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Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIO-BRIDGE INITIATIVE

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The Conference of the Parties, in paragraph 9 of decision XII/2 B, requested the Executive Secretary to enhance technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer under the Convention, and report on progress to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting. As outlined in the summary presented in section III of document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6 on capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and the clearing-house mechanism, the Secretariat's work to implement the decision has been focused mostly on the further development and strengthening of the Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI). Supported by the Government of the Republic of Korea as President of the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the initiative¹ was launched to enhance technical and scientific cooperation (TSC) under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and its Protocols in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.² This note offers more detailed information about the development and implementation of this initiative.

I. BACKGROUND AND UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BIO-BRIDGE INITIATIVE

2. Following the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12), the Secretariat entered into a funding agreement with the Republic of Korea to support the Bio-Bridge Initiative. As the Convention's flagship initiative to support technical and scientific cooperation, the Bio-Bridge Initiative will facilitate the articulation of Parties' needs, match them with sources of expertise, mobilize partner organizations to assist Parties in their cooperation initiatives, and capture and provide the most effective practices on technical and scientific cooperation as benchmarks. The preliminary vision of the Bio-Bridge Initiative is that "Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to its Protocols have enhanced capacities to achieve their national biodiversity targets through extensive sharing of tools, knowledge and resources through regional and global partnerships and networks".

3. For 2015 and early 2016, the project focused on establishing project architecture, recruiting staff, identifying key partners, developing the Action Plan and identifying potential pilot projects for testing

* UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/1/Rev.1.

¹ UNEP/CBD/COP/12/INF/33.

² Decision XII/2 B.

mechanisms for identifying needs and offers. The Secretariat's work in this interim period is being supported through an interim BBI Project Officer and a consultant. A P-4 post for a BBI project manager has been classified by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and advertisement for the post is underway. An independent contractor is also presently being hired to support the administrative work. Unfortunately, the Secretariat experienced delays, mostly in administrative processes and recruitment of services and professionals, caused by a change being implemented in the information and administration management system of the United Nations Secretariat (*Umoja*). Nonetheless, significant progress has been made.

4. To assist with the initial planning phase of the initiative, the Secretariat engaged the services of two global institutions, the Quebec Centre for Biodiversity Science and the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), as external partners. The external partners' main tasks are to prepare the 2016-2020 BBI Action Plan, in consultation with the appropriate partners; to prepare project progress reports; to help identify the CBD Parties' TSC needs and best practices; assist in developing partnerships and cooperation proposals with prospective BBI partner organizations; to organize meetings and consultations; and to develop the design and selection of BBI pilot projects. The Secretariat of the Convention and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea (MoE) have been collaborating closely since the beginning of this initiative. Two officers seconded by MoE to the Secretariat facilitate regular communication with the Government of the Republic of Korea and convey the vision and contribution of the MoE in the development of BBI activities. Following the signature of the first funding agreement, USD 785,000 were disbursed for the first project tranche (2015-2016). A second funding agreement is being negotiated of around USD 750,000 for the 2016-2017 period.

5. Among the activities undertaken so far, an international expert inception workshop on the Bio-Bridge Initiative was held in Seoul from 17 to 18 December 2015, co-organized by the Secretariat of the Convention and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea. With the aim of coordinating the development of BBI with similar initiatives, the Secretariat and the external partners have had several bilateral discussions with different organizations, including the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Capacity-Building Forum, the BES-Net initiative led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN). These activities had the goal of exploring opportunities for cooperation and partnerships among similar TSC and capacity development initiatives, with the goal of improving synergies and avoiding duplications of efforts.

6. A first internal iteration of the BBI 2016-2020 Action Plan has been produced for the consideration of the Secretariat of the Convention and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, and extracts of the Plan are presented in this document to help the discussions at the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 1) and other events.

7. The main objectives for the 2016 efforts are to finalize a BBI Action Plan (2016-2020) and test its functionalities through a set of pilot projects. A preliminary review of literature and an internal consultation in the Secretariat have been conducted as part of a scoping exercise to orient the development of the Action Plan. Several meetings were held with Secretariat staff and outside experts. A stocktaking exercise is also being done by the external partners in order to develop a solid scientific and documentary basis and the rationale for the different tools and services suggested in the BBI Action Plan. BBI will reach out to potential partners, including members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity, Aichi Biodiversity Target Task Force members, and other partners with whom the Secretariat has active Memoranda of Understanding.

