



This paper was provided to the Joint Committee for decision/discussion or information. Please refer to the minutes of the meeting for Committee's position on the paper.

To view other Joint Committee papers and minutes visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2671>

To find out more about JNCC visit <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-1729>

## **JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

### **FUTURE DIRECTION FOR JNCC'S GLOBAL ADVICE PROGRAMME**

#### **Paper by Vin Fleming**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 JNCC's Global Advice programme, together with the European Advice programme, provides the major contribution to the *European and international influencing* strategic objective. The programme targets, as set out in JNCC's corporate plan for 2007-20 are to:
  - i. provide high-quality scientific support to enable effective UK implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), focusing on those MEAs that deliver the greatest nature conservation benefits; and
  - ii. provide high-quality, timely advice in support of the global conservation of biological and geological diversity, paying particular attention to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) target of significantly reducing the rate of global biodiversity loss by 2010.
- 1.2 In 2004, Government established an Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity (IDMGB) to deal with international biodiversity issues. This group comprises ministers from Defra, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, along with the JNCC Chairman.
- 1.3 Over the past two years, the IDMGB has been considering the UK priorities for supporting international biodiversity conservation. JNCC has contributed significantly to this work, part of which was a review of MEAs that was discussed by the Joint Committee in 2005 (paper JNCC 05 D13). Recently, the IDMGB has agreed some thematic priorities for the UK.
- 1.4 As part of this process, it seemed appropriate to review JNCC's Global Advice programme and in particular our support to MEAs (hereafter referred to collectively as mechanisms).

#### **2. Scope and aims of the JNCC review**

- 2.1 The review relates only to nature conservation outside the metropolitan UK (i.e. it includes our Overseas Territories). It does not cover UK implementation of the various mechanisms under consideration.

- 2.2 The aims of the review were to:
- i. identify those international mechanisms which are most deserving of JNCC input and which achieve the greatest impact for our limited resources; and
  - ii. recommend how priorities might be promoted within and between mechanisms.
- 2.3 Geodiversity has been considered only insofar as it falls within the remit of the relevant mechanisms. Most of the mechanisms relate only to biodiversity.
- 2.4 The review covered all the ‘big five’ MEAs, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the ‘Ramsar’ Convention on Wetlands of International Importance and the World Heritage Convention (WHC), as well as a range of relevant, but more minor, mechanisms. It also considered JNCC’s contribution to the implementation of Defra’s delivery plan for WSSD commitments on international biodiversity<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.5 Nevertheless, the review did not encompass the entirety of JNCC involvement in international mechanisms. For example, it did not cover the full range of marine mechanisms to which JNCC contributes.
- 2.6 The criteria used to assess the various mechanisms under review were:
- i. relevance to the JNCC strategy and to other JNCC programmes;
  - ii. nature and level of demand from key customers and stakeholders;
  - iii. effectiveness of mechanisms at mitigating the direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss identified in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (derived from earlier JNCC analysis);
  - iv. actual and potential contribution of the mechanisms in promoting the agreed thematic priorities (see section 3 below);
  - v. relevance to Defra’s delivery plan for WSSD commitments on international biodiversity;
  - vi. current level of JNCC resources (staff time and financial) committed to the various mechanisms, the impact we can have per unit effort and whether we have special skills to influence the mechanism.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/international/wssd/documents/biodiversity-2006.pdf>

- 2.7 In applying the criteria set out in 2.6, it has to be recognised that JNCC and, indeed, the UK, does not have an entirely free hand in deciding where to direct resources. The UK has ratified each of the MEAs under review and cannot simply stop all involvement in these agreements; nor, in our role as Government adviser, is JNCC able to do so if our advice is requested. Nevertheless, there is potential flexibility to adjust resource inputs to ensure they are commensurate with the conservation benefits which might accrue from our involvement.
- 2.8 JNCC's key stakeholders for work on international nature conservation are Defra and other UK Government departments, devolved administrations and the country agencies. Typically, we have a greater continuity of involvement in the agreements than the customers we advise. Our expertise is also often highly valued by the secretariats and other parties to the various agreements, who may look to JNCC to support them in areas of work that contribute to the implementation of the MEA as a whole (JNCC's support to the CBD on the ecosystem approach being just one example). Accordingly, we need to consider the risks, as well as benefits, of any change in JNCC involvement, not only to JNCC but to the mechanisms themselves.

### **3. Thematic priorities**

- 3.1 Following an assessment of the thematic priorities endorsed by the IDMGB and of the main objectives in the UK's WSSD delivery plan for international biodiversity, four areas were identified where JNCC could make a key contribution to achieving the WSSD 2010 target:
- i. avoiding over-exploitation by improving the governance of natural resources (especially in the areas of fisheries and forestry);
  - ii. enhancing the integration of biodiversity considerations into other sