

Sustainability Beyond 2010: Perspectives from Experiences

1. In 2002, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a strategic plan including the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on Earth. This target was subsequently endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2006, the UN General Assembly declared the year 2010 as the International the Year of Biodiversity and adopted a resolution that calls for a high level segment of the UNGA at its 65 session in 2010. The Conference of Partise at it tenth meeting (October-November 2010) will review progress made towards the achievement of its strategic plan with the 2010 biodiversity target and identify future biodiversity targets.
2. Since the Stockholm Summit in 1972, environment and sustainable development received considerable attention that resulted in several assessments and status reports on the contribution of biodiversity to sustainability and human well-being. The CBD laid the foundation for an integrated and holistic approach to conservation that calls for both sustainable use as well as sharing the benefits of such use equitably through the Access and Benefit Sharing provisions. Issues of sustainability and equity that formed the basis of adopting CBD during the Earth Summit in 1992 also need re-thinking in terms of effectively integrating the principles into future discussions of biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing.
3. Fifteen years of experience from countries implementing the CBD and responding to emerging global conceptual vision must be set but it must also be brutally pragmatic. challenges facing biodiversity, especially its loss due to various natural and anthropogenic factors, have now provided us with a range of options to enable us to respond to future challenges to reduce biodiversity loss with an aim that such actions are not conservation-centred but human-centred.
4. Adoption of the global biodiversity targets by the CBD and subsequently by the WSSD warrants integrated and holistic approaches to assess the impacts and outcomes of past and current actions to reduce biodiversity loss besides looking at further development of the targets beyond 2010 in a manner that provides options for Such co-ordination must occur at all levels – local-global-between agencies and time-bound assessments, realisitic target setting, national and regional actions for global achievements and between processes. Effective development and implementation of post 2010 targets implementable options for various stakeholders to own the targets and help realise the outcomes.

5. Based on available information collated from national reports from Parties to the CBD (3rd national reports), MDG reports, annual reports of various agencies at different levels, assessments and analysis of information and data, the following can be argued as the key messages that could provide us with some status and trend issues related to biodiversity loss:

- People rely on biodiversity for their daily livelihoods without realising and responding to the speed at which biodiversity, ecosystem goods and services are being eroded permanently;
- There is a general awareness among policy makers that biodiversity acts as the asset for future development. However, such an awareness is not always translated into actions to conserve, use and share biodiversity;
- While the increased focus on environmental issues such as climate change is receiving highest attention at different levels, the very basis of mitigation and adaptation options for dealing with climate change - biodiversity - lacks the needed attention and support;
- Implementation and compliance to CBD and actions to realize the MDG targets are being pursued from different angles and agencies, often with no connection or relationship, threatening the very basis of achieving sustainable development;
- The rigor with which science is used in policy making and implementation of biodiversity conservation action is still being questioned creating the basis for lack of convincing arguments to deal with biodiversity issues at policy and political levels;
- Environment and biodiversity are often used and understood in confusing manner by stakeholders. Resulting outcome is the lack of focus on biodiversity under the CCA/UNDAF processes at country level;
- Need for cooperation among agencies and stakeholders to relate their programmes and actions to reduce biodiversity loss and promote the principles of CBD is always felt, more so recently, due to diminishing attention to underestimating impacts of conservation action; and
- In spite of good intentions to deal with coordinated action to reduce biodiversity loss and enhance human well-being, translation of such intentions to actions is weak by countries and agencies.

6. While arguments in favour of sustainable development and redefining sustainability as a concept with focus on better environmental management are increasing, issues of equity, ethics, rights and privileges of communities still need policy support and implementation experiences. Translating such concepts into actionable programmes need priority focus.

7. Considering the need to evaluate, discuss and design a set of global targets for reducing biodiversity loss in order to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development beyond 2010, it is time for stakeholders to reflect upon and answer the following questions:

- How and why are current biodiversity targets being met and not met?

- What conditions at local, national, regional and global levels are prevailing on conservation action that either promotes or stops actions to reduce biodiversity loss?
- What are the strategic and policy gaps in mainstreaming biodiversity conservation as the business of common person and country development frameworks?
- If biodiversity has to receive its due attention, what interventions are needed and how will they be delivered and used?
- Should we develop the next set of targets for reducing biodiversity loss for poverty reduction and sustainable development that are long term with achievable and accountable time lines supported by some rational and practical means to realise them?
- How much should the future strategic plan of CBD be a 'bottoms up' approach compared to the 'tops down approach'?
- When is it time to move away from the thinking 'think global and act local' to 'think local and act global'?
- What will be the relevance of development discourse in the absence of balanced focus on components of environment and their impacts on human well-being and how such lacunae can be corrected, if they exist?
- What should be the realistic and inclusive 'road map' for deigning and delivering the future of biodiversity target(s)? and
- How will countries rise above their national interests to deal with biodiversity and sustainability so that we re-look at the past with a sense of concern?
- If sustainability is about managing resources for the future without compromising on present needs, what challenges need to be considered while defining the post 2010 biodiversity targets, given the patterns and modes of biodiversity loss?

8. Recognising the need for engaging in a series of dialogues and discussions on the issues above, UNEP is calling for stakeholders to be realistic, responsive and strategic so that we can together maximise the global attention being called for in 2010 to re-shape the biodiversity agenda. While complexity is not an excuse for inaction, we hope the discussions in coming months on re-defining the biodiversity agenda results in conservation action and not assiduous conversation.

To this end, UNEP organized an informal strategic consultation on development of post 2010 targets on 15th February 2009, at Nairobi. The outcome of this consultation is presented here:

Outcomes of the UNEP Informal Strategic Consultation on “Sustainability Beyond 2010: Perspectives from Experiences” Chair’s Summary

The significance of the 2010 Target cannot be underscored enough. The targets that we have now are not perfect but they helped to keep biodiversity high on the agenda. The current targets paved the way to focus on the following:

- Need for broader stakeholder involvement,
- Need for improved science-policy interface
- Improved the understanding of the value of biodiversity (TEEB - Stern-like report of biodiversity)
- Generated many success stories
- Produced a unifying message with one objective, but with a multitude of approaches.

Despite many of the achievements, the target was developed through a political process without engaging the scientific community and without setting a baseline from which to measure the progress toward achieving the target. In addition, the target was not directly linked to sustainability and thus did not generate the relevance to current national agendas (such as poverty alleviation, energy efficiency etc) necessary for policy and management reactions.

The deadline for meeting the target is fast approaching and there is now an opportunity to revisit the target in a more systematic manner.

Building Blocks for Post-2010

It is crucial that when thinking about the post 2010 agenda for the biodiversity target that it be based on several key building blocks. These building blocks should be constructed by engaging full stakeholder involvement and including indigenous community and the private sector. Scale (i.e. regional level) will also remain an overarching factor. The communication strategy for engaging this different sector will be also important. Some of key building blocks as identified by this meeting are the following:

- **Science** - The science of biodiversity ecosystems is complex and incomplete and therefore subject to attempts at rationalisation which sometimes confuses or leaves decision-makers at a loss. But the scientific basis is important and there needs to be a stronger interface with policy. Such an interface must be based on the links between human well-being and livelihoods, the natural capital base and biodiversity. In other words from the perspective of sustainability—the capital base required to support biodiversity needs to be ensured so that that the key ecosystem services are sustainably maintained---not just today, not just tomorrow but in the years and generations to come. A scientific rationale that combines these components in a coherent framework must form the conceptual basis for understanding how the post-2010 biodiversity targets would be constructed
- **Metrics and timeframe** - There is a need for quantifiable targets. Even if it is not perfect, it needs to be a proxy by which we can measure progress and indicate gaps and needs. A target without explicit timeframes and milestones is uninteresting to politicians. A high conceptual vision must be set but it must also be brutally pragmatic.
- **Economics** - The point where hard decisions are taken is based on financial terms. If it can be shown, that millions are being lost because of unsustainable use, then action will be taken since no one to hear or see economic loss.

- **Coordination** - Coordination is key to achieve results in realizing current targets and setting new ones. Such co-ordination must occur at all levels – local-global-between agencies and between processes. Effective development and implementation of post 2010 targets impinges upon effective co-ordination, networking and information exchange. As we move to the International Year of Biodiversity, UNGA in New York, COP10 in Nagoya all in 2010. These building blocks could be carried forward and form the basis for discussion at these strategic meetings.