8. The proposed mission defines that BBI will “harness expert and institutional networks to catalyse and systematize technical and scientific cooperation so that biodiversity knowledge and tools are accessible to all nations.” The mission can be broken down into three interlinked, overarching objectives of BBI:

- (a) Facilitate the articulation of Parties’ needs and match them with sources of expertise and funding from regional and global networks;
- (b) Catalyse action and cooperation among Parties;
- (c) Provide an evolving framework for capturing and sharing TSC “good practices”.

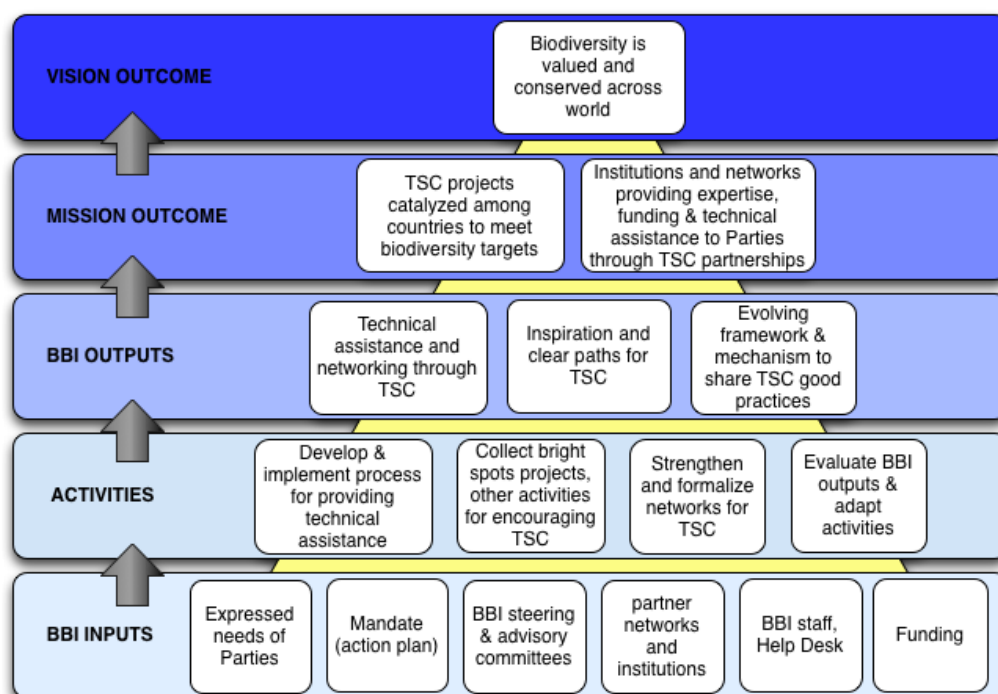
9. The activities that BBI will implement to achieve these objectives focus on early stages of TSC, namely supporting the clear identification and articulation of Party needs, the development of response plans to identify relevant sources of expertise and funding, and the coordination of cooperation among Parties and partners. BBI activities will also foster conditions for cooperation among Parties by harnessing regional and global networks holding relevant expertise, and providing inspiration and replicable good practices for TSC. The following table summarizes the overarching objectives and the activities and rationale related to each.

Objective	Activities	Rationale	Supporting tools or activities
Facilitate the articulation of Parties’ needs and match them with sources of expertise and funding	Technical support for the precise expression of needs and technical and scientific cooperation (TSC) requests	CBD Parties need a systematized, accessible mechanism where they can ask for support in relation to the achievement of their biodiversity targets. The need for support in articulating clear needs has been highlighted by multiple sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible, user-friendly website • A common form to request assistance • Help desk service to assist with the articulation of needs and elaboration of requests for assistance
	Facilitate the development of response plans	Although BBI cannot fund a large number of TSC projects, it will support the development of robust project proposals ready to be funded by development partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process to support the use and adaption of “bright spot” case studies by Parties • Process to facilitate development of response plans in accordance with agreed guidelines and principles • Roster of expertise providers • Regional network hubs leading matchmaking in coordination with central help desk, supporting delivery of response plans • Response plans will consider connecting requesting countries with other TSC and/or capacity development initiatives/mechanisms, if appropriate
	Mobilize institutions and networks for	For TSC to have a far-reaching impact, institutions and expert networks at different scales,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalized networks of institutions and experts

Objective	Activities	Rationale	Supporting tools or activities
	matchmaking and support project implementation	including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), research institutions, universities and government institutions, among others, need to be mobilized.	committed to BBI participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pool of funders aware and supportive of BBI • Partnerships with regional hubs to catalyse and support TSC
Catalyse action and cooperation	Outreach and communication	Outreach and communication are necessary to publicize BBI and encourage TSC among parties, improve access to technical support for countries not already engaged in cooperation, and communicate BBI success stories to inspire further cooperation. It is also of critical importance to enable BBI long-term sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop of a communication strategy to reach all CBD Parties and relevant partners
	“Bright spots” library of good practices and replicable solutions to biodiversity challenges	Examples of inspiring cooperation stories, good practices and replicable solutions to biodiversity challenges can encourage and inspire learning and action from each other. Replicable solutions are an approach to cooperation that may not require matchmaking or financial support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of good practices, replicable projects and inspiring stories from partners (e.g. expertise providers) • Create of a searchable database to facilitate easy access to “bright spots” projects • Write-ups and videos on website of inspiring stories
	Competition for pilot project funding, yearly themes to foster cooperation	BBI will inspire and encourage cooperation using different approaches. One approach is to organize yearly competitions around a biodiversity-related theme (to be identified).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance for the selection of yearly biodiversity-related themes to foster cooperation • Develop guidance to manage competition for funding of one project per year on theme <i>[Specific procedures will be defined together with the development of terms of reference for BBI Steering and Advisory Committees]</i>
	Regional meetings to encourage new cooperation	Face-to-face meetings are key to developing new relationships and opportunities for TSC. Yearly regional meetings could be funded on specific themes to showcase expertise and needs and stimulate cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the organization of meetings

Objective	Activities	Rationale	Supporting tools or activities
Provide an evolving framework for capturing and sharing TSC “good practices”	Pilot projects	Pilot projects are needed to test alternative approaches to TSC, including ability to catalyse productive and lasting relationships among countries. Project criteria should be updated regularly based on state of knowledge on good practices related to TSC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidance related to the process for selection of pilot projects (in 2016 and in next phase of BBI, including focus of what to pilot during each phase) • Pool of funding for pilot projects (potentially in next phase to be same as competition funding) • Develop evaluation process for pilot projects so that BBI development and implementation is informed by lessons learned
	Develop TSC framework based on lessons learned	BBI activities need to be evaluated regularly in order to improve services and ensure that the programme is meeting the evolving needs of CBD Parties. Because TSC has not been done successfully in the past with the Secretariat, experimentation and learning will allow for continuous improvements to services offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop initial TSC framework of good practices • Develop review and iteration process for TSC framework

10. The following figure summarizes how BBI activities will lead to the achievement of the BBI mission and vision.



11. As part of the BBI Action Plan development process, the Secretariat of the Convention and the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea have agreed to ensure a broad engagement of Parties, international organizations and United Nations agencies, as well as similar platforms, major groups and donors, in the planning, implementation and financing of BBI, in order to ensure the appropriate responses to the needs for technical and financial resources to implement a systematic, sustainable and efficient TSC platform evolving out of BBI's experience.

12. A short-term communication plan has been produced by the Secretariat, outlining the different public outreach activities that will be implemented in the coming months. Three side events will be held during the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, one in French, one in Spanish and one in English (during the lunch break on 2, 3 and 4 May 2016), to allow for direct consultations with as many Parties and organizations as possible. In addition, an open-house session will be held parallel to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, on Monday, 2 May 2016, during the afternoon. A workshop to gather input on the proposed project structure and BBI mechanisms, as well as to examine and advance partnership development, is also planned for June 2016, to be held in the Republic of Korea or in Montreal. Another side event is being planned during the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress to be held from 1 to 10 September 2016 in Hawaii. Communication tools are planned, including a logo for BBI, leaflets in different languages, banners and a web page.

II. PILOT PROJECTS

13. The development phase of BBI also includes the implementation of a number of pilot projects, aimed to test some TSC approaches and to generate some lessons learned that can be fed into the development process of the cooperation programme of the BBI. The 2016 pilot projects, selected by an evaluation committee composed of the Secretariat of the Convention, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea and the external partners, will also serve to draw attention to the ongoing and potential work of BBI, engaging stakeholders and building interest. A process and criteria for selecting the pilot projects, and a request and evaluation form, have been produced with the help of the external partners. Candidates have been identified based on internal consultations parallel to the BBI scoping/stocktaking report, and on the basis of previous activities and established partnerships. Parties and partners will be involved in project identification, development and selection from 2017, when the procedures and mechanisms will have been tested by the pilot projects.

