

**Convention on Biological Diversity**  
**Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**  
**Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**  
**International Plant Protection Convention**  
**International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for food and Agriculture**  
**Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**  
**World Heritage Convention**

**Eleventh Meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions (BLG)**  
**Tuesday, 23 August 2016 - 09:00 a.m. to 17:00 p.m.**  
**CMS Secretariat, United Nations Premises, Bonn, Germany**

## **1. Opening of the meeting and procedural matters**

Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), welcomed the participants to the UN Premises. He added that some staff from the CMS Secretariat and the CMS Family would take advantage of the BLG's presence in Bonn by attending the meeting in person, including Catherine Lehmann, representing the AEWA Executive Secretary, Jacques Trouvilliez, who was on leave, and Andreas Streit, EUROBATS Executive Secretary, who would join the meeting later.

Mr Chambers proposed that the agenda as circulated by CBD should be adopted; there were no objections and the agenda was adopted.

The minutes of the previous meeting had been adopted through a process of correspondence and did not have to be approved by the current meeting.

Mr Chambers suggested that a list of Action Points be prepared in addition to the minutes.

<b>Action</b>
CMS Secretariat to prepare separate list of action points as well as the full record of the meeting

## **2. Update on action items from the tenth meeting of the BLG**

The meeting reviewed progress regarding implementation of the actions agreed at the tenth meeting of BLG (BLG 10) (Geneva, 16 September 2015).

BLG 10 Action point: BLG Pavilion at CBD COP and IUCN WCC (paragraph 5 of the report of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting)

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), explained that the Rio Conventions had a Pavilion at COPs (the "Rio Conventions Pavilion") at which there was a different theme each day and various partners were invited to lead or participate at particular events. It was proposed to do something similar to highlight linkages between biodiversity-related conventions, if other members of the BLG were interested.

Neil Pratt (CBD) suggested that CBD COP13 could be used as a pilot for the BLG and there were still some weeks in which to work up the details such as themes and main contributors within the two-week COP programme. A more flexible alternative would be to fit the BLG presence / joint activities within the parallel programme of the COP side events held at

lunchtime and in the evenings. Mr Pratt observed that with the new arrangement for the concurrent organization of the COP and COP-MOPs of the Protocols, national delegations will find it challenging to attend events held in parallel to the working sessions of the COP/COP-MOPs.

Mr Dias said that it would be necessary to check on the availability of rooms, but the second week was usually less congested after the high level segment had finished. There were three options to choose from: a “parallel summit”, typically a two-day event; lunchtime or evening side events (but the competition for attracting audiences was fierce); and input to the ten-day Rio Conventions Pavilion.

Mr Chambers welcomed the offer from CBD and sought the views of the meeting, confirming the interest of CMS in participating.

Ania Grobicki (Deputy Secretary General, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands) conveyed the good wishes of the new Secretary General, Martha Rojas-Urrego, who had taken up her post the previous day. Ms Grobicki was looking forward to the CBD COP and welcomed the proposal.

Mr Dias assured the meeting that the acoustics in the Cancún venue were good. Rooms for side events would be provided at no cost to the partner organizations. For the Rio Pavilion, a cost-sharing formula had been agreed among the participating organizations. Consideration should also be given to having any BLG event covered by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin “On the Side”.

Qunli Han, the Secretary of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, representing Mechthild Rössler of the World Heritage Convention (WHC), expressed his organization’s willingness to take part.

Jingyuan Xia, the Secretary of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), also supported the idea and looked to CBD to take the proposal forward.

David Morgan, Chief of Corporate Services at the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) conveyed the greetings of Secretary-General John Scanlon. Mr Morgan welcomed the proposal but warned that at the moment the CITES Secretariat was preoccupied with organizing its own COP. Mr Scanlon would however be attending the CBD COP and CITES would certainly wish to participate in any BLG events.

Mr Pratt concurred that the programme in the second week was usually less hectic, but final arrangements would depend on the availability of partners and Secretariat staff. The Heads of Secretariats would be more likely to be present at the start of the Conference for the High Level Segment.

Mr Chambers confirmed his attendance for the whole first week and start of the second. Mr Han confirmed that Mechthild Rössler would be attending for the WHC.

In summary, Mr Chambers said that the meeting had expressed general support of idea and asked that CBD work up the details of possible formats.

**Action**

CBD to work up the details of possible formats for joint BLG participation at COPs (pavilion, side events etc.)

BLG 10 Action point: IPPC – International Year of Plant Health (paragraph 12)

Mr Xia reported that this action had been completed.

BLG 10 Action point: Teleconference on SDGs (paragraph 26)

Mr Dias reported that this action had also been completed

BLG 10 Action point: Document on interlinkages between biodiversity and the SDGs (paragraph 27)

The CBD Secretariat had circulated the draft as requested and comments were pending.

BLG 10 Action point: Friends of Biodiversity Group (paragraph 33)

Ms Grobicki (Ramsar) had mentioned at the previous meeting of the BLG that a “Friends of Water” group existed and thought that consideration should be given to setting up a similar group for biodiversity.

Mr Dias (CBD) agreed that such a group would be a good idea but wondered how best it could be established. A similar suggestion had been floated at an FAO meeting on forests where the Mexican Ministry of the Environment had seemed interested. One question to address was where the Friends should be based, with the FAO in Rome and UN HQ in New York being suitable options, where permanent representatives could be lobbied. Representations at New York, however, would probably lack the environmental expertise and raising their awareness of the issues would be crucial. A proposal for a group in New York to pursue themes related to SDGs put forward by India, Mexico and Brazil had not been followed through yet. These “Friends” groups required some impulse from Secretariats, and this could be a task shared by the BLG members in turn.

