

Ireland

“The country is largely free from air pollution and the watercourses are generally of a satisfactory high quality.”

The preceding chapters have provided an overview of the status and trends of global biodiversity. They have outlined how the Convention on Biological Diversity was designed by the international community to provide the framework for reversing biodiversity loss and for ensuring that biodiversity is used sustainably and that benefits are equitably shared. The experience of implementation so far, through both national action and global cooperation, has been described.

If there is a simple message to be heard from the experience of the first eight years it has two components – two sides of the same coin. First, the nature and scope of the measures needed for implementing the Convention, which are themselves a reflection of the nature and scope of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, require making complex and integrated policy choices that call for coordination, political will and active leadership at the national level. Second, the Convention will only succeed if its importance is recognised in the wider context of economic development and global change, in particular by the international regimes on key issues such as trade, agriculture, and climate change. Unless these processes acknowledge the concerns of this Convention and its programmes for implementation, and actively take account of these in their own decision-making and measures for implementation, the Convention is unlikely to succeed. In this case biodiversity, with all the social benefits and ecological services that derive from it, will continue to be lost.

This chapter will note the urgent priority issues that need to be addressed at the national level, by those agencies and services that can support national action, and by the Convention itself. It will

consider how the experience of implementing this Convention can contribute to an examination of the issues concerning international environmental governance that will occur in the broader context of multilateral efforts for sustainable development to be considered at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

NATIONAL ACTION

As has been stressed throughout this report, the primary focus for implementation of the Convention is national action. The types of actions that Parties are currently undertaking have been outlined in chapter 4. The following are some of the most important priority areas for further action by countries. Above all, however, countries will need to combine implementation of the different measures called for under this Convention into truly integrated national biodiversity strategies and make these the centrepiece of national sustainable development strategies.

Investing in public education and awareness

Meeting the objectives of the Convention will require changes in behaviour at all levels of society, from the individual to the State. These will only be brought about by changes in attitude, which will require greatly increased investments in public education and awareness. An increased awareness of the importance of biological diversity will be necessary in order to generate the levels of public opinion favourable to the necessary policy and behavioural changes, which

in turn will reinforce pressure on decision-makers to demonstrate the political will to push through change at governmental and intergovernmental levels.

In developing the educational and public awareness programmes called for under the Convention, Parties will need to identify different target audiences, the specific educational and informational needs of these, and develop appropriately focused materials. All avenues need to be explored: formal education systems, mass media, informal education, and specialist training. The clearing-house mechanism should become an important tool for education and public awareness, particularly through the development of national biodiversity clearing-house mechanisms providing access to national biodiversity information in the national language(s).

Increasing stakeholder involvement in decision-making

The world's poor, particularly the rural poor, are those most immediately and severely affected by environmental degradation. They are also often expected to bear much of the cost of maintaining biodiversity, for example in the form of foregone benefits of land conversion when areas are set aside for the protection of unique or threatened ecosystems or species. Unless they are fully involved in decision-making, it is unlikely that long-term solutions to the problem of biodiversity loss can be found. In developing mechanisms to ensure such involvement, it is vital that issues of gender and social structure are properly addressed.

Although the Convention recognizes the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation, the decisions of the Conference

of the Parties contain no specific guidance on the question of the role of women in implementation, nor have Parties referred to this in their national reports.

The Conference of the Parties has emphasized the central role that full stakeholder participation will play in the successful implementation of the different work programmes of the Convention. Organizations representing the private sector, in particular those sectors that use biological resources or have an impact on biodiversity, need to be fully engaged in national efforts to implement the Convention. The development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans should take place with the full involvement of relevant stakeholders, and national reports on implementation should be prepared through consultative processes.

Completing and implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans

Most developed country Parties have developed a national biodiversity strategy or adapted existing strategies. Of developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition, it appears that about one third have completed their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, a similar number are in the process of doing so, and around forty have yet to start.

Completing and adopting national strategies is clearly a priority for all those countries that have not yet done so. For others, implementation of completed strategies and action plans is a high priority. Biodiversity strategies and action plans should be integral parts of national sustainable development strategies and, for those countries eligible for external assistance, they should be central to funding strategies and programming.

Strategies need to be regularly reviewed and updated on the basis of the experience gained in implementation. Regularly reviewing strategies will provide an opportunity to incorporate guidance given by the Conference of the Parties in the intervening period and, for those countries whose initial strategies were prepared within government agencies or in a top-down fashion, to ensure full participation by stakeholders in the revision.

Improving sectoral and cross-sectoral integration

As the Convention makes explicit, it will be impossible to meet its objectives until consideration of biodiversity is fully integrated into other sectors. While many countries have made some start in this, notably in those sectors most immediately associated with biodiversity such as forestry, fisheries and agriculture, much more needs to be done, particularly in areas that traditionally are economically and politically dominant such as industry, trade and transport.

Leadership will be called for in the resolution of conflicts over uses, while the adoption of economically and socially sound incentive measures, and the removal of perverse incentives, will help reduce such conflicts. Even in those sectors where a start has been made in incorporating consideration of biodiversity into decision-making, more cross-sectoral integration is needed, for example consideration of the impacts of forestry, agriculture or aquaculture on sustainable use of inland water biodiversity, of fishing on marine and coastal biodiversity, or of land-use change on forest or dryland biodiversity.

Strengthening protected area networks

As noted in chapter 3, the great majority of national reports submitted by Parties have emphasised the importance of protected areas in maintaining biodiversity. Most countries now have, on paper at least, protected area networks that hold a significant proportion of the country's biodiversity. However, each country will need to evaluate whether its protected area network is representative of the full range of its biological diversity. There are still major gaps in the protected area network in many parts of the world and filling these gaps is important.

In many countries, the effectiveness of protected area networks in maintaining biodiversity is often seriously compromised by a chronic shortage of human and financial resources. Remedying this is undoubtedly one of the most immediate priorities in many countries, and requires technical and financial cooperation. Where relevant, countries should collaborate for the establishment of transboundary protected areas, which can counter the trend toward fragmentation of areas rich in biodiversity and constitute efficient and effective means for its maintenance.

However protected areas should not be seen as biodiversity sanctuaries removed from the wider economic and social context. Within national biodiversity strategies, protected areas should form an integral part of coordinated measures for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, with attention given to socially and environmentally appropriate activities within protected areas and in buffer zones, to the establishment of biological corridors, and to eco-regional planning. Protected areas should be part of broader land-use planning systems that are based on the ecosystem approach, and that maintain and enhance landscape diversity.

Israel

"Israel is world renowned for its strategies for combating desertification in the arid Negev and for its reforestation efforts."

Improving EIA legislation and procedures

Although many countries have enacted environmental impact assessment legislation, this frequently places relatively low emphasis on impacts on biodiversity and is often weakly enforced. Even where such laws are enforced, penalties for transgression are often very low and do not reflect the true environmental costs incurred. In such cases, a first step will be to strengthen such legislation, with increased emphasis on biodiversity and more stringent penalties.

Countries should address loss of biological diversity and the interrelated socio-economic, cultural and human health aspects relevant to biological diversity when carrying out environmental impact assessments. They should look beyond the impacts of individual projects and use strategic environmental assessments to assess their cumulative and global effects, including on biological diversity.

Strengthening the role of the national focal point

Given the extremely wide-ranging remit of the Convention, and the need for cross-sectoral integration outlined above, it is important that the national focal point for the Convention in each country is empowered to play an effective coordinating role. This includes not merely enhancing its ability to monitor those national activities that contribute to, or adversely affect, implementation, but also increasing its ability to promote more favourable outcomes. Many national focal points are located within the system of national government, but in some countries they are located outside government. Irrespective of location, a major responsibility of the national focal point is the exchange of information and the development of public awareness of biodiversity issues. The national focal point should act as an effective advocate for the implementation of a full and effective national biodiversity strategy.

