



Australian Government

**Streamlined reporting by Pacific Island
countries to the biodiversity-related
multilateral environmental agreements –
progress report**

October 2009

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary	3
Project History	5
Progress since 19th SPREP Meeting	7
Options to carry the project forward.....	16
Recommendations.....	20
Attachment A – Record of the trial of the template in 2009	21
Attachment B – Paper on the ‘Preconditions for harmonisation of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements’ (UNEP-WCMC).....	25

Executive Summary

1. This report has been prepared by the Australian Government's Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) for consideration under Agenda Item 10.1 'Streamlined reporting by Pacific Island countries (PICs) to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) – progress update' at the 20th Meeting of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) in November 2009.
2. At the 19th SPREP Meeting in September 2008, Members endorsed recommendations under Agenda Item 8.1 'Options to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements – the development of a consolidated reporting template'^{*} for the Australian Government, in collaboration with SPREP, to:
 - a) formally consult with MEA Secretariats on the consolidated reporting template; and
 - b) broaden the trial of the consolidated reporting template to other self-governing PICs in 2009.
3. The Australian Government, in consultation with SPREP, has since sought feedback from the Secretariats of the five main biodiversity-related MEAs on the consolidated reporting template. At the time of writing this report, feedback had been received from four of the five Secretariats. Feedback has not been received from the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
4. The Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provided positive feedback on the template as a model for use by PICs. An overview of feedback received from the Secretariats is presented in this report.

^{*} Further details regarding the streamlined reporting project including the development and trial of the consolidated reporting template can be found in the working papers submitted to the 19th SPREP Meeting in 2008 under Agenda Item 8.1.

5. The trial of the consolidated reporting template was broadened in 2009 to other self-governing PICs - Vanuatu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. As such, the trial of the consolidated reporting template has now taken place in eight PICs.
6. At present, the template is not endorsed for official use as a reporting tool for the biodiversity-related MEAs. For this to happen, the template needs to be endorsed for use by the governing bodies (i.e. contracting parties) of each of the MEAs via an official process, generally the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the respective MEAs.
7. Two recommendations to carry forward the project are outlined below. These recommendations have been discussed with and are supported by the SPREP Secretariat as well as the CITES Secretariat. These recommendations should be carried forward simultaneously to ensure the success of the project:
 - **Recommendation 1:** That the project be brought to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), in particular its Working Group on National Reporting, for discussion and consideration; and
 - **Recommendation 2:** That the project be raised by the Australian Government with support of Pacific Island countries at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2010 for consideration under Agenda Item 21 of the meeting.

Project History

8. In 2007, the Australian Government, in consultation with SPREP, commenced a project to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries (PICs) to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). This project is funded under the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Pacific Governance Support Program.
9. At the 18th SPREP Meeting in September 2007, Members endorsed an option under Agenda Item 6.2 'Options to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries (PICs) to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)' for the Australian Government, in collaboration with SPREP, to develop and trial a consolidated (single) reporting template for PICs to the five main biodiversity-related MEAs:
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
 - Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
 - Convention on Migratory Species (CMS);
 - Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar); and
 - World Heritage Convention (WHC).
10. The consolidated reporting template was drafted in early 2008 and trialled in four PICs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa) in July 2008. Workshops were conducted in each of the trial countries with government officials and other stakeholders who work on the implementation of the biodiversity-related MEAs. The objective of the trial was to determine the suitability of the consolidated reporting template for use in the Pacific. The results of the trial were successful.
11. The reporting template consolidates the separate reporting requirements for the five biodiversity-related MEAs into one template. This means that each PIC would use the consolidated reporting template to develop one national report per reporting period and this report would serve as the national report for any of the five biodiversity-related MEAs to which the PIC is party. The benefits of this to PICs are:
 - a reduction in the amount of time and resources (staff, funds) spent undertaking national reporting for the biodiversity-related MEAs;

- a simplified structure that reduces duplication yet still allows for tracking of progress and achievements in implementing the biodiversity-related MEAs; and
- a reporting template that is tailored to meet the reporting capacity of PICs.

12. At the 19th SPREP Meeting in September 2008 under Agenda Item 8.1. 'Streamlined reporting by Pacific Island countries to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements - the development of a consolidated reporting template', Members agreed, pending formal consultation with the MEA Secretariats and with their support, to broaden the trial of the consolidated reporting template to other self-governing PICs in 2009.

13. This report provides a progress report on activities undertaken in 2009 in relation to the project. Full details on the development and trial of the consolidated reporting template, as well as the template itself, were provided to Members under Agenda Item 8.1 at the 19th SPREP Meeting in 2008.

Progress since 19th SPREP Meeting

Consultation with the Secretariats on the consolidated reporting template

14. Early this year, the Australian Government, in collaboration with SPREP, undertook formal consultation with the biodiversity-related MEA Secretariats to seek their views and support for the use of the template as a reporting tool for the Pacific.
15. The draft template and report on the trial of the template was sent for comment to the five biodiversity-related Secretariats in February 2009. Overall, feedback received from the Secretariats regarding the template was positive. The CBD and CITES Secretariats are provided positive feedback on the template as a potential reporting tool for the Pacific. The CMS Secretariat and the World Heritage Centre stated that while they recognised the value of the template as a reporting tool for the Pacific, they are unable to offer their full support for the template as they have been focussing resources on updating their own reporting processes and are unable to support a new reporting process at this time.
16. The feedback received from the Secretariats (CBD, CITES, CMS, and WHC) is summarised below. Feedback was not received from the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention. The suggested inclusions and alterations to the template that were provided by the Secretariats during the consultation process were incorporated into the most recent draft of the template, where possible.

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

17. The CBD Secretariat provided positive feedback on the template and concept. The Secretariat stated that the template could be a useful tool to present the state of implementation of the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions in the Pacific region. They feel the questions are relevant and useful for PICs, and meet the reporting requirements of the CBD. The Secretariat suggested some additions to the template. These suggestions included questions on the CBD thematic programmes of work such as Island Biodiversity, and Marine and Coastal Biodiversity. They also proposed the inclusion of some questions on cross-cutting issues such as Invasive Alien Species, and Climate Change and Biodiversity.

They affirmed their support for the template as a solid reporting approach for the Pacific that could be extended to other regions that also have limited reporting capacity.

Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

18. The CITES Secretariat provided positive feedback on the template and the inclusion of all the biodiversity-related MEAs that participate in the Biodiversity Liaison Group. They proposed the inclusion of some of their annual reporting requirements, as at present the template focus primarily on their biennial reporting requirements. Other proposed additions were questions about the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The CITES Secretariat stated difficulties in altering their current reporting cycles to suit the three year reporting cycle proposed in the template. The CITES Secretariat included reference to the template in a discussion document on national reports for the 58th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (Geneva, 6-10 July 2009) and brought the template to Parties' attention in this forum.

World Heritage Centre

19. The World Heritage Centre acknowledged the value of consolidating the reporting processes to the biodiversity-related MEAs; however, they believe the inclusion of the World Heritage Convention into the template is problematic. They noted that the mandate of the World Heritage Convention does not completely align with that of the other biodiversity-related MEAs, since it covers both cultural and natural heritage. They feel there could be some misalignment with their mandate due to the biodiversity focus of the template. Other issues outlined by the World Heritage Centre are that they have just revised their reporting process and do not think it would be useful to pursue a two-track reporting process, one for natural and one for cultural World Heritage sites. They also flagged concerns with the proposed three year reporting cycle for the consolidated reporting template as the cycle for periodic reporting under the World Heritage Convention is once every six years. Their reporting cycle is established under the procedures of the World Heritage Convention and does not align with the reporting cycle of the other MEAs.

Secretariat of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

20. The CMS Secretariat is supportive of the concept of harmonisation of national reporting and believes the template has been well designed and highlights the unique habitat requirements of the region. The Secretariat also supports the structure of the template. However, they advised that they have recently launched a new online reporting format in 2008 and are therefore unable to support a competing reporting process at this time.

Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar)

21. No feedback has been received.

Broadening the trial of the consolidated reporting template

22. As per the recommendation agreed under Agenda Item 8.1 at the 19th SPREP Meeting in September 2008, following the formal consultation with the MEA Secretariats, the Australian Government, in collaboration with SPREP, expanded the trial of the consolidated reporting template to other self-governing PICs in 2009.

23. The trial was extended to Vanuatu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The Australian Government project officers travelled to the trial countries to conduct workshops on the template with government officials and other stakeholders who work on the implementation of the biodiversity-related MEAs in these countries. A brief outline of how the trial was conducted in these countries is at Attachment A.

24. A total of eight countries participated in the trial in 2008-09.

25. Expanding the trial to other self-governing PICs was an important component of the work in 2009. The expansion of the trial was useful to ensure a greater number of PICs are familiar with the project and that PICs are well positioned to support the project in international fora. It also provided a useful opportunity to deliver capacity support and advice to the trial countries on national reporting.

26. Countries that participated in the trial in 2009 noted the benefits of using a consolidated reporting model, particularly in terms of the reduction in the amount of resources, staffing and funding that would be required to undertake national

reporting using this model. It was also seen as a valuable mechanism to bring focal points and government officials together to discuss work that they are undertaking or have undertaken in relation to the biodiversity-related MEAs, to share experiences and to identify synergies in work programs relating to the biodiversity-related MEAs.

Preparation of draft national reports using the template

27. National reports are currently under preparation for countries involved in the trial of the consolidated reporting template in 2008-09. The reports will be finalised using the new Adobe Smartforms software, in consultation with the trial countries, and will be made available upon completion as examples of the benefits of using a consolidated reporting model.

Conversion of the template into Adobe LiveCycle software (SmartForms)

28. The template has now been converted from a Microsoft Word document into a SmartForm using Adobe LiveCycle software. Conversion of the template into a SmartForm means the template is now available as a simple, interactive Portable Document Format (PDF) form that is purpose designed to facilitate reporting. The SmartForm version of the template is more interactive than the Microsoft Word version. Both versions, however, will remain available as examples of formatting and layout for the consolidated reporting template. The Microsoft Word version will also be retained in case there is a preference for this format.

29. The Adobe LiveCycle software is built on the Adobe Intelligent Document platform. No new IT infrastructure will be required by PICs to use this software or to send and receive data produced in the SmartForm version of the report. The only requirement for PICs to view and compile the report as a SmartForm is to have the free Adobe Reader application (Acrobat/Adobe Reader 6.0.2 or above).

30. This software has been purpose-designed to improve the collation and management of data entered into the SmartForm. This could also be of benefit to end-users of the template; for example, the Secretariats who will be analysing and interpreting the reports submitted by PICs. The software is designed to link with

existing software platforms used to manage data. Some adjustments may, however, be required to the systems currently used by the Secretariats to collate and analyse data to ensure SmartForm reports are compatible with their existing systems. The SmartForm version is an XML-based template that can be rendered as a PDF or HTML file.

31. Use of the Adobe LiveCycle software is a transitional step towards online reporting. At present, national reports completed using the SmartForm version will be developed as a stand-alone electronic document (offline). However, in the future, these national reports could be completed online and hosted on a website. The transition to online reporting, whilst some time away, could be very beneficial in facilitating national reporting for both contracting parties as well as end-users of the reports, such as Secretariats, donors and other stakeholders.
32. There are benefits to be gained from standardising information and the way it is collated, analysed and presented across the biodiversity-related MEAs. The harmonisation of information formats and reporting standards could facilitate information exchange and provide easier access to information for Parties, MEA Secretariats and other stakeholders, and result in a more efficient use of MEA resources. Ultimately, ensuring the interoperability of information prepared in national reports is important, as information reported on for one MEA could also be useful for another. Using software such as Adobe LiveCycle and a consolidated reporting model for national reporting could facilitate the interoperability and exchange of information between MEAs.

Maintaining linkages with other harmonisation efforts

33. The Australian Government recognises the importance of working with other national, regional and international agencies on approaches to harmonise and streamline reporting. We have continued to work closely with SPREP, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (UNEP-DELIC) and other regional bodies to ensure work on streamlining and harmonisation of national reporting builds on existing knowledge and expertise.

34. Both UNEP and UNEP-WCMC acknowledge that the project provides a useful case study of a regional approach to streamlined reporting. They have also expressed their interest in receiving information on lessons-learned from the implementation of the project.

35. The project continued to generate interest from other regions that also face difficulties meeting their reporting requirements, such as South-East Asia. For example, the project officer was invited to contribute their experience to an Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) workshop on the harmonisation of national reporting (see page 15).

36. A brief outline of linkages between the streamlined reporting project and other work on this topic by other agencies is provided below.