Ms Grobicki provided some background on how the Friends of Water worked. At the SDG discussions, the co-chairs had been Kenya and Hungary and they had ensured that water was included in the SDGs. Tajikistan had called for a “Year of Water” in 2013 and Japan had led on water-related disasters within the UN General Assembly. Japan and the Republic of Korea had sent high level advisers to meet the Secretary General. Summits had been held in Hungary in 2013 and 2016 and in Pakistan in 2014. The main impetus was provided by the World Water Council and there were many countries playing an active role but more often than not they acted independently. These efforts could be more effective with some shepherding.

She also asked whether consideration was being given to setting up a high level panel for SDG Goal 15 as had been done for water.

Mr Dias said that during the SDG discussions, UNEP, UNDP, FAO and the World Bank had formed a support network providing technical information to countries. CBD had been part of the network.

Mr Dias stressed the importance of identifying the champion countries and the need for Parties’ buy-in. He also asked whether Nairobi, Geneva or Bonn would be suitable locations. He also raised the question of the tasks of the groups, which might include providing briefings before COPs.

Mr Morgan (CITES) said that the Swiss Government was very supportive and helped maintain an environmental network, which had a biodiversity sub-group. The basic structure was therefore already in place in Geneva.

Mr Chambers (CMS) said that most diplomatic missions in Germany were located in Berlin rather than Bonn, but the German Government was a supportive host and conducted a great deal of bilateral activity.

Mr Chambers suggested that the BLG continue to consider the options and develop more concrete ideas.

Mr Dias agreed suggesting that a concept note be drafted, examining the possible role of champion countries and drawing on the experience of other Friends groups in Rome and New York.

Mr Chambers said that there seemed to be two possible directions to take – a forum of IGOs advising Parties or a group of Parties with the task of mobilizing actions. He suggested that Ms Grobicki set the ball rolling with a concept note to which the other members of BLG should contribute.

**Action**

Ramsar to lead on the preparation of a concept note for establishing a “Friends of Biodiversity” drawing on the experience of the “Friends of Water” and the High Level Panel dealing with SDG related to water.

BLG 10 Action point: MOU with IPBES (paragraph 50)

Mr Chambers reported that CMS had prepared a draft Memorandum of Understanding for the BLG and IPBES and this had been submitted to the IPBES Plenary. Some Parties however had expressed doubts about the desirability of IPBES entering into arrangements with the BLG as a whole, preferring separate agreements with the individual treaties. It was agreed that this would be discussed in greater detail in Ms Anne Larigauderie, IPBES Executive Secretary’s report (agenda item 9).

BLG 10 Action point: Note for the Informal Advisory Group (IAG) (paragraph 69)

The note by the BLG on opportunities for synergies was prepared and provided to the meeting of the informal advisory group which was held the next day and is provided in annex to the report of BLG 10.

BLG 10 Action point: Common Messages in advance of international days (paragraph 87)

Mr Pratt (CBD) said that joint outreach and communication had been discussed at the previous meeting and he recalled that the joint statement made by Heads of the Secretariats on the adoption of the SDG had been easily arranged and well received, providing a clear indication of the cooperation among BLG members. It had also been agreed to work on common messages on international observances and to ensure that communications officers continued to work together. There are several international observance days and these could be used as stepping stones in developing campaigns and themes.

On observances, Mr Chambers said that there were many such special days and CMS tended to select a few that were particularly relevant such as those relating to oceans, World

Wildlife Day and World Environment Day. CMS was also pursuing the idea of having World Migratory Bird Day officially recognized by the UN. A process was needed to identify the observances of common interest and a means of developing common messages.

Mr Dias agreed that there were many observances and the practice tended to be to react to them a short time in advance. The BLG should agree common messages and be more supportive of each other's campaigns. A strategy should be developed.

Mr Chambers suggested that this task should be delegated to the Secretariats' communications teams, which should organize a conference call or email exchange to identify the key common themes for the BLG and prioritize the main observances of interest.

**Action**

Communications teams to liaise over common approach to themed days

BLG 10 Action point: Circulation of Bilateral Work Plans (paragraph 97)

Bilateral Work Plans should be sent to Mr Pratt at CBD so that he could arrange for them to be posted on the CBD website.

**Action**

Bilateral work plans to be sent to CBD for posting on the website

BLG 10 Action point: Meetings of the Chairs of Scientific and Advisory Bodies (CSAB) (paragraph 101)

It was noted that the last meeting of the Chairs of Scientific and Advisory Bodies (CSAB) had taken place in Italy in 2013 chaired and organized by CMS. There was unanimous agreement that CSAB was a useful body and should be continued.

Mr Morgan (CITES) said that the onus lay with the Secretariats to take the lead as the Chairs were all too busy. His colleague, Tom de Meulenaer had tried to convene a meeting but had been unable to find a suitable date upon which the Chairs could agree.

It was agreed to continue with the arrangement that BLG members should take responsibility for organizing the CSAB meetings by turn, and Mr Morgan tentatively undertook to lead on the next one, but this would have to wait until after the CITES COP.

The option of holding CSAB meetings via Skype or back to back with other events at which the Chairs attended should also be explored.

**Action**

CITES to convene next CSAB meeting

**3. Updates under the Conventions since the tenth meeting of the BLG**

WHC

Mr Han (WHC) said that the General Assembly of the World Heritage Convention had met in November 2015 in Paris and had passed a Resolution on the linkages between the WHC and the SDGs.

The 40<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee meeting in Istanbul in July 2016 had been suspended because of security concerns and would reconvene later in the year in Paris.

The WHC welcomed synergies and cooperation with other biodiversity-related conventions. One report submitted to the Committee was the IUCN study on Ramsar, WHC Biosphere Reserves and the Global Geopark Network, linking cultural and natural sites.

The WHC and Ramsar had jointly worked on case studies on sites as tourist destinations, and WHC had commissioned a study on tourism in a changing climate, done in conjunction with UNEP and Union of Concerned Scientists.

