

ANNEX 1**Testing methods of harmonizing national reporting nationally and internationally*****Progress Report*****I. Introduction**

1. As the first step to address the need to harmonize reporting processes under Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), UNEP is implementing a project entitled "Streamlined National Reporting under Biodiversity-Related Conventions: Pilot Case Studies in Selected Countries". The project is an umbrella project encompassing six pilot projects to be implemented with interested countries, including Belgium, Ghana, Indonesia, Panama, Seychelles and UK. UNEP is currently in touch with Spain to explore the possibility of its participation in the project.

II. Scope of the project

2. The biodiversity conventions included in the project are the five global conventions, i.e. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Convention on Wetlands), Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and World Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention).
3. The Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) Protocol under the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention) will also be considered in the pilot project of Panama. If Spain participates, its pilot project will be supported by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and could include addressing the reporting requirements under the SPAW Protocol of the Barcelona Convention.

III. Summary of project aims and expected outputs

4. The pilot projects will test the four main methods of streamlining national reporting that were identified in the workshop (October 2000, Cambridge) which explored ideas for a more harmonized approach to national reporting to international agreements. The workshop was convened by UNEP (Division of Environmental Conventions and UNEP-WCMC).
5. Each pilot project will produce the following:
 - (i) a report (or reports) that satisfy the reporting requirements under the biodiversity-related conventions to which the country is a Party for a selected period
 - (ii) a report on the national reporting mechanisms (institutional frameworks and information/data flow) for the biodiversity-related conventions and in some cases, state of the environment (SOE) reporting, including:
 - description of the reporting mechanisms that exist and the information management systems used for the preparation of each report;

- description of the linkages between the reporting mechanisms for the biodiversity-related conventions (and in some cases the SOE reporting mechanism);
 - gaps in information and data existing in the country;
 - recommendations, including the necessary actions to be taken by the Government, on how to streamline the national reporting under biodiversity-related conventions and, in some cases, including the linkages with the SOE reporting mechanism, can be ensured or improved;
 - recommendations on how the information management system for the reporting can be improved, including possible information support from outside the country.
6. Based on the results of the pilot projects the following outputs will be produced under the main project:
- (i) preliminary consolidated reporting format for the global biodiversity-related conventions.
 - (ii) a set of guidelines on establishment of coordinated national reporting mechanisms for the biodiversity-related conventions.
 - (iii) a report on regional mechanisms for supporting the countries to fulfill the reporting requirements under biodiversity-related conventions: the case of Panama and Central America.
7. It is intended that the analysis should also, in the future, help the COPs ensure that reporting requirements focus on the minimum set of useful data for implementation of the conventions.

IV. Implementation and financing of the project

8. The project will be implemented by the UNEP Division of Environmental Convention working in collaboration with the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (which will provide the necessary technical assistance) and with cooperation of the secretariats of the relevant biodiversity-related conventions. The project is funded by UNEP (US\$135,000) with in-kind contributions of countries involved in the project and relevant MEAs. Further funding may be received from participating developed countries and other donor countries.
9. The pilot projects have been prepared in the form of draft Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between UNEP and the participating developing countries. The MOUs have been agreed and are now being signed. Seychelles has already embarked on the work: several meetings of the national team have been convened, and analyses are under way. The developed countries will finance their own work and are considering supporting, both financially and substantively, the implementation of the pilot projects in the developing countries.
10. Paucity of funds has precluded the selection of more countries for the implementation of the project. An attempt has however been made to select one country from each continent. The selection of one Small Island Developing State (SIDS) - Seychelles - is significant. In the SIDS there is often one focal point coordinating, and reporting on, the implementation of several conventions.

ANNEX 2

**Testing a wider-scale harmonized approach for a more specific theme or issue:
protected areas***Progress report***I. Introduction**

1. Over the past three years there have been a number of studies and meetings aimed at harmonizing and sharing information between international agreements and programmes. All stakeholders agree with the need for careful planning and cooperation in information management to ensure increased synergy in the use of information and reduced duplication of effort. Given the range of international agreements and programmes that are concerned either directly or indirectly with protected areas, there are clear opportunities for promoting and demonstrating increased harmonization of information management and reporting.

II. Scope of the project

2. The UN List of Protected Areas: Protected areas form part of each nation's strategy for dealing with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and landscape. These areas vary considerably in their objectives, the extent to which they are integrated into the wider landscape, and the effectiveness with which they are managed, but they nonetheless provide powerful evidence of a nation's commitment to conservation and sustainable development. Recognizing the importance of such areas, the UN Economic and Social Council adopted Resolution No. 713 (XXVII) in 1959, which called for the preparation and maintenance of a list of national parks and equivalent reserves. The *United Nations List of Protected Areas* includes all national protected areas that meet certain criteria.
3. International agreements and programmes: A significant number of international treaties and programmes call on nations to protect or conserve areas for specific purposes. Many of these give international recognition to specific sites, for example the World Heritage Convention, the Convention on Wetlands and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves are concerned with protection and management of specific sites, and at least 11 other global and regional agreements and programmes recognize or designate specific protected areas. Other treaties define a need for protected areas without giving recognition to specific sites, for example Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity requires each Contracting Party to "establish a system of protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity" and to manage them effectively.
4. A key issue to be addressed is the problems, or opportunities, which arise from multiple designations under several international and or regional agreements. For example, it is possible for the same site to be a Wetland of International Importance, inscribed on the World Heritage List, a Biosphere Reserve, and, if in Europe for example, to be listed under the habitats Directive. In itself this is not a bad outcome, but it is not necessarily helpful if all the designations exactly overlap, rather than be nested. The project offers the opportunity to focus on this issue, and to present discussion papers for the World parks Congress. Clearly, if well used, designations offer the potential to be useful management tools, and signals for international attention – if poorly managed, however, they can only lead to confusion and inevitably devaluation of the label.

III. Summary of project aims and expected outputs

5. The overall aims of this project are to report on the current status of the world's protected areas, and to promote the harmonization of information management and reporting for those international agreements and programmes concerned with protected areas.
6. This will be achieved through the preparation of a new-format *United Nations List of Protected Areas* which not only lists the world's protected areas and presents synthesis and analysis of the information, but also seeks to meet the related information needs of a range of international agreements and programmes concerned with protected areas.
7. There are two major events which provide a specific focus for delivery of the new format *UN List* and associated reports. These are:
 - (i) World Parks Congress: The Fifth World Parks Congress will take place in South Africa in September 2003. This ten-yearly meeting of the World's protected area professionals will include assessment of the world's protected areas, their management and their future needs, and the international mechanisms that support them.
 - (ii) CBD Conference of Parties: Protected areas as a tool for conservation and sustainable development will be one of the main issues discussed by the 7th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, when they meet in 2004, and will presumably also be discussed at the preceding SBSTTA meeting.
8. Outputs will include a state of the parks report (or reports), list of sites, and recommendations on future information collection, management and use programmes incorporating the needs and capacities of national and international agencies.

IV. Implementation and financing of the project

9. The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre developed a series of concept and discussion papers which have been reviewed by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA), the expert body which brings together the world's protected areas professionals. The WCPA Steering Committee has agreed to play a strong role in helping to guide implementation of the project.
10. UNEP-WCMC and WCPA have together approached the key UN agencies (UNEP, FAO and UNESCO) directly seeking their support and greater involvement. The concept was subsequently presented to the Ecosystem Conservation Group at its meeting in Nairobi in May 2000, where it received wholehearted endorsement from the members.
11. IUCN has provided UNEP-WCMC with the financial support necessary to develop guidelines, work programmes, quality control strategies, etc, and to prepare and implement a funding strategy. Meanwhile UNEP is exploring opportunities for locating resources from within the UN system, and is considering options for appointing a Junior Professional Officer in Cambridge to work on the project.
12. The next stage will be to involve the secretariats of international agreement and programmes with an interest in protected areas, so that the whole project helps to meet their information needs, as well as promoting these agreements and programmes and providing an opportunity for integration and cross-comparison of information on the sites recognized by each.
13. Subsequent to this information will be compiled during 2002 from national and international sources

using the agreed procedures and quality control measures, and in discussion with appropriate UN agencies and international agreement and programme secretariats. The analyses, lists and assessments will be published in various formats in 2003 and 2004 as input to the key meetings identified earlier.

ANNEX 3

**Identify ways to build on the related initiatives of others:
the Global Biodiversity Information Facility***Concept Note***I. The role and purpose of GBIF**

1. GBIF has been established through an intergovernmental process in order to enable users throughout the world to discover and put to use the vast quantities of global biodiversity data that exist. The agreed programme priorities of GBIF are to:
 - create an Internet-based catalogue of known names of species
 - digitize data on species information in museums and herbaria
 - create interoperability of databases and search engines for accessing these data
 - build capacity in nations for implementation of GBIF

II. Participation in GBIF

2. The GBIF Memorandum of Understanding allows for two types of participation, Voting Participants and Associate Participants. UNEP has been accepted as an Associate Participant in GBIF, and intends *inter alia* to contribute in the area of species information for implementation of MEAs.
3. UNEP has identified as its GBIF “node” the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, which already conforms with GBIF’s definition of a node. UNEP-WCMC will therefore:
 - take the lead in UNEP’s operational involvement in the GBIF
 - participate in GBIF Board Meetings as an Associate Participant
 - ensure UNEP’s compliance with the GBIF Memorandum of Understanding, including the responsibilities of a GBIF node
 - act as a focal point for the involvement of other UNEP divisions and agencies

III. Objective of UNEP participation in GBIF

4. UNEP, as the administrator of several multilateral environmental agreements on species or with a species component seeks, in cooperation with GBIF, to enhance the quality and quantity of species-specific information available to parties, secretariats and those who directly implement such international agreements.
5. UNEP recognises the species/taxonomic information impediment to effective implementation of such MEAs and will enter into discussions with parties, secretariats and a range of other organizations to define and implement a “Joint Conventions Species Information Service” within the framework of GBIF.

ANNEX 4

**Integrate information management at the international level:
Review existing information sources***Progress Report***I. Introduction**

1. National governments need international biodiversity information for a variety of reasons, including, *inter alia*: to put national conditions and plans in perspective; to set priorities; for strategic planning and policy development; to effectively implement national obligations under MEAs; and to effectively respond to evolving global and regional issues.
2. Since the development of GEMS in the 1970s there have been growing numbers of international efforts of environmental data assembly, integration and exchange, both regionally and globally. It is difficult for national governments seeking to utilize these networks and services to locate the best sources, and to decide which information systems or networks are most worthy of support and enhancement.
3. A project has been initiated by the UK Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, called “Rationalization of International Nature Conservation Information Systems”, with the intent of shedding light on the availability and suitability of information.

II. Scope of the project

4. The project is considering ways of rationalizing, and making better use international information networks, with the general objective of improving the Government policy development process in nature conservation, both domestically and internationally. All major information sources and services will be reviewed, especially those relevant to the biodiversity-related MEAs.

III. Summary of project aims and expected outputs

5. More specifically the project aims to:
 - compile information on information networks and services that deliver information relevant to nature conservation and biodiversity
 - critically assess the information holdings and analysis capacity of such agencies in the context of the needs of *policy making bodies of the UK government*
 - provide guidance on the most effective and efficient use of existing information sources for policy development
 - evaluate and make recommendations on the information organizations and networks that most merit future support and investment in the context of UK Government needs.

IV. Implementation and financing of the project

6. The project is financed by the UK government and will be executed by the UNEP-WCMC and the Orbis Institute, working in collaboration with UNEP GRID Arendal and the European Centre for Nature Conservation. The one-year project began in May 2001 and a series of interactive workshops were held July-September 2001 to analyze information use and needs in the UK government.

ANNEX 5

**Integrate information management at the international level:
ECOLEX***Concept Note***I. Introduction**

1. Government officials, lawyers, academics, non-governmental organisations, and researchers need to locate and analyse legal instruments and materials related to environmental management. Recognising the necessity for a single gateway to this information, the UNEP Governing Council (Decision 18/9) called upon UNEP and IUCN to join forces in providing access to international and national environmental law information.