10th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar COP 10)

37. A joint side-event between the Australian Government and UNEP-WCMC took place at Ramsar COP 10 on the 'Harmonisation of national reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs' in October 2008. The side-event was well attended and the streamlined reporting project generated significant interest.

Pacific MEA Hub (SPREP)

38. UNEP has partnered with the European Commission (EC) to develop three regional hubs to support MEA implementation in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions.

39. SPREP will host the Pacific Hub. The Pacific Hub will assist countries to implement their obligations under MEAs. In general, the activities of the Pacific Hub will focus on providing technical assistance and training, as well as policy and advisory support services to enable countries to fulfil their MEA obligations. Some of the proposed activities for the Pacific Hub include investigating and promoting activities to harmonise and streamline national reporting to MEAs.

40. The Australian Government has undertaken preliminary consultation with SPREP to determine how the streamlined reporting work might fit within the work priorities of the Pacific Hub. At the time of writing this report, the Pacific Hub was still in the process of identifying and confirming its work priorities. We will therefore explore

synergies and linkages between the streamlined reporting project and the activities of the Pacific Hub in the coming months once its work plan and capacity have been determined.

*United Nations Environment Programme - World Conservation Monitoring Centre
(UNEP-WCMC)*

41. UNEP-WCMC has continued to work on the harmonisation of national reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs. In June 2009, UNEP-WCMC, in collaboration with UNEP and the Secretariats of the biodiversity-related MEAs, prepared a paper on the 'Preconditions for harmonisation of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements'. The paper is at [Attachment B](#). It provides an overview of progress and work undertaken on the harmonisation of national reporting to date. It is an important framework document as it consolidates and reviews work on this issue. It also outlines challenges as well as options to progress this work.
42. The paper has been developed to inform discussions on the harmonisation of national reporting at the international, regional and national levels. In particular, it will be used to inform meetings of the governing bodies of the MEAs to guide decision-making on this issue. The paper has already been presented at a number of meetings of the governing bodies of the biodiversity-related MEAs for their consideration and endorsement, and will be presented at relevant meetings in 2010.
43. The paper identifies two possible ways forward to harmonise national reporting that were developed as part of the 2006-2008 UNEP Knowledge Management Project. The project was conducted jointly between UNEP-WCMC and UNEP-DELC, and aimed to improve implementation of the biodiversity-related MEAs by developing solutions for the strategic and shared use of biodiversity information. Two ways forward that were explored as part of this project to harmonise national reporting are:
 - a) to further consider and assess the viability of using a core reporting model, as has been adopted by the Human Rights Treaty System; and
 - b) to identify joint thematic reporting frameworks.

44. Importantly, the paper refers positively to the streamlined reporting project for Pacific Island countries and states that 'it is hoped that the project provides a regional perspective of the harmonisation as well as further insights into the feasibility of harmonising reporting formats across the range of biodiversity-related MEAs' (UNEP-WCMC, 2009, pg. 6). It acknowledges that the consolidated reporting template prepared for PICs aligns with the recommendation from UNEP's Knowledge Management Project to trial a core reporting model similar to the Human Rights Treaty System. This is a very strong endorsement of the consolidated reporting template and could lead to further consideration of it as a global reporting tool.

United Nations Environment Programme - Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (UNEP-DELIC)

45. In September 2009, UNEP-DELIC hosted a 'Workshop on Knowledge Management and MEAs' to identify ways forward for UNEP's Knowledge Management Project. Participants included representatives from the Secretariats of a range of MEAs, as well as representatives from environmental agencies and associated bodies that currently provide information services to these conventions, such as Ecolex, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and TEMATEA (Project on Issue-Based Modules).

46. The aim of the workshop was to develop initiatives and solutions to enhance biodiversity knowledge and information management. Discussions focussed on assessing the types of information that can be exchanged within and across cluster groups of MEAs. Other issues included discussion of the harmonisation efforts being employed by Secretariats across MEAs, identification of impediments and possible solutions to achieve data harmonisation/interoperability and shared data standards between MEAs, and the development of effective tools to help collate and process biodiversity data.

47. The outcomes and future directions of UNEP's Knowledge Management Project will be useful for the streamlined reporting project given the focus of this work on identifying synergies and linkages between MEAs.

Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG)

48. The Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG) has continued to work towards identifying synergies and linkages among the main biodiversity-related conventions. The group holds regular meetings and is working towards establishing a more coordinated approach for information exchange. Membership of the BLG comprises the Secretariats of the CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, WHC and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. At the 7th Meeting of the BLG in April 2009, a decision was made to establish a Working Group on National Reporting comprised of a representative from each of the MEA Secretariats. At the time of writing this report the Working Group was not fully established and did not have a programme of work developed. The Working Group could potentially further explore the viability of the consolidated reporting model.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)

49. In 2009, the ACB embarked on a process to streamline national reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs for the ASEAN Member States. The ACB held a workshop in April 2009 for ASEAN Members on the 'Harmonisation of reporting to biodiversity-related conventions'. The workshop aimed to identify approaches to streamline reporting that could be suitable for implementation in the South-East Asian region. The Australian Government was invited to present on the streamlined reporting project for PICs, in particular the trial of the consolidated reporting template, as a possible option to streamline reporting for ASEAN Members. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the consolidated reporting template and provide broader exposure on the project. The ACB will continue to investigate options to progress work on the harmonisation of national reporting in the coming months.

50. We have also been advised by the CITES Secretariat that the streamlined reporting project may be of interest to Western Asia. We will consider opportunities to promote the streamlined reporting project to this group in the future.

Upcoming forums

51. National reporting will likely be discussed in forums such as the 2nd Meeting of the Consultative Group on International Environmental Governance in Rome in October 2009 and the 2nd Ad Hoc Intergovernmental and Multi-stakeholder meeting on an Intergovernmental Science-Policy Interface on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in Nairobi in October 2009. Any decisions made in these forums relating to the harmonisation of national reporting will be given due consideration.

Options to carry the project forward

Obstacles with progressing the trial of the consolidated reporting template

52. The streamlined reporting project has a broad range of benefits for PICs. Conducting the trial in eight PICs has meant that it has been possible to inform a wide audience about the project, and provide capacity building support and advice on national reporting in these countries[†].

53. However, at present, the template is not endorsed for official use as a reporting tool for the biodiversity-related MEAs. For this to happen, the template needs to be endorsed for use by the governing bodies (i.e. contracting parties) of each of the MEAs via an official process, generally the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the respective MEAs as national reporting requirements are determined by them. Thus, decision-making power for further action on the harmonisation of national reporting, including the implementation of the consolidated reporting template, ultimately rests with the contracting parties of the MEAs.

