

A review of the national reporting systems of the five global biodiversity-related conventions

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Executive Summary

The five biodiversity-related conventions - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) and World Heritage Convention (WHC) – all require their Parties to report regularly on the national implementation. Given that reporting to a range of conventions has been recognised as a burden, the need to streamline and harmonize reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions and the underlying national biodiversity information management has been increasingly acknowledged.

About this report

Harmonization has been the subject of four UNEP pilot projects, the results of which were discussed at a workshop in Belgium in September 2004, convened by UNEP-WCMC in cooperation with the governments of Belgium, the United Kingdom and Germany. In December 2004, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contracted UNEP-WCMC to develop some of the actions envisaged by the recommendations of the workshop. This report presents the results of the following two objectives of this project:

- To review the extent to which the purpose of reporting is made clear to Parties, and the extent to which the information in the reports is used, *inter alia* for measuring progress in achieving the 2010 target, including assessing the links between reporting and strategic planning
- To identify potential overlaps between conventions in information requested, to identify themes relevant across several conventions and agreements, and to assess the experience in the forest sector of harmonizing reporting by theme.

Reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions: the basics

On the basis of article 26, national reports for the CBD are due for consideration at alternate ordinary meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP). In addition, a number of thematic reports have been requested. Parties to CITES submit an annual report containing statistics on trade with the species on the Appendices, while a biennial report informs about legislative, regulatory and administrative measures. The reports are based on article VIII of the Convention. CMS article VII foresees national reporting, which the COP has requested for every meeting. The Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding under the CMS have their own reporting requirements. Reports for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands have been requested for each meeting of the COP, with the reporting format following the strategic objectives of the Convention's Strategic Plan. The reports to the World Heritage Convention, based on article 29, inform on the legislative, administrative and educational provisions as well as fundraising and other efforts for the application of the Convention (section I). Section II reports about the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties.

Explanation of the purpose of reporting

All of the five conventions have, to various degrees, been moving towards a better explanation of the background for the questions in the reporting formats. A number of purposes for reporting are provided, namely: enabling to assess and monitor progress in implementation; providing information the COP in decision-making; identifying priorities for further work; providing opportunities for information exchange and regional cooperation; providing for self-assessment of the implementation by Parties.

Some conventions have developed guidelines or explanatory notes for the reporting formats. Also, increasingly the questions in the reporting formats are provided with a brief background explanation, linking the questions to specific COP decisions, objectives of the strategic planning document, or articles of the convention.

For enabling measuring the progress in implementation, the reporting formats refer specifically to the implementation of the Convention's provisions (articles) and the decisions/resolutions of the COPs as well as the strategic documents. It has proven useful to link the reporting requests closely to those and to explain this approach through the guidelines and reporting formats.

The response of Parties to the reporting requests

The reporting rate of Parties varies considerably between the conventions, with the Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention as well as the CITES annual reports achieving very high numbers of Parties that do report. For the CITES annual reports, an obvious reason is the compliance mechanism attached to reporting: trade with a Party failing continuously to submit reports without an adequate justification can be suspended. Support by regional and subregional consultative and information meetings has been crucial in achieving a high reporting rate for the World Heritage Convention. The CBD found that lack of financial assistance, lack of national capacities, resources and cooperation, as well as changes in personnel were the main reasons for non-submission of reports.

It has been found that when information was required via tick boxes with attached boxes for additional information to be filled in narratively, many Parties preferred to just tick the boxes but not provide additional narrative information.

In some cases, a lack of crystal-clear guidance on the information required seems to have caused the provision of inadequate information. Reporting guidelines and the provision of background information have generally been successful tools in soliciting adequate responses.

There is a great need of efficiently organising the national information management, which would enable a quantitatively and qualitatively improved response to national reporting requests. This has resource implications, in particular for developing countries. It would therefore be helpful, if financial and technical assistance would be made available to developing countries for developing and maintaining their national biodiversity information management.

The use of information from national reports

Feedback to Parties on how the information from national reports is being used is clearly a significant step to encourage the further provision of national reports. This feedback has in most cases taken the form of analyses of reported information for the consideration by the governing bodies of the conventions. This includes assessments of the extent of which the information from national reports allows for assessing the state of implementation of the conventions.

To varying degrees only have the conventions developed analyses of the information from national reports, in the form of background documents for the governing bodies or separate publications as in the case of the Regional State of the World Heritage reports. Some types of national reports have not yet been analysed, for example the CITES biennial reports. However, some conventions do hardly draw on information from national reports when preparing documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, subsidiary bodies and working groups. It is suggested that this is, at least to some extent, due to the lack of substantial information available from national reports.

The Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention prepare regional reports on the implementation of the Convention, drawing on the national reports, as a way to identify characteristics and challenges for the region. The latter convention has embarked on long-term regional programmes, following up from the information in the national reports and developed in consultation with the State Parties of the region in question. The regional reports also contain recommendations for State Parties and, in the case of the Africa regional report, an action plan for Medium-term Regular Reporting.

The information from the annual reports to CITES is managed through the CITES trade database. The data provide the basis for decision-making processes within the Convention. Information from national reports to CMS is managed through the CMS Information Management System. An online search and analysis facility for information from CBD national reports is offered on the CBD website. The IOSEA Marine Turtles MoU provides an online reporting facility, which makes the reported information easily available for reviews and the extraction of specific information. In 2005, the Meeting of the Signatory States is considering proposals for an improved implementation of the MoU, based on the reported information.

Outcome-oriented reporting

The reporting formats of CBD and Ramsar carry provisions that, for each section, ask for narrative information on outcomes or implementation progress. This reflects the emerging shift in focus from process to outcome-oriented reporting, driven, in particular for the CBD, by the need to measure progress towards the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. It is also a response to the difficulties of obtaining information on status and trends of biodiversity or components of it through former reporting formats. However, the additional information requested adds to the already overwhelming volume of the reporting formats and through this to the reporting burden.

The CMS requests information on population size and trends of species on Appendix I. The CITES annual reports provide information that could be used in the evaluation of outcomes of actions taken in implementing the Convention. The CITES biennial reports ask for the results of assessments of the effectiveness of national CITES legislation. While section I of the World Heritage Convention reports requests information on processes for implementing the Convention, section II focuses on the conservation status of World Heritage properties and sites and thus on outcomes of action taken.

As most reporting formats request information on action taken to implement the obligations under the conventions, it seems not too difficult a task to expand this information request to include information on the outcomes of actions undertaken (where not done already). Both CMS and the Convention on Wetlands are currently considering such a move. This would considerably help the assembling of overviews of the overall success of the conventions. To avoid an overall increase in the information requested, such a process should be accompanied by the disposal of information requests on processes that are not essential for the report in question.

Links of national reporting to strategic planning documents

Across the conventions, the degree of linkages between the strategic planning documents and the reporting format varies. The CBD has extended the national reporting process to cover the Strategic Plan. Parties are requested to report on the implementation of the four goals and some specific objectives of the Plan. The Action Plan of the Strategic Vision of CITES stresses the importance of information from Parties to carry out the action points. The Convention on Migratory Species has to some extent structured the national reporting formats along the lines of the Strategic Plan. The Ramsar Convention has chosen the Strategic Plan as the primary focus for reporting, by amalgamating the Strategic Plan-derived national planning tool with the reporting format into one document. Also, the reporting formats for the IOSEA MoU and AEWa use their respective strategic planning documents to structure the reporting formats. The reporting format of the World Heritage Convention does not refer to the Global Strategy of the Convention, which is concerned with a balanced and representative World Heritage List and therefore different in nature to the strategic documents of other conventions.

It seems reasonable to closely link the reporting process to the strategic plans in order to ensure that Parties reflect on their implementation of the obligations under the strategic plan. Most strategic plans, however, do not refer to the reporting process although reporting constitutes a significant part of the implementation process.

The reporting requests and the guiding principles for national reporting

A comparison of the reporting requests of the five conventions against the UNEP-WCMC Guiding Principles shows a varied picture. All five conventions link their reporting requirements closely to the obligations of the conventions (principle 1), while several conventions have recently updated their reporting formats to cover critical priority issues such as the CBD 2010 target (principle 2). The reporting formats cover what is relevant to implementation, but do not sufficiently allow for assessing the effectiveness in implementation (principle 3). The CITES annual report, the CMS reports and to some extent CBD and Ramsar focus the reporting requests on progress since the previous report (principle 4). To some extent, all five conventions ask for information on progress in strategies and plans to implement the convention (principle 5). Some of the reporting formats seem likely to avoid unnecessary repetition of information that exists in other documents and reports, while this is less clear for others (principle 6). Increasingly, the conventions require their Parties to report on current status and trends relevant to the convention, but little information on programmes to evaluate and monitor status and trends is being asked for (principle 7). The use of indicators to report against has been inserted in the reporting requests of the CBD and the World Heritage Convention, and to a lesser extent in those of the Ramsar Convention. Ramsar and CMS are currently exploring an increased use of indicators (principle 8). There are few concrete calls for the provision of information that would help other nations in their implementation of the convention, including good and bad practice. The CBD collects case studies in a separate exercise to national reporting (principle 9). The national reports for the Ramsar Convention are intended to serve not only as a report to the Convention COP, but also as a national planning tool (principle 10). The Guiding Principles are repeated here in a different order and with some minor adjustments (chapter 6).

Overlaps and common thematic approaches of the five conventions regarding reporting

Many of the reporting requests of the five conventions are very specific to the obligations that the articles, decisions and resolutions of the convention in question have developed. However, the conventions share a wide range of themes under which the reporting requests can be summarised. There is potential for the identification of issues under these themes that are shared by all or a subset of the biodiversity-related conventions. The 2010 target could serve as a driver for such efforts, in particular regarding the issue of indicators and targets. Such joint information requests could focus on progress in the light of the 2010 target, or recent developments for the subset of biodiversity that all the conventions in question deal with, thus avoiding bulky reports that present a wide, but not necessarily relevant range of information on the specific subject. The challenge would be to develop the reporting requests in a way that satisfies the information needs of the individual conventions and help the countries to assemble all relevant information in one place.

Lessons from the Collaborative Partnership on Forests Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting

The work of the CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting provides for a number of lessons of significance to the five biodiversity-related conventions. The Task Force has made the national reports to a range of forest-related conventions and mechanisms available through a single portal. A similar approach could be tested by the five biodiversity-related conventions, for example through their joint website.

For the Information Framework for Forest Reporting, which is currently under development, the Task Force is distinguishing between reporting on actions and on status and trends, which is largely similar to the distinction between processes and outcomes.

The Information Framework for Forest Reporting aims to analyse consistency between national reports of one country to different conventions and mechanisms as well as between the reporting requirements of the conventions and mechanisms. For doing this, the Framework uses the seven elements of sustainable forest management as principles for organising the reported information. The analysis of consistency seems a useful approach for the five biodiversity-related conventions

(or a subset of them), in order to support closer collaboration between national focal points to various conventions at the national level. By also identifying further overlaps, gaps and consistencies between the reporting requirements of the conventions, such an approach could help to find opportunities for agreeing on joint issues that are shared between the reporting requirements of some of the conventions.

Recommendations

Chapter 7 presents a range of recommendations derived from the analysis of the previous chapters. They fall into three categories: recommendations regarding the reporting formats, further recommendations on national reporting, and recommendations for harmonization of reporting. In particular, future national reporting could be built around the following elements:

- Each round of reporting would focus only on a few selected issues of major concern for the convention, asking for new information regarding earlier reports only. This would ensure concise reports and informing agenda items of the forthcoming meetings of the governing bodies.
- Using indicators and targets, the reported information would focus on outcomes of action taken to implement the convention, providing an overview of the status and trends in the components of biodiversity the convention is concerned with.
- The reports would highlight successes and challenges for the actions taken or to be taken nationally, using case studies that are useful to other Parties.
- The reporting formats would consist of convention-specific information requests alongside requests that are shared with one, or more than one, other convention. This approach would encourage the development of national biodiversity information management systems in a way that allows national information modules on specific issues to be produced for more than one convention.

1. Introduction

Amongst the multitude of multilateral environmental agreements, five global biodiversity-related conventions have been recognised: 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 of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) and the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention; WHC). All of these conventions require Parties to report, on a regular basis, on the national implementation.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that the reporting burden has increased. This view conflicts with the recognition that reporting processes and the reports themselves should support rather than detract from agreement implementation, particularly at the national level. Following on from this, the need to streamline and/or harmonize the national reporting to these conventions – as well as the underlying national information management – has been acknowledged.

Following a workshop in October 2000, UNEP conducted pilot projects in four developing countries (Ghana, Indonesia, Panama, Seychelles) to test different approaches to harmonization of reporting and information management. The results of the pilot projects were further discussed at a workshop in Haasrode, Belgium, in September 2004 that was supported by the governments of Belgium, the United Kingdom and Germany and convened by UNEP-WCMC. This workshop resulted in a number of recommendations addressing possible next steps to further develop the harmonization agenda (see <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop.htm>).

In December 2004, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) contracted UNEP-WCMC to develop some of the actions envisaged by the recommendations of the workshop. The project has the following objectives:

- To review the extent to which the purpose of reporting is made clear to Parties, and the extent to which the information in the reports is used, *inter alia* for measuring progress in achieving the 2010 target, including assessing the links between reporting and strategic planning
- To identify potential overlaps between conventions in information requested, to identify themes relevant across several conventions and agreements, and to assess the experience in the forest sector of harmonizing reporting by theme
- To develop information documents and recommendations based on these analyses in a form that can be used within convention processes and support discussion on these issues both within the convention meetings and at the Biodiversity Liaison Group.

This document presents the results of the work on the first two of these objectives. It refers mainly to the latest national reports and reporting formats, but takes former reports and reporting formats into account where needed. The document focuses on the five global biodiversity-conventions, but also includes some aspects of the reporting systems of some of the Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding under the Convention on Migratory Species.

The main findings of the report are summarised in the Executive Summary. Each of the main chapters includes a summary and conclusions. At the end of the document, guiding principles for national reporting are presented, followed by specific recommendations.

2. The reporting systems of the global biodiversity-related conventions

2.1 Background

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Article 26 requires the Contracting Parties to present reports to the Conference of the Parties (COP) on measures taken to implement the Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the Convention's objectives. The first national reports were due in time for consideration by COP 4 in 1998, and the second national reports in time for COP 6 in 2002. COP 5 decided that future reports should be submitted for consideration at alternate ordinary meetings of the COP (decision V/19). The deadline for the third national reports was 15 May 2005. A questionnaire-based reporting format was developed for the second and third national reports.

In addition to the national reports, the COP has invited Parties to submit thematic reports on items due for in-depth consideration at future COPs. So far, the following issues have been covered by thematic reports: invasive alien species, access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, forest ecosystems, mountain ecosystems, protected areas, technology transfer and cooperation, and Global Taxonomy Initiative. In addition, Parties have been invited to submit a voluntary report on forest biological diversity.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

Article VIII, paragraph 7, of the Convention requires each Party to submit an annual and a biennial report. The annual report contains statistics on, *inter alia*, the number and type of permits and certificates granted, the States with which such trade occurred, the quantities and types of specimens and the names of species as included in Appendices I, II and III. The biennial report informs about legislative, regulatory and administrative measures taken to enforce the provisions of the Convention. The COP has agreed on guidelines for the preparation and submission of national reports, which include a standard format for the reports. In addition, COP 13 in 2004 requested Parties to submit the biennial report covering the years of 2003 and 2004 by October 2005, in accordance with the biennial report format distributed by the Secretariat. This decision is based on the review of the reporting system undertaken by a working group established by the 49th meeting of the Standing Committee. The aim of the review was to identify and analyse the causes of non-compliance with reporting requirements and to propose ways to turn reports into useful management tools for Parties.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Article VII, paragraph 5d, states that the COP, at each of its meetings, may receive and consider any reports presented by, *inter alia*, any Party. Parties have been asked to report to every COP since COP 2 in 1988, with the COPs meeting every second or third year. In addition, Article VI, paragraph 3, requests Parties which are Range States for migratory species listed in Appendix I or II, to inform the COP, through the Secretariat, at least six months prior to each ordinary meeting of the COP on measures they are taking to implement the provisions of the Convention for these species. Following a request by the COP the Standing Committee has developed a reporting format. In addition, a number of the Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding under the CMS have their own reporting requirements.

Convention on Wetlands

Although not based on the text of the Convention, the COP has decided that Contracting Parties should prepare national reports for each meeting of the COP, following a defined reporting format.

For COP 8 (2002), Parties were asked, for the first time, to link their national report to a national planning tool for the implementation of the Convention, with a reporting format constructed according to the strategic objectives of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

World Heritage Convention

Article 29 requests the State Parties to the Convention to submit reports to the General Conference of UNESCO, giving information on the legislative, administrative and educational provisions as well as fundraising efforts which they have adopted and other action which they have taken for the application of this Convention (section I of the reports), together with details of the experience acquired in this field. Section II of the reports is about the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties. The World Heritage Committee has a regional approach to periodic reporting as a means to promote regional collaboration and to be able to respond to the specific characteristics of each region. This process includes regional and subregional consultative and information meetings. The Committee examines these regional reports according to a pre-established schedule, which is based on a six-year cycle. Between 2000 and 2006, one report of each of the five regions has been due.

2.2 Explanation of the purpose of reporting

This section explores the extent to which the purpose of reporting is made clear to Parties by the global biodiversity-related conventions. For the reporting provisions within the Articles of the Convention, see chapter 2.1 above.

Convention on Biological Diversity

There has been increasing effort to explain the purpose of reporting, beyond the general provisions of Article 26. In the opening paragraphs, the Guidelines for the second national report state: ‘Responses to these questions will help Contracting Parties to review the extent to which they are successfully implementing the provisions of the Convention and will assist the Conference of the Parties to assess the overall status of implementation of the Convention’. The report format aims to be a checklist of what Parties have agreed to do. The wording of the questions follows the wording of the articles and decisions as closely as possible.

Despite the fact that the reporting format for the second national reports was designed with the close involvement of Parties, there was general dissatisfaction with it. Hence, decision VII/25 requested the reporting format for the third national reports

- to be more concise and better targeted to reduce the reporting burden
- to better contribute to the assessment of progress towards achieving the mission of the Strategic Plan and the 2010 target
- to better contribute to the identification of obstacles to implementation
- to include reporting on the four goals of the Strategic Plan
- to allow for inclusion of the results of indicators
- to include data on the outcomes and impacts of measures taken to achieve the CBD objectives.

The opening paragraphs of the Guidelines for the third national reports explain the reporting purpose as follows: ‘It is expected that the information provided will help Parties and the Conference of the Parties to review the extent to which the provisions of the Convention as well as the programmes of work adopted under the Convention are being implemented’. The Guidelines consider the reporting process ‘to go beyond highlighting the administrative aspects of the implementation of the Convention and instead to place more emphasis on the actual outcomes of the implementation of the policies’ of the CBD (paragraph 3).

Some questions in the guidelines for the third national reports are introduced with an explanation of the purpose of the question, linking it to COP decisions and placing it in the wider context of the national implementation of the Convention, for example the chapter on the 2010 target as follows: ‘The Conference of the Parties, in decision VII/30, annex II, decided to establish a provisional framework for goals and targets in order to clarify the 2010 global target adopted by decision VI/26, help assess the progress towards the target, and promote coherence among the programmes of work of the Convention. Parties and Governments are invited to develop their own targets with this flexible framework. Please provide relevant information by responding to the questions and requests contained in the following tables’.

The guidelines for both the second and the third national reports present, where appropriate, questions with a reference to the relevant COP decision that is asking for the specific implementation measure.

For the thematic reports, the purpose of the requests is provided in the specific context. For example, the format for the thematic report on transfer of technology and technology cooperation outlines that ‘the information submitted by the Parties will be compiled to facilitate the consideration of relevant issues at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The responses to these questions will also assist with the assessment of the overall status of implementation of the Convention’ (page 1). The same two or very similar reasons are presented within the format for most of the other thematic reports.

It is worth noting that on several occasions the Conference of the Parties has asked for information to be reported on in national reports, independent of the decisions on national reporting.

CITES

The purpose of reporting is explained in the guidelines for annual and biennial reports. The guidelines for annual reports state: ‘One of the functions of these guidelines is to encourage Parties to present information in a standard form, so that it can be easily computerized, with two main objectives:

- to enable monitoring of the extent of world trade in each species included in the CITES Appendices and the identification of potentially harmful trade; and
- to enable monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and the detection of potentially illicit trade’.

The reporting format for biennial reports ‘allows Parties to present information in a standard manner, so that it can be easily computerized, with three main objectives:

- i) To enable monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the Convention;
- ii) To facilitate the identification of major achievements, significant developments, or trends, gaps or problems and possible solutions; and
- iii) To provide a basis for substantive and procedural decision-making by the Conference of the Parties and various subsidiary bodies.’

For the biennial reports, the Secretariat explains on the CITES website (<http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/reports.shtml>): ‘Biennial reports provide an opportunity for Parties to share information regarding their overall implementation of the Convention, including their progress in the development and application of laws and regulations, administrative procedures, economic and social incentives and wildlife trade policies. Such reports may contain summaries of national compliance and enforcement efforts (e.g. awareness-raising, training, monitoring, inspections, investigations, seizures, confiscations, prosecutions, convictions, penalties, court decisions, *etc.*). At the national level, biennial reports serve as a tool for self-assessment through which Parties can identify achievements, significant developments or trends,

gaps or problems and possible solutions. At the international level, the comparison and synthesis of information in biennial reports can support substantive and procedural decision-making by the Conference of the Parties and various subsidiary bodies’.

The working group of the Standing Committee, tasked with a review of reporting requirements under the Convention (see above, chapter 2.1), analysed the responses of Parties (22 responses were received) to notification 2003/084 on national reporting and concluded, *inter alia*, that

- the Guidelines for the preparation and submission of CITES annual reports were sufficiently clear, and a number of suggestions for further improvement were made
- a move to computerization of reporting was welcomed
- the draft for biennial reports was widely welcomed.

For each proposed resolution or recommendation, the working group recommended consideration of whether there is a need to collect information, and whether this would be best done through national reports.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

Resolution 7.8 refers to the purpose of reporting through elaborating on the need to enhance the information provided through national reports and on the need for using the information from the reports for implementing the CMS Information Management Plan. The resolution states:

‘2. *Recommends* further that Parties be provided with feedback on the ways in which their subsequent national reports could be enhanced, in line with the guidelines already provided in the new report format;...

4. *Encourages* Parties to submit their national reports in a timely and comprehensive manner, to enable the objectives of the CMS Information Management Plan to realise their full potential’.

The CMS Information Management Plan aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of CMS implementation, and to ensure an effective contribution by CMS to harmonised reporting and information management by biodiversity-related treaties. It is concerned with the collection, management and dissemination of the scientific and management information that is necessary for the implementation of the Convention. The Information Management Plan is implemented through, *inter alia*, the CMS Information System. The CMS Information System brings together the data from various expert organisations, the knowledge generated within the CMS and other biodiversity agreements, and the information provided by the Parties to CMS through their National Reports.

Convention on Wetlands

National reporting under the Ramsar Convention is closely linked to the Strategic Plan, and the reporting format is structured along the lines of the strategic objectives of the Strategic Plan. This is explained at length in the Explanatory Notes to the national report format.

The Explanatory Notes make reference to resolution VIII/26 and its call for the reporting format to include

- codified questions on priorities and progress in implementation
- precise indicators for the status of, and progress in, implementation
- explanatory text fields for reporting implementation progress since COP 8.

The purpose of the questions is in several cases further explained by references to the various Ramsar guidelines, such as the Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands, contained in the actions from the Strategic Plan or COP resolutions.

World Heritage Convention

The Operational Guidelines of the Convention, in paragraph 201, as well as the explanatory notes on the reporting format, explain that the periodic reporting on the application of the World Heritage Convention intends to serve four main purposes:

- to provide an assessment of the application of the World Heritage Convention by the State Party;
- to provide an assessment as to whether the World Heritage values of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained over time;
- to provide up-dated information about the World Heritage properties to record the changing circumstances and state of conservation of the properties;
- to provide a mechanism for regional cooperation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties concerning the implementation of the Convention and World Heritage conservation.

Summary and conclusions

All of the five conventions have, to various degrees, been moving towards a better explanation of the background for the questions in the reporting formats. A number of purposes for reporting are provided, namely:

- Enabling the decision-making bodies as well as the Parties to assess and monitor progress in implementation of the Convention, including assessing progress towards achieving objectives of strategic documents
- Providing information to support the COP in taking appropriate decisions
- Identifying priorities for further work of the convention, including on major achievements or challenges
- Providing opportunities for information exchange and cooperation for Parties at the regional level
- Providing for self-assessment of the implementation of the convention for Parties.

Some conventions have developed guidelines or explanatory notes for the reporting formats. Also, increasingly the questions in the reporting formats are provided with a brief background explanation, linking the questions to specific COP decisions, objectives of the strategic planning document, or articles of the convention.

For each proposed resolution or recommendation, the CITES working group on national reports recommended consideration of whether there is a need to collect information, and whether this would be best done through national reports. Conversely it would appear at times that the CBD COP takes decisions suggesting information be collected through national reports without relating this to the reporting format.

For enabling measuring the progress in implementation, the reporting formats refer specifically to the implementation of the Convention's provisions (articles) and the decisions/resolutions of the COPs as well as the strategic documents. It has proven useful to link the reporting requests closely to those and to explain this approach through the guidelines and reporting formats.

2.3 The response of Parties to the reporting requests

This section looks at the response of Parties to the reporting requests, in terms of the number of reports submitted and, where possible, the matching of contents with the reporting requests.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The deadline for submission of the second national reports was 15 May 2001. By that date, the Secretariat had received 15 reports from 180 Parties. By the end of October 2003, 104 reports had been received (26 from Asia and the Pacific, 25 from Africa, 17 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 13 from Central and Western Europe, and 23 from Western Europe and other countries). For comparison, the Secretariat had received 107 first national reports by the end of COP 4 (May 1998, when the Convention had 173 Parties); the original deadline had been June 1997.

At the time of writing (mid July 2005), two months after the deadline for submission, third national reports of just 12 Parties were available on the CBD website.

From notifications and reminders to Parties on submitting the second national reports, the Secretariat was able to analyse reasons for late or non-submission. Those reasons were presented in document COP/7/17/Add/3 as follows:

- Lack of financial assistance to prepare the national reports;
- Delay caused by lack of or poor coordination with relevant implementing agencies to apply for the funds from the Global Environment Facility;
- Delay caused by lack of or poor coordination at the national level and the limited participatory approach;
- Delay caused by change of personnel responsible for biodiversity and national reporting at the national focal point;
- Lack of technical capacity and resources to prepare the report.

It was generally found that Parties, in their national reports, responded well to those questions that required ticking a box, but that in most cases they did not provide additional information (boxes provide space for additional information). This seems to be independent of the provision of background to the question.

COP 6 considered three thematic reports. 58 reports on invasive alien species were received, 46 on forest ecosystems, and 16 on access and benefit-sharing. COP 6 invited further three thematic reports: on mountain ecosystems, on protected areas, and on technology transfer and cooperation. By the time of the preparation of the respective note for COP 7, the Secretariat had received 18 reports on mountain ecosystems, 34 reports on protected areas and 22 on technology transfer and cooperation. A few reports were received later, too late for inclusion in the notes for COP 7: four on mountain ecosystems, and 12 on protected areas. In the notes for COP 7, the Secretariat states that the small number of respective reports and a lack of detailed information make drawing any general conclusions very difficult. The notes contain therefore a synopsis of the information received, but no substantive analysis. The same conclusion has been drawn for the voluntary reports on the implementation of the expanded programme of work on forest biodiversity; the Secretariat had received only 15 reports by November 2003, when a note for COP 7 on the results of the reports was drafted. The thematic reports on the implementation of the programme of work on the Global Taxonomy Initiative were due by 30 June 2004; the number of reports available on the CBD website as of mid July 2005 is 44.

CITES

COP 13 Doc. 18 stated: 'Overall, the level of submission of annual reports is rather high. Since the 12th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP12, Santiago, 2002) however, Parties have been recommended to suspend trade in specimens of CITES-listed species with Algeria, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania and Somalia because of their failure to submit annual reports for three consecutive years without having provided adequate justification'.

CITES is the only one of the five conventions that can take punitive action when Parties fail to report.

COP 12 Doc. 22.2 outlines that the workload of the Secretariat had prevented it from being able to devote resources to the subject of biennial reports. It also states that ‘compliance levels with the biennial report requirement have never been high’, and that since 1990 reports with biennial report information have been submitted by 63 countries (by the end of 1990, CITES had 107 Parties; that number had risen to 160 by the end of 2002). With the adoption of the guidelines for biennial reports at COP 13 in 2004, an increasing submission rate for biennial reports can be expected.

Convention on Migratory Species

From 1988 to 1999, the percentage of Parties that submitted reports had risen from 27 to 52. In 1999, of 60 national reports due, 31 were submitted. The submission rate (1988-1999) has been best in Europe and worst in Africa.

The Synthesis of Party Reports 1988-2001 found that in many cases Parties did not provide the requested information on species of Appendix I or II of which they are a range state. In some cases, Parties provided information on species they are not a range state to. The Synthesis also found that some reports were repetitions of previous reports. A number of recommendations to Parties and to the CMS Secretariats were made, in order to improve the quality of the information provided in the reports (see below, chapter 2.4).

Convention on Wetlands

Only four Contracting Parties had not submitted their national report to COP 8, reflecting the generally high reporting rate. It was found that, generally, Parties had responded well, allowing for detailed analyses of the current state of implementation of the Convention. In a few cases only, the regional overviews of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan (documents COP 8.25-30) state that the information was insufficient to draw a clear picture. For example: Section 2.2 B of the African regional report (COP 8 doc 25): ‘Fourteen Contracting Parties have reported that they are partly or totally reviewing government plans and policies, which might impact wetlands. However Kenya and South Africa are the only Contracting Parties that have provided detailed information on the scope of the appraisal, the progression of the work and its purpose’.

In some cases, it was found difficult to interpret the information provided. For example: Section 2.11 A of the Asia regional report (COP 8 doc 26): ‘In reply to the question “Have the measures required to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar sites been documented”, out of 21 Contracting Parties 16 (76%) replied yes, 2 (9.5%) replied partly, and 3 (14%) replied no. However, no Contracting Party who replied “yes” provided any details of what steps have been taken to document these measures, so it is not possible to clearly assess the true extent of implementation... Replies to the questions in the National Report Format concerning the status of management plans for Ramsar sites have proved very difficult to interpret accurately’.

In other cases, it was acknowledged that the reporting questions/format might not have been sufficiently clear to solicit an appropriate response: Chapter 2.18 of the Asia regional report (COP 8 doc 26): ‘Out of 21 Contracting Parties in Asia, 10 (48%) report that they have reviewed their national institutions related to wetlands to ensure that resources are available to implement the Convention. However, most of the information they have provided was not related to this particular question, which may have been misinterpreted. Some relevant information was provided by India, Israel and Japan on these reviews’. Or chapter 2.7 of the European synthesis (COP 8 doc 27): ‘The formulation of the questions in the National Report format was not very helpful to provide substantial answers either’.

World Heritage Convention

Information is available for those regions, the reports of which have been analysed during the 2000-2006 reporting cycle of the Convention.

In the Arab States region, 11 out of 12 Parties that were called to report did provide a report (1 Party failed; 2 further Parties acceded to the Convention after the reporting period, 6 Parties were not eligible to report as they do not have any properties on the World Heritage List). In Africa, 16 of 18 State Parties provided section I reports (equivalent figure for section II not known). Of 42 Parties in the Asia and the Pacific region, section I reports were expected from 39 and received from 36 Parties. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, 31 Parties were expected to report, four of which did not submit a report on either section I or section II. The deadline for submission of the reports from Latin America and the Caribbean had to be extended several times, and by July 2003, all but four Parties of the region had submitted their report.

The high reporting rate has undoubtedly been helped by the holding of consultative and information meetings. For example, between 2001 and 2003, seven subregional or regional meetings were held in the Asia-Pacific region, in addition to four national meetings and three information meetings for Asia-Pacific States Parties Permanent Delegations to UNESCO.

The content of the reports allowed for developing overview publications so far for the Arab States, the Africa region and the Asia-Pacific region, while the World Heritage Committee provided, for its 28th session, a detailed regional account for the Latin America and the Caribbean region from the national reports.

Summary and conclusions

The reporting rate of Parties varies considerably between the conventions and the type of reports, with the Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention as well as the CITES annual reports achieving very high numbers of Parties that do report. For the CITES annual reports, an obvious reason is the compliance mechanism attached to reporting: trade with a Party failing continuously to submit reports without an adequate justification can be suspended. Support by regional and subregional consultative and information meetings has been crucial in achieving a high reporting rate for the World Heritage Convention. The CBD found that lack of financial assistance, lack of national capacities, resources and cooperation, as well as changes in personnel were the main reasons for non-submission of reports. The reporting rate is particularly low for most of the CBD thematic and voluntary reports. The reasons for that are not clear; perhaps, these reports are seen as less significant than the regular national reports and as an additional burden to the regular national reporting requirements.

It has been found that when information was required via tick boxes with attached boxes for additional information to be filled in narratively, many Parties preferred to just tick the boxes but not provide additional narrative information. The reason could be that it is not sufficiently clear what narrative information is required, and for what purpose. For some reports, the right balance between tick boxes and narrative sections might not have been found yet.

In some cases, a lack of crystal-clear guidance on the information required seems to have caused the provision of inadequate information. Reporting guidelines and the provision of background information have generally been successful tools in soliciting adequate responses.

Experience from the UNEP pilot projects on harmonization of national reporting indicates that there is a great need of efficiently organising the national information management, which would enable a quantitatively and qualitatively improved response to national reporting requests. This has resource implications, in particular for developing countries. It would therefore be helpful, if financial and technical assistance would be made available to developing countries for developing

and maintaining their national biodiversity information management. This could be part of assistance for implementing the biodiversity-related conventions.

2.4 The use of information from national reports

This section explores to which extent the information submitted by Parties in national reports has been used in the respective convention process.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Secretariat provided an analysis from the second national reports (document COP/7/INF/2) as well as conclusions drawn from the analysis (document COP/7/17/Add/3). However, it is stated that the information is in most cases not sufficient 'to make an effective assessment of the implementation of the Convention' (COP/7/17/Add/3, paragraph 22). Also, the Secretariat's notes for COP 7 on the three thematic reports requested by COP 6 (COP/7/INF/7, COP/7/INF/8, COP/7/INF/9), conclude, that substantial analyses have not been possible, due to the small number of reports received and the lack of detailed information in those reports that were submitted.

The COP recommended in decision II/1 that the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) contains a 'summary of the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity at the national level on the basis of the information contained in national reports to be submitted by Parties in accordance with Article 26 of the Convention'. The first edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook was published by the Secretariat of the CBD in 2001. Similarly, COP decision VI/25 (paragraph 7) decided that the second edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook should draw 'upon information contained in the second national reports [and] the thematic reports on the items for in-depth consideration at its sixth and seventh meeting'. The second edition of the GBO will be available at COP 8 in 2006. It will contain information on national measures for implementing the Convention, but will face the difficulty of getting a comprehensive picture from the rather patchy information provided in national reports (see above).

All national as well as thematic and voluntary reports are available online on the CBD website. The website offers search facilities, through a Second National Reports Analyzer and a Thematic Reports Analyzer. The Second National Reports Analyzer, for example, makes information from national reports from specific countries or from regional groups of countries available for the articles and thematic work areas of the convention. The efficiency of the analyzers depends, of course, on the quality of the information reported. As the information from the second national reports and the thematic reports has been, to a large extent, submitted via tick boxes, the search results produced by the analyzers cannot provide comprehensive results.

There is a widespread assumption that the national reports are not very much drawn upon in the preparation of meetings under the Convention (see, for example, Australia's submission of views on the issues to be addressed by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, to be held in September 2005, available at <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/submissions/wgri-au-en.pdf>). The documents for the meetings of the COP, SBSTTA or of working groups and expert groups under the Convention do not indicate that they have been based on information from the national reports, apparently due to the lack of substantial information from national reports. Interestingly, in several cases the Secretariat has requested from Parties specific information in preparation for meetings under the Convention, another indication that the information reported through the national reporting process is not sufficient. It must be concluded, therefore, that the purpose of reporting - enabling Parties and the COP to review the extent to which the provisions of the Convention and the programmes of work are being implemented - has not been achieved.

CITES

The data from annual reports build the basis for the CITES trade database which is managed by UNEP-WCMC, on behalf of the CITES Secretariat. This database contains more than 6 million records of wildlife trade and is openly accessible via the CITES website (see <http://www.cites.org/eng/resources/trade.shtml>).

As the major source of information on trends in trade in endangered species of wildlife, the information from national reports is used as a basis for decisions and resolutions as well as amendments of appendices by the COP. Hence, the annual reports provide the information needed for defining further steps in addressing trade in endangered species. The reports, which are very focused, are therefore substantially used.

For biennial reports, as said above, COP 12 Doc. 22.2 outlines that the workload of the Secretariat had prevented it from being able to devote resources to the subject of biennial reports, but with the recent adoption of a format for biennial reports it is expected that the Secretariat will be in a better position to make use of the information from the biennial reports.

Convention on Migratory Species

Resolution 7.8 acknowledges that conclusions on the implementation of the Convention require high-quality information from national reports: 'Recognising that the quantity and quality of the information supplied in Party reports needs to be enhanced in order to enable the production of robust, coherent conclusions regarding the results of implementation of the Convention'. The resolution further concludes that Parties need to be supported in order to provide quality reports: 'Recommends further that Parties be provided with feedback on the ways in which their subsequent national reports could be enhanced, in line with the guidelines already provided in the new report format'. This feedback can be provided on an individual basis to Parties, based on the analysis of annual reports to CMS and related Agreements undertaken by UNEP-WCMC.

COP 7 in 2002 provided a summary from this analysis. It outlines recommendations, regarding Secretariat support to the reporting process, *e.g.* providing State Parties with a list of appendix I and II species for which they are a range state, and developing a reporting format. A similar summary will be prepared by UNEP-WCMC for COP 8 in 2005.

Information from national reports, together with expert information from other sources, builds the CMS Information Management System, developed and maintained by UNEP-WCMC for the Convention. The system, available online on the CMS website at <http://sea.unep-wcmc.org/isdb/cms/Taxonomy/index.cfm>, provides information about animal groups of relevance to the CMS, about Parties to the Convention and about specific themes such as implementation of resolutions and recommendations, policies on satellite telemetry, *etc.* It is expected that the Information Management System will increasingly be used to develop responses of the COP to challenges identified by national reports.

In the case of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and Their Habitats of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia (IOSEA Marine Turtles MoU), the Secretariat has produced a detailed analysis of national reports for the Third Meeting of the Signatory States, to be held in 2005 (doc 7.2). This document provides a synopsis of the information from the national reports on each question, leading to a range of recommendations for improvement in implementation of the MoU. Also, changes to the reporting format are proposed (doc 7.1). This task has been aided by the online reporting facility of the IOSEA MoU, which makes the reported information easily accessible and allows for easy extraction of information from the reports.

Convention on Wetlands

At COP 8 in 2002, the Ramsar Bureau presented regional overviews of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in the six Ramsar regions (COP 8 documents 25-30). These overviews are based on the national reports and present a comprehensive picture of the state of the implementation of the Convention (in addition to the national reports, some regional overviews have drawn on additional information from regional Ramsar meetings). From the information provided in the national reports, weaknesses are identified and priorities for the triennium 2003-2005 described. Often, a link is made to a draft resolution of COP 8 which addresses the challenge in question.

However, it is understood that the reporting does not allow for an objective analysis of status and trends of wetlands at the national level; as outlined in chapter 1.2 of the synthesis report for the Neotropics: 'From the analysis of the National Reports it is evident that the high percentage of implementation might be misleading, as the level of progress of many of the actions is different from country to country. As the present report format does not allow for a more objective analysis of status and trends of wetlands at the national level, the future reporting system should be modified to guarantee that Parties to the Convention will have a clearer picture of the key priorities to attain the sustainable use of wetlands in all their territory'.

World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Committee examines and responds to the States Parties' periodic reports. It then includes its findings in its report to the General Conference of UNESCO. The Secretariat consolidates national reports into Regional State of the World Heritage reports, two of which, for the Arab States and for Africa, have been developed in recent years. The chapter on evaluation and follow-up of the Operational Guidelines, paragraphs 209 and 210, states the following: 'The World Heritage Committee carefully reviews issues raised in Periodic Reports and advises the States Parties of the regions concerned on matters arising from them. The Committee requested the Secretariat with the Advisory Bodies, in consultation with the relevant States Parties, to develop long-term follow-up Regional Programmes structured according to its Strategic Objectives and to submit them for its consideration. These should accurately reflect the needs of World Heritage in the Region and facilitate the granting of International Assistance. The Committee also expressed its support to ensure direct links between the Strategic Objectives and the International Assistance.'

Importantly, the regional overviews develop recommendations for the further implementation of the Convention. *E.g.*, the Africa report identifies recommendations at the State Party level, the site level, as well as a proposal of an action plan for medium-term regular reporting. The latter identifies a number of strategies, each accompanied by activities, timeframes and potential funding sources. The strategies are for training, management, research and site reporting, participation, and networks and cooperation.

For two regions not covered by regional reports yet, preliminary analyses of national reports are underway. The 28th session of the World Heritage Committee discussed the Periodic Report: State of the World Heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2004 (WHC-04/28.COM/16). It analyses the state of the World Heritage in the region, looks back on three decades of conservation of World Heritage in the region, and proposes a comprehensive action plan for World Heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean. The 27th session of the World Heritage Committee discussed the Periodic Report: State of the World Heritage in Asia and the Pacific, 2003 (WHC-03/27.COM/6A rev). It analyses the state of the World Heritage in the region and delivers detailed recommendations for the region and its subregions. The national reports from Europe and North America will be considered by the World Heritage Committee in 2005 and 2006.

Summary and conclusions

Feedback to Parties on how the information from national reports is being used is clearly a significant step to encourage the further provision of national reports. This feedback has in most cases taken the form of analyses of reported information for the consideration by the governing bodies of the conventions. This includes assessments of the extent of which the information from national reports allows for assessing the state of implementation of the conventions.

To varying degrees only have the conventions developed analyses of the information from national reports, in the form of background documents for the governing bodies or separate publications as in the case of the Regional State of the World Heritage reports. Information from reports has also been used for the preparation of a major publication, the Global Biodiversity Outlook of the CBD. Some types of national reports have not yet been analysed, for example the CITES biennial reports. However, some conventions, such as the CBD, do hardly draw on information from national reports when preparing documents for meetings of the Conference of the Parties, subsidiary bodies and working groups. It is suggested that this is, at least to some extent, due to the lack of substantial information available from national reports.

The Convention on Wetlands and the World Heritage Convention prepare regional reports on the implementation of the Convention, drawing on the national reports, as a way to identify characteristics and challenges for the region. The latter convention has embarked on long-term regional programmes, following up from the information in the national reports and developed in consultation with the State Parties of the region in question. The regional reports also contain recommendations for State Parties and, in the case of the Africa regional report, an action plan for Medium-term Regular Reporting. It can be concluded that regional reports to the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention indeed lead to follow-up action.

The information from the annual reports to CITES is managed through the CITES trade database. The data provide the basis for decision-making processes within the Convention. Information from national reports to CMS is managed through the CMS Information Management System, which is, like the CITES trade database, publicly available on the Internet. An online search and analysis facility for information from CBD national reports is offered on the CBD website. The IOSEA Marine Turtles MoU provides an online reporting facility, which makes the reported information easily available for reviews and the extraction of specific information. In 2005, the Meeting of the Signatory States is considering proposals for an improved implementation of the MoU, based on the reported information.

2.5 Outcome-oriented reporting

This section identifies the extent to which the conventions have included requests for information on outcomes, in contrast to information on processes, in the national reporting formats.

Convention on Biological Diversity

One of the background documents for COP 7 in 2004 (COP/7/INF/2, paragraph 272) states: 'From the above analysis, the information contained in the second national reports is found inadequate to identify the status and trends and the impacts of implementation in most cases... In addition, even though some countries provided some detailed quantitative information, it is still very difficult to generalize any status and trends considering their low level of representativeness'. The conclusions drawn from the second national reports (document COP/7/17/Add/3) clearly highlight this problem. Similar conclusions have been drawn from the thematic and voluntary reports (see above, chapters 2.3 and 2.4).

Since the format for the second national reports was developed, considerable discussions have taken place in the CBD to shift the focus from process to outcome-oriented reporting. This is in

particular due to the pressure to report on progress in achieving the 2010 target that the Convention adopted, as part of its Strategic Plan, in 2002 (decision VI/26). As a result, there are some remarkable differences between the guidelines for the second and those for the third national reports.

Like the guidelines for the second national reports and those for the thematic reports, the format for the third national reports still has a strong focus on the provision of information on action taken or measures put in place nationally, i.e. on processes for implementation of the Convention. However, requests for information on outcomes have been widely included. The guidelines state: ‘Finally, an effort was made to move from purely administrative questions (“Was this programme implemented?”) to results questions (“How did the implementation of this programme change biodiversity conservation, its sustainable use or the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from its use?”)’ (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/Add.2, paragraph 12c).

Accordingly, for each section (the sections refer to information related to thematic areas or articles), a box with the following question, focusing on outcomes, has been included:

‘Please elaborate below the impacts or outcomes achieved by your country in implementing this article, particularly in terms of

- (a) Achieving priority objectives of your NBSAP (if applicable),
- (b) Achieving the objectives and goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention,
- (c) Progressing toward the 2010 target’.

Chapters on the targets for the 2010 target, as identified by decision VII/30, have been introduced, requesting information on, *inter alia*, status and trends as well as indicators. Also, a new chapter on the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation asks for information on progress made towards the targets of the Strategy and for indicators used to monitor this progress.

However, adding on information requests for outcomes has further increased the volume of the reporting format and with this, the reporting burden for countries. The overarching need to collect information on the 2010 target would provide a good opportunity to review, which information is essential and which information requests can be disposed of. This should build not only on the information needs for the COP but also those of national focal points, for assessing progress towards the 2010 target.

CITES

Annual reporting has an element of outcome-oriented reporting in so far as trade statistics reflect the results of measures taken under the Convention. The new guidelines for biennial reports include a question on the results of any review or assessment of the effectiveness of national CITES legislation. The replies to this request should allow for an overview of the outcomes of national implementation efforts regarding legislative measures.

Convention on Migratory Species

The CMS Reporting Format includes questions on activities that Parties have undertaken in implementing the Convention, reflecting information on processes. The requests for information on population size, trends and distribution of Appendix I species for which the Party is a range state represent requests for outcome-focused information. Meanwhile the Scientific Council and the Standing Committee are considering both how the Convention should report on the 2010 target, and how this might relate to assessing progress in advancing the Convention’s objectives.

The reporting formats of several of the agreements under the CMS have included requests for information on outcomes. The reporting format of the IOSEA MoU asks in paragraph 1.6: ‘Has your country undertaken a recent evaluation of the effectiveness of its nest and beach management programmes? ... Please give details...’; and in paragraph 3.3: ‘List in order of priority the marine

turtle populations in your country [in] need of conservation actions, and indicate for each of them their population trends.’

Also, the reporting format of the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), in the section for riparian Parties, paragraph 17, asks for the following information: ‘Scientific assessment of the state of cetacean conservation in the area under national jurisdiction included in the distribution area’, and in paragraph 15 of the section of reports starting from MOP 2: ‘Results, obtained during the period covered by the report, of scientific assessments of the state of cetacean conservation in the area under national jurisdiction included in the distribution area’.

The reporting format of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (Eurobats), in section B on the status of bats within the territory of the Party, asks for status and trends of bats and of sites important for their conservation.

Convention on Wetlands

Most questions in the reporting format are asking for the extent of action that has been taken in fulfillment of the obligations. Thus, the reporting format focuses on the process of implementation. There is less room for information on the outcomes of these processes although at the end of each section, a box asks for ‘implementation progress since COP 8’, to be filled by text answer (as opposed to tick boxes).

In some cases, the box at the end of each section has been extended to request information specifically on outcomes. An example is provided by action r3.2.iii which specifically asks for information on the status and trends in national peatland resources.

In several cases, the question on the process (‘has the action been fulfilled?’) asks for the number of sites involved, which might give an idea of the impact of the action taken. For example, action r4.1.i requires information on actions that have been taken to restore/rehabilitate those wetlands defined as priority for restoration, including, if available, the number of sites.

As outlined above, there is a comprehension that the reporting does not allow for an objective analysis of status and trends of wetlands at the national level (see chapters 2.3 and 2.4 above). Additional information on the results of action taken could easily be included in the reporting format when, for example, reference is made to the conservation status of mountain wetlands (Action r2.2.iii). However, as with the CBD, such additional information on outcomes would increase the volume of the already hefty report.

Meanwhile the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) is considering ways in which information could be used in assessing progress in achieving the Convention’s objectives.

World Heritage Convention

Reporting under the Convention serves, *inter alia*, the purpose of providing an assessment as to whether the World Heritage values of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained over time. This is reflected in the reporting format. Section I refers to the legislative and administrative provisions which the State Party has adopted and other actions which it has taken for the application of the Convention, together with details of the experience acquired in this field. This particularly concerns the general obligations and commitments defined in specific articles of the Convention. Thus, section I refers to the processes. Section II refers to the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties located on the territory of the State Party concerned. This Section should be completed for each World Heritage property. Thus, section II is expected to provide information about outcomes of implementation action.

Summary and conclusions

The conventions have taken different approaches to obtain information on outcomes. The reporting formats of CBD and Ramsar carry provisions that, for each section, ask for narrative information on outcomes or implementation progress. This reflects the emerging shift in focus from process to outcome-oriented reporting, driven, in particular for the CBD, by the need to measure progress towards the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity target. It is also a response to the difficulties of obtaining information on status and trends of biodiversity or components of it through former reporting formats. However, the additional information requested adds to the already overwhelming volume of the reporting formats and through this to the reporting burden.

The CMS requests information on population size and trends of species on Appendix I. The CITES annual reports provide information that could be used in the evaluation of outcomes of actions taken in implementing the Convention. The CITES biennial reports ask for the results of assessments of the effectiveness of national CITES legislation. The World Heritage Convention has separated requests for information on processes from that on outcomes. While section I of the reports requests information on processes for implementing the Convention, section II focuses on the conservation status of World Heritage properties and sites and thus on outcomes of action taken.

As most reporting formats request information on action taken to implement the obligations under the conventions, it seems not too difficult a task to expand this information request to include information on the outcomes of actions undertaken (where not done already). Both CMS and the Convention on Wetlands are currently considering such a move. This would considerably help the assembling of overviews of the overall success of the conventions. To avoid an overall increase in the information requested, such a process should be accompanied by the disposal of information requests on processes that are not essential for the report in question.

2.6 Links of national reporting to strategic planning documents

This section looks at how the national reporting processes are linked to the strategic plans or similar documents of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Convention on Biological Diversity

COP 6 adopted the Strategic Plan of the Convention in 2002. It does not refer to the reporting process. However, COP decision VII/25 requested the format for the third national reports to make provisions for reporting on the four goals of the SP. Hence, the reporting format includes, at the end of each set of questions on the articles or programmes of work, the option to submit information, 'on the impacts or outcomes of the actions taken by your country, particularly in terms of achieving ... if applicable, the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention (2002-2010) and the 2010 target adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties'. Specific questions on some of the objectives of the Strategic Plan are included (objectives 3.1, 4.1, 4.4), under the paragraphs on related articles (article 6 on general measures and article 13 on public education and awareness). As discussed above, as this is an added-on information request, it increases the workload with preparing the national reports.

Although only three out of 19 objectives under the four goals of the Strategic Plan are covered specifically in the reporting format, Parties are requested to submit information on the outcomes of actions taken for achieving all four goals.

CITES

The Strategic Vision, which was adopted at COP 11 in 2000, makes no direct reference to national reporting. The accompanying action plan, however, relates to biennial reporting as follows:

- Objective 1.8: To encourage Parties to develop and implement effective management programmes for the conservation and recovery of species, so that the species will no longer satisfy the criteria for inclusion in the Appendices.
- Action point 1.8.5: Report biennially on progress related to this objective.

The Strategic Vision provides an indirect reference to national reports when it states that several action points shall be carried out by the Secretariat and the Parties ‘on the basis of information from Parties’.

Convention on Migratory Species

Resolution 6.4 of the CMS Conference of the Parties requested Parties to report to COP 7 on the progress made in the implementation of the objectives identified in the Strategic Plan. Therefore, a number of questions in the reporting format link to the objectives and operational objectives of the Strategic Plan although there is no complete overlap. The content of the IOSEA MoU reporting template is linked directly to the provisions of the MoU's Conservation and Management Plan. Likewise, the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) has its reporting format structured along the Action Plan (2003-2005).

Convention on Wetlands

National reporting under the Ramsar Convention is closely linked to the Strategic Plan, and the reporting format is structured along the lines of the strategic objectives of the Strategic Plan. All questions are directly related to actions under the objectives of the Strategic Plan or to COP resolutions.

In addition, the Strategic Plan serves as a planning tool for the national level. As the reporting format is combined with the national planning tool, the national report is likely to strongly reflect the national implementation efforts.

World Heritage Convention

The Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List, launched in 1994, aims to ensure that the List reflects the world's cultural and natural diversity of outstanding universal value. It is therefore a document very different in nature to the more recent strategic plans of other conventions and no reference is made to the reporting process.

Summary and conclusions

Across the conventions, the degree of linkages between the strategic planning documents and the reporting format varies. The CBD has extended the national reporting process to cover the Strategic Plan. Parties are requested to report on the implementation of the four goals and some specific objectives of the Plan. The Action Plan of the Strategic Vision of CITES stresses the importance of information from Parties to carry out the action points. The Convention on Migratory Species has to some extent structured the national reporting formats along the lines of the Strategic Plan. The Ramsar Convention has chosen the Strategic Plan as the primary focus for reporting, by amalgamating the Strategic Plan-derived national planning tool with the reporting format into one document. Also, the reporting formats for the IOSEA MoU and AEWA use their respective strategic planning documents to structure the reporting formats. The reporting format of the World Heritage Convention does not refer to the Global Strategy of the Convention, which is concerned with a balanced and representative World Heritage List and therefore different in nature to the strategic documents of other conventions.

It seems reasonable to closely link the reporting process to the strategic plans in order to ensure that Parties reflect on their implementation of the obligations under the strategic plan. Most strategic plans, however, do not refer to the reporting process although reporting constitutes a significant part of the implementation process.

3. The reporting requests and the guiding principles for national reporting

For the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1997, WCMC (now UNEP-WCMC) prepared an information paper on reporting, which incorporated Guiding Principles for National Reporting (UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/3/Inf.16). The Principles were subsequently refined for the use of all biodiversity-related conventions and submitted to the UNEP-conducted workshop on harmonization of national reporting in 2000 (background paper 1 of the workshop, see workshop report at <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop/REPORT.pdf>). They are aimed at Parties to conventions, and to the advisory and governance processes developing and adopting reporting formats and guidelines.

This section compares the reporting requests of the five biodiversity-related conventions against the Guiding Principles (using the version of the workshop on harmonization in 2000).

Guiding Principle 1: Base the report on information that is required already by the national focal point to ensure that the country is meeting the commitments made in acceding to the convention.

Reporting on the implementation of the obligations for Parties is indeed a fundamental requirement of national reporting. Accordingly, all five conventions link their reporting format closely to the obligations of the respective convention's articles. The CBD and the Ramsar Convention have structured their reporting formats along the lines of the respective convention's articles and the decisions/resolutions taken by the Conferences of the Parties as well as the objectives of the strategic plan, aiming for the reported information to reflect the Party's commitments under the treaty. It is important to note that countries' efforts need primarily target an efficient national biodiversity information system that allows for reporting. Such an information system would need to cover status and trends of biodiversity and the actions taken to implement global commitments.

Guiding Principle 2: Ensure adequate coverage of critical priority issues identified by international decision-making bodies such as conferences of parties, and do not incorporate information of no direct use.

Several conventions have recently updated their reporting formats to integrate current priority issues, for example, in the case of the CBD, the 2010 biodiversity target, or wind turbines and their impact on migratory species in the case of the CMS. It is important, however, to ensure that the reported information can be used by the governing bodies for consideration of the priority issues. This is hampered by the low reporting rates within some conventions and the difficulties to receive substantial information from some of the reports, as outlined above in chapters 2.3-2.5. In addition, questions about priority issues are easily added-on to the already existing huge amount of information requests, which does not encourage appropriate reporting on these issues.

Guiding Principle 3: Cover what is relevant to implementation of the convention and to assessing effectiveness of its implementation, not just what is being done as a result of accession.

The provisions of the reporting formats of all five conventions focus on implementation of the Convention. For assessing the effectiveness of the implementation, the CBD has added a box to each section of the reporting format, asking for impacts or outcomes achieved nationally regarding the priority objectives of the country's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), the objectives and goals of the Strategic Plan, and the 2010 target. The CITES biennial reporting format requests information on any reviews of the effectiveness of national CITES legislation. The

CMS reporting format asks for information on population size and trends of Appendix I species, while the Convention on Wetlands has included information on implementation progress since COP 8 in its recent reporting format. For the World Heritage Convention, the section on conclusions and recommended action could help to assess the effectiveness of the Convention. However, as outlined above (see chapters 2.3-2.5), the reporting formats frequently do not sufficiently allow for assessing the effectiveness in implementation of the conventions.

Guiding Principle 4: Concentrate on measurable progress since the previous report, where feasible reporting 'by exception' to update previous reports and avoid unnecessary repetition.

The CBD reporting format marks questions that are repeated from previous reports and advises only to provide new information. The Ramsar reporting format asks for implementation progress since COP 8 in a separate box, while the bulk of the information requests do not distinguish between measures taken during previous reporting periods and recent activities. The CITES annual reports provide new information by default while the biennial reporting format asks for information on measures taken during the reporting period only. Parties to the CMS are supplied with pre-filled reports, containing all the relevant information provided by themselves in previous reporting exercises. This enables Parties to amend and update any relevant piece of information while preventing any repetition of information that remains valid from one reporting exercise to the next.

Guiding Principle 5: In particular, emphasise progress in development and implementation of strategies, action plans and programmes for implementation of the convention at the national level.

To some extent, all conventions ask for information on progress in strategies and plans to implement the respective convention. The CBD reporting format provides for some focus on progress in development and implementation of strategies, action plans and programmes for implementation, through specific questions on article 6, which covers NBSAPs, and through the box attached to each section, requesting information on achieving priority objectives of the NBSAP. CITES, through information on wildlife trade policies in the biennial report, and Ramsar, through reference to the status of National Wetland Policies or equivalent instruments (*inter alia* via operational objective 2.1) refer to progress in national strategies or plans for implementing the respective convention. Section I.3 a of the reporting format of the World Heritage Convention requests information on policies in support of the implementation of the Convention. The Explanatory notes explain for this section: 'Provide information on the adoption of policies that aim to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community. Provide information on the way the State Party or the relevant authorities has (have) taken steps to integrate the protection of World Heritage properties into comprehensive planning programmes.' The CMS is requesting information on action taken for migratory species, which would cover the adoption of specific policies. Overall, although information on progress in implementation will be available in many cases, the reporting formats do not necessarily *emphasise* progress in implementation when presenting their information requests.

Guiding Principle 6: Avoid unnecessary repetition of information that exists in other documents and reports, which can be referred to or appended.