A conference had been held in Lima, Peru on the biosphere programme, setting priorities for the next ten years. There were 669 sites in 120 countries.

WHC welcomed the invitation made to the Man and Biosphere (MAB) programme to report on the Aichi Targets.

A workshop on benefit sharing in Africa had been held under the auspices of the MAB. MAB now covered 1 billion hectares and the sites had 100 million inhabitants.

Mr Dias said CBD had convened a working group to examine effective area-based conservation measures. The buffer zones established for biosphere reserves were of interest and input from UNESCO would be welcome.

## CITES

Mr Morgan reported that two new Parties had acceded to CITES - Tajikistan and Tonga. The Standing Committee had met in January 2016 with the highest attendance on record. Parties were supportive of synergies but stressed that they wanted the Secretariat to concentrate on core issues. Parties also recognized that synergies were needed in national administrations to improve communication and coordination. He would report on preparations for the forthcoming COP under Agenda Item 4.

## IPPC

Mr Xia said that Parties supported efforts to improve synergies among the BLG members conventions. Preparations were under way for the International Year of Plant Health in 2020, with the process including the Committees of Agriculture and Fisheries and Forests, the Council in 2017 and the FAO conference.

The focus within the IPPC was shifting from production towards trade. Parties were engaged, with a number of developing countries playing an active role.

The IPPC Secretariat was cooperating well with UNEP, CITES and CBD with respect to enhancing synergies in the implementation of the conventions.

On the IPPC proposal for an International Year of Plant Health, Mr Dias recalled that a similar proposal had emanated from UNESCO and he wondered whether the two initiatives could be merged.

Mr Han recalling the conference on botany in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century undertook to liaise with the IPPC.

### Ramsar

Ms Grobicki said that the Ramsar Secretariat had been going through a period of transition over the past nine months. The Standing Committee had appointed Martha Rojas-Urrego in June 2016 and she had entered on duty the previous day.

The theme for World Wetlands Day 2017 approved by the Standing Committee would be Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Ramsar COP13 would take place in 2018 in Dubai, UAE with the theme being wetlands for a sustainable urban future. It was noted that the central feature of Dubai City was the creek which supported a population of flamingos. A wetland city accreditation scheme was being developed.

The Standing Committee had adopted a proposal to add Arabic to the official languages of the Convention. Mr Dias said that he could offer guidance as Arabic was an official language of CBD.

Lake Ichkeul in Tunisia which was both a Ramsar and World Heritage Site had been added to the Montreux Record (a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character had occurred, were occurring, or were likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference) and the number of sites recorded as degraded under Article 3.2 was growing. A programme was being initiated for national and international efforts to work on improving the state of these sites.

Work plans had been agreed for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, the CEPA Programme and the Secretariat.

A system of online national reporting was being adopted. The Ramsar Convention had a 90 per cent record of Parties submitting reports (CBD now had 94 per cent). AEWA had been singled out for praise for its high reporting levels, outperforming CMS.

The Ramsar culture network was being developed with funding from the MAVA Foundation and this initiative opened up opportunities for working with the WHC. Four new regional initiatives had been proposed taking the total to nineteen. The four new ones covered the Amazon Basin, the Indo-Burma Region, the Senegal Basin and Central Asia. Questions had been raised regarding the legal status of these initiatives.

On synergies, although Parties were supportive in principle, concerns had been raised by Parties that Ramsar, as a relatively small Convention, ran the risk of losing its separate identity within the biodiversity-related conventions of the BLG.

Mr Han (WHC) stated that the WHC was also interested in disaster risk management. It also had hydrological programmes and was active in the Lake Chad area and Myanmar. He asked for the contact details of the officers dealing with the issue at the Ramsar Secretariat.

Mr Dias (CBD) stressed the role of ecosystems in mitigating the risks of disasters and that the Rio Conventions and UNEP were involved. A workshop had been held in South Africa looking into case studies and the report was now available.

**Action**

CBD to provide information to Ramsar on introducing Arabic as an official language

The Ramsar Secretariat to provide contact details of officers working on disaster risk mitigation to WHC

CMS

Mr Chambers said that CMS was developing a new reporting template to align national reports more closely to its Strategic Plan, itself based on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. The template would be submitted to CMS COP12 in 2017.

Many meetings under CMS had been held, the most important being the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Signatories to the Sharks MOU in March 2016 in Costa Rica, and it had been attended by the President and several ministers. This MOU was global in geographic reach and the Signatories had agreed to add several species to the Annex. The CITES COP would be considering listing the same species.

The Task Force on the illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) had met in Cairo in July 2016. The participants had issued a declaration after the event and had committed themselves to reduce the number of birds illegally taken year, estimated at as many as 25 million.

On lions, CMS and CITES had convened a joint workshop for African Range States as part of the follow-up to the Resolution adopted at the CMS COP11 in Quito in 2014. Lions were suffering from sharp population declines and there is the possibility of another proposal to list lions under the CMS being put forward at COP12.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) would be held in Helsinki 30 August-1 September 2016.

In September, a meeting was being held to consider a review mechanism for the Convention. Several BLG members had provided valuable input.

The inaugural meeting of the Energy Task Force was tentatively scheduled for October. A representative of the Ramsar Secretariat would be attending along with stakeholders from the private sector.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee in October would be the last one before COP12 in Manila in October 2017.

The Working Group that had been responsible for elaborating the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species (SPMS) adopted at COP11 was now developing the indicators and the "Companion Volume" on implementation. The SPMS closely mirrored the Aichi Targets.

Mr Morgan (CITES) reiterated the close cooperation between CMS and CITES on lions and the illegal trade in birds through MIKT.

**4. Preparations/expectations for CITES COP17 and CBD COP13/COP-MOP9/COP-MOP2, including feedback from the joint regional/sub-regional pre-COP meetings taking place during August 2016.**



## CITES

Mr Morgan (CITES) reported on the good progress being made regarding preparations for the CITES COP. Already 2,000 people had registered, representing 170 of the Parties and 260 observer organizations and 135 media agencies. There had been no provision in the core budget to sponsor eligible country delegates, so US\$500,000 had had to be raised. Over two hundred documents covering 2,500 pages had been prepared. There would also be 125 side events on the programme.

The EU had become a Party to the Convention so there was a prospect of long discussion over voting procedures and whether Parties whose votes the EU wished to cast *en bloc* would have to be present in the room or registered for the meeting.

The South African Government was proving to be a most supportive host and the facilities at the venue in Johannesburg were excellent. All appeared to be on course for the largest and best COP in the history of CITES.

While charismatic species attracted the headlines, it was necessary to draw attention to the conservation status of wider elements of biodiversity too.

The feedback received from the series of pre-COP meetings which had been run by CITES and CBD was over exclusively positive.

Mr Chambers recalled that the issue of voting procedures involving the EU had been raised in other forums and asked whether there had been any fundamental change of circumstances. Mr Morgan explained that the CITES Rules of Procedure required explicitly that Parties be present to vote, which would preclude the EU casting a vote on behalf of an absent country. The EU claimed that it was empowered to represent all of its Member States. The USA and Japan were likely to insist that Parties be present.

Mr Morgan said that the proposals to list certain shark species might lead to some close votes, as they had at the previous COP. There seemed to be some concern that the thresher sharks did not meet the criteria.

Mr Dias (CBD) said that the EU was a Party to CBD. At CBD the EU spoke on behalf of the Member States. The USA was not a Party to CBD (and therefore had not raised objections to voting procedures) and thus far all decisions have been taken by consensus.

Mr Morgan also reported a growing trend for Parties to list tree species and the initiative tended to come from the Range States wanting to secure greater control of their products rather than from Europe.

CITES was also trying to become paper-free, an aspiration shared by other BLG members, and Mr Morgan was asked to report back on whether CITES had succeeded. Mr Chambers said that CMS was trying to be paper-smart rather than totally paper-free.

On 23 September, South Africa was holding a ministerial meeting on the relevance of SDGs to CITES.

With regard to the budget proposals, the CITES Secretariat was bidding for modest increase to cover salaries and basic services but not for programmes.

<b>Action</b>
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## CBD

Mr Dias (CBD) reported on progress regarding the CBD COP, informing the meeting that the Nagoya Protocol now had 80 Parties.

Mr Dias had been invited to a meeting at the Vatican following the Pope’s encyclical on the need to protect nature. The support of an influential religious institution such as the Roman Catholic Church would be welcome.

Two meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), a meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8j and Related Provisions (related to traditional knowledge) and a meeting of the new Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), had been held during the intersessional period, providing a solid basis for COP 13 decisions.

An important element of the agenda of the forthcoming COP would focus on mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors. One such sector in which there has been progress in promoting mainstreaming has been health and CBD had worked closely with the World Health Organization (WHO). The four sectors being addressed on the agenda of COP 13 and also chosen by Mexico as Host Government as themes for discussion in the High-level Segment are: fisheries, tourism, forestry and agriculture. A preparatory workshop to brainstorm ideas on mainstreaming would be held, as would a special dialogue session at the FAO Committee on Forestry. A Workshop was also planned with the FAO on sustainable fisheries.

A meeting will be held in the Republic of Korea in September where all regional fisheries organizations and regional seas conventions would be engaged in dialogue along with FAO and UNEP. Agriculture was the next challenge, with solutions need for practical ways to deal with pesticides, pollination and soil-based microorganisms. A special manual had been produced with funding from the EU. Africa was the first region for attention and the Pacific and the Caribbean would follow.

CBD was also working on marine issues in part through the designation of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs). The occurrence of plastics in the oceans was also a concern being addressed under the Convention.

Invasive alien species also remained a cause for concern, while Protected Areas and species conservation would also be addressed with IUCN expressing an interest in enhancing species conservation under CBD.

This would be the first fully integrated meeting for the Convention and the Cartagena and Nagoya processes, with their meetings (the COP and the two COP-MOPs) being held concurrently. CBD had done considerable preparatory work towards this, including consultation with the Chemicals Conventions and the UNFCCC to find out how they have run parallel meetings.

CBD would examine how it could better use voluntary contributions to support implementation of activities agreed by the COP and COP-MOPs and the Secretariat would soon issue a Notification inviting Parties to consult internally about the possibility of identifying their potential voluntary contributions in advance of the COP, based on the cost-estimates provided against relevant decisions.

Mr Pratt (CBD) shared Mr Morgan's view that the feedback from the pre-COP meetings had been very positive and thanked the CITES Secretariat for its leadership in this initiative and for negotiating financial support for it with the European Commission. Mr Pratt felt that the description of the events as "workshops" was misleading as from the CBD perspective they took the form of formal preparatory meetings, and although the Secretariats had set up the platform and organized the logistics, the Parties had determined the content. Many of the participants were experienced Government representatives, familiar with negotiation and therefore did not require much "training" per se, but instead benefitted from the opportunity to develop common understanding within their regional groups.

Valuable support had been received from UNEP Regional Offices in Asia-Pacific and Africa, the latter also serving as the Secretariat for the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), and also benefitting from support from the African Union.

Parties welcomed the common platform provided by the meetings which, despite CBD and CITES having different remits, included some joint sessions on issues of joint interest such as capacity-building and resource mobilization, where there were overlaps in responsibility at national levels.

These were the first such regional preparatory meetings facilitated by CBD Secretariat for some time, although the African Union had convened similar gatherings for African countries in recent years. CMS Secretariat had participated in all the regional joint preparatory meetings. Consideration should be given to how to build on this model in the run-up to future COPs.

Mr Dias noted that at COP12, the biodiversity-related conventions represented in the BLG had been invited to provide advice to COP13 on priority areas that contribute to the Aichi Targets and that it could consider incorporating in its guidance to the GEF.

CMS and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture both had mandates from their governing bodies to provide input. Stressing its importance to the Aichi Targets, CITES had identified its financial needs for the next triennium, with priority being given to capacity-building. CITES was now specifically requested to comment on the integrated programme under GEF on the illegal wildlife trade and its extension from GEF6 to GEF7 after the next replenishment.

Mr Dias invited further inputs from the BLG members on such GEF guidance but pointed out that donor countries had highlighted that any such inputs should come from governing bodies.

Mr Dias said that the GEF had had a challenge in identifying priorities for its programme as national interests differed. The GEF would appreciate more focused requests, and CBD had held a retreat to decide on the best way of providing guidance. The GEF had started with projects focused on conservation and protected areas and then expanded to systems and policy development, and mainstreaming biodiversity in productive landscapes and seascapes, so was looking at more integrated work programmes, and seeking wider projects covering many portfolios. Attention has now been given to commodities, deforestation and food security. The list of eligible areas was now broader and Parties were being given greater choice in what they wish to target.

Further inputs from other BLG members for GEF guidance would be welcome at the programme level (rather than specific projects). CMS had responded at the outset. The comments would be presented to the Conference of the Parties (annexed to papers) and

summarized by the CBD Secretariat. Comments would be needed soon as the deadline for COP documents were approaching and the comments should be sent from the COP or a governing body.

Mr Morgan (CITES) said that CITES was seeking a broad mandate from its COP to promote CITES' objectives wherever possible. Mr Dias said that he could alert CBD Parties to the fact that a response could be expected from the CITES COP.

In terms of details, Mr Dias asked for indications of where other MEAs perceived there to be funding gaps and those Aichi Biodiversity Targets where progress was lagging behind schedule (which was the case for many of them). CBD Parties had a duty to develop NBSAPs after consulting stakeholders and to implement them by adopting them as formal policies. There was a disparity between global obligations and national implementation, and for the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity countries needed a monitoring programme and national mechanisms for resource mobilization and better coordination.

Mr Dias noted that on domestic resource mobilization, Parties had agreed at COP12 to do more and undertake more financial reporting on domestic and international resource mobilization. UNDP was supporting 30 countries through its Biofin initiative and this was expected to expand.

Mr Dias also noted that he had been invited to a meeting in Indonesia of auditing agencies to provide input into how to audit biodiversity, as was being done for climate change, forests and Protected Areas in Latin America.

Mr Dias said that a proposal for the fifth Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBO5) which will assess the achievement of the Aichi Targets would be presented to COP 14. The results of the final assessment will be presented to COP 15 which would pave the way for the post 2020 strategy. GBO5 would be prepared with important contribution from the forthcoming IPBES Global Assessment. A formula was needed for taking into account the input of other IGOs and Conventions.

Work in this area was being coordinated by a newly formed unit at the CBD Secretariat headed by Robert Höft.

<b>Action</b>
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CBD to send COP document to GEF for comments by end of August [Done]
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**5. Synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions: Follow-up among the conventions to the process initiated under CBD COP decision XII/6, the Geneva workshop on synergies, SBI-1 recommendations, expectations at CITES COP 17 and CBD COP 13, and including UNEA-2 resolutions related to synergies.**

Regional workshops had been held to help prepare national road maps for Targets 11 and 12, and six regional workshops had been held on Targets 5 and 15 with support from the Governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea.

A Notification from CBD to its Parties was pending on a joint announcement of regional actions and partner organizations were being asked to enhance their support to countries.

Mr Pratt (CBD) drew attention to the workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions held in Geneva in February 2016 that brought together Party representatives of

each of the seven conventions. He said that the key recommendations from the Geneva workshop and the meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), which considered the report of the workshop, would be brought together in a proposal to CBD COP13, covering the need at both national and international level for coordination mechanisms; the importance of overarching frameworks – Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, NBSAPs (realizing their potential for all MEAs) and 2030 Agenda / SDGs; and establishing a common knowledge base and improving knowledge sharing.

In the next few weeks a simplified proposal would be circulated with both national and international approaches described, by means of a Notification to CBD Parties and Parties of other MEAs. UNEP would be consulted on the next steps for securing possible funding, in keeping with UNEP's important role and the mandate that it had received from UNEA2.

Mr Dias referred to paragraphs 7 and 9 Recommendation 1/10 from SBI 1 on national reporting. The only way he saw to avoid duplication in national reporting was to take a long-term approach. All BLG conventions should by end of the decade have in place a harmonized approach to reporting.

Mr Chambers welcomed Mr Pratt's proposal and the chance to comment. He also agreed with Mr Dias's ideas on aligning reporting.

Mr Morgan (CITES) said that CITES Secretariat would issue a Notification but might remove some of content less relevant to CITES.

Mr Pratt understood the points made by both CITES and CMS, but did not wish to exclude the UNEP perspectives, preferring to harness them to best effect for the needs of the MEAs based on the mandate from UNEA. The role of UNEP either assisting or leading had to be defined.

Mr Chambers saw the risk of some duplication on indicators for SDG. InforMEA was also doing a mapping exercise, and he suggested that CBD take a lead and consult UNEP on this.

Mr Dias said that there were too many players with a stake. Formally, the UN Statistics Division had responsibility to develop the statistical aspects of the SDGs, but not all countries had yet agreed to the framework and wanted to retain a national approach. FAO led on some issues and UN Water on others.