54. There is little value in continuing the trial of the template whilst it is not officially endorsed for use as many PICs have limited resources and time to invest in activities that are not their core business. It is therefore important to determine a proactive and logical way forward for the project that is suitable for all SPREP Members, and provides a mechanism to propel the project forward for international endorsement.

Options

55. Two options to carry forward the project are outlined below. They are not mutually exclusive. The options have been discussed with and are supported by the SPREP Secretariat, and the CITES Secretariat in their capacity as a member of the BLG. The options are designed to reinforce future action on the project and should be undertaken concurrently to ensure a greater chance of success of the project in achieving international endorsement and recognition.

[†] For details of the benefits of the consolidated reporting template refer to the report on the development and trial of the consolidated reporting template that was presented at the 19th SPREP Meeting in 2008.

Option 1: That the project be brought to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), in particular its Working Group on National Reporting, for discussion and consideration

56. Use of the BLG to carry the project forward is a logical option as its mandate is to promote synergies and linkages among the biodiversity-related MEAs. In addition, the BLG has recently established a Working Group on National Reporting that will be comprised of representatives of each of the biodiversity-related Secretariats. The Working Group would be an ideal forum to progress the streamlined reporting project and consolidated reporting model. Ideally, the Working Group could be tasked to further investigate and explore the viability of the use of the consolidated reporting template as a reporting tool.

57. The 8th meeting of the BLG takes place in January 2010. Advice has been sought from the BLG membership regarding the procedures for BLG meetings and an invitation could be sought to have the project added to the agenda for discussion and consideration at this meeting. This would be a useful step to present the project to the group and to determine the level of interest in the project by the BLG.

58. Agreement by the BLG to explore and progress the use of the consolidated reporting template would be highly beneficial and a very positive outcome for the project. It would be particularly useful to determine at the meeting whether the BLG's Working Group on National Reporting could be tasked to further investigate and explore the viability of the consolidated reporting template as a reporting tool. The BLG may require a mandate from contracting parties to the biodiversity-related MEAs via a COP to pursue this work.

Option 2: That the project be raised by the Australian Government with support of Pacific Island countries at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2010 for consideration

59. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) will hold its 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) in Qatar from 13-25 March 2010. National reporting will be discussed under Agenda Item 21 at this meeting.
60. The CITES Secretariat has provided positive feedback on the project. This, and the fact that national reporting will be discussed as a specific agenda item, suggests that the CITES COP 15 is an appropriate forum to raise the consolidated reporting template for consideration by contracting parties.
61. It is therefore proposed that the Australian Government with support of PICs use the agenda item on national reporting at the CITES COP 15 to request the biodiversity-related Secretariats to further investigate and explore the viability of the consolidated reporting template as a reporting tool. This could be done via a resolution raised under Agenda Item 21. The resolution could also suggest that the BLG invite its Working Group on National Reporting to undertake the analytical work.
62. The support of contracting parties to CITES to request the Secretariats of the other biodiversity-related MEAs to further investigate and explore the consolidated reporting template could be a very positive step forward for this project.
63. To ensure other contracting parties to CITES are informed and aware of the project, Australia is willing to prepare an information document for submission to the CITES COP 15 that provides an outline of the streamlined reporting project and the trial of the consolidated reporting template. Australia is also willing to conduct a side-event on the project at COP 15 to ensure contracting parties receive a detailed briefing about the project.
64. It will be important for SPREP Members that are party to CITES to show their support for the project at the COP. It is proposed that further discussion on a draft resolution with SPREP Members that are party to CITES take place in the lead up to the COP.

Next steps

65. Pending SPREP Members' decision at the 20th SPREP Meeting on a way forward for the project, the trial of the template will not be continued due to the fact that it is not officially endorsed as yet and the value in continuing the trial whilst this is the case is limited. Instead, resources will be invested towards ensuring the project receives international consideration and is explored and progressed by the BLG and the Conferences of the Parties to the biodiversity-related MEAs. Work to progress the project in international fora will be undertaken in consultation with SPREP, UNEP-DELC and UNEP-WCMC.
66. Pending Members' agreement, it is proposed to have the project put on the agenda for discussion and consideration at the upcoming meeting of the BLG in January 2010, with the aim of tasking the BLG's Working Group on National Reporting to further investigate and explore the viability of the consolidated reporting template as a reporting tool. Work will also be undertaken in the lead up to the CITES COP to ensure that the project is considered under Agenda Item 21 of the COP. Support for the project from SPREP Members that are party to CITES will be required in the lead up to and during the COP.
-

Recommendations

67. Members are invited to note that continuing the trial of the template whilst it is not officially endorsed as a reporting tool has limited value. It is therefore important to determine a way forward for the project that is suitable for all SPREP Members, and provides a mechanism to propel the project forward in international fora.

68. Members are invited to consider the following recommendations to carry the streamlined reporting project forward internationally:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the project be brought to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group (BLG), in particular its Working Group on National Reporting, for discussion and consideration; and
- **Recommendation 2:** That the project be raised by the Australian Government with support of Pacific Island countries at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2010 for consideration under Agenda Item 21 of the meeting.

69. Members are invited to provide support for the streamlined reporting project in all relevant international fora.

Attachment A – Record of the trial of the template in 2009

VANUATU	
Date of trial:	Tuesday 30 June to Friday 03 July 2009
Consultation:	Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources, Geology, Energy and Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vanuatu Environment Unit
	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Quarantine and Livestock <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Department of Forests
	Global Environment Fund Small Grants Coordinator
	GHD Consultant – Vanuatu Environment Unit
	World Heritage and Tourism Committee - member from Mangaliliu Village.
	Landholders Conservation Initiative
	Foundation of the People of the South Pacific (FSP)
MEAs:	CBD, CITES and WHC
<p>Process</p> <p>The Australian Government officers met with government staff from the Vanuatu Government's Environment Unit, Forest Department and the National Landholders Conservation Initiative to discuss the template. The officers also met with a GHD consultant who worked on the Vanuatu National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA) as well as staff from non-government organisations (NGOs).</p> <p>Due to the resource and time constraints on government staff working on the biodiversity-related MEAs, discussions on the template were kept at a conceptual level to ascertain how a consolidated reporting process might work in Vanuatu.</p>	

