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**ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE**

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Report of the United Nations Environment Programme

Executive Summary

1. This is the document referred to in paragraph 29 of Document IT/GB-6/15/21, *Report on Cooperation with Other International Bodies and Organizations*, and contains the Report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on its project on improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies.

2. The document, prepared by the UNEP for the information of the Governing Body, is being circulated in the form and language in which it was received by the Secretariat of the Treaty.

Enhancing synergies among biodiversity-related conventions

1. Over the past decades a number of biodiversity-related conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have been adopted, which have put into place a comprehensive legal and governance regime for addressing most biodiversity issues. However, when considered together, they can be challenging to implement in a coherent manner. As a result, there have been calls by governing bodies of conventions, as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to explore possible synergies between such MEAs, with the specific aim of making their implementation more coherent, efficient and effective.

2. Through the UNEP project on “Improving the effectiveness of and cooperation among biodiversity-related conventions and exploring opportunities for further synergies”, funded by the European Union, with additional support from the Governments of Finland and Switzerland, UNEP carried out online surveys and convened two expert meetings to discuss and elaborate options for identifying potential ways of enhancing synergies in implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.¹ Participants in the surveys and at the expert meetings included UNEP Secretariat staff, representatives of convention secretariats, national focal points for the conventions and other experts. Concurrent with this, UNEP also reviewed guidance, experience and lessons learned at the national level with respect to coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, working closely with both convention secretariats and national focal points and authorities.

3. Two experts meetings, convened as part of the project, demonstrated that there were many relevant activities already completed or underway, involving convention secretariats, governing and advisory bodies of the conventions, United Nations bodies and other stakeholders, such as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. These include achievements, mandates, opportunities and activities that can be readily built upon, and it was recognized that these must be considered carefully, and wherever possible appropriately used as a basis for possible further action. It was also highlighted that it would be important to identify options that will lead to clearly identified benefits and substantive goals.

4. Expert groups elaborated options for enhancing synergies across the biodiversity-related conventions. The Options Paper sets out 28 recommended options, under which 88 action points in total have been identified for various actors which include: Parties; UNEP and other relevant UN bodies; convention secretariats; and others. These options and actions take into account relevant completed, existing and planned initiatives undertaken by a number of actors. The focus of the Options Paper is on programmatic cooperation, for which National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets provide a fundamental basis.

5. The options are proposed to achieve two main outcomes: a) Implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions carried out in an increasingly coherent manner, involving greater collaboration and cooperation amongst convention parties, convention secretariats and key partners, leading to more efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of those conventions; b) Increased collaboration and cooperation in implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, facilitated engagement with other sectors, and improved opportunities for mainstreaming biodiversity objectives into other policies and sectors (including through the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and in furtherance of the Sustainable Development Goals).

¹ The conventions included in this work are the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA); the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; and the World Heritage Convention (WHC). Reference to ‘biodiversity-related conventions’ also includes the Conventions’ Protocols, e.g. the CBD’s Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

6. Specific options for action with respect to improving synergies and coherence in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions were identified in the Options paper under seven related themes:

1 NBSAPs, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

Options:

- 1.1 Taking into account already existing materials, prepare streamlined and simple guidance and tools for facilitating the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs across the conventions.
- 1.2 Support the integration of NBSAPs and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into different sectors, UNDAF and sustainable development instruments at all levels.
- 1.3 Support parties in accessing timely GEF-funding for the development, revision and implementation of NBSAPs, through promotion of coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions in a coordinated manner among their respective national authorities.
- 1.4 Support experience exchange on the development and implementation of NBSAPs and voluntary 'peer review' of NBSAPs, including through the NBSAP Forum, with a particular focus on the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related conventions.
- 1.5 Explore the use of regional approaches to address transboundary issues identified in NBSAPs, by focusing efforts on collaboration between national focal points and authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of NBSAPs in different countries.
- 1.6 Elaborate on the role of each convention and UN body in contributing to the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

2 Reporting, monitoring and indicators

Options:

- 2.1 Building on existing work, and recognising the existing reporting obligations under each of the conventions, explore the possible benefits of using a shared modular reporting approach, and develop and test such an approach based on addressing the identified benefits.
- 2.2 Further enhance coherence in reporting through supporting indicator development and monitoring, building on existing work, including that of the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP).
- 2.3 Further develop online reporting and information management systems and continue working to ensure their interoperability.
- 2.4 Continue support to reporting processes through joint (regional) capacity building activities.
- 2.5 Increase reporting on enhanced synergies across the conventions.