II. Summary of progress to date

2. ECOLEX was designed to use IUCN's Environmental Law Information System as its core archival system and link this data to full text information available with UNEP's Computerised Environmental Law Information Base and other authoritative sources.
3. Users can search using subject area, keyword, country, or date. ECOLEX includes information on multilateral treaties; national legislation; European Union instruments; international "soft law" and related documents; law and policy literature; and judicial decisions.
4. The service is designed to provide users with access to: a locator mechanism; a distributed system of specialized environmental law information databases; two levels of Internet access (general and specialized); products such as CD-ROMs, disk-based information and paper publications; and links to other databases, expertise and more information.
5. The full-suite of the prototype ECOLEX databases is now available on the Internet for a limited period. Included are references and full-text, where available, of multilateral treaties, national legislation, EU instruments, soft-law documents, law and policy literature, court decisions, and fauna and flora protection under international and national law.

III. Future development

The first phase of the project ended in December 2000. The second phase of the project will further ensure improvement on the database, its management and add new partners to it such as the FAO and environmental convention secretariats. The Steering Committee meeting held in November 2000 agreed and decided on the integration of FAO database, FAOLEX and ECOLEX, on the division of responsibilities with UNEP playing the leading role and standing chair of the Committee.

ANNEX 6

**Integrate information management at the international level:
Species information***Concept Note***I. Introduction**

1. Individual species are listed in the annexes to CITES and CMS, the Bern Convention and the EC Birds and Habitats Directives. Many other organisations also deliver species information over the Internet, including IUCN, UNEP (especially UNEP-WCMC) and numerous national agencies. In addition programmes on specific issues also deliver information such as the Global Register of Migratory Species, the Global Invasive Species Programme and the Association for Biodiversity Information. Collaborative programmes need to be developed to use the power of the Internet to link information in a manner that is useful.

II. Objective

2. To develop distributed and integrated information systems based on existing services and programmes that serve the needs of a wide range of international agreements and programmes.

III. Proposed activities

3. Review the information on species already available to convention and programme secretariats, and plan ways to make it more accessible on the Internet.
4. Review the information already managed by organizations and programme such as UNEP-WCMC, ECOLEX and the European Environment Agency, to identify the best means to link the species information made available by convention secretariats to convention appendices and annexes, taking account of the need to deal with differences in accepted taxonomies.
5. Identify other information sources on species which could be readily linked to this information, or which could be modified to do so.
6. Review with convention secretariats and technical bodies the information that is required to support policy development for implementation of the different agreements in a synergistic manner.
7. Implement in a staged manner information services on the Internet that support implementation of international agreements at national and international levels.

ANNEX 7

Improve access to the experience of others*Concept Note***I. Objective**

1. The objective is to promote and facilitate the sharing of experience from case studies, whether positive success stories or examples of what to avoid. A number of the MEAs currently have some of the case studies available through the Internet, but there is little consistency in this – even within one MEA, and no uniform way of searching for relevant case studies across conventions. The objective is to integrate case studies called for under a range of international agreements and programmes into an effective “Lessons Learned Library”.

II. Proposed activities**A. *All MEAs make case-studies available through the internets***

2. This requires an internal review in each secretariat to select appropriate material from project files, national reports and nomination submissions, responses to previous calls for case studies, and so on. These would be posted on a special section of the convention web site.

B. *Develop tools for integrated access across MEAs*

3. This will require improved means of identifying the content of the material in a consistent way, including a standard “cover sheet”, standardisation for country and region identification, and more specialised key-wording vocabulary for these lessons learned – for instance, incorporating a standard taxonomy and more detailed terms related to habitat rehabilitation, management plans, threat mitigation and other specific items.

C. *Establish a prototype lessons-learned web site*

4. This could be developed as a separate web site or as part of an inter-convention web site and would serve to test the methodology and delivery of information, and to attract input from other agencies.

D. *Further implementation*

5. The most valuable lessons-learned will be from national activities, and so establishing links to the lessons-learned case studies of national sites is a logical next step. To encourage this, a set of themes could be drawn up (e.g. for Best Practice Guidelines for CITES implementation for new parties and others) and efforts would be made to collect relevant material from the Parties in the short term. From the experience of Ramsar, once a prototype site is established, national and international agencies are willing to submit additional material and/or provide links to existing sites with case studies and examples of good practice. Guidelines must be developed for acceptance of lessons-learned or links.
6. Finally, the Lessons-Learned site could be linked to the CBD Clearing House Mechanism following the testing of the prototype and adjustment according to experience. The ultimate goal is that the lessons-learned network becomes a useful node in the overall CBD Clearing-House Mechanism.