TONGA	
Date of trial:	Tuesday 07 July to Wednesday 08 July 2009
Consultation:	Ministry of Lands, Survey, Natural Resources and Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Natural Resources and Environment Planning Division
	Ministry of Agriculture & Food, Forests and Fisheries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Department of Fisheries
	Secretary - Tonga Traditions Committee
	Consultant - Environment Division
	Tonga Community Development Trust (Tonga Trust)
MEAs:	CBD and WHC (<i>CITES - not a member country</i>)
<p>Process</p> <p>The Australian Government officers met with government staff from the Tongan Government's Environment Division, the Department of Fisheries, and the Tonga Traditions Committee to discuss the template. The officers also met with a consultant who worked on Tonga's National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA) and the first National Report to the CBD as well as staff from the Tonga Trust.</p> <p>Due to the resource and time constraints on government staff working on the biodiversity-related MEAs, discussions on the template were kept at a conceptual level to ascertain how a consolidated reporting process might work in Tonga.</p>	

PAPUA NEW GUINEA	
Date of trial:	Tuesday 8 September to Thursday 10 September 2009
Consultation:	Department of Environment and Conservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ World Heritage Secretariat; ➤ Sustainable Lands Management Division; ➤ Legal Services; and ➤ Terrestrial Ecosystems Division.
	Consultant – Conservation International
	The Nature Conservancy
MEAs:	CBD, CITES, Ramsar and WHC
<p>Process</p> <p>A working group of staff from the Department of the Environment and Conservation in Papua New Guinea was established to assist the DEWHA Project Officer with the trial of the template. This working group was comprised of technical officers and the focal points for the biodiversity-related MEAs.</p> <p>The first workshop session aimed to achieve an understanding of how a consolidated reporting process might be implemented and coordinated in Papua New Guinea, as well as the current processes in place to undertake national reporting.</p> <p>Following this, workshop sessions were held with the objective of using the template to draft a national report for Papua New Guinea. The suitability of every section in the template was reviewed and information was provided on activities and initiatives underway in Papua New Guinea.</p>	

SOLOMON ISLANDS	
Date of trial:	Tuesday 22 September to Thursday 24 September 2009
Consultation:	Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Environment Division; and ➤ Conservation Division.
	World Wide Fund For Nature
	The Nature Conservancy
	Solomon Islands Community Conservation Partnership
MEAs:	CBD, CITES, CMS and WHC
<p>Process</p> <p>A working group of staff from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology in the Solomon Islands was established to assist the DEWHA Project Officer with the trial of the template. This working group consisted of the technical officers for the biodiversity-related MEAs.</p> <p>The first workshop session aimed to provide an overview on the value of reporting. This included information on the purpose of reporting, why countries are required to complete national reports, how national reports should be undertaken, and what the information provided by countries is used for.</p> <p>Following this, workshop sessions were held with the objective of using the template to draft a national report for the Solomon Islands. The suitability of every section in the template was reviewed and information was provided on activities and initiatives underway in the Solomon Islands.</p>	

Attachment B – Paper on the ‘Preconditions for harmonisation of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements’ (UNEP-WCMC)



Preconditions for harmonization of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements

Introduction and purpose of this paper

1. Most of the multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) require Parties to report on national implementation on a regular basis. In recent years there has been a growing recognition that the reporting burden for Parties has continued to increase, despite some efforts having been made to simplify and otherwise facilitate MEA reporting. In considering this, it is important to recognize that reporting processes and the reports themselves should be supporting rather than complicating MEA implementation, particularly at the national level. Following on from these observations, there are clear advantages to be obtained from streamlining and/or harmonizing national reporting to these conventions, as well as the underlying national information management. The practical implications of various harmonization options, however, should be well understood.

2. Spanning more than a decade, a series of papers has been written and a number of workshops conducted exploring options for harmonizing and streamlining approaches to reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs, trying to identify options to reduce the reporting burden for Parties (see *Annex I* for the history of efforts towards harmonization of reporting). In addition, the governing bodies of a number of biodiversity-related MEAs have adopted decisions or resolutions supporting this work (see *Annex II* for the mandates provided by biodiversity-related MEAs for harmonization of reporting). In particular, a series of national pilot projects coordinated by UNEP with the support of MEA secretariats (see *Annex I* for details) have provided insights into options for and challenges to harmonization of reporting at the national level where harmonization would need to be ultimately implemented.

3. The harmonization of information management and reporting can be defined as those activities that lead to a more integrated process, reduction of duplication and greater sharing of information. This would support the more efficient and coherent implementation of the conventions and agreements involved. A number of options for harmonization of reporting have been discussed over the years and the pilot projects have tested some of them. The options range from one consolidated report for all the MEAs involved to joint thematic reports between a limited number of MEAs, but they also include the identification of MEA information needs and subsequent reorganization and better alignment and coordination of different reporting formats. Importantly, the options for harmonization extend to the national level where information management could become a coordinated and simplified process between those in charge of delivering and/or assembling information for national reports. These aspects are discussed in more detail further below.

In collaboration with:



4. From 7 to 9 March 2008, UNEP convened a workshop on knowledge management for biodiversity-related conventions and agreements in Cambridge, United Kingdom. The workshop was attended by the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the African – Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the Indian Ocean South-East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA). Among other issues, the workshop discussed recent developments on harmonization of reporting and concluded the following: *A paper on pre-conditions for harmonization of national reporting can help countries understand the rationale for and challenges to harmonization of national reporting. This will be drafted by UNEP-WCMC for secretariats to distribute.*

5. Participants at the workshop felt that, after many years of discussing harmonization of reporting, it was time to move ahead but that there was a need to summarise the lessons from those discussions. This should help to correct possible misperceptions and to explain what is actually feasible or achievable regarding harmonization of reporting and its expected impact in terms of reducing the reporting burden. The purpose of this paper is therefore to inform discussions on harmonization at the meetings of governing bodies to biodiversity-related MEAs as well as at the national level.

Entry points for harmonization of reporting: the global and the national level

6. Harmonization of reporting is a process that needs to be addressed at both global and national levels.

- a) Globally, it affects the reporting formats used by individual conventions, although there remain major questions on the extent to which these can be harmonized. The decision about harmonization at the global level rests with the governing bodies of the MEAs, several of which have provided mandates for continuing work on harmonization (see Annex II).
- b) Importantly, harmonization also needs to be addressed at the national level to be fully effective. Harmonization of reporting has implications for the way biodiversity data and information are generated and managed nationally. It also affects the cooperative arrangements between the MEAs and their focal points within each country.