Mr Han (WHC) said that the UNESCO Institute of Statistics located in Montreal, Canada, handled the needs of WHC. A coherent approach was needed.

Mr Dias said that the UN Statistics Office was taking a strict approach regarding what could be included in the global framework, insisting on scientific robustness of the data. Some indicators had been removed on the grounds that the supporting data were not available.

## **6. Work plan for 2016/2017 and next meetings**

Mr Chambers (CMS) asked whether all BLG members had provided their Work Plans. Mr Dias (CBD) undertook to check which Work Plans were outstanding when he returned to Montreal.

The question was raised about the desirability of joint work programmes. The bilateral arrangement between CBD and the Ramsar Convention on inland water was effective,

although there was some bureaucracy involved in securing the approval of the two governing bodies.

It was thought that some CBD Parties would move to strengthen species conservation under the Convention at the IUCN-WCC.

Options included a formal thematic Work Programme but this would require two years to obtain approval through the decision-making cycle. A simpler approach might be a short-term action plan such as the one on the agenda at Cancún on habitat restoration in Africa.

Mr Chambers said that the next BLG meeting should decide on the thematic areas of common interest. Species conservation would be of great interest to CMS.

<b>Action</b>
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Next BLG to consider themes of common interest for joint work programmes
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## **7. UNEA-2 - outcomes of UNEA-2 – resolutions related to synergies (video link)**

Elizabeth Mrema, Director of the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC) and her colleagues, Jiri Hlavacek and Balakrishna Pisupati joined the meeting for this agenda item via Skype link.

Ms Mrema gave an overview of the 25 resolutions adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA2), four of which were particularly relevant to the biodiversity-related MEAs, namely Resolution 2/5 on Delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution 2/16 mainstreaming biodiversity for well-being, Resolution 2/17 on enhancing the work of UNEP in facilitating cooperation, collaboration and synergies among biodiversity-related conventions and Resolution 2/18 on the relationship between UNEP and the multilateral environmental agreements for which it provides the secretariat.

Ms Mrema also listed the other resolutions likely to be of interest: Resolution 2/6 (supporting the Paris Agreement), Resolution 2/7 (sound management of chemicals and waste), 2/8 (sustainable consumption and production), Resolution 2/10 (oceans and seas), Resolution 2/11 (plastic and marine litter), Resolution 2/13 (sustainable coral reef management), Resolution 2/14 (illegal trade in wildlife), Resolution 2/19 (Midterm review of the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environment Law (Montevideo Programme IV)), Resolution 2/20 (proposed medium-term strategy for 2018-2021 and programme of work and budget for 2018-2019), Resolution 2/21 (sand and dust storms), Resolution 2/24 (desertification and land degradation) and Resolution 2/25 (principle 10 of the Rio Declaration).

She assumed that the participants were familiar with the Resolutions and had digested the consequences for their organizations, having in most cases contributed to their drafting and evolution.

Mr Chambers thanked Ms Mrema for the overview, and suggested that the meeting concentrate on the salient points of the most relevant Resolutions.

Mr Dias (CBD) said that all of the listed Resolutions were relevant to different degrees and the questions were what follow-up measures were required and whether Parties needed to consider the Resolutions further at their COPs. He asked Ms Mrema whether there were any plans for a joint approach by UNEP and the MEAs and suggested that UNEP might

undertake an exercise identifying areas where further work was required. In run-up to the COP, the CBD Secretariat was pointing out to its Parties that UNEA had adopted Resolutions but guidance was needed where some action on the part of the Secretariat and Parties was required.

Ms Mrema said that there had been inevitable delays while the new Executive Director came on board. She also noted that UNEP would report on the progress made to the next session of UNEA and invited MEA Secretariats to identify their priorities arising from the UNEA2 Resolutions. Mr Hlavacek promised that in two weeks' time the Secretariats would receive the official follow-up letter from the Executive Director. He noted also a need for a road map for the future work on synergies among MEAs.

Mr Dias said that he looked forward to receiving the Executive Director's letter as it would be helpful to know where UNEP thought interactions were necessary and to have direct requests for Secretariats to engage with COPs. He confirmed that a letter regarding Resolution 2/18 had been received, but said that more information was needed from UNEP on how it saw its implementation going ahead, and that the views of BLG members should also be sought about the areas needing efforts to enhance synergies (Resolution 2/17).

Regarding the promised letter, Mr Morgan (CITES) noted that the report of the meeting convened by UNEP in Geneva in July suggested that more had been agreed than the BLG members had accepted. He asked whether the letter would supersede the report.

Ms Mrema replied that the letter and this report were separate items. The meeting in Geneva was on a specific issue (synergies among conventions) and was not connected to the letter following UNEA2.

Mr Dias agreed that there were separate processes but said that they needed to be coordinated. EU funding was being provided for promoting synergies, and the most had to be made of the opportunities that this provided.

Mr Chambers agreed that coordination was required. There was a chance to implement Resolution 2/17 through a synergistic approach. There had been much discussion but there was no clear follow-up mechanism for enhancing synergies. Referring to paragraph 2 of the Resolution on alignment, he said that concrete activities were needed to implement it, and NBSAPs might be one route. MEAs other than CBD were trying to have their work integrated into NBSAPs but despite aligning strategies this was not happening. If NBSAPs proved to be a fruitful channel for implementation, then more needed to be done for national implementation. The UN was succeeding in achieving greater read-across in other fields, but not in biodiversity. The Resolution was designed to unlock doors; more effort was needed to actually open them.

Mr Dias recalled having written to the former Executive Director, five years ago seeking opportunities for greater cooperation and programmatic support from UNEP in key areas under the Convention. The conversations were still taking place but there was little concrete action to implement the "wish list".