ANNEX 8

Ensure that national reports and assessment together cover the “Big Picture”*Concept Note***I. Introduction**

1. For many years now, national reports have been flowing into the MEAs with the main purpose of enabling the assessment of the state and effectiveness of the implementation of the particular treaty. However, it is not currently clear to what extent national reporting to the suite of MEAs provides the “big picture” either of the collective degree of effectiveness of the treaties, or of the overall global status of biodiversity?

II. Objective

2. The aim is to review the reporting requirements of the key international agreements, with a view to identifying how the range of reports presents the “big picture”, that is a global overview, and what else would be required to complete it.

III. Proposed activities

3. The first stage is to conduct a study that will examine the information content of the national reporting requirements against a framework of issues of concern in biodiversity and nature conservation. The analysis could be expressed through one or more matrices of information elements verses the particular MEAs and the perceived information needs. A summary matrix would indicate the range of information required and the extent to which it presents a complete picture of the state and issues of global biodiversity.
4. Once established this matrix would lead to recommendations on improving and streamlining reporting, including:
 - areas of duplication
 - additional reporting elements required
 - areas where existing treaties or treaty provisions are inadequate
 - opportunities for rationalisation of treaties
5. The resulting information would then be reviewed by an expert meeting involving both convention secretariats and contracting parties to different MEAs, who would confirm (or otherwise) the project findings, and recommend ways to implement the recommendations.
6. A further stage would be to also look at the ways in which international assessment processes and programmes such as the Millennium Assessment, GEO, GIWA and the Forest Resources Assessment also contribute, and the extent to which these assessments are acceptable to contracting parties in assessing the status of biological diversity.

ANNEX 9

Organized inventory of obligations

*Progress Report***I. Introduction**

1. The concept is to develop a detailed consolidated inventory of all obligations placed on contracting parties to report information to international conventions. This database could then provide the basis for analysis of duplication and potential synergies.

II. Scope of the project

2. The project would cover all reporting obligations, both legal and moral, relating to international agreements and programmes, including questionnaires and requests for statistical information.

III. Project summary and expected outputs

3. The information would be compiled in the form of an annotated list of specific "questions" or information elements demanded (directly or implicitly) by each obligation instrument (convention, protocol, agreement, directive, etc).
4. While not replacing the detailed format and reporting instructions of the convention secretariats, the questions would be as specific as possible in indicating the nature of the information element required. The questions would be key-worded using a standardised thesaurus as to subject matter, and linked to data on schedule and periodicity of regular reports.
5. The inventory would be structured as a searchable database that links the questions to the text of the legal authority for the obligation (e.g. convention article or formal decision) and to geographic scope.
6. The resulting database would facilitate analysis of reporting requirements.

IV. Implementation and financing of the project

7. This project is being carried out by the European Environment Agency for all of the environmental agreements and questionnaires that relate to European Union countries.

ANNEX 10

“Handbook” to reporting, incorporating existing formats, rationale and timetables*Concept Note*