In cases where the reporting format consists to a large extent of tick boxes and focuses on recent progress in implementation, overlap with other reports and documents seems rather unlikely. On the other hand, comprehensive reports will in many cases touch on information that is, perhaps in a more extended form, available elsewhere, in particular at the national level. Parties could be asked to append other relevant reports and indicate where significant information can be found in those documents. Parties could also be asked to summarise information that is relevant for fulfilling reporting requirements but found in other documents.

Guiding Principle 7: Summarise current status and trends relevant to the convention, and progress in development and implementation of programmes to evaluate and systematically monitor them.

The new reporting format of the CBD has introduced a set of opening questions, under the heading of Overviews and Priority Setting, including the one on status and trends of biodiversity: 'Please provide an overview of the status and trends of various components of biological diversity in your country based on the information and data available'. Other requests also focus on current status and trends, in particular the questions regarding the 2010 target and the Global Plant Conservation Strategy, as well as the box attached to every section. The latter requests information on achieving priority objectives of the NBSAP, achieving the objectives and goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention, and progressing toward the 2010 target.

Current status and trends of trade in species on the CITES appendices can be obtained from annual reports. There is, however, no mechanism to report on status and trends in populations of those species. The CMS reporting format requests information on population size, trends and distribution of appendix I species as well as information on monitoring programmes.

Information on status and trends of wetlands or components of wetlands is requested several times in the Ramsar reporting format, as is information on monitoring activities (operational objective 11). The Convention has an additional reporting process on the state of the Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites). When a Ramsar site is designated, Parties are requested to submit an Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands to the Ramsar Bureau. For updating the information on the wetland and in particular its ecological character, Parties are asked to revise the data of the Information Sheet at least every six years.

The reporting format of the World Heritage Convention asks for comprehensive information on the state of conservation of specific World Heritage properties. It also requests to review whether the values on the basis of which a property was inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained (section II.3). Section II.6 is about monitoring of the state of the World Heritage properties.

So far, information on status and trends is, in most cases, just one issue amongst many others. However, as more conventions include the 2010 target in their considerations, it is likely that increased focus on information on status and trends will be requested from Parties, to enable measuring progress towards the 2010 target. As to the second part of guiding principle 7, there is little focus across the conventions in the reporting formats on the development and implementation of programmes to evaluate and systematically monitor status and trends of biodiversity or its relevant components.

Guiding Principle 8: Use indicators, preferably those that are internationally recognised and harmonised, to show progress in achieving targets set in strategies and action plans, and in previous reports.

The CBD asks for information on the use of indicators, in particular regarding the 2010 target, the Global Plant Conservation Strategy, and article 7 (identification and monitoring). The World Heritage Convention requests analyses of the conditions of the World Heritage properties on the basis of key indicators for measuring the state of conservation of the properties (section II.6 of the reporting format). So far, the Ramsar Convention has included early-warning indicators in the reporting format via information on the application of the Wetlands Risk Assessment Framework. This might change, as COP 9 in 2005 will discuss outcome-oriented indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Convention.

As the CITES annual reports provide basic trade statistics, there might not be a need for indicators for trade in these species. However, indicators for population trends in the appendix species would help to assess the effectiveness of the application of CITES. The current CMS reporting format is not requesting information on indicators, for example on status and trends of the species on the appendices, but indicators are likely to be included in future reporting formats, following the current exploration of performance indicators for the Convention by a working group of Parties and the Scientific Council.

As all the conventions in question here deal with biodiversity or its components, it should be explored to which extent a common or harmonised set of indicators – such as the 2010 indicators currently developed under the CBD – could help the conventions to assess progress in achieving targets set in strategies and implementation programmes. This might be particularly, but not exclusively useful for those conventions that share species (CITES and CMS) or sites (Convention on Wetlands and World Heritage Convention) on their annexes. It would also be useful to have indicators that allow for measuring progress from previous reporting periods, enabling time series of measuring of progress.

Guiding Principle 9: Identify information that will help other nations in their implementation of the convention or programme, in particular both good practice and bad experience.

It is generally expected that at least some of the reported information is of use to other Parties for their own implementation efforts. There are a few concrete calls for the provision of information that would help other Parties in implementation. The format for biennial reports under CITES focuses on major achievements, significant developments, or trends, gaps or problems and possible solutions, many of which will be of interest to other Parties. Action 12.1.4 of the Ramsar reporting format reads as follows: ‘Ensure enhanced accessibility to information, analyses, good practice examples, and experience-sharing on integrating wetlands and biodiversity into integrated river basin management, including through the *Ramsar/CBD River Basin Initiative*.’

One of the four main purposes for reporting under the World Heritage Convention is ‘to provide a mechanism for regional co-operation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties concerning the implementation of the Convention and World Heritage conservation’ (from the explanatory notes on the format for periodic reporting). Outside of the reporting format, the CBD is collecting case studies on good practice under a number of its work programmes through the Clearing-House Mechanism. It might be worth considering a link of the case studies to the reporting process.

The value of the national reports for other Parties would generally increase if calls for good and bad practice and experience were either included in the reporting formats or collected as part of a separate exercise.

Guiding Principle 10: Design reports that are useful for multiple purposes with minimal modification, for example as material for local planning, public awareness, or education.

The reporting format of the Ramsar Convention is intended to serve not only the production of the report itself, but also as a national planning tool for the implementation of the Convention. Although not foreseen by the reporting formats, it is known that Parties to the five conventions have made use of their reports for educational and public awareness purposes; for example, the annual report for CITES is made publicly available in some countries. Also, some of the first national reports to the CBD were printed and published in national languages. This was aided by the fact that no tick boxes were foreseen, so plenty of room was provided for narrative, reader-friendly text. This information was often overlapping with information presented in other documents (see comments on guiding principle 6 above). The simple step of making a national report publicly available on a national or regional website is a first step for serving an educational

purpose. In addition, when preparing the national report drawing on national biodiversity information, more attention could be paid to the potential use of that information for planning and educational purposes.

4. Overlaps and common thematic approaches of the five conventions regarding reporting

This section identifies overlaps in the reporting requests and those thematic approaches that could be further developed for joint reporting exercises. It is using only the most recent reporting formats of the five conventions.

4.1 Common reporting themes between the five conventions

The Indonesian pilot project on harmonization of reporting and information management (see introduction) was asked to identify common information modules and using this as a basis for developing a coordinated modular approach to national reporting. The project developed a matrix for a modular reporting structure, which has been taken here (see table below) and further developed, *inter alia* to include the CMS. A theme was considered as dealt with by a convention if it comes up in a more than marginal way within the reporting format or the guidelines or explanatory notes for national reporting. Note that under CITES, although different in nature, both the annual and the biennial reports are covered.

Theme number	Reporting theme	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
1	ECOSYSTEM OVERVIEWS					
	1.1 Biodiversity of inland water ecosystems	√			√	
	1.2 Marine and coastal biodiversity	√			√	
	1.3 Agricultural biodiversity	√			√	
	1.4 Forest biodiversity	√			√	
	1.5 Biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands	√			√	
	1.6 Biodiversity of mountain ecosystems	√			√	
2	STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS	√		√	√	
3	PRIORITY SETTING, TARGETS & OBSTACLES					
	3.1 Priority setting	√		√	√	
	3.2 Targets	√			√	
	3.3 Obstacles	√		√		√
	3.4 Ecosystem Approach	√			√	
	3.5 Millennium Development Goals	√				
4	COOPERATION					
	4.1 General cooperation – global and regional	√	√	√	√	√
	4.2 Transboundary cooperation	√	√	√	√	
	4.3 Technical and scientific cooperation	√	√		√	√
5	GENERAL MEASURES FOR CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE					
	5.1 Legislative measures	√	√	√	√	√
	5.2 Strategies, policies and programmes	√	√	√	√	√
	5.3 Integration of conservation and sustainable use into sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and policies	√			√	√
6	IDENTIFICATION AND MONITORING					
	6.1 Identification					
	6.1.1 Taxonomy	√				
	6.1.2 Indicators and rapid assessments	√			√	√
	6.1.3 Inventories	√			√	√
	6.2 Monitoring	√	√	√	√	√
7	IN SITU CONSERVATION					
	7.1 General <i>in situ</i> conservation measures	√		√	√	√
	7.2 Systems of protected and special areas	√		√	√	√
	7.3 Restoration & rehabilitation of ecosystems and threatened species/populations	√		√	√	√
	7.4 Management of living modified organisms	√				
	7.5 Migratory species	√		√	√	
	7.6 Invasive species	√		√	√	
	7.7 Knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities	√	√		√	√
8	EX SITU CONSERVATION	√				
9	SUSTAINABLE USE					

	9.1 Sustainable use	√	√	√	√	
	9.2 Trade in wildlife		√		√	
	9.3 Tourism	√				√
10	INCENTIVE MEASURES	√			√	
11	RESEARCH AND TRAINING					
	11.1 Research	√		√	√	√
	11.2 Training	√	√		√	√
12	COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS	√	√		√	√
13	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MINIMIZING ADVERSE IMPACTS					
	13.1 Impact assessments procedures	√		√	√	
	13.2 Climate change	√			√	
	13.2 Emergency responses	√				
	13.4 Liability and redress	√				
14	ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES	√				
15	ACCESS TO AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY	√			√	
16	EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION	√	√		√	√
17	BIOTECHNOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION OF ITS BENEFITS	√				
18	FINANCIAL RESOURCES					
	18.1 Annual and additional contributions	√		√	√	√
	18.2 National financing	√	√	√	√	√
	18.3 Financial mechanism	√				

The following conclusions can be drawn from the table:

- There are a substantial number of themes that two or more conventions address in their reporting requests to Parties.
- In particular, the CBD and Ramsar share themes; to a lesser extent both share themes with CITES, the CMS and the World Heritage Convention.
- The following themes are shared between all five conventions:
 - General cooperation – global and regional
 - Legislative measures
 - Strategies, policies and programmes
 - Monitoring
 - National financing.
- The following themes are shared between four of the five conventions:
 - Transboundary cooperation
 - Technical and scientific cooperation
 - General *in situ* conservation measures
 - Systems of protected and special areas
 - Restoration & rehabilitation of ecosystems and threatened species
 - Knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities
 - Sustainable use
 - Research
 - Training
 - Communication, education and public awareness
 - Exchange of information
 - Annual and additional contributions.

It is important to note, however, that sharing a theme does not necessarily mean that the conventions seek similar information under this theme. This is further explored in the following paragraphs.

The five themes that all five conventions cover – general cooperation (global and regional); legislative measures; strategies, policies and programmes; monitoring; and national financing – might be suitable for developing joint reporting modules or at least systematic consistent

approaches across the five conventions. The following sections aim to discover opportunities for developing joint reporting modules between all five as well as subsets of conventions. Therefore, as examples, two of the five themes shared by all five conventions (legislative measures, monitoring) and two shared by less than five conventions (protected areas, indicators) will be analysed here. For this purpose, in the following table (and similarly for the other themes in the following chapters), the specific information requests of the five conventions for each of these themes are selected as an ‘issue’ and those conventions, covering these issues, are ticked.

4.2 Reporting requests on legislative measures

The following table shows the areas for which the reporting formats of the five conventions seek information on legislative measures.

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
Generally on implementation of the Convention		√	√	√	√
Lack of policies & legislation as challenge & obstacle to implementation	√				
Achievement of targets of Global Plant Conservation Strategy	√				
Ecosystem approach	√				
Protection of threatened species & populations	√		√		
Gaps & barriers to establishment & management of protected areas	√				
Invasive alien species	√			√	
Guidelines for cultural, environmental & social impact assessments	√				
Liability & redress	√				
Access to genetic resources & benefit-sharing	√				
IPR in access & benefit-sharing	√				
Technology cooperation & transfer	√				
Integrated management of marine & coastal ecosystems	√				
Participation of indigenous & local communities in conservation & sustainable use	√				
Environmental impact assessment	√			√	
Legislation on mountain wetlands				√	
Wetland restoration				√	
Hunting legislation				√	
Conservation of World Heritage property					√

Although all five conventions address legislative measures in their reporting requests, there is little overlap when looking at the specific nature of requests in this regard. Although four of the five conventions ask for information on general legislative measures for the implementation of the respective convention, the other requests are all rather specific to the obligations of the respective conventions. However, five broader areas can be identified that would embrace almost all the requests of the five conventions regarding legislative measures. The following table outlines which current convention requests relate to which of these five areas.