Ms Grobicki (Ramsar) asked whether there were any concrete proposals from UNEP on how it would follow-up on the discussion held in Geneva in July 2016 about working together on specific issues relevant to all BLG members e.g. Invasive Alien Species.

Ms Mrema said that she agreed with many of the points that Mr Chambers had raised. She said that Mr Hlavacek had promised a road map in two weeks setting out a way forward for

dealing with the long list of actions. What was required was a manageable list of priorities that could be dealt with given time, staff and financial limitations.

Mr Pisupati said that there were two projects being drawn up for GEF dealing with IAS and it was being decided who should take the lead.

He also noted the Geneva meeting (July 2016) and drew attention to the recent workshop for Parties convened by UNEP in Nairobi on NBSAPs seeking ways to integrate MEA work. He noted also that following the workshop convened by CBD on synergies among biodiversity-conventions, CBD had been asked by its Subsidiary Body on Implementation to prepare a road map. UNEP could help prioritize and coordinate relevant actions.

Mr Chambers said that some areas where the prospect of success was high should be identified. After the Executive Director's letter had been received, two or three themes from a potential enormous list should be chosen as pilots through which trust could be built. One such theme could be invasive alien species. He suggested holding a conference call to coordinate the BLG response to the Executive Director's letter. It was open whether progressing this would be best handled at Executive Secretary or desk officer level.

Mr Dias agreed with Mr Chambers that the number of themes should not be too long but the themes chosen should be relevant to all BLG members. Thought should also be given to the deliverables, so that progress could be reported at UNEA.

Mr Chambers had some questions on the EU synergies project which had been discussed at the Geneva meeting, as the possibility of a paper being submitted to the current meeting had been raised. He also asked what the European Commission's timetable was and the deadlines for comments.

Ms Mrema said that a paper had been promised but UNEP was waiting for comments on the report of the meeting (CITES and CBD both indicated that they had some). There was a draft paper which Ms Mrema was reviewing and she hoped to be able to issue it the following week.

Ms Mrema said that the European Commission would start its internal discussions after the summer break and would need a response quite quickly. Mr Pisupati said that an outline concept rather than a finished draft would be required by the first week of September. If the outline received the green light, then the proposal could be worked up in further detail.

Ms Mrema said that as the end of the year approached, bilateral discussions would begin with likely donor countries.

Mr Chambers asked what the likely level of the budget would be. The previous programme had had a budget of US\$800,000 but this had included additional support from the Swiss and Finnish Governments. The concept being developed had an overall budget of US\$ 2 million but it was made up of discrete components and some parts might need other sponsors.

**Action**

UNEP to send a UNEA follow-up letter on in two weeks

A BLG conference call would be arranged to coordinate the response to the Executive Director's letter



UNEP to send a concept note for the second phase of the EU-funded project on synergies in two weeks

## **8. Indicators and monitoring under the SDGs including Global Water Goal by UN-Water**

Discussion of this item was deferred as there was no representative of UN Water present.

## **9. Update on IPBES activities**

Anne Larigauderie, the Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) gave a report on recent developments within her organization.

Reports on the first two IPBES assessments relating to pollination and methodological assessment of scenarios and modelling were about to be launched.

Two draft decisions had been prepared for CBD COP13, one building on the pollination report.

The IPBES Global Assessment had been launched the previous week and an authoring meeting of 130 experts had been convened under three co-chairs from Argentina, Brazil/USA and Germany. There had been a good balance of disciplines represented at the meeting including social scientists, and specialists in indigenous knowledge.

IPBES was keen to work with CBD on the Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 which will report on the 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and to which the Global Assessment will contribute.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meetings of regional workshops on land degradation had been held, and these had generated a large number of comments for peer review cycle. Work had started on revised drafts with a view to publishing the five assessments in March 2018. IPBES was in contact with UNCCD on the question of land degradation.

A meeting had been held on the sustainable use of biodiversity, attended by one of the CITES plants experts. The Plenary had examined a draft document but had asked for more focus. The revised document now had a narrower focus on use of wild species, but consumptive and non-consumptive, and covering food and spiritual, ceremonial and decorative uses.

Regarding the options for collaboration between IPBES and BLG, the Plenary requested formalization through an MOU but the path of a single instrument covering all BLG members gave rise to concerns by some governments that wanted individual MOUs with each Convention and Treaty. Ms Larigauderie expressed a preference for a light, flexible agreement, based on the model used for CBD, rather than the more formal texts often used for agreements between UN and non-UN entities. The initial focus would be on reaching agreements with those MEAs with which IPBES did most work.

Mr Chambers said that the IPBES Assessments related to some central areas of work for the MEAs and he asked when the next opportunity would be to have the MOUs adopted. Ms Larigauderie said that the Bureau would meet in October 2016 and the next Plenary would be in the following March.

Mr Morgan (CITES) asked when the deadline for comments was. He recalled that the BLG had made a joint statement coordinated by CBD at the previous IPBES Plenary and he felt that the BLG would want to collaborate on sustainable use too.

With regard to the form of MOUs, Mr Dias (CBD) agreed that the simplest format was best. The IPBES-CBD model allowed annual updates to be made easily. He was also concerned about the importance to disseminate good news about the benefits of working with IPBES. Some earlier assessments, for example the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, had not been taken up strongly by the CBD because Parties had not been engaged under the Convention. For this reason he had made it a priority for CBD Secretariat to provide information to its Parties on the work of IPBES, including through notifications transmitting IPBES communications, including on opportunities to contribute. This effort would be continued. The COP in Cancún would be able to refer to the IPBES Assessments.

Ms Grobicki (Ramsar) welcomed the collegiate approach and the opportunities of cooperation. Procedurally, she would have to refer any proposals to the Ramsar Standing Committee for its approval, so Ramsar would only be able to sign after the June 2017 meeting of its Standing Committee. Preparatory work however did not need to be delayed.