Obstacles to harmonization of reporting

7. A number of obstacles to harmonization of reporting have been identified. These include at the *global level* the following:

- The reporting processes for most MEAs, although evolving constantly, are well established and have been in place for many years – this might make major moves towards cooperation with other conventions more difficult.
- There is a concern that some States that are not Party to all MEAs involved might have little reason to agree to changes in the reporting process.
- The reporting cycles of MEAs differ considerably, varying between annual reporting and reporting on a six-year cycle.
- MEAs have not always identified what information they require. A thorough consideration of the information needs for the various bodies of MEAs and, not least, for Parties, has in some cases proven helpful for better focusing the requests for information that Parties might agree to provide or governing bodies to agreements might agree to request. This challenge has implications for the reporting process, through which a substantial part of the information needs of MEAs would be materialized.
- Different MEAs might use different terminologies or follow different nomenclatures for species or habitat types/ biomes, which might hamper harmonization efforts.

8. At the *national level*, major obstacles to harmonization of reporting may include the following:

- The information needed for reporting to an MEA might be widely scattered throughout different institutions and organizations, without a central mechanism (such as a national biodiversity database) that brings relevant data and information together.
- There is often a lack of coordination among national focal points or the institutions in charge of national reporting. This leads to repeated calls for the same data and information for national reports to different MEAs reaching the holders of information (e.g. in one year the national focal point to one MEA requests information on forest biodiversity from the national forestry agency while in the following year this agency is asked by the national focal point to another MEA for the same or very similar information).
- In some cases, there may be a lack of clarity or an overlap in the responsibilities of government departments or agencies in charge of different conventions, thus preventing coordination mechanisms from being agreed upon and accepted.
- In many developing countries, there is a lack of human, financial and/or technical capacity to address issues of data and information management as well as coordination between various ministries, agencies and/or stakeholders.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting – general aspects of national reporting

9. ***Purpose of national reporting:*** It is crucial that national reporting is not just seen as a cumbersome obligation arising from an international treaty, but as a tool to support implementation. Reporting serves a variety of purposes, among them:

- demonstrating compliance, including the enactment of appropriate legislation;
- developing an overview of implementation, projects and financial matters;
- identifying relationships to, and interactions with, other MEA processes, including amongst the subject areas covered by the MEAs;
- reflecting on work done and identifying future/further work;
- sharing experience; and
- providing information on the status of biodiversity, for example in the framework of the 2010 biodiversity target.

Most of these aspects, in principle, should involve summarising information that already exists at national level and packaging it for transmittal to the MEAs. Ideally, there should be limited extra burden on national authorities because they would already be compiling much of the information needed for their own domestic purposes. In this respect, difficulties in reporting to the MEAs may reflect either a mismatch between information required for the MEAs and at national level, and/or inadequate national information management.

10. **The use of reported information:** While the articles of many MEAs define in general terms the contents of national reports, it is essential that governing bodies agree about the way the reported information will be used, e.g. for overviews of the status of implementation of treaties, for guiding decisions or resolutions of governing bodies, and for the preparation of publications. It is also essential that the reported information is actually used, and that Parties can clearly see and understand the use that has been made of the reports that they have submitted.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting at the national level

11. **Arrangements between MEA focal points:** At the national level, harmonization of reporting requires cooperative arrangements between national focal points and/or the institutions in charge of different MEAs. In some countries, there is a national committee which coordinates the implementation of a single biodiversity-related MEA (e.g. CITES or Ramsar). There are also a few national coordination bodies comprising the focal points of the biodiversity-related MEAs, and a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa, have established national coordination committees for the Rio Conventions (CBD, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification).

12. **Arrangements between data-collecting institutions:** Any harmonization efforts at the national level would benefit from cooperative arrangements between the national institutions that collect and manage biodiversity data and information. This could result in an information strategy, a more coordinated approach to information networking, and/or a more integrated and coordinated biodiversity information system. Whatever the cooperative arrangement, it is essential that information relevant for national reporting to MEAs is available and easily accessible for the focal points or agencies that assemble the national reports. For this to happen, some of the following issues would normally need to be addressed:

- Is the information needed for national purposes and for MEA reporting collected from all relevant data holders, including private and non-governmental organizations?
- Can data standards be harmonized?
- How is the information stored, retrieved, analysed and made available?
- Are there clear roles and responsibilities for collecting data and preparing national information and MEA reports based upon it?
- Is there duplication in information collection and storage?
- How often is the information updated?
- How easily can MEA focal points - and other stakeholders - access the information?
- Do MEA focal points have the authority and means to coordinate all aspects of the obligations for national implementation and to access the information available to support national implementation?

13. **Links between supporting reporting and supporting implementation:** Any improvement in data and information management and reporting at the national level will also support, and further encourage, harmonized national implementation. Indeed any support for national reporting should be considered in terms of support for national implementation and the work of national focal points in overseeing that implementation. Such support would also extend to the involvement in national implementation of indigenous and local communities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Preconditions for harmonization of reporting at the global (MEA) level

14. **Clarity about information needs:** The governing bodies of MEAs often decide to request a large amount of information from Parties and sometimes other stakeholders. In some cases, two or more MEAs require the same or overlapping information. This fact raises the following questions:

- Is there scope for reducing the requests to Parties by one MEA because the information is collected already by another MEA?
- What is the balance between the need for information on the activities undertaken by Parties for implementation of the convention (processes) and the results of these activities (outcomes)?
- Similarly, what is the balance between qualitative and quantitative information?

These questions may need to be put into a wider context:

- What are the relations between MEAs in terms of decisions and actions taken to ensure their coherent implementation and arrangements for accessing the information required for that purpose?
- What information is available from sources outside a particular MEA and therefore, what information would need to be requested through the national reports of related MEAs?

The options that information technology offers in making available information from other MEAs or additional sources outside a particular MEA could play an important role in this regard. Online reporting, for example, makes it easier to provide information, which has been reported to one MEA, to the bodies and Parties of the other MEAs.

15. **Inter-MEA agreements on information needs and management:** The governing bodies of MEAs might not only wish to identify their own information needs but also where these requirements overlap with those of other MEAs. This could lead to agreements among MEAs on who is collecting what information, avoiding overlaps and duplication. It could also result in MEAs agreeing on which MEA will request which information from Parties, and subsequently how the information acquired will be shared among the MEAs.