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
General legislative measures for the implementation of the specific convention	√	√	√	√	√
Legislative measures for the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and species	√		√	√	√
Legislative measures for impact assessment	√			√	
Legislative measures for access & benefit-	√				

sharing regarding genetic resources					
Legislative measures for technology transfer and cooperation	√				

The first two or three of these five issues could be components of a joint reporting module on legislative measures for the five conventions.

4.3 Reporting requests on monitoring

The following table shows the areas for which the reporting formats of the five conventions seek information on monitoring (m.). Again, the issues are taken from the specific reporting requests of the conventions.

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
M. of implementation of the Convention		√		√	
M. of migratory species within NBSAP	√		√		
M. programmes for components of biodiversity	√		√	√	√
M. programmes on key threats to biodiversity	√				
Mechanism for maintaining and organising data from m. programmes	√				
Indicators for national-level m. of biodiversity	√				
Taxonomic support for m.	√				
M. of coral reefs, incl socio-economic	√				
M. of marine & coastal protected areas	√				
M. of agricultural biodiversity	√				
M. of global forest biodiversity	√				
M. of mountain biodiversity	√				
M. of trade in species		√			
M. of migratory species			√		
M. of wetlands				√	
M. of projects funded through development assistance				√	
Training for m.				√	
Transboundary m. of wetland-dependent species				√	
M. of World Heritage properties					√

Again, there is little overlap between the reporting requirements of the five conventions on monitoring because most requirements are of a very specific nature. Clustering the requirements would reveal the following broader areas.

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
Monitoring of the implementation of the specific convention		√		√	
Monitoring of ecosystems and species	√		√	√	√
Monitoring of threats to biodiversity	√				
Monitoring of the use of biodiversity		√			
Monitoring of biodiversity-related projects				√	
Training for monitoring				√	
Organisational & logistical aspects of monitoring	√				

The clustering still reveals little overlap between the monitoring requests. However, in some cases where there is no reporting request from a specific convention, the convention might be requesting this information under a different heading. For example, information on monitoring of the use of biodiversity only appears in the CITES reporting format, but would be of interest to both CBD and Ramsar under their sustainable/wise use portfolio. Similarly, information on training for monitoring would not only be of interest to Ramsar, but also to CBD, CITES and World Heritage Convention for their respective training requirements. Therefore, a reporting requirement module for the five conventions on monitoring could well contain all these seven issues.

4.4 Reporting requests on protected areas

The following table shows the areas for which the reporting formats of the five conventions seek information on protected areas (PAs).

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
PAs for migratory species within NBSAPs	√		√		
Taxonomic support for PAs	√				
National-level PA targets and indicators	√				
PAs in large unfragmented or threatened areas	√				
PAs for threatened species	√				
PAs in marine & coastal ecosystems	√			√	
PAs for coral reefs	√				
Integration of PAs into land and seascapes	√				
EIA for projects affecting PAs/priority sites	√			√	
Legislative & institutional gaps for establishment and management of PAs	√				
Capacity building for PAs	√				
Financing plans for PA systems	√				
Effectiveness of PA management & governance	√				
Financial support from developed countries for PAs	√				
PAs in national or regional policies or plans			√		
PAs for migratory species			√		
PAs for wetlands				√	
Protection of World Heritage properties					√

There is hardly any overlap between the reporting requirements for protected areas of the four conventions that deal with the issue. However, a clustering of the requirements allows for a different perspective as the following table reveals.

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
Systems of PAs: rationale & management	√		√	√	√
Institutional arrangements incl financing & capacity building	√		√		
EIA for projects affecting PAs/priority sites	√			√	

Most of the reporting requests can be summarised under these three issues; for example the first issue (system of protected areas: rationale & management) should inform about how the national system of protected areas incorporates the different ecosystems such as wetlands and protects migratory species as well as natural World Heritage properties. Some very specific reporting requests of the CBD might still fall outside joint clusters.

4.5 Reporting requests on indicators

The following table shows the areas for which the reporting formats of the five conventions seek information on indicators (= i.).

<i>Issue</i>	CBD	CITES	CMS	Ramsar	WHC
I. for conservation of ecosystems, habitats & biomes	√				
I. for species diversity	√				
I. for genetic diversity	√				
I. for sustainable use	√				
I. for threats to species by trade	√				
I. for invasive alien species	√				
I. for adaptation of biodiversity to climate change	√				
I. for impact of pollution on biodiversity	√				
I. for capacity of ecosystems to deliver goods and services	√				
I. for traditional knowledge	√				
I. for access & benefit-sharing related to genetic resources	√				
I. for financial resources	√				
I. for technology transfer	√				
I. for understanding and documenting plant diversity	√				
I. for conserving plant diversity	√				
I. for sustainable use of plant diversity	√				
I. for education and awareness about plant diversity	√				
I. for capacity building for plant conservation	√				
I. for monitoring of biodiversity	√				
Taxonomic support for indicators	√				
I. for protected areas	√				
Financial support from developed countries for i. development	√				
Early warning indicators for wetland management				√	
I. for state of conservation of World Heritage property					√

The vast majority of reporting requests on indicators come from the CBD. Neither CITES nor CMS ask their Parties for information on indicators, but a working group of Parties and the Scientific Council of CMS has been exploring a set of performance indicators for the operational objectives of the Strategic Plan, in order to measure the success of the Convention in achieving its aims. The Ramsar Convention reporting format refers to early warning indicators and COP 9 in 2005 will discuss indicators for assessing the implementation effectiveness of the Convention. The World Heritage Convention requests information on indicators for the state of conservation of World Heritage property. There is, thus, potential for the development of joint reporting requests for a subset of the five conventions, covering, for example, status and trends of components of biodiversity and indicators for institutional, legislative and financial arrangements for biodiversity.

Summary and conclusions

Many of the reporting requests of the five conventions are very specific to the obligations that the articles, decisions and resolutions of the convention in question have developed. However, the conventions share a wide range of themes under which the reporting requests can be summarised. There is potential for the identification of issues under these themes that are shared by all or a subset of the biodiversity-related conventions. The 2010 target could serve as a driver for such efforts, in particular regarding the issue of indicators and targets. Such joint information requests could focus on progress in the light of the 2010 target, or recent developments for the subset of biodiversity that all the conventions in question deal with, thus avoiding bulky reports that present a wide, but not necessarily relevant range of information on the specific subject. The challenge would be to develop the reporting requests in a way that satisfies the information needs of the individual conventions and help the countries to assemble all relevant information in one place.

Such a joint approach would implement some of the recommendations from the workshop on harmonization of national reporting in Belgium in 2004 (see introduction), in particular recommendation viii on thematic issues: ‘Active consideration should be given to focusing on specific themes that are relevant across several conventions and agreements... Consideration might also be given to thematic reports on specific issues which would be relevant to all conventions and agreements which consider the issue’.

5. Lessons from the CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting

5.1 The CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting consists of the secretariats of CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and UNFF as well as FAO, ITTO and UNEP-WCMC. The Task Force's overall objective is reducing the forest-related reporting burden. The Task Force has developed a forest reporting portal (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar>). The portal offers information related to national reporting on forests to various international conventions and mechanisms. The information is currently accessible via processes and countries. For processes, users can select one of the following processes and access its national reports: CBD, CSD, FAO, ITTO, Ramsar, UNCCD, UNDP, UNFCCC and UNFF. National reports to these mechanisms are also accessible by selecting a country. In addition, the portal also provides quick access to the formats and reporting guidelines of these mechanisms as well as a table outlining the reporting schedule of the conventions and instruments.

To move forward to achieving its overall objective (see above), the CPF Task Force is currently embarking on the development of an Information Framework for Forest Reporting, building on the forest reporting portal. This framework has the following objectives:

- Provide structured access to country reports to forest-related processes, building on the two broad reporting categories (a) actions, and (b) situation and trends.
- Develop and maintain information service contents, drawing from existing reporting processes and country reports.
- In collaboration with countries, analyse coverage/overlaps and consistency in reporting and make recommendations to international processes and countries.
- Promote, through outreach and capacity building, the use of the information service in future reporting efforts by countries, and in future decisions on reporting processes by international fora and their secretariats.
- Enhance the value and utility of the information service through feedback from meetings of relevant working groups, including the CPF Task Force/project steering committee, criteria and indicator processes and national reporting focal points.

The two reporting categories, actions, and situations and trends, mirror the distinction between processes and outcomes. The framework would organise the information on actions and situation and trends from the national reports according to the seven thematic elements of sustainable forest management: extent of forest resources; biological diversity; forest health and vitality; productive functions of forest resources; protective functions of forest resources; socio-economic functions; and legal, policy and institutional framework.

5.2 Lessons from the CPF Task Force for harmonization of reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions

- *Access to national reports to various mechanisms through one portal*
The Task Force's objective is reducing the burden for countries of reporting to forest-related mechanisms. This is, in the first place, addressed by making available, through the reporting portal, information on reporting requirements and schedules as well as on the reports itself. National focal points to the various mechanisms can easily access the national reports that

their country has submitted. This can help in identifying overlaps and consistency between the various reports and aims to encourage the collaboration at the national level of the focal points to the various mechanisms.

- *Outcome and process-oriented reporting*
The Information Framework for Forest Reporting will organise the information from national reports in the two categories of (a) actions taken to implement international commitments, and (b) situation and trends in ecological, social and economic aspects of forests. That mirrors to a large extent the distinction between process and outcome-oriented reporting.
- *Analysis of overlaps and consistency between national reports to various mechanisms*
The envisaged Information Framework aims to analyse coverage and overlap as well as consistency in reporting to the different forest-related conventions and mechanisms and make recommendations to international processes. Overlaps and gaps could be looked for amongst the reports of one country to different conventions, thus supporting consistency in reporting at the national level. On the other hand, analysing the reporting requirements of the conventions and mechanisms and amending them to avoid overlap and enhance cooperation could promote such consistencies.
- *Organising forest-related information along the elements of sustainable forest management*
The Information Framework for Forest Reporting aims to organise the information on actions and situations and trends according to the seven elements of sustainable forest management. This is expected to help to ease finding specific information and to structure the search for specific information.

Summary and conclusions

The work of the CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting provides for a number of lessons of significance to the five biodiversity-related conventions. The Task Force has made the national reports to a range of forest-related conventions and mechanisms available through a single portal. A similar approach could be tested by the five biodiversity-related conventions, for example through their joint website.

For the Information Framework for Forest Reporting, the Task Force is distinguishing between reporting on actions and on status and trends, which is largely similar to the distinction between processes and outcomes. Within some of the biodiversity-related conventions, the latter seems to be emerging as a major structure for reported information, driven in particular by the 2010 target, which requires measurable outcomes of action taken.

The Information Framework for Forest Reporting aims to analyse consistency between national reports of one country to different conventions and mechanisms as well as between the reporting requirements of the conventions and mechanisms. For doing this, the Framework uses the seven elements of sustainable forest management as principles for organising the reported information. The analysis of consistency seems a useful approach for the five biodiversity-related conventions (or a subset of them), in order to support closer collaboration between national focal points to various conventions at the national level. By also identifying further overlaps, gaps and consistencies between the reporting requirements of the conventions, such an approach could help to find opportunities for agreeing on joint issues that are shared between the reporting requirements of some of the conventions. The preliminary results presented above (chapter 4) might be useful for such an exercise.

6. Guiding principles for national reporting

According to the findings of this study, the guiding principles for national reporting, as identified for the UNEP workshop on harmonization of national reporting in 2000, remain a useful tool for national reporting. They are primarily directed to governments and government agencies involved with national reporting to biodiversity-related conventions, but are important for governing bodies and secretariats of conventions as well when reporting requests are being developed. They are repeated here, in a different order, and with some minor adjustments.