3 IPBES and strengthening the Science-Policy Interface

Options:

- 3.1 Conventions should continue a close dialogue with IPBES on the timely communication of key findings coherently across the governing bodies and scientific advisory bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions.

- 3.2 Conventions should consider and identify common issues for closer cooperation in developing and making future requests of IPBES, so that priorities requested address areas of common interest.
- 3.3 Strengthen efforts to ensure that the governing and subsidiary bodies of conventions and convention secretariats interact with IPBES in a coherent and timely manner.

4 Information management and awareness raising

Options:

- 4.1 Develop shared approaches to use more effectively global information management tools.
- 4.2 Deliver joint information and awareness campaigns, including in the context of the UN Decade of Biodiversity.

5 Capacity building

Options:

- 5.1 Strengthen the support provided by UNEP regional offices for implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions, and secure funding for sustaining the functions of the MEA focal points.
- 5.2 Identify immediate opportunities for collaboration on capacity development activities and develop harmonised and possible common approaches.
- 5.3 Promote ways to strengthen coherent system-wide action on capacity building for facilitating cooperation and collaboration in the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions.

6 Funding and resource efficiency

Options:

- 6.1 Convention secretariats to collaborate on new initiatives for obtaining additional financial resources.
- 6.2 Pursue a coordinated approach to accessing GEF and Green Climate Fund (GCF) funding among the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 6.3 Encourage donors, particularly those concerned with development assistance, to contribute to the creation of enhanced opportunities for, and to incentivise, coordination and synergies.
- 6.4 Share information on work to support parties on resource mobilisation, including in relation to innovative financial mechanisms that promote cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions.
- 6.5 Review and share past and ongoing experiences on MEA synergies and on wider mainstreaming efforts to identify means to increase the cost-effectiveness of synergistic action on biodiversity.

7 Institutional Collaboration

Options:

- 7.1 Focus and enhance the work of UNEP in supporting the implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at national, regional and global levels, including, where appropriate, by promoting and facilitating collaboration and cooperation in their implementation, in those areas that fall within its mandate, through its various programmes, initiatives and policies.
- 7.2 Strengthen the BLG as a mechanism for promoting collaboration and cooperation among the biodiversity-related conventions within its mandate.

- 7.3 Encourage mutually supportive decisions and possible common decisions across the governing bodies of biodiversity-related conventions for achieving coherence at all levels, including further developing and strengthening joint work programmes and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs).
- 7.4 Develop mechanisms to share expertise across the biodiversity-related conventions in order to seek and identify common issues to address, and actions to undertake, at programmatic and political level to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 in a coordinated manner.

7. In addition to the specific options, the co-chairs of expert group identified **five overarching considerations** which came out through the process:

- a) the benefits to be gained by implementing the biodiversity-related conventions in a synergistic and coherent manner, so as to increase their national implementation, efficiency and effectiveness;
- b) the importance of acknowledging and building on the past, existing and planned activities of biodiversity-related conventions and others to identify and address opportunities to build synergies and increase coherence in implementation of the conventions;
- c) the value of engaging with the activities of UNEP (and other relevant entities) to identify and address opportunities to further build synergies and increase coherence in implementation of the conventions;
- d) the potential opportunities for further promoting synergies among the biodiversity related conventions in the context of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including global Sustainable Development Goals and their targets; and
- e) the need for all actors, including governments, United Nations bodies, conventions and their secretariats, and other stakeholders, to continue to promote and undertake mutually supportive efforts and approaches aimed at enhancing coordinated and coherent implementation of the biodiversity-related conventions at all levels, building on existing activities and experience.

8. It is expected that the Options Paper that was already shared with involved biodiversity-related conventions, as well as the background material produced for the two expert meetings, will be useful for discussion and possible further action in a number of fora. This includes, *inter alia*, the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP, the governing and advisory bodies of each biodiversity-related convention and their Parties and members, the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions and the Chairs of the Scientific Advisory Bodies of the Biodiversity-related Conventions.