Achieving policy coherence in national positions under different international instruments and processes

As stressed in chapter 5, there is a wide range of international processes, including binding treaties and agreements, which impact on the ability of the Convention to achieve its objectives. It is not uncommon for Governments to adopt divergent, or even contradictory, positions under these different processes. Clearly, this is a serious impediment to implementation of all the agreements concerned, including this Convention. Achieving coherence amongst those that directly address environmental issues, particularly aspects of biodiversity (e.g. this Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species, CITES, the Ramsar Convention and the World Heritage Convention), should be relatively straightforward and should principally entail an improvement in the efficacy of the coordinating role of the national focal point. Ensuring that trade and economic agreements are consistent with and do not conflict with the Convention is considerably more challenging. Decisions involving these agreements are usually made in different government sectors from those directly involved with implementation of the CBD, and often ones that carry more influence. Remedying this will involve improving cross-sectoral integration, as discussed above.

Increasing information, training and capacity development

In many countries there is a serious lack of resources with which to undertake implementation of the Convention. However, the recommended procedures for developing a national biodiversity strategy and action plan involve a process of stocktaking to identify what is known about the status and trends of biodiversity in the country, and what human and institutional resources already exist. In many cases countries may discover that more information and resources are available than was initially supposed. The problem may

be that information is dispersed, and institutions and individuals are not working in a coordinated way. The framework of the strategy process should be designed to use existing resources to maximum effect.

Development of the national clearing-house mechanism is a key element in ensuring that information is brought together and made accessible to those involved in implementation of the national strategy, in the national language(s). It will also act as the portal for accessing relevant information from other countries, and for making national information and lessons learned accessible to others. The number of countries who have established national biodiversity clearing-houses amounts to less than a third of Parties, and the number who have built up the information content in the way recommended by the Conference of the Parties is even smaller. This suggests that much remains to be done at the national level to create the functional global network for technical and scientific cooperation envisaged by the Convention.

As part of the development of their biodiversity strategy, the problems and constraints encountered by countries need to be identified, and appropriate training and capacity development needs specified and included in the action plans. If countries eligible for external assistance make the biodiversity strategy and action plan the centrepiece of their discussions with donors, it will then be easier to ensure that measures to address such identified needs are clearly seen as priority activities in a country-driven process.

Effective national reporting

Revised formats for national reporting have been developed, aimed at eliciting comprehensive information about the experiences of implementation by Parties of all aspects of the Convention. Without

reliable and comparable information, it is not possible to assess the state of implementation or to identify constraints, lessons learned or emerging issues. The responsibility rests with Parties to provide the Conference of the Parties with the information needed in the agreed format and by the agreed deadline.

It is recognised that reporting can represent a burden, especially when information on similar matters is required under more than one international agreement. The reporting process under the Convention has been revised with a view to ameliorating this problem. Work is also under way on pilot projects, involving convention secretariats and volunteer countries, to test methodologies for harmonised reporting to different environmental agreements.

The preparation of reports should not be seen by Parties simply as an external obligation. Many countries have reported that the process of reporting provides an important management tool, allowing those responsible for implementation to take stock of progress and set future targets.

National level indicators of biodiversity

Effective implementation of the Convention is currently seriously hampered both by a lack of coherent information on the effectiveness of measures already undertaken and by the difficulty in presenting information on the state of biodiversity in a form understandable and relevant to policy-makers. The Parties have recognised this in their calls for the development of a core set of indicators of biodiversity and in the efforts they have made to develop credible and feasible biodiversity indicators. Complex scientific and political questions come into play, but momentum needs to be maintained in this key area.

Universal membership

The Convention has 180 Contracting Parties, making it one of the most inclusive multilateral agreements in any field. However membership is not universal. There is a small number of countries that have not yet ratified the Convention. Achieving the objectives of the Convention requires action on a global scale, and it is important that all countries make the commitment to work together for its implementation. Where ratification is being blocked by domestic pressures, those responsible for biodiversity management in the country can continue to press the case for ratification by explaining the nature of the goods and services biodiversity provides, why it is important to halt the loss of biodiversity, and why only coordinated global action can do this.

The Conference of the Parties has urged Parties to take all necessary measures to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety so that it comes into force at the earliest possible opportunity and that universal membership is achieved as soon as possible thereafter.

SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL ACTION

The provisions of the Convention probably comprise the broadest range of issues of any international agreement. These are addressed in a holistic way. Many of the issues are complex and unfamiliar to the institutions who will need to be involved in the implementation of the Convention. All Parties, to a greater or lesser degree, are grappling with the challenges the Convention poses. However, the challenges faced by many developing countries are exacerbated by inadequate technical and financial resources. National action needs to be supported through policy guidance, financial assistance and cooperation for the development of national capacity.

Improving scientific assessment procedures

A considerable amount of information on the status of biodiversity exists within the global scientific community. However, it is often scattered, relatively inaccessible and in a form that is not necessarily easy to understand or synthesise. Drawing this information together to produce coherent assessments of biodiversity has proved problematic and the clearing-house mechanism has a key role to play. The Conference of the Parties, when reviewing the role of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, noted that the quality of assessment presented to it needed, in general, to be improved.

Recent efforts to ensure greater involvement of the international scientific community in the work of SBSTTA have led to improved recommendations going forward to the Conference of the Parties. Such efforts should be continued in order to ensure that policy development under the Convention counts on the full range of global scientific expertise. Given that biodiversity loss is overwhelmingly the result of human activity, and that changes in social, economic and political sectors will be required to meet the objectives of the Convention, such scientific expertise should not be thought of as residing solely in the fields of biological or environmental sciences. The identification and implementation of workable strategies and programmes for addressing the underlying causes of biodiversity loss and generating changes in social behaviour is, above all, a multi-disciplinary endeavour requiring the participation of all fields, including the social sciences.

The absence of reliable assessments hampers both individual Parties and the Conference of the Parties itself in setting priorities for action. Remedying this requires the development of standardised, widely applicable methodologies and, more importantly, adequate

Norway

“The proportion of wilderness-like areas has decreased from 48% of Norway’s total area in 1900 to 12% in 1994. In Southern Norway such areas account for only 5% of the total, and they have been disappearing considerably faster during the last 15 years.”

investment in the process: the production of reliable assessments at anything other than local level is time-consuming and costly. It is equally important that the assessments themselves are tailored to produce policy-relevant results, regarding for example, early warning of major problems, and are not merely abstract scientific exercises. To achieve this, a wide range of stakeholders should be involved in determining what questions such assessments should aim to answer.

It should also be stressed, however, that in many cases existing information is perfectly adequate to form the basis for the action required to help meet the Convention’s objectives in, for example, implementing Articles 6 and 8 (the Conference of the Parties explicitly recognized this in early decisions). Rather, what is often missing is the political will, the resources, or both, to undertake such action.

Reform of multilateral and bilateral aid mechanisms

Donor institutions have made great strides in recognising the importance of incorporating environmental considerations into their plans, programmes and strategies. Nevertheless much more remains to be done, in particular with regard to mainstreaming biodiversity and treating it as an integrating factor, and not a subject to be treated separately from other development concerns and (usually) accorded low priority. Donor countries could ensure, for example through the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, that their development assistance priorities are supportive of the Convention’s objectives. Regional development banks could take a much more proactive role in the mainstreaming of biodiversity. The World Bank’s Comprehensive Development Framework and Poverty Reduction Strategies offer the possibility for ensuring that the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and National Strategies for Sustainable Development of its borrowers become central to its overall lending. IMF stabilization

and structural adjustment programmes should avoid treating national investments in environmental management as a first, soft option for budget cuts.

Donors of all types should commit to increasing funding for projects that directly address biodiversity. However, there is also a pressing need for donors to review the way in which such projects are funded. Most problems relating to the maintenance and sustainable use of biodiversity are not amenable to the “quick fix,” and it is often clearly unrealistic to expect local sustainability of activities at the end of a three- or five-year project. Although there is increasing awareness of this in the international community, many donors still appear to be wedded to short-term project cycles. The long-term impact of this approach may be actively counterproductive and it is probable that longer-term commitments involving smaller annual disbursement may be more effective than spending larger amounts of money over a shorter period. Donors should also ensure that biodiversity planning processes are country-driven and not donor-driven, in order to increase their effectiveness and the prospects for sustainability at the end of the funding period.