The Ten Guiding Principles for National Reporting

1. Base the report on information that is required already by the national focal point to ensure that the country is meeting the commitments made in acceding to the convention.
2. Summarise current status and trends relevant to the convention, with a focus on outcomes of actions taken in implementation, and progress in applying programmes to evaluate and systematically monitor them.
3. Cover what is relevant to implementation of the convention and to assessing effectiveness of its implementation, not just what is being done as a result of accession.
4. Emphasise progress in development and implementation of strategies, action plans and programmes for implementation of the convention at the national level.
5. Ensure adequate coverage of critical priority issues identified by international decision-making bodies such as conferences of parties or strategic plans of conventions, and do not incorporate information of no direct use.
6. Use indicators, preferably those that are internationally recognised and harmonised, to show progress in achieving targets set in strategies and action plans, and in previous reports.
7. Concentrate on measurable progress since the previous report, where feasible reporting 'by exception' to update previous reports and avoid unnecessary repetition.
8. Avoid unnecessary repetition of information that exists in other documents and reports, which can be referred to or appended.
9. Identify information that will help other nations in their implementation of the convention or programme, in particular both good practice and bad experience.
10. Design reports that are useful for multiple purposes with minimal modification, for example as material for national or local planning, public awareness, or education.

7. Recommendations

The summary and conclusions of the main chapters of this study allow for the following suggested recommendations for further developing the national reporting systems and for streamlining and harmonizing national reporting to the five biodiversity-related conventions. Recommendations specific to governments appear in the revised guiding principles for national reporting (see above, chapter 6). Note that not all recommendations will be relevant for all five biodiversity-related conventions. For example, the CITES annual reports are very specific and most of the recommendations would not fit those but many will fit the CITES biennial reports. It is apparent that many of the recommendations are already being implemented by a subset of the five conventions.

Recommendations regarding the reporting formats

- The requests for information in reporting formats should focus on
 - the implementation of specific obligations, including Convention articles, COP decisions/resolutions or objectives of the Convention's strategic planning document; the specific obligations on which information would be requested, would need to be identified to avoid the burden of reporting on all articles/decisions/objectives at the same time
 - emerging priority issues that require information from Parties; those will in most cases be reflected in COP decisions/resolutions or the objectives of the strategic plan
 - development and progress in implementation of national strategies, action plans or progress supporting implementation of the convention, including the identification of national priority issues and major challenges for Parties.
- The strategic planning document could serve to structure the national reporting format, by using the objectives of the strategic plan as the main heading to which the individual reporting requests (where appropriate based on convention articles and decisions/resolutions) would be allocated.
- It should be considered for all of the above to shift the focus from requests for information on actions taken (processes) to outcomes of those actions:
 - Information on status and trends should form a core component of the reporting format, allowing for trend information to be extracted from series of national reports over time.
 - Some of the requests for outcomes could be presented as tick boxes which have proven to be popular with Parties, such as: *Has the population of species X changed over the last XX years? Tick one of the following: Increase by X% - Decrease by X% - No change - No information available.*
 - Parties should be asked to report on how and with which results they assess the effectiveness of their implementation efforts.
- The provision of information on outcomes would be made much more consistent through the use of indicators and targets. This would allow for assessing progress in implementation compared to previous reports.
 - Such reporting requests could include information on the national use of indicators and targets and the results of such use.
 - Global sets of indicators and targets, against which Parties could be asked to report or to which Parties can contribute information, would help to achieve measurable results of progress in implementing the conventions.

- The information requests in the reporting formats should be focused on information that is new or updated from previous reports, avoiding repetition of information already reported.
- Space should be given to information that is specifically useful for other Parties, for example through case studies. This information, as well as other documents usefully accompanying the reports, might be appended to the main body of the reports to avoid overloading the latter. Otherwise, such information could be requested through an exercise separate from the national reports.
- Reporting formats should find the right balance between tick boxes and requests for the provision of narrative information. Where the latter is essential, this should be made clear in order to prevent Parties to only tick the box and not provide the additional narrative information.
- Guidelines or explanatory notes should include information on the purpose of reporting in general and the purpose of the specific reporting requests in particular. This should include information on how the reported information will be used.

Further recommendations on national reporting

- A number of actions could help to increase the commitment of Parties to the provision of high-quality national reports. These may include:
 - Feedback from previous rounds of reporting on ways to improve the provision of information
 - Regional and subregional meetings in support of the preparation of national reports. Funds would need to be mobilised for those meetings.
 - Analyses of the reasons for the quantitative and qualitative lack of reporting.
- The information from national reports should be analysed at the global and, if possible also the regional level. This would allow for
 - conclusions to be drawn for the further implementation of the convention
 - use of the information in background documents and draft decisions/resolutions for the convention governing bodies
 - major overviews on the state of implementation and the achievements of the convention
 - an assessment of whether the information provided by national reports is sufficient for an overview of the implementation of the convention. This assessment might result in specific efforts to increase the reporting rate and/or amend the reporting format
 - demonstration that reporting is a useful process.
- For these uses of national reports, information on outcomes of implementation action is particularly important, hence the proposed focus on outcomes (see above).
- National reports and the information gained from them should be made available online. This could be extended to the following:
 - Online reporting facilities should be made available, offering national focal points the opportunity to submit their national reports online, allowing for public access to the reports and the easy extraction of information from the reports.
 - National reporting search functions and analyzers could be offered on the conventions' websites, in order to allow Parties and interested organisations to find specific information from the national reports.

- Where suitable, databases could make the information from national reports available in a user-friendly format.
- Future editions of strategic planning documents should include provisions on national reporting, underlining the relevance of national reports to measuring the progress in convention implementation.
- When COP decisions/resolutions are drafted and adopted, reporting requirements should be taken into account and the extent considered, to which the collection of additional information from Parties is needed.
- Financial assistance should be provided to developing country Parties in order to coordinate the collection and organisation of information on convention implementation, enabling Parties to assess their state of implementation of the conventions and to fulfil the reporting requirements.

Recommendations for harmonization of reporting

- Access to the national reports to the five biodiversity-related conventions should be made available through a single portal. The joint website of the five conventions could offer such a facility.
- The reporting requirements of the five conventions should be checked for overlaps, gaps and consistencies, with the question in mind whether they together provide the ‘big picture’ of biodiversity that is needed for the 2010 target. This exercise could build on the approach and emerging results of the CPF Information Framework for Forest Reporting.
- The identification of overlaps, gaps and consistencies between the reporting requirements to the five conventions could help to identify issues shared between the conventions, building on the preliminary results found here in chapter 4. This would allow for developing a number of joint reporting modules that could be applied in the reporting formats of all or a subset of the biodiversity-related conventions. The format of these modules should satisfy the main information needs of the conventions and help Parties to assemble the information needed.
- Joint reporting modules could build on specific indicators and targets that help to focus the reported information, avoiding requesting broad information that would lead to an increased reporting burden and bulky reports.
- Joint issues and reporting modules could help Parties to analyse overlaps, gaps, consistencies and inconsistencies between their national reports to different conventions, in order to foster collaboration, at the national level, between national focal points to various conventions and also between the managers of the different sets of information required for the reports.

8. Conclusions

National reporting to biodiversity-related conventions serves basically two purposes. Firstly, it allows Parties to take stock of progress in implementation of an agreement in their own country, to identify successes but also challenges and gaps, and to plan future implementation efforts. In this regard, reporting supports national biodiversity information management and planning as well as communicating biodiversity concerns to other government sectors and stakeholders and a wider public. Secondly, national reports allow for overviews of the state of implementation of an agreement at the regional and global level, in particular through assessing the status and trends of the components of biodiversity the agreement is concerned about. This would inform the governing bodies of the conventions and enable taking adequate decisions addressing the current state and the challenges as identified.

National reporting in particular to CBD and Ramsar has become a major burden as the reporting formats have evolved over time, with additional requests added on a number of occasions, for example on the 2010 target in the case of the CBD. Reporting formats tend to request information on all aspects of the convention, covering all major articles and decisions, often without prioritising those that may be of particular relevance to forthcoming meetings of the convention. The resulting reporting burden is often unmanageable (not only) for developing countries, and this affects the quality of the reported information, making it in many cases difficult to extract substantial information on the implementation of the convention that could subsequently build the basis for decisions of the governing body.

To address these concerns, future national reporting could be built around the following elements:

- Each round of reporting would focus only on a few selected issues of major concern for the convention, asking for new information regarding earlier reports only. This would ensure concise reports and informing agenda items of the forthcoming meetings of the governing bodies.
- Using indicators and targets, the reported information would focus on outcomes of action taken to implement the convention, providing an overview of the status and trends in the components of biodiversity the convention is concerned with.
- The reports would highlight successes and challenges for the actions taken or to be taken nationally, using case studies that are useful to other Parties.
- The reporting formats would consist of convention-specific information requests alongside requests that are shared with one, or more than one, other convention. This approach would encourage the development of national biodiversity information management systems in a way that allows national information modules on specific issues to be produced for more than one convention.

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10. List of acronyms and abbreviations

ACCOBAMS	Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area
AEWA	Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on Forests
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBO	Global Biodiversity Outlook
IOSEA	Indian Ocean – South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
MOP	Meeting of Parties
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
STRP	Scientific and Technical Review Panel
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WHC	Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)

Annex: Articles and decisions on national reporting

This annex does not list all reporting-related decisions, but those of major importance, including those that this report is referring to.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Article 26:

Each Contracting Party shall, at intervals to be determined by the Conference of the Parties, present to the Conference of the Parties, reports on measures which it has taken for the implementation of the provisions of this Convention and their effectiveness in meeting the objectives of this Convention.

- Decision II/17: Form and intervals of National Reports by Parties
- Decision IV/14: National reports by Parties
- Decision V/19: National reporting
- Decision VI/25: National reports
- Decision VII/25: National reporting

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Article VIII, paragraph 7:

Each Party shall prepare periodic reports on its implementation of the present Convention and shall transmit to the Secretariat:

- (a) an annual report containing a summary of the information specified in sub-paragraph (b) of paragraph 6 of this Article; and*
(b) a biennial report on legislative, regulatory and administrative measures taken to enforce the provisions of the present Convention.

Article VIII, paragraph 6:

Each Party shall maintain records of trade in specimens of species included in Appendices I, II and III which shall cover:

- (a) the names and addresses of exporters and importers; and*
(b) the number and type of permits and certificates granted; the States with which such trade occurred; the numbers or quantities and types of specimens, names of species as included in Appendices I, II and III and, where applicable, the size and sex of the specimens in question.

- Resolution Conf. 11.17 (Rev. CoP13): Annual reports and monitoring of trade
- Decision 12.87: Reporting requirements

Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)

Article VI, paragraph 3:

The Parties which are Range States for migratory species listed in Appendix I or Appendix II should inform the Conference of the Parties through the Secretariat, at least six months prior to each ordinary meeting of the Conference, on measures that they are taking to implement the provisions of this Convention for these species.

Article VII, paragraph 5:

At each of its meetings the Conference of the Parties shall review the implementation of this Convention and may in particular:

... d) receive and consider any reports presented by the Scientific Council, the Secretariat, any Party or any standing body established pursuant to an Agreement.

- Resolution 7.8: Implementation of the CMS Information Management Plan

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention)

There is no reference to national reports in the text of the Convention.

- Resolution VIII.26: The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 during the triennium 2003-2005 and National Reports for Ramsar COP9

Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)

Article 29:

1. *The States Parties to this Convention shall, in the reports which they submit to the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on dates and in a manner to be determined by it, give information on the legislative and administrative provisions which they have adopted and other action which they have taken for the application of this Convention, together with details of the experience acquired in this field.*
 2. *These reports shall be brought to the attention of the World Heritage Committee.*
 3. *The Committee shall submit a report on its activities at each of the ordinary sessions of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.*
- Decision 28 COM 16: Presentation of the periodic report for Latin America and the Caribbean and Follow-up Regional Programme
 - Decision 7 EXT.COM 5: Periodic reporting
 - Decision 27 COM 6A: State of the World Heritage in Asia and the Pacific 2003 – Synthesis Periodic Report for the Asia-Pacific Region
 - Decision 27 COM 6B: Follow-up to Periodic Reporting in the Arab States and Africa and Preparations in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Europe and North America