1. Reporting instructions for contracting parties vary widely between treaties. Contents specification, reporting formats, guidance and interpretation may be found in convention articles, decisions and resolutions of conferences of the parties and subsidiary bodies, and less formal guidelines and interpretation documents circulated by secretariats. Focal point agencies may often be unsure if they are using the most up-to-date instructions or formats for a particular reporting obligation, and countries often find it difficult to obtain an overview of the range of reporting requirements to which they must respond.
2. A “handbook” that provides in one place access to the relevant guidelines and formats for a range of biodiversity-related conventions (ideally all) would be of great day-to-day practical benefit, as well as being a tool to promote harmonisation.
3. The primary objective would be to make national reporting to conventions easier and of improved quality and consistency by ensuring that the most up-to-date instructions are readily available
4. The “handbook” would also potentially:
 - (i) identify opportunities for harmonisation of reporting frameworks and approaches
 - (ii) assist in identifying gaps and overlaps in reporting, and opportunities for streamlining
 - (iii) encourage the adoption of standards for vocabulary and nomenclature and provide a convenient means of disseminating such guidance
5. The “handbook” could be made more useful by the addition of an overview section on good practices in information management. This could suggest how contracting parties could most usefully organise national information systems and collection regimes for reporting to the conventions while contributing to their own national policies, strategies and action plans.
6. The “handbook” could begin as a simple compilation of existing guidance documents, either in paper format or as a series of weblinks. This would be of immediate practical value. The “handbook” could then be used as a tool to consolidate, harmonise and rationalise reporting structures and evolve in stages to a guide for modular reporting and/or virtual reporting.
7. The “handbook” would have the following essential characteristics:
 - (i) reporting requirements, formats and other guidance for all treaties compiled in one document
 - (ii) must be updated whenever changes in requirements are mandated by the authoritative treaty bodies
 - (iii) would be widely and easily accessible.
8. The “handbook” would have the following useful characteristics:
 - (i) website with links to all formats and guidelines
 - (ii) provision of blank pro-forma reporting formats, and links to sites where sample completed reports can be obtained would be useful.
 - (iii) common glossary, acronym list, terminology set and cross-convention standards
 - (iv) integrated schedule of reporting due dates

ANNEX 11

All national reports accessible on the Internet

Concept Note

I. Objectives

1. Improve the usefulness of national reports to all stakeholders by ensuring that all reports are available and easily accessed on the Internet.

II. Proposed activities

2. Each MEA undertakes actions to place electronic version of all national reports submitted on the Internet, including consideration of the extent to which capture of the previous backlog should be attempted.
3. Develop tools to effectively search the material across conventions. This will require improved means of identifying the content of the reports in a consistent way, e.g. by adopting a standard thesaurus such as ENVOC for keywording the reports, a standard “cover sheet”, standardization for country and region identification.
4. Coordinate between the MEAs to ensure that the formats and information technology regimes are sufficiently similar to allow search engines to operate.
5. Establish a common web-site or entry portal that will enable searching and selecting reports across the MEAs.

ANNEX 12

Metadatabase of official document and information papers of MEAs*Concept Note***I. Introduction**

1. A metadatabase refers to an automated searchable index or directory of information about information - a means to search and locate available documents across a range of custodians.
2. Many, but not all, MEAs currently make national reports and some secretariat documents available electronically, but systems vary and there is no way to search across MEAs for information - for instance by issue, or action or species. Having a metadatabase would greatly improve the access and usefulness of national reports. The concept is that this catalogue would extend to all relevant documents, not only national reports and case studies, whether in electronic form or on paper.

II. Objective

3. To facilitate availability and exchange of information from MEAs and inter-linkages between MEAs by developing a metadatabase that covers all MEA official documents – those submitted by parties, and those related to governance of the convention.

III. Proposed activities

4. The anticipated activities would include the following:
 - design a the structure content and format for a metadatabase
 - adopt standard thesauri (shared between the conventions)
 - adopt standards for geographic identification (consistent country and region naming, etc)
 - adopt standards for document naming and numbering (meeting minutes, decisions, resolutions, background papers, membership lists, etc)
 - keyword all reports for subject matter content using the standard thesaurus
 - add to the metadatabase information on how to obtain or access the reports (in both electronic and paper form)
 - develop cooperative processes to maintain and manage the metadatabase jointly, through a central web-site
5. Searching for information that is relevant to a particular inquiry would then be a simple operation which could be conducted from one common point, with the option to include or exclude documents pertaining to specific conventions or time periods. This would lead naturally to increased harmonisation of information management practices generally between the MEAs.

