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, as well as economic, social and development goals. With only four years left to implement this Strategic Plan, we need to significantly increase our efforts. Mainstreaming biodiversity recognizes the critical role of biodiversity for human well-being, and will move us on a path that secures our future.