

- a. Establish and develop nurseries where medicinal plants can be propagated for distribution and sale.
- b. Provide technical and other assistance to farmers who are interested in the cultivation of medicinal plants.
- c. Provide incentives (such as access to land, low interest financing and tax exemption) to farmers who cultivate medicinal plants.

6.4.24. Objective: to promote research on the conservation and use of medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Identify medicinal plants which are threatened in the wild.
- b. Conduct a survey of the plant species used for medicinal purposes in Belize and determine the presence in Belize, of those used in other countries.
- c. Conduct research on the ecology, propagation, cultivation and harvesting of medicinal plants.
- d. Continue to identify the active ingredients of plants with medicinal value.

6.4.25. Objective: to provide incentives for the involvement of the Private Sector in the management of medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Offer tax and income tax holidays to companies (with preference to local companies and joint-ventures) that invest in the management of medicinal plants.
- b. Develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that a portion of funds allocated for the exploitation of medicinal plants be used for the conservation of the resource.

6.4.26. Objective: to modernize the medicinal plant sub-sector.

Actions:

- a. Develop and monitor quality standards for medicinal plants and their products.
- b. Encourage local production and sale of dried products, extracts, tinctures, pills and other advanced and modified forms of useful plant compounds.
- c. Integrate the use of medicinal plants into the national health care system.

6.5. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (CBD: Article 10)

Conventional and traditional management principles have always been guided by the need for enforcement through physical monitoring and surveillance. This responsive approach is expensive, it ignores the root cause of the problem and is usually ineffective. In addition, traditional management measures rarely ever include the inputs of the community, resulting in very poor implementation success.

Local communities are in more direct contact with the resource and have expressed interest in its management. The community must play a more active role in the planning and management of the resources on which they depend for their livelihood. Maximizing community participation minimizes the need for conflict resolution, reduces cost and provides a higher probability for implementation success and effectiveness. For community participation to be effective, however, it must be preceded and accompanied by education and access to appropriate information.

A. Environmental and Land Use Planning

6.5.1. Objective: to increase the role of communities in the development, implementation and compliance monitoring of plans.

Actions:

- a. Research, identify and develop models for cooperative plan implementation and compliance monitoring at the local level.
- b. Implement a pilot project to determine the feasibility and potential for adoption, of models identified for cooperative plan implementation and compliance monitoring at the local level.
- c. Define and adopt creative, inexpensive approaches for increasing and improving local involvement in land-use planning and EIAs.
- d. Develop and adopt mechanisms for effective and efficient participation of local communities in enforcement activities, such as empowering local planning committees to issue 'Stop Orders' until the relevant Government authority addresses the problem.

6.5.2. Objective: to increase public awareness and capacity to absorb their role in the development, implementation and compliance monitoring of plans for the management of biological resources.

Actions:

- a. Continuously conduct workshops and seminars in community leadership, self-organization and mobilization for Village Council Chairmen and community leaders, in an effort to better prepare them to participate in the decision-making processes occurring within their communities.
- b. Develop and distribute adequate and appropriate information to local communities regarding Protected Areas, SDAs, EIAs, Planning Schemes, Development Guidelines, Management Plans, etc., in an effort to facilitate their role in the planning and management of their resources.
- c. Establish a Voluntary Network of Resource Persons, with wide cross-sectorial and multi-disciplinary representation, to assist in preparing local communities to better perform their role as managers of the biological resources on which they depend.

B. Fisheries, Coastal and Marine Resources

6.5.3. Objective: to develop workable mechanisms so as to maximize public consultation and community participation in coastal and marine biodiversity management.

Actions:

- a. Conduct workshops and all other consultations necessary to determine the feasibility and practicality of establishing 'Community Clearing House Mechanisms' at the local level, for the appraisal of permits related to coastal developments.
- b. Develop a system to encourage voluntary compliance and which provides incentives for community participation in biodiversity management.
- c. Develop mechanisms to encourage and promote community co-management of Marine Protected Areas.

C. Forest and Wildlife Management

6.5.4. Objective: to build on existing co-management initiatives of Protected Areas and Forest Reserves.

Actions:

- a. Conduct workshops for local communities to introduce the concept of community co-management.
- b. Identify communities near Protected Areas, with the view of including them in the Management Plan for such areas.