The proposed strengthening of the role of UN resident coordinators, contained in the Secretary-General’s reform plan, will create the opportunity to provide harmonised and synergistic support by UN agencies to national implementation of the Convention through the country-level UN Development Assistance Framework. The current process of decentralisation from headquarters to regional centres offers UNDP the opportunity to ensure that regional and field office staff are familiar with the objectives and programmes of the Convention, and actively seek to identify with Governments opportunities for integrating these into its full range of development activities (from policy to operations) for simultaneous poverty reduction and environmental protection.

Peru

“Approximately 1% of good farmland has been lost to urban development projects. Barely 20% of agricultural terraces (andenes) are being used properly, the rest are deteriorated due to inappropriate farming practices. Up to 30% of the national territory has serious and moderate eroded areas.”

OPERATIONS OF THE CONVENTION

Improving institutional mechanisms

It is vital that, in their efforts to implement the Convention, Parties are supported by a strong and flexible institutional structure. The institutions of the Convention must be able to respond to changing political circumstances and to the evolving scientific understanding of the subjects that the Convention deals with. Moreover, they must be able to bring together the scientific and the policy or political spheres in ways that allow science to inform policy in a persuasive and comprehensible way.

As noted, it is very important that the scientific and technical inputs to the Convention are of the highest possible standard and that the mechanisms for input should be as streamlined and efficient as possible. The changes in the operations of the Conference of the Parties and of the functioning of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice recently introduced should be continuously monitored and assessed in this regard.

Of special importance is the decision by the Conference of the Parties to focus its decisions, to identify who is being called on to undertake each activity identified, and to follow-up on implementation.

The effectiveness of the financial mechanism is crucial to implementation of the Convention. The relationship between the Conference of the Parties and the Global Environment Facility has evolved since the entry into force of the Convention. The expectations that Parties have of the financial mechanism are high and the Conference of the Parties must provide clear guidance to the GEF, which in turn must ensure that this is translated into support for country-driven projects in a timely and strategic fashion. The

Convention provides for the Conference of the Parties to review the effectiveness of the financial mechanism on a regular basis and to take appropriate action to improve effectiveness, if necessary.

The pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism was evaluated and a strategic plan for implementation has been approved by the Conference of the Parties. Parties, international and scientific bodies, the Secretariat and the financial mechanism will need to work together in a strategic and coordinated way on implementing complex priority tasks identified in the strategic plan in order to accelerate the building of a truly decentralised, global and effective mechanism for technical and scientific cooperation.

Strategic planning

One of the greatest strengths of the Convention, but also one of the greatest challenges in its implementation, is the breadth of its provisions. Chapter 3 testifies to the range of subjects already addressed by the Conference of the Parties, and those to be addressed in the near future. There is a danger that, with such a wide – and ever-growing – agenda, focus is lost and energy becomes dissipated. There is a need to set priorities amongst competing, but often equally relevant, priorities. The process of priority setting needs to be participative and transparent.

The Conference of the Parties is developing a strategic plan for adoption at its sixth meeting in 2002. The strategic plan will cover the period 2002 to 2010.

Strategic planning is about making choices amongst limitless possibilities: what objectives to pursue, what outputs to attain? The choices need to be based on stated rationales that explain why specific priorities and activities have been chosen and others have not.

A crucial element of the strategic plan will therefore be the overall objectives and how to reach them. What is the Convention's vision for 2010 and what route(s) should be taken to implement and achieve this vision? What is to be achieved in ten years time, especially in relation to biodiversity and how will this be assessed?

The fundamental rationale for the plan should be to achieve the objectives of the Convention: namely, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of its benefits. In other words, all elements of the plan should relate to achieving these objectives. Identifying priorities and activities to achieve these objectives requires reviewing the status of biodiversity, the institutional and political context in which the Convention operates and the effectiveness of the Convention to date.

The consensus is that the basic structure of the plan should comprise:

A mission statement. This should state an eternal truth, a goal that all stakeholders will be working toward at all times. It should be based on the objectives of the Convention as provided in Article 1;

A vision. This should be composed of three elements (one for each objective of the Convention) that represent a visionary but realistic level of achievement by 2010;

Operational goals. A series of operational goals should be developed for each element of the vision;

Action plans to achieve the operational goals. Each operational goal should contain a number of action plans, which are activities undertaken to achieve the relevant operational goal. These plans will contain the expected products. The action plans should not simply be "programmes of work" analogous to existing CBD thematic and

cross-cutting programmes of work. In order to add value to the existing initiatives it is important that they contain outcome-orientated targets (these differ from the "output" targets or "process" targets used so far under the Convention); and

Monitoring, reporting, assessment and review, and communication.

The plan needs to provide a process for ensuring implementation and this will be structured around the above basic elements.

On the basis of the advice received from the Meeting on the Strategic Plan (November 2001), the Conference of the Parties is expected to adopt a strategic plan for the Convention at its sixth meeting in April 2002.

Measuring and improving compliance

One of the most controversial and sensitive issues in the Convention is that of compliance. Critics have argued that, given its country-driven nature, the highly qualified nature of many of its substantive provisions, and the absence of any standardised measures, targets or lists, it is difficult to see how implementation can ever be measured, still less enforced. Even if measurable standards are set, it is not clear what action might be politically feasible to be taken under the Convention if these are not reached. The Conference of the Parties has emphasised, for example in its guidelines for national reports, that information provided by Parties will not be used to rank performance or to otherwise compare implementation between individual contracting Parties. However, without such measurable standards, the long-term credibility of the Convention as an instrument of genuine change may well be at stake. This problem is all the more complex as implementation of this Convention implies making politically difficult changes in many important sectors.

A way forward may lie in the development of further protocols, regulatory instruments or guidelines under the Convention. The adoption of the Biosafety Protocol marks an extremely important step forward. As outlined in chapter 3, the Protocol has a clear, and monitorable, *modus operandi*, although its efficacy has yet to be tested in action.

COOPERATION AND GOVERNANCE

As described in chapter 2, the Convention on Biological Diversity grew out of the coalescing preoccupations emerging in the 1970s and 1980s concerning persistent poverty, increasing inequality and growing environmental degradation at the global scale. In the case of preoccupations about what would later come to be called “biodiversity,” the global community adopted a number of species-based or thematic agreements. A growing number of regional instruments were also devised. The sum of these preoccupations and instruments on biodiversity formed a component of what would later come to be called the “sustainable development” agenda. By the early 1990s these strands had come together in the preparations for the Earth Summit.

The products of the Earth Summit included a programme of action for sustainable development (Agenda 21), a declaration on environment and development, two major new international legal instruments (the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change), a statement of forest principles, and the commitment to develop a third legal instrument (the Convention to Combat Desertification). Following the Earth Summit, a series of other summit meetings took place, addressing global issues that intersect in crucial ways with the global sustainable development agenda agreed in Rio de Janeiro. These included small island developing states, migratory fish stocks, human rights, population and development, human settlements, women, and social development. The

programmes of action and commitments emerging from these are highly relevant for sustainable development, and to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. More recently new global regimes on chemical management and on biotechnology and biosafety have emerged, the latter notably through the adoption of the first protocol under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

However over the same decade the world has changed in ways and at a rate that were not anticipated when the Convention was being negotiated. Political change, economic liberalisation, and extremely high levels of technological innovation have brought about many changes, including a process of globalisation that has taken many countries by surprise, has not brought comparable benefits to all, and has highlighted emerging areas of concern. Central to this process, that was developing in parallel to the raft of global sustainable development instruments and institutions just described, was, of course, a new global trade regime that came into force in 1994. This is composed of agreements that intersect with the sustainable development agreements negotiated contemporaneously, and establishes a single powerful institution to oversee rule making, negotiation and the settlement of disputes.

As the Convention reflects on the experience and achievements of its first eight years of operations, and prepares to contribute to the World Summit on Sustainable Development that in 2002 will examine progress achieved since Rio, it needs to consider whether current legal and institutional arrangements facilitate or impede achievement of its objectives, how its Parties can reconcile their development needs and aspirations with obligations under these regimes that may in crucial areas appear to conflict, and how they can identify the necessary resources and arrangements to ensure that policies to promote economic growth, to ensure that development is sustainable and to take advantage of opportunities offered by globalisation are coordinated and coherent.