16. **Joint systems of information management:** MEAs are increasingly considering joint systems of information management. This approach not only allows for a more efficient use of MEA resources, but also for easier access to information by Parties and other stakeholders. The Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) has established a CPF Portal on Forest Reporting (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar/en/>), a good example for such joint information management systems. In addition, the concept of a core report to all biodiversity-related conventions with smaller treaty-specific add-on-reports (as used by the Human Rights Treaty System) warrants further exploration (see <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm> for more information). Some MEAs are also examining ways to harmonize information formats, protocols and standards with a view to facilitating information exchange, development of new information products, and support for knowledge management initiatives. Online reporting could play a particularly important role here, as it makes the delivery of national reports by Parties and the analysis of reported information easier, with a view of improved access to such information across related MEAs.

17. **Addressing the different reporting cycles:** The widely differing reporting cycles of the biodiversity-related MEAs have consistently been identified as a major obstacle for harmonization. Harmonizing these cycles might be difficult and would involve mandates from the governing bodies of the MEAs involved and in some cases provisions within the MEAs themselves. Those differing cycles might, however, not be a real problem if the systems of information collection are better streamlined at the national level. If, for example, information at the national level, which is relevant to MEA reports, is made available on a regular basis (e.g. annually), focal points could use such information to fulfil their reporting obligations whatever the reporting cycles. The concept of a core report with treaty-specific add-on reports referred to in the previous paragraph would allow for the treaty-specific reports to be submitted by the different deadlines for the MEAs involved. If agreed, the core report could be updated on a regular basis independent of the reporting cycles. In this context, the MEAs could also consider agreeing on the simultaneous and coordinated production of summary reports, compiled from information from national reports and other reports. Each agreement could produce a summary of the status of, e.g. wetlands, migratory species, species in trade, the natural world heritage, or biodiversity in general. Such reports do exist but they have not been produced by the various MEAs in a coordinated manner. Preparation of these reports may require technical and/or financial support of some kind.

18. **Mandates from governing bodies:** Efforts to harmonize national reporting between MEAs need the mandate from the governing bodies of the agreements concerned. A number of biodiversity-related agreements have provided such mandates in recent years (see Annex II). Future major steps in harmonization would require renewed mandates – which themselves would need to be harmonized between the MEAs involved, with an expectation that the governing bodies would then take full account of the outcomes of the mandated work.

19. **Role of key stakeholders:** Moving the harmonization agenda forward at the MEA level requires commitment from key stakeholders, including Parties and secretariats. The CPF Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting referred to above provides a good example: it was established through the initiative of committed staff members of the MEAs and agencies involved. Committed stakeholders would need to take, or suggest, leadership in driving the harmonization agenda forward.

Conclusions and suggestions for the way forward

20. Many years of discussing and testing potential approaches to harmonization of national reporting to the biodiversity-related MEAs and beyond have produced a wealth of insight into the challenges and options. This paper highlights the most relevant of these. It is obvious that a more practical approach is now needed, addressing the preconditions identified above and moving towards harmonization.

21. The 2006-2008 UNEP Knowledge Management project (see <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm>) explored two possible ways forward:

- a) Firstly, the approach to harmonization that the Human Rights Treaty System has taken, where Parties are requested to provide a core report relevant for all treaties involved, supplemented by smaller treaty-specific reports that address the specific information needs of the MEAs involved. The work on harmonization of reporting under the Knowledge Management project suggested a framework for such a core report for CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention, AEWA and IOSEA.
- b) Secondly, the project suggested joint thematic reporting as a way to implement harmonization of reporting. Following on from a mandate from the CBD Conference of the Parties on joint thematic reporting with the Ramsar Convention on inland waters (see Annex II), a first step towards a comprehensive framework for joint inland water reporting was developed, as was a similar framework for reporting on drylands for the CBD and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. In addition, a framework for joint reporting for CMS, AEWA and IOSEA was developed.

22. Testing harmonization for specific themes of relevance to a limited number of MEAs, such as inland waters (see the previous paragraph), might result in important lessons about the feasibility of harmonization of national reporting. Such themes could be easily identified, and the lessons from the discussions between CBD and Ramsar on potential joint reporting on inland waters be analysed in order to inform similar approaches to harmonization for joint themes between MEAs.

23. An approach not dissimilar to the one of the Human Rights Treaty System is currently (as of February 2009) being explored through a project of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), in Pacific Island Countries. This project is testing a consolidated template for reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, World Heritage Convention). The draft template consists of a 'core report' for all the five conventions, with annexes providing supplementary information specific to the individual conventions. It is hoped that the project provides a regional perspective of harmonization as well as further insights into the feasibility of harmonizing reporting formats across the range of biodiversity-related MEAs.

24. In addition consideration should be given to the potential value of additional guidance for Parties on how to manage data and information in a harmonized manner for their own domestic purposes so that it is available for input to national reports for MEAs at the same time as supporting national focal points in tracking implementation and achievement of objectives.

Annex I
A short history of efforts towards harmonization of reporting
to the biodiversity-related agreements

This annex is an attempt to provide an overview of the history of key events addressing harmonization of reporting. It is restricted to the biodiversity-related conventions and agreements and closely-related activities. It does not include the meetings of governing bodies of the conventions where harmonization was discussed (see Annex II for the mandates provided by the conventions) nor does it contain the guidance that bodies of the individual MEAs have provided on national reporting, such as guidelines and report formats.

1997 *Guiding Principles for National Reporting* (prepared for CBD SBSTTA 3, see <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbstta/sbstta-03/information/sbstta-03-inf-16-en.pdf>; redrafted for the 2000 workshop; see below and <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop/BP1.pdf>)

1998 *Feasibility Study for a Harmonised Information Management Infrastructure for Biodiversity-related Treaties*, by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, commissioned by CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention and UNEP (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/Feasibility%20Study%201998.pdf>)

1999 United Nations University International Conference on Inter-linkages: Synergies and Coordination between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, 14-16 July, Tokyo, Japan (see conference report at <http://www.ias.unu.edu/binaries/Interlinkages.PDF>). A paper on *Harmonizing the information management infrastructure for biodiversity-related treaties* was presented to the conference (http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/Harmonizing%20info%20management_JH%20&%20MC_1999.pdf)

2000 *Towards the harmonization of National Reporting to Biodiversity-related Treaties* – UNEP/MEA secretariats workshop, 30-31 October, Cambridge, UK (http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop_00.cfm)