6.5.5. Objective: to maximize community involvement in the formulation of policies and laws, in the appraisal of Forest Licenses, and in the establishment of Protected Areas.

Actions:

- a. Forest Department to consult with Village Council or other representative body of the community to be affected, before timber licenses and logging concessions are granted.
 - b. Designate commercial area of forest around villages for exclusive use by villagers.
- 6.5.6. Objective: to form CBOs to assist in the detection of potential problems that may arise from forest activities.

Actions:

- a. Conduct workshops to encourage the formation of youth groups, that can assist in the monitoring of forest activities.
 - b. Encourage the formation of community volunteer groups that can assist in the monitoring of forest activities.
 - c. Empower local organizations to assist in the enforcement of legislation.
- 6.5.7. Objective: to implement community-based projects and monitoring programmes in forestry and wildlife.

Action:

- a. Conduct a series of consultations with communities in the districts to identify potential projects for implementation and to define the role of such communities in the implementation process.
- b. Develop and implement projects identified in (a).

D. Medicinal Plants

- 6.5.8. Objective: to institutionalize the involvement of traditional healers, community groups and the Private Sector in the management and use of medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Conduct public consultations with traditional healers and the general public on issues affecting medicinal plants.
- b. Establish clear mechanisms for conducting public consultations to ensure effective participation.
- c. Include representatives of indigenous groups and traditional healers associations in bio-prospecting negotiations and in the elaboration of pertinent agreements.
- d. Finalize the co-management plan with BEST for the management of Terranova Forest Reserve.

E. Legal and Policy Framework

- 6.5.9. Objective: to develop a legislative and institutional framework for the involvement of communities and NGOs in the management of Protected Areas and national lands.

Actions:

- a. Draft guidelines for co-management regimes.
- b. Conduct consultations with stakeholders and community at large to discuss draft guidelines.

6.6. EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CBD: Article 13)

People will only protect what they appreciate and will only appreciate what they can understand. Even though there is a growing level of environmental consciousness in Belize, this is occurring at a very slow pace and

is not enough to create the awareness and advocacy necessary to ensure the sustainable use of Belize's biological resources. There is an evident need for biodiversity conservation to be formally addressed as a topic at all levels of society.

School curricula at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels need to be modified to include biodiversity conservation. A major public awareness campaign is necessary to sensitize stakeholders, consumers, other users of the resource and particularly youths, on the need to conserve biodiversity and the rationale for it. Special emphasis must be placed on sensitizing immigrant communities, fishers, game hunters, mechanized farmers, extractive industries and rural communities on a whole.

A. Environmental and Land Use Planning

6.6.1. Objective: to increase appreciation for the value of planning and biodiversity conservation to the quality of life to all sectors of society.

Action:

- a. Conduct workshops to educate resource users and all sectors of society, including local communities, on the laws, regulations and procedures relating to the planning and management of biological resources.

B. Fisheries, Coastal and Marine Resources

6.6.2. Objective: to increase public awareness and knowledge of society at large on the value, conservation, and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity.

Actions:

- a. Conduct radio, television and printed media spots that highlight the importance of terrestrial, coastal and marine biodiversity and the need to conserve it.
- b. Through user-friendly information, educate coastal developers and the general public on natural resource laws and policies.

6.6.3. Objective: to strengthen the capacity of educators at all levels to teach biodiversity conservation.

Actions:

- a. Conduct training programs on the conservation of terrestrial, coastal and marine biodiversity for teachers at all educational levels.

C. Agriculture

6.6.4. Objective: to educate consumers on the benefits of organically produced foods and the link between organic agriculture and biodiversity conservation.

Actions:

- a. Prepare a series of articles on the link between organically produced food and biodiversity conservation to be published in weekly newspapers.
- b. Contact major wholesalers, retailers, hotels and other major consumers of vegetables to develop a marketing strategy for organically produced foods.

6.6.5. Objective: to educate farmers in environmentally friendly farming techniques.

Actions:

- a. Prepare and make accessible up-to-date information materials in video and pamphlet form.
- b. Identify farmers to act as 'demonstration farmers' for the promotion of environmentally friendly farming techniques.
- c. Conduct a weekly radio programme in English, Spanish, Maya, Kekchi, Garinagu and German (Mennonites) to be broadcasted at suitable times, based on general information and workshop materials.
- d. Conduct a series of workshops country-wide on Integrated Pest Control Management, Agro-Forestry Techniques, Organic Farming Techniques, Multi-cropping and Inter-cropping, and Appropriate Use of Soils, Slopes and Land.

6.6.6. Objective: to educate farmers in the techniques and opportunities for propagating and cultivating Non-Timber Forest Products.

Action:

- a. Conduct a series of workshops for potential farmers in communities adjacent to Protected Areas.

6.6.7. Objective: to increase the emphasis in school curricula on agriculture, its importance to the economy of Belize, its impact on the environment and the opportunities for employment in the sector.

Actions:

- a. Revise school curricula and include the preparation of suitable materials as teacher guides.
- b. Conduct a series of workshops for teachers to introduce the revised curricula.
- c. Revise curricula for Lynam and the Belize School of Agriculture to place more emphasis on conservation issues and environmentally friendly techniques.

D. Tourism

6.6.8. Objective: to educate civil society on the importance and relevance of biodiversity conservation to the tourism industry and the economy of Belize.

Actions:

- a. Publish and develop newspaper articles, radio and television programmes.
- b. Produce pamphlets along with BTIA to inform tourism industry personnel and tourists of biodiversity conservation.

6.6.9. Objective: to promote marketing of tourism, emphasizing Belize's biodiversity.

Action:

- a. Prepare and distribute (nationally, regionally and internationally) small brochures targeting specific groups, such as bird-watchers, campers and divers.

E. Medicinal Plants

6.6.10. Objective: to preserve knowledge on the use and management of medicinal plants and to strengthen the culture of traditional healing through formal education.

Actions:

- a. Develop and introduce a medicinal plant syllabus into the curriculum of primary, secondary and tertiary schools.
- b. Continue and expand special presentations on medicinal plants in schools, namely, visits by traditional healers, production of coloring books, lectures, slide and video presentations.
- c. Continue and expand schools' visitation to Medicinal Trails.
- d. Continue and expand competition between schools in activities involving medicinal plants.
- e. Encourage and support Belizean students to study natural healing as a profession.
- f. Encourage and contribute to the introduction of ethnobotany/healing studies in regional universities.
- g. Develop and conduct a part-time organized course of study on ethnobotany/natural healing at one of Belize's tertiary institution.

6.6.11. Objective: to improve the general public's awareness and knowledge on the use of plants as medicine.

Actions:

- a. Broadcast and publish special programmes on medicinal plants through the media.
- b. Organize and conduct public displays and exhibits on medicinal plants.
- c. Encourage and strengthen the publication and circulation of newsletters, pamphlets, reports, etc. on medicinal plants.
- d. Produce a series of postage stamps on important and/or threatened medicinal plants.

6.7. INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION (NATIONAL, REGIONAL, and INTERNATIONAL) (CBD: Article 17 and Article 18)

Poor coordination, collaboration and 'turf protection' has been quite notorious between agencies with mandates for the management of Belize's biological resources, resulting in duplication of effort, unjustified spending and reduced efficiency. A lack of knowledge on efforts by neighboring countries to manage trans-border resources and threats, can undermine local achievements and render them ineffective.

In addition to national needs, biodiversity conservation has to be seen from a regional perspective, consistent with regional and global initiatives. Regional collaboration will compliment local efforts, enabling Belize to draw on regional expertise and will facilitate the optimization of the region's human, financial and infrastructural resources.

A. Environmental and Land Use Planning

6.7.1. Objective: to establish tighter integration between the Physical Planning Unit and the Geographical Information System (GIS) Section of the Land Information Center (LIC).

Action:

- a. Establish a small internal committee including, but not limited to, staff from the LIC and the Physical Planning Unit to conduct regular meetings to evaluate and chart the direction of the LIC-GIS sector in serving the needs of Land Use and Physical Planning for the country.