#### **10. International Whaling Commission (IWC) and its contribution to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets as well as to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs**

Before passing the floor to Simon Brockington, the Executive Secretary of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), Mr Chambers welcomed Heidrun Frisch-Nwakanma, the CMS Marine Mammals officer and coordinator of ASCOBANS to the meeting.

Mr Chambers reported that the CMS Family was already working closely with the IWC and Mr Brockington had visited the Secretariat in Bonn the previous year. Mr Dias (CBD) said that Mr Brockington had also visited the CBD Secretariat and the dialogue started there had culminated in the invitation to Mr Brockington to attend the BLG.

Mr Brockington (IWC) made a presentation outlining the work of the IWC and stressed that the organization was seeking to engage more with other IGOs. He wanted to explore the possibilities for cooperation and would report back to his Parties on the options.

The IWC was celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. It had started with 15 Parties in 1946 and had reached 88 now, including the USA, the Russian Federation and many countries from Europe, West Africa and the Caribbean. This decision had been taken in 1946 not to organize the Commission through the then newly formed United Nations and the IWC had remained outside the UN ever since. The Commission operated on a biennial cycle and the next meeting was taking place in Slovenia. Typically these Conferences attracted 500 delegates, with 300 national representatives, 150 from NGOs and 50 from the media.

Initially, the IWC worked to regulate whale stocks and oversaw commercial whaling and indigenous peoples' rights. Commercial whaling had been subject to a moratorium so there was only a small amount of sustainable subsistence hunting taking place in the Arctic.

Scientific data showed that populations were recovering and some hunting could be permitted. Blue whales now numbered 2,500 (up from 400 at their lowest), although this was far below the historic levels of 250,000. Humpback Whales were now back to half their historic levels.

This recovery led to new problems such as higher incidence of bycatch and ship-strikes in addition to wider concerns relating to the marine environment. More whales and busier shipping lanes with larger vessels meant ship-strikes were becoming more frequent and they were underestimated with between 1 per cent and 10 per cent of collisions reported. IWC was working with the International Maritime Organization on mitigation measures such as re-routing lanes and setting speed limits.

The USA and Mexico were working together to address the perilous conservation status of the Vaquita in the Gulf of Mexico, numbers of which were now estimated at just 60.

Trade was an issue and meant interactions with CITES were more common. Whales were also an important part of eco-tourism with whale-watching attracting 12 million people each year and generating large revenues.

Mr Dias (CBD) said that some collaboration was already taking place and BLG members should identify areas of common interest with the IWC. He agreed that it was important to highlight good news stories such as species' numbers recovering, indicating that conservation efforts were worthwhile, as was done in GBO4. It was also important, however, to give an accurate picture of negative trends too. Some species attracted more publicity, whereas other equally deserving and threatened species did not.

Mr Dias also suggested that the IWC might consider becoming a member of the BLG, as it dealt with an element of biodiversity. IWC Parties could be sounded out for their opinion.

Mr Morgan (CITES) confirmed that in the past IWC and CITES had worked closely together. There had been fewer opportunities for cooperation more recently.

Ms Grobicki (Ramsar) said that the Ramsar Convention worked on marine and coastal habitats where cetaceans occurred so there were avenues to pursue. The marine environment was an area where the Ramsar Convention wanted to expand its activities and opportunities to cooperate with the IWC would be welcome.

Mr Dias said that CBD had voiced its concerns about the Vaquita with the Mexican authorities, who were also concerned about the perilous conservation status and anxious to avoid this detracting from their efforts in hosting the CBD COP and providing its Presidency. Bycatch was the main cause of the species' decline and action was being taken; the question was whether these actions would be effective given the species' precarious status. Mr Brockington undertook to speak to the Chair of the IWC Scientific Committee regarding the Vaquita and said that the USA and Mexico were preparing a report for the next IWC Meeting.

Mr Dias also said that the IWC did not only deal with large cetaceans but also dolphins living in coastal waters, which made cooperation with the Ramsar Convention a possibility. Mr Brockington mentioned that the IWC also covered river dolphins and had a successful small dolphin fund.

Mr Han (WHC) said that the WHC also had an interest in river dolphins in China and Pakistan and in the Irrawaddy Dolphin which inhabited transitional waters.

Mr Chambers observed that IWC was already working with a number of BLG members and there was scope for cooperation with others. He also pointed out that the IWC not being part of the UN system would not preclude it joining BLG, as Ramsar was not a UN organization, and therefore an invitation for the IWC to join could be extended.

**Action**

Consideration to be given to IWC joining the BLG; IWC Parties to be sounded out.

**11. World Conservation Congress - IUCN-WCC, Hawaii, 1-8 September 2016**

Ms Mrema (UNEP) sought confirmation that all BLG members had received the invitation by UNEP for a breakfast meeting with the new Executive Director.

As it was pointed out that the timing would be difficult as the IUCN-WCC started at 08:30 and many of the BLG members would have only just arrived in Hawaii and would be jetlagged, Ms Mrema agreed to reconsider the time and notify BLG members of the new arrangements.

Mr Dias suggested that all those attending the IUCN-WCC should circulate a list of the events in which they were participating and which needed to be promoted.

**Action**

Ms Mrema undertook to reconsider the start time of the UNEP breakfast meeting and confirm arrangements.

All those attending the IUCN-WCC to circulate by email a list of the events in which they were participating and which needed to be promoted.

**12. Any other business**

Mr Chambers asked for offers to host the next meeting and suggestions for possible dates.

Mr Xia tentatively offered to host the meeting in Rome, suggesting August 2017.

**13. Closing**

At the end of a busy but productive day, Mr Chambers thanked the participants for coming to Bonn for the first BLG meeting to have been held there for some years and declared proceedings closed at shortly after 17:00.