ANNEX 13

Harmonization of terminology and classification*Concept Note*

1. Harmonisation of the terminology (both technical and administrative) between the conventions would provide a number of benefits, including enabling useful on-line searches, and effective metadatabases, and as well contribute to improved understanding and communication of information.
2. Areas in need of harmonisation or standardisation include:
 - country naming and coding
 - region naming and coding
 - official/legal terminology (*party, accession, signatory, nomination, listed, etc*)
 - ecological classification systems and terms (*ecosystems, bio-geographic zones, wetland and vegetation classification, land-use and land cover, etc*)
 - taxonomy - to the extent possible adopt standard species names, spelling etc
 - protection level
 - species status (*endangered, threatened, etc*)
 - keywording vocabulary
 - abbreviations
3. In many cases it should be possible to adopt an existing terminology set, such as the ENVOC vocabulary for keywording, IUCN protection categories for protected areas, and so on.
4. In other cases, such as species taxonomy, finding a standard, or even a harmonized approach will take longer and rather more adjustment.
5. Guidance and tools to assist parties to adopt these conventions will also be needed and should be developed through interagency co-operation.

ANNEX 14

Demonstrations of streamlined reporting through electronic means*Concept Note***I. Introduction**

1. Various MEA secretariats are already experimenting with the use of “electronic” means of submitting reports, including on diskette and using web forms. At the same time countries are increasingly using national websites for delivering information at the national level.
2. Contracting parties to each international agreement periodically *submit* a report to the convention secretariat. This is so whether the report is “hard copy” or a computer file, and whether it is sent through the post or by email. The concept of "virtual reporting" has also been proposed, where no report is submitted, rather the information that comprises the report is made available for access by the convention secretariat. This would be done through a linked series of pages on a national website. Secretariats would access the information relevant to them as and when required.
3. An important secondary benefit is the creation of a multi-purpose national information resource that is constantly up-dated and available for research and education, as well as for national policy implementation. It could easily be linked to national SoE processes.

II. Objective

4. The pilot projects and demonstrations described here aim to build on this experience, in particular to:
 - (i) promote the sharing of experience relating to submission using electronic media
 - (ii) demonstrate the potential value and application of “virtual reporting”

III. Proposed activities/Pilot studies

6. The anticipated activities would include the following:
 - encourage the submission of national reports on electronic media, especially in proforma formats established by the MEA
 - review the effectiveness of trials of direct submission of reports as email attachments, in lieu of paper or electronic media
 - pilot test the establishment of a national websites (or linked network of sites) for assembling national reports to international conventions and programmes. At its simplest, the website would simply hold electronic copies of the reports required in order to comply with international agreements.
 - conduct further pilot tests of which would see the convention secretariat accessing the site (on instructions from the Party) to obtain the information needed for meeting reporting obligations, i.e. moving towards full “virtual reporting”.

ANNEX 15

Mechanisms for improving institutional interlinkages*Recommendations*

1. It is clear that achieving and maintaining the desired harmonisation will require on-going means for the five Convention Secretariats to exchange views and co-ordinate actions at the working level, especially with regard to information systems and harmonisation of reporting. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including standing committees, working groups, advisory groups, and shared service providers. The following are some suggestions for the key processes:
 - A. *Co-ordination of scientific methodology considerations and the use of nomenclature, definitions, harmonisation of taxonomies, etc.*
2. Suggestion: A joint Scientific Advisory Committee to address issues of harmonisation of taxonomies, species lists, and scientific methodologies. This shared committee could be considered as scientific advisors to all the Conventions - for instance providing advice to the SBSTTA of CBD. The participation of appropriate international NGOs is also suggested. In addition this Scientific Committee could convene a sub-committee to deal with issues of harmonisation of nomenclature and scientific definitions.
 - B. *Developing or adopting a consistent terminology, thesaurus and key word structure*
3. Suggestion: This could be a specific task for the above noted sub-committee, with the assistance of an international NGO familiar with thesaurus and metadata issues.
 - C. *Harmonisation and inter-linking of Web-sites and other forms of information dissemination, developing and maintaining guidelines on virtual reporting sites, and management of a shared lessons-learned library*
4. Suggestion: A joint Working Group on Information Technology consisting of the "information officers" or "IT Managers" of each convention, with the assistance of a shared international information manager and/or technology consultant. There would seem to be considerable advantage to having an external agency manage the tasks required, under the direction of the Working Group.
 - D. *Developing and co-ordinating a joint capacity building programme in information management and related Internet technology (process d above)*
5. Suggestion: A joint working group, which identifies common capacity building needs, seeks shared funding, and engages shared resources to implement capacity building programmes.