6.7.2. Objective: to develop mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and collaboration.

Action:

- a. Establish mechanisms to share GIS resources with institutions and organizations involved in the conservation of biological resources.
- b. The Biodiversity Coordinating Office to ensure information exchange, dissemination and coordination among relevant agencies.

B. Fisheries, Coastal and Marine Resources

6.7.3. Objective: to strengthen collaboration with countries that have similar biological and cultural resources, to exchange experiences on approaches to management, implementation constraints and successes.

Actions:

- a. Broaden the Belize-Mexico Technical Cooperation Programme to include target projects for the conservation of coastal and marine biodiversity in the Border Zone.
- b. Initiate bilateral and multinational negotiations with suitable institutions in Mexico, Cuba, Honduras, Guatemala and Jamaica to obtain access to technology, infrastructure, training and funding necessary for the development and management of Belize's biodiversity.
- c. Conduct workshops with competent personnel from neighboring countries, with the intention of harmonizing management measures for trans-border biological resources such as the lobster and the Nassau grouper.
- d. Initiate negotiations with the competent authorities in Mexico and Guatemala to address the problems associated with trans-border pollutants from municipal waste, industry and maritime traffic.

C. Forest and Wildlife Management

6.7.4. Objective: to continue and expand collaboration with local and foreign institutions to conduct research on forest and wildlife resources.

Actions:

- a. Continue and expand current collaboration with foreign organizations and institutions to address multi-disciplinary issues.
- b. Strengthen collaboration with local institutions on forestry and wildlife issues of mutual interest.
- c. Increase technical meetings with personnel from Mexico and Guatemala including monitoring and relocation of persons intruding in Protected Areas and the monitoring of illegal logging on the borders, among others issues of mutual interest.

D. Agriculture

6.7.5. Objective: to improve collaboration with international research and development organizations in the agriculture sector, to improve efficiency of production and to diversify agricultural production.

Action:

- a. Establish closer links with international agencies in countries with similar crops and climatic conditions.

6.7.6. Objective: to increase collaboration with existing seed and gene banks in other countries.

Actions:

- a. Establish closer links with international seed and gene banks.
- b. Collect and supply material to appropriate international seed and gene banks.

E. Tourism

6.7.7. Objective: to strengthen and participate fully in regional tourism development, promotion and marketing programmes.

Action:

- a. Establish closer links with international agencies involved in the tourism sector and participate fully in regional tourism development and marketing programmes.

F. Medicinal Plants

6.7.8. Objective: to strengthen institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration to conserve medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Establish and maintain a National Traditional Healers Association consisting of regional associations from all districts, to encourage collaboration between healers on a national level.
- b. Establish and develop a National Medicinal Plant Institute or National Bioprospecting Office under the NBO, to coordinate activities related to the conservation of medicinal plants.
- c. Clarify the role of NGOs and Government Departments in the management and conservation of medicinal plants.

- 6.7.9. Objective: to participate in regional initiatives and strengthen collaboration with international organizations involved with the management and conservation of medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Continue participation in TRAMIL workshops and conferences.
- b. Improve and increase collaboration with NYGB.
- c. Participate in the development and implementation of joint research programmes with international research institutions and pharmaceutical companies.

G. Legal and Policy Framework

- 6.7.10. Objective: to build coordinating mechanisms between all agencies involved in Protected Areas management.

Actions:

- a. Develop inter-ministerial committees with representatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Cooperatives, Archaeology Department and the Ministry of Tourism to promote collaboration.
- b. Conduct training workshops on institutional collaboration and "Conflict Resolution" for agencies and stakeholders involved in Protected Areas management.

6.8. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (CBD: Article 12, Article 17 and Article 18)

The organization, access and timely distribution of information play an important role in the development of effective management measures. Disorganized information, though available, is of no use to the planning process unless accessible in a user-friendly format. Access to information allows proper planning, avoid duplication of effort and strengthens the basis for proper decision-making. Baseline data collection and management are essential bench-marks for a successful monitoring program.

Efforts must be made to establish credible and accessible data-bases on biodiversity and its uses. Technologies such as GIS should be used to allow for the integration and simultaneous use of many different types of data.

A. Environmental and Land Use Planning

- 6.8.1. Objective: to ensure the timely organization and distribution of information to assist in the planning and management of biological resources.

Actions:

- a. Integrate the CSO socio-economic data and the BBIS biodiversity data into the GIS at the LIC in an effort to improve land use planning.
- b. Develop and distribute a GIS planning database complete with metadata, to all planning institutions in Belize having GIS access.

B. Information and Geographical Information System (GIS)

- 6.8.2. Objective: to improve the development of the CEDS as a central clearing house for information relating to biological resource management.

Actions:

- a. Improve the functioning of the Belize Biodiversity Information System (BBIS) as a separate but complimentary component under CEDS.
- b. Identify and access additional funding for the establishment of the BBIS under the CEDS to provide the data necessary for the proposed National Biodiversity Monitoring Program.
- c. Conduct an assessment of CEDS to identify gaps and loop-holes, and to make recommendations for their correction, including provisions for the employment of a Systems Administrator and expertise in the management of environmental data.
- d. Allow the CEDS organizational structure to function and ensure the sustainability of the CEDS, including the enhanced input from inactive members;
- e. Amend, where possible, the CEDS data exchange policy to ensure easy access to information
- f. Develop and implement a system of incentives for CEDS members.

6.8.3. Objective: to facilitate access and appropriate use of data relevant to the management of biological resources.

Actions:

- a. The Environmental Statistics Section at the CSO to conduct periodic synthesis of existing biodiversity information and the dissemination of the results to interested and affected groups.
- b. Conduct training on the standards and documentation of metadata.
- c. Ensure that accuracy assessment and reporting are key factors in determining metadata standards.
- d. Develop guidelines for the use of metadata.

C. Agriculture

6.8.4. Objective: to develop and continuously update an accurate database on agricultural land use.

Action:

- a. Obtain latest aerial photography and conduct analyses with ground-truthing to prepare detailed maps of current land use.

6.8.5. Objective: to develop a statistically accurate crop information database.

Action:

- a. Prepare statistically accurate sample surveys for the collection of crop data to be stored in a national database.

6.8.6. Objective: to develop a database on the in-country genetic stock of agricultural crops and livestock, including location and "ownership" of the genetic material.

Action:

- a. Compile a database of in-country genetic stock through field surveys.

D. Medicinal Plants

6.8.7. Objective: to document and catalogue data obtained from the study of medicinal plants.

Actions:

- a. Establish at least one (1) center in each district where information on medicinal plants can be stored and accessed.

- b. Continue the preparation, storage and cataloguing of herbarium specimens of medicinal plants.
- c. Document and disseminate the outputs of research conducted.
- d. Develop, maintain, publish and distribute the database of plants used as medicine and their active ingredients.
- e. Develop and maintain a comprehensive database on plant diversity in Belize and the status of medicinal plants.
- f. Maintain computerized databases of all records and maintain an international format to facilitate data sharing and transfer.

6.9. ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES (CBD: Article 15)

Open access to genetic resources can easily result in arbitrary exploitation and indiscriminate use. Developmental research such as bio-prospecting presents no guarantee for success and specific guidelines are essential for identifying accessible areas and for minimizing wanton waste. Belize has to develop its own capacity to conduct developmental research, therefore technology transfer and protection of intellectual property should be integral parts of access agreements.

General

6.9.1. Objective: to provide guidelines for controlling access to genetic resources.

Actions:

- a. Identify and access information from other countries with successful policies and mechanisms for controlling the exploitation of genetic resources.
- b. Develop the policies, laws, enforcement mechanisms and institutional framework necessary to regulate access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge, including a strict screening mechanism for access to organisms with known pharmaceutical or other industrial value.
- c. Ensure that access agreements do not over-exploit genetic resources and include technology transfer for local people.
- d. Establish incentives to maximize local participation in the access to genetic resources.
- e. Conduct the research/inventory necessary to identify areas with high concentrations of organisms with known or potential pharmaceutical value.
- f. Contribute to the development of international protocols/mechanisms for access to genetic resources and indigenous knowledge.

6.9.2. Objective: to regulate bio-prospecting in all its forms.

Actions:

- a. Conduct consultations to sensitize the public on issues related to bio-prospecting.
- b. Develop and implement legislation to monitor and control bio-prospecting.

6.9.3. Objective: to ensure robust inspections of applications for permits to conduct bio-prospecting.

Action:

- a. Establish a committee with wide cross sectorial representation to evaluate applications for permits.

6.9.4. Objective: to address the new areas of Intellectual Property Rights defined by the Convention on Biodiversity.

Actions:

- a. Develop legislation and regulations, inclusive of enforcement mechanisms, to address Intellectual Property Rights.
- b. Conduct consultations with the Private Sector, rural communities, indigenous groups and NGOs.
- c. Develop media campaign to sensitize the public on Intellectual Property Rights issues.

6.10. EQUITY AND BENEFIT SHARING (CBD: Article 8,10,15,16, 20)

The success of biodiversity conservation and development will depend on how well mechanisms can be put in place to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits. Whether benefits are direct or indirect, there has to be a conspicuous and tangible flow of returns for users, managers and the community at large. Global benefits derived from biodiversity conservation and development at the local, national and regional levels must also be built into the benefit-distribution equation.

General

6.10.1. Objective: to develop the legal and institutional framework necessary to ensure that maximum benefits accrue to Belize from the exploitation of its biological resources.

Actions:

- a. Conduct consultations with competent authorities in countries with similar biological resources, on successful policies and mechanisms being used to ensure maximum benefits from the exploitation of those resources.
- b. Seek advice from the public, the judiciary and the community at large on possible ways to ensure equitable distribution of benefits derived from the use of biological resources, cultural resources and traditional knowledge, at the national and local level.
- c. Develop Regulations to ensure that some of the benefits derived from the exploitation of biological resources are invested in conserving the integrity of critical habitats and ecosystems.
- d. Hire a consultant to develop the legal and institutional framework for the equitable distribution of benefits derived from the exploitation of biological and cultural resources.
- e. Contribute to the re-examination of international policies on intellectual property protection, and incorporate mechanisms to protect traditional knowledge.

6.11. POPULATION AND BIODIVERSITY (CBD: Article 10, Article 13)

The root causes of all threats, except those caused by natural disasters, are associated with human influences on natural resources. Belize's high rate of human population growth, coupled to the absence of a National Population Policy, maximize threats to biodiversity through uncontrolled clearing of vegetation for agricultural and residential purposes, increase liquid and solid waste, and unsustainable exploitation practices.

It is absolutely necessary that a National Population Policy which is cognizant of biodiversity conservation be developed and implemented immediately. Settlement Planning should be given priority in the policy to address unplanned settlements by immigrants.

General

6.11.1. Objective: to develop, adopt and implement a National Population Policy that is cognizant of poverty, human settlement, economic factors and biodiversity conservation.

Actions:

- a. Include poverty and biodiversity conservation issues in Human Settlement Planning.
- b. Include wide stakeholder participation in the planning processes for human settlements.
- c. Ensure that Human Settlement Planning is included in the National Population Policy being prepared

- by the Ministry of Human Resources.
- d. Submit the National Population Policy to Cabinet for adoption.
 - e. Develop and implement an Action Plan for the said policy.

6.12. BIOSAFETY (CBD: Article 19)

Genetically engineered Living Modified Organisms are a potential threat to Belize's biodiversity with possible effects of catastrophic magnitudes. The lack of personnel trained in the handling of LMOs is compounded by the absence of legislation to restrict the importation of these organisms, and by the lack of quantitative information to determine what level of genetic diversity in Belize are most vulnerable to the introduction of LMOs.

The legislative and management framework needed to address LMOs must be put in place immediately. Belize needs to stay abreast with regional and international developments and guidelines to ensure protection from uncontrolled introduction of LMOs.

General

6.12.1. Objective: to establish a National Biosafety Committee.

Actions:

- a. Conduct a series of consultations with Government, NGOs, CBOs and the community at large, to deliberate on the justification of a National Biosafety Committee, its possible membership, functions, organizational structure and operational framework.
- b. Conduct a legislative review of existing laws and amend as appropriate to legalize the operation of a National Biosafety Committee.