14. In order to have a balanced portfolio of pilot projects, a set of criteria have been identified, so that candidate projects are:

- (a) Distributed across all regions of the developing world;
- (b) Contribute to a range of Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- (c) Address three key issues identified in the original BBI funding agreement with the Republic of Korea:
 - i. Technical aspects in the implementation of Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
 - ii. Cross-cutting issues, such as biodiversity for development, economic sectoral planning, subnational and urban implementation and links with the business sector;
 - iii. Institutional and governance approaches, for example for mainstreaming biodiversity and for inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities and other major groups.

15. The core criteria for BBI projects define that all BBI projects should:
- (a) Support implementation of an Aichi Biodiversity Target, via the national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP) or other relevant national plans or programmes;
 - (b) Use an international partnership for delivery;
 - (c) Demonstrate an important, meaningful contribution to addressing biodiversity loss.
16. The projects will also be prioritized through the considerations below:
- (a) Involve the participation of CBD Parties, notably megadiverse developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States;
 - (b) Involve multiple partners and Parties in a regional or subregional approach;
 - (c) Integrate multiple sectors or ministries;
 - (d) Demonstrate multiple social or economic benefits;
 - (e) Demonstrate a potential for replicability or scaling up;
 - (f) Support a sustained cooperation among partners;
 - (g) Promote an effective participation of major groups (business, subnational and local authorities, NGOs, youth, etc.) as well as women, indigenous peoples and local communities.
17. Also, in order to be supported by BBI:
- (a) The provider of expertise should demonstrate an institutional commitment to sharing expertise, or replicating or scaling up of technical and scientific cooperation projects;
 - (b) The receiving Party should commit to a complete implementation of the project;
 - (c) Projects should demonstrate feasibility in terms of funding, capacity and expertise;
 - (d) Processes should be in place to monitor outcomes and evaluate the impacts of the project.
18. Finally, additional criteria for the selection of 2016 pilot projects include:
- (a) At least partial short-term results (to allow for evaluation by the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, COP 13);
 - (b) Test of a replicable TSC tool or approach.

All criteria will be applied to pilot projects in a flexible manner due to time and resource constraints.

19. At the time of writing this report, around ten potential pilot projects are being developed for the consideration of the evaluation committee, including:
- (a) Transferring expertise to build capacity for national ecosystem accounting in francophone Parties;
 - (b) Facilitating traditional knowledge and technology transfer between indigenous peoples and local communities in Asia;
 - (c) Strengthening capacity for invasive alien species management in small island developing States;
 - (d) Exchanges for stronger partnerships between park agencies and the tourism sector in southern Africa;

- (e) Preparing gender-responsive NBSAPs in Latin America;
- (f) Facilitating subnational and local implementation and cooperation under the Convention.

During the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, more information will be available about the pilot projects to be selected by the evaluation committee for 2016.

III. NEXT STEPS

20. The Secretariat will incorporate input from Parties and partners, from consultations through side events at the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, the World Conservation Congress and at other events into the BBI 2016-2020 Action Plan. Selected pilot projects will deliver reports on lessons learned by November of 2016, in order to feed into the development phase. Input and guidance from Parties resulting from deliberations on item 8 of the provisional agenda of the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (paragraphs 4, 5 and 10 on page 18 of the note from the Executive Secretary, UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6) will also be considered.

21. The Secretariat, the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea and the external partners are working to launch a final 2016-2020 Action Plan at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in Cancun, Mexico, in December of 2016. By 2017, Parties will be able to submit articulated needs for technical and scientific assistance online, with the support of a help desk towards a response plan. The involvement of Parties and other organizations is sought with the aim of improving the orientation and the design of the BBI TSC platform in a way that corresponds to the needs of the Parties. In preparation, interested Parties can communicate to the Secretariat their best practices and solutions for cooperation, as well as the main obstacles blocking the implementation of their NBSAP, their needs in term of policy, planning, awareness raising, research, capacity, expertise, tools, technology or guidance, and institutions that could be involved in preparing a BBI response plan.