United Kingdom

“Loss of 5% of hedgerows each year is threatening the biodiversity of lowland agricultural ecosystems.”

Over the recent period countries have tried to identify the best arrangements for environmental protection and natural resource management at the national level. Many started with agencies responsible for interministerial coordination for environmental issues, but found that these did not resolve existing environmental problems or prevent the emergence of new problems. This experience led in many cases to the establishment of environment ministries. These may have executive authority and budgets for some areas of the sustainable development agenda, but dispersion of responsibility for important “environmental” issues is still the norm. Other agencies, typically those dealing with national planning, agriculture, forests and trade, are usually more powerful than the environment ministry.

Some have identified the same paradigm in global environmental governance arrangements. Interagency coordination has not been sufficient, it is argued, to reverse the rate of environmental degradation.

Whatever the arguments for or against a global environment organization, it is clear from the point of view of the Convention and its Parties that there are improvements that can be made and synergies that can be captured.

The process for investigating possibilities for harmonised reporting under biodiversity-related conventions has been described. There may be further ways in which coordination can be achieved. Joint work programmes are under way in some areas, joint strategic planning and harmonisation of work programmes by conferences of parties can be envisaged. Resources saved through increased coordination of meetings and secretariat services could in turn be devoted to more coordinated implementation of these conventions.

What is needed, above all, is for other international regimes to take on board the concerns of this Convention. As was described above, the experience has been mixed. On some issues there have been encouraging advances, albeit slower than desired. In others no headway has been made.

For example, despite slow progress there are encouraging signs that the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources in harmony with the Convention will be completed and the revised Undertaking will have strong links with both the Convention and FAO. Similarly, examination by Parties of the linkages between this Convention and the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and how implementation of one affects the other, is now getting under way. The Conference of the Parties has requested SBSTTA to prepare scientific advice on the integration of biodiversity considerations into the implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol.

Collaboration between the Convention and the International Plant Protection Convention on alien invasive species has also started. At its next meeting the Conference of the Parties will consider options for further developing the guiding principles referred to in chapter 3, developing an international instrument, or other options.

However, although the Executive Secretary has repeatedly conveyed the wish of the Conference of the Parties to explore with the World Trade Organization the interrelationship between relevant provisions of the Convention and those of the Agreements on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and on Agriculture, neither of the Councils of these Agreements have yet been able to consider this, nor been able to grant the Executive Secretary the observer status requested by the Conference of the Parties.

The Convention has also faced difficulties in conveying the message of the economic importance of biodiversity. Although a dialogue with relevant private sector organizations is emerging in the areas of biosafety and access to genetic resources, it is fair to say that the Convention has yet to identify mechanisms for engaging the private sector at the national and global levels in the implementation of the Convention.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development

The General Assembly of the United Nations has noted with concern that, despite the many successful and continuing efforts since the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and the fact that some progress has been achieved, the environment and natural resource base that support life on Earth continue to deteriorate at an alarming rate.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg in 2002, will bring the issues of sustainable development back onto the political agenda at the highest levels and, it is hoped, reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development.

Chapter 1 above has shown that the condition of biodiversity in the world's major ecosystems continues to deteriorate, almost without exception and often at an accelerating rate. Biological diversity provides the goods and services that make life on Earth possible and satisfy the needs of human societies. The variability it represents constitutes a global life insurance policy.

This report represents an account of what has been achieved since the Convention was opened for signature in Rio during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It points to some of the critical issues that have to be addressed if the Convention is to succeed in meeting its objectives.

Key amongst these is the need to integrate the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, to promote greater policy coherence and coordination between the various processes, and to renew the commitment to make available the financial resources and the technical and scientific cooperation that are needed if progress is to be made. These are concerns that will be addressed in Johannesburg in 2002.

The conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources are keys to achieving sustainable human development in the 21st century. Implementing the objectives of the Convention over the coming decade will require policy coherence between all relevant instruments and processes, renewed political will on the part of Governments, and a renewed commitment to cooperation and to providing the resources and technology required.