6.12.2. Objective: to develop guidelines for laboratory and field handling of living modified organisms (LMOs).

Actions:

- a. Conduct a detailed study to determine potential risks of LMOs to Belize's biodiversity.
- b. Establish a **competent regulatory authority** to govern all aspects of LMOs in Belize, including the certification of individuals, laboratories and institutions proposing to use or handle LMOs.

6.12.3. Objective: to participate in the UNEP/GEF Pilot Biosafety Enabling Activity Project.

Actions:

- a. Identify and access technical and financial assistance for the preparation of a National Biosafety Framework.
- b. Attend Regional Workshops on Biosafety in an effort to improve Belize's human capacity in this discipline.

7.0. IMPLEMENTATION

The National Biodiversity Committee (NBC) hereby makes the following recommendations to the GOB, in order to meet its obligations as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity:

7.1. Actions to be undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment

7.1.1. Expanded Membership

In order to have a wider representation of the Private Sector on the National Biodiversity Committee, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment may undertake a review of the membership and organizational structure of the National Biodiversity Committee and may appoint additional members as follows:

- Belize Integrated Forest Industry Association (BIFIA)
- Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA)
- Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Belize Better Business Bureau (BBBB)
- Traditional Healers Foundation (THF)
- Belize Fishermen Cooperative Association (BFCA)
- One representative of Civil Society

7.1.2. Legal Mandate

Short Term

- Create the legal foundation for the NBC and National Biodiversity Office (NBO) to operate and have legal recognition and mandate in its own right (Note: the Ministry may seek the services of consultants to describe membership of the new NBC, define TOR of the new NBC, TOR of the TABS and develop proposal to clearly define the organizational and operational structure, legal framework and funding mechanisms of the NBO).
- Hire or re-assign staff with responsibility to operate the National Biodiversity Office.

Medium and Long Term

The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment may consider possibilities to promote and enact legislation to transfer all bio-prospecting issues, projects and programs to a statutory board, private foundation, university or NGO. This proposed agency will be given the legal mandate to negotiate on behalf of the people and Government of Belize, with local and foreign companies interested in entering into a partnership for the sustainable use of Belize's biological resources. This process requires training of Belizeans, from the Private and Public Sectors, in the various fields, both legal and technical, in order to develop the negotiating skills and technical knowledge necessary to ensure that benefits derived are shared equitably among stakeholders.

7.2. Actions to be undertaken by the National Biodiversity Committee (NBC)

7.2.1. Prepare a Revised Terms of Reference of the NBC

With an expanded membership, the NBC will adopt the following preliminary terms of reference and review it as considered necessary to ensure an effective implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan:

- Coordinate the development of a National Biodiversity Policy for Belize.
- Guide the implementation of the Action Plan and seek a wider and active participation of the NBC and TABS members.

- Seek funding for the National Biodiversity Office(NBO) either from GOB sources, PACT or other bilateral and multilateral cooperating partners. In the long term, serious effort must be made to establish an active fund raising mechanism. (Note: Technical assistance from the UNDP-GEF is available and should be explored as soon as possible to access funding.)

7.3. Actions to be undertaken by the National Biodiversity Office

7.3.1. Short Term

Below is a proposed Terms of Reference for the National Biodiversity Office:

- Finalize the distribution of documents developed by the NBSAP Project to all stakeholders.
- Take coordination responsibility of all matters relating to the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan implementation.
- Prepare a budget for the next five years to operationalize the implementation plan including the financing of priority strategic actions as determined by the Action Plan itself.
- Assist in fund raising activities to operate the Office.
- Prepare a Cabinet Paper/ presentation to sensitize Cabinet on the commitments of the GOB under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and inform them on the highlights of Belize's Strategy and Action Plan.
- Make presentations to sensitize all Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Coordinators of Projects related to biodiversity planning on their agency's anticipated role in the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- Conduct an NBSAP awareness campaign (meetings and workshops) to the staff of relevant Ministries, Departments, biodiversity-related Projects, NGOs, CBOs and all relevant Private Sector agencies, including the commodity associations (sugar, bananas, cattle, citrus, tourism, forestry sectors, etc.).

7.3.2. Medium and Long Term

- Continue coordinating the implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

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