



Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity
413 Saint-Jacques Street, Suite 800
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11 January 2010

Re: Revision and updating of the Strategic Plan of the Covention for the post-2010 Period: Possible Outline and Elements of the New Strategic Plan.

Response to the letter of 4 December 2009 (SCBD/ITS/DC/LC/69800) from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).

The Executive Secretary has in a letter of 4 December 2009 (SCBD/ITS/DC/LC/69800) invited National CBD Focal Points and Relevant Organisations to participate in the process of revising and updating the the Strategic Plan of the Covention for the post-2010 period.

The Global Biodiversity Information Facility welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft revision of the CBD Strategic Plan and looks forward to be engaged in the process as the subsequent drafts are developed.

Our comments will be structured in the follow way:

- A short introduction to GBIF and how GBIF may be able to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan
- More specific comments to the draft plan

1. GBIF and the contribution of GBIF to the Strategic Plan

The Global Biodiversity Facility (GBIF) is an governmental initiated international organisation currently comprising 53 countries and 43 international organisations supporting scientific research, conservation and sustainable development by making biodiversity data freely available on the internet.

By the work of the GBIF network on setting standards for making scientific data interoperable, by promoting free sharing of primary biodiversity data and by developing informatics tools, *GBIF can today enable access to almost 200 million biodiversity records from all over the world* to be used by Parties in the Convention and of course a variety other users. These data are not located in a central database, but is under control of the Participants as part of the GBIF *distributed* informatics network architecture. GBIF has since it existence developed key standards for biodiversity informatics and will continue this work also to enable other iniatives at the national, regional or global level to build on these.

1.1. National infra-structure essential to assessing success

The members of GBIF are encouraged to establish their own national or organisational Biodiversity Information Facility (BIF) and the necessary committee structures to ensure collaboration at the national level among all relevant data holding institutions and agencies, as well as key data users/decision makers etc.

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As the achievements of a significant number of the goals and targets in the new CBD Strategic Plan have to be assessed on data—and hopefully good quality data—they would benefit in the long term if the Strategic Plan were to emphasize the importance of building at the national level a Biodiversity Information Network Infrastructure of relevant biodiversity dataholding institutions and agencies. Such an infrastructure would ensure an overall strategic plan and coordination, not only for accessible and available data, but also for setting priorities for mobilization of currently inaccessible data with respect to national goals and targets and in accordance with agreed measures in the CBD Strategic Plan. For those countries that are members of GBIF, closer collaboration and mutual assistance should be directly encouraged between GBIF national BIF's and the CBD-CHM focal points.

An operational success criterion/target linked to target 16 could be that *all Parties by 2020 have a functional National Biodiversity Information Facility that coordinates, mobilizes and provides open access to biodiversity data relevant for the national management and understanding of biodiversity processes, and for effective reporting to the CBD.* (Please notice that the open access is in accordance with an endorsement of that principle by the CBD some years ago). The establishment of such national facilities—where they are not already existing and functional, which is the case for many countries—will more or less provide the backbone for the assessment of much of the implementation work of the Strategic Plan in the national and global context as outlined in target 16.

GBIF will, of course, be instrumental in the attempt to implement such a target, as we already are focusing our training activities to assist member countries in building their national Biodiversity Information Facility—in particular our Developing Country members.

1.2. Prioritising certain taxa

GBIF mobilizes and serves biodiversity data for all taxa, but Participants in the network can and do choose which data for which taxa to make available, for example, hiding detailed occurrence data on threatened and endangered species, or featuring taxa important to that country's natural resources. Therefore, GBIF-enabled data are biased toward certain taxa. This bottom-up process will, of course, continue and may be useful to CBD processes in the long term.

However, the bottom-up process could benefit from and be complemented by a parallel top-down process in which GBIF participate in formulating and transmitting to our members a common and strategic 'agenda' for prioritising data mobilization for certain taxa that are targeted in global or regional legislation, e.g., on habitat protection, nature conservation, invasive species, disease spread, pest control, health care etc. GBIF's capacity to help fund such a prioritization is limited. Nevertheless, if priority taxa/targets overlap with certain national priorities, more data—and perhaps the most critical data—may be mobilized in a coherent way at the end of the day. Our Science

Committee plans to work on this issue in the near future and would welcome participation in this work with the CBD Secretariat.

1.3. Tools to make better use of the GBIF-enabled data

Finally, GBIF welcomes the emphasis on spatial planning and land-use planning as key areas within which the biodiversity sector should engage. These emphases are very much in line with the GBIF focus on georeferenced biodiversity data and tools developed for using these data in spatial analyses, including modeling and forecasting biodiversity phenomena under different scenarios of change, such as the potential occurrence and resilience of different species with climate change, the potential spread of invasives and zoonotic diseases, etc.

2. More specific comments to the draft plan

We are in support of

- the Strategic Plan as a flexible framework for national planning and implementation and that
- the framing of biodiversity as underpinning ecosystem services.

We are further in agreement with

- the shift towards using the term “pressures on biodiversity” rather than “threats to biodiversity” (although the term threats creeps in later in the document, for example in the first and third proposed mission statements on pages 6 and 7), and
- the emphasis on mainstreaming as one of the key actions required.

- **Vision and Mission**

- GBIF recommend some simplification of the vision such as ‘*Biodiversity is a healthy global resource by 2020*’.
- This can be supported by a mission to, ‘*Ensure that global biodiversity issues are identified, understood and addressed in timely, effective ways*’.
- The activities within each of the goals are then guided by the well established objectives of the Convention—to conserve, use in sustainable ways, and share equitably.

- **Headline Indicator Framework**

- The CBD Secretariat might wish to consider a revision of the headline indicator framework in the strategic plan to a smaller set in four focal areas, as articulated in a recently published article in *Science* [Walpole, M et al. 2009. Tracking Progress Toward the 2010 Biodiversity Target and Beyond. *Science* 325 (18 September 2009): 1503-1504]: *Pressures—threats; Status—trends; Benefits—services; Actions—responses*. These four focal areas align with the pressure-state-response approach often

used for state of environment reporting. Use of this headline indicator framework might have implications for the structure of the Strategic Goals and Targets.

- **Mentioning of GBIF in the main text and Annex**

We kindly recommend that you use in the main text on page 17 our full name as the GBIF acronym is still quite unknown among many Parties.

We also suggest that you consider other appropriate places in the Annex (in the column of partnership) where GBIF could be mentioned as a source of information for the Parties (see below). Alternatively, the CBD Plan could contain a broader recommendation for the Parties to make use of the data enabled by GBIF in general, and specifically for several of the targets listed.

As mentioned above GBIF-enabled data can be deployed to help accomplish goals in

- **target 6**, determining the distribution and assessment of fish species abundance
- **targets 9** invasives
- **target 12**, threatened species
- **target 15**, on climate change assessments of different kinds
- **target 16**, national biodiversity strategy
- **target 19**, trends and
- **target 20**, Capacity Building, which is a significant component in the GBIF Work Programme and will most likely continue to be an area of priority.

3. GBIF Review and Forward Look

The GBIF Governing Board has decided to have an independent Review of the current work since the approval of the second phase of GBIF (2007-2011) and a Forward Look outlining possible directions of GBIF post 2011 where the current GBIF Strategic plan expires. The draft CBD strategic document has been forwarded to the two committees in charge of the work for their awareness and inspiration. Reports are to be made available sometime during summer 2010.

We hope that the CBD Secretariat will find the comments and information useful for the further revision of the draft Strategic Plan.

Your sincerely,

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