2001-2003 UNEP pilot projects on harmonization of national reporting in Ghana, Indonesia, Panama and the Seychelles (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/projects.htm>)

2001-2004 Issue Management Group *Harmonization of Information Management and Reporting for Biodiversity-related Treaties* of the Environment Management Group. The activities included drafting a Harmonization Action Plan (<http://www.unemg.org/document/harmonization.php>)

2002 Establishment of the Task Force on Streamlining Forest-related Reporting of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/7692/en/>); the Task Force set up the CPF Portal on Forest Reporting (<http://www.fao.org/forestry/cpf-mar/en/>)

2004 *Towards the harmonization of national reporting to biodiversity-related treaties* – UNEP/UNEP-WCMC/MEA secretariats workshop, 22-23 September, Haasrode, Belgium (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/workshop.htm>)

2006 UNEP Knowledge Management meeting - Workshop on harmonization of reporting, 16 June, Cambridge, UK (<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/SUMMAR.pdf>)

From 2007 Project of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), on harmonization of national reporting in Pacific Island Countries. This project is testing a consolidated template for reporting to the biodiversity-related conventions (CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar, World Heritage Convention).

2008 UNEP/MEA secretariats workshop on Knowledge Management among Biodiversity-related MEAs, 7-9 March, Cambridge, UK (http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/docs/KM%20workshop%20March2008%20report_final_18_Apr.pdf)

2009 ASEAN Workshop on Harmonization of Reporting to Biodiversity-Related Conventions, 15-17 April, Hanoi, Vietnam (http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=58&Itemid=127 and <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/conventions/harmonization/papers.htm>)

Annex II
Mandates for harmonization of reporting by governing bodies
of the biodiversity-related agreements

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

COP Decision IX/19 (2008) (Biological diversity of inland water ecosystems): The COP invites the Ramsar Convention, the United Nations Environment Programme and its World Conservation Monitoring Centre to continue their joint work on harmonized reporting between the Ramsar Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

COP decision VIII/14 (2006): The COP takes note of the recommendations from the Workshop Towards the Harmonization of National Reporting to Biodiversity-related Treaties, organized by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC) and held in September 2004 (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/1/INF/6), and encourages the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions, in liaison with UNEP-WCMC and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, to give further consideration to issues of harmonization of reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions, and to develop proposals thereon.

COP decision VII/25 (2004): The COP encourages the Executive Secretary to continue to participate in the ongoing efforts to harmonize and streamline the national reporting processes of the Convention with those of other biodiversity related conventions and processes with a view to reduce reporting burdens on Parties and increase synergies among biodiversity related conventions, without impeding progress on improvements to the national reporting process to meet the needs of Parties to the Convention.

COP decision VI/20 and decision VI/25 (2002): The COP welcomes the work of the United Nations Environment Programme on the harmonization of environmental reporting and encourages its continuation, whilst recognizing the need to ensure that this does not affect the ability of the Conference of the Parties to adjust national reporting procedures under the Convention in order to better meet the needs of Parties.

CITES

COP decision 14.38 (2007): The Secretariat shall a) continue to collaborate with the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions, UNEP and other bodies in order to facilitate the harmonization of knowledge management and reporting; b) identify additional ways to reduce the reporting burden on Parties, *inter alia*, in the context of its ongoing review of the Resolutions and Decisions of the Conference of the Parties, its support to the Standing Committee on electronic permitting and its work with IUCN or other organizations to compile and analyse CITES-related reports; and c) report at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the results of this work.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)

COP resolution 9.4 (2008): The COP requests the Secretariat to advance harmonization of reporting with other international biodiversity agreements through the development of common reporting modules, via the framework of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and in consultation with UNEP-WCMC.

COP resolution 8.11 (2005): The COP invites the Executive Secretary, in collaboration with the Biodiversity Liaison Group and UNEP, to advance the harmonization of reporting both within the UNEP-CMS 'family' of Agreements and between relevant conventions.

COP resolution 7.9 (2002): The COP invites the CMS Secretariat and UNEP-WCMC to work closely with the CBD Secretariat in developing a format for CBD Parties to report, through their national reports, on the extent to which they address migratory species at the national level, and on cooperation with other Range States as part of on-going efforts to harmonise national reporting requirements of the biodiversity-related conventions.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

COP resolution X.11 (2008): Noting that the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in its decision VIII/20 invited the Ramsar Convention to take the lead in developing a framework for harmonized reporting on inland waters, and that UNEP and UNEP-WCMC have commenced this work, as acknowledged by decision IX/19 of the 9th meeting of the CBD COP ... the Conference of the Contracting Parties ... requests the Secretariat to continue its participation in the UNEP-WCMC project for developing tools for the on-line use of the biodiversity-related conventions, including those for possible on-line harmonized reporting by the respective parties; ... also requests the Secretariat and the STRP to continue to cooperate with the CBD Secretariat, UNEP, and UNEP-WCMC in the development of a framework for harmonized reporting on implementation on inland waters for the CBD and the Ramsar Convention.

COP resolution IX.5 (2005): The Conference of the Contracting Parties, ... aware that UNEP-WCMC held a consultative workshop on the issue of Harmonized National Reporting (Haasrode, Belgium, September 2004), that this issue has also been discussed by the Biodiversity Liaison Group established under CBD Decision VII/26, and that this workshop specifically noted seven key issues concerned with the harmonization of national reporting (COP DOC. 32) ... requests the Secretary General to continue working with UNEP's Division of Environmental Conventions and the secretariats of other biodiversity-related conventions and agreements concerning more effective convention implementation. Topics could include, inter alia, ... harmonization of national reporting requirements subject to the mandate of each individual convention bearing in mind their Contracting Parties.

COP resolution VIII.26 (2002): The Conference of the Contracting Parties ... urges parties to consider initiating trials of joint reporting involving Ramsar and other multilateral environmental agreements, seeking the advice, as appropriate, of the United Nations Environment Programme.

African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)

Resolution 4.7 (2008): The Meeting of the Parties... requests the Secretariat, working closely with the Secretariat of the CMS, and with the assistance of UNEP, as necessary, to further advance harmonization of the national report formats of AEWA and CMS, where possible.

Resolution 3.5 (2005): The Meeting of the Parties... instructs the Agreement Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Technical Committee and the CMS Secretariat, to develop an online national report format to be submitted for approval to MOP4. The format should seek to advance harmonization of reporting with other international biodiversity agreements through the development of common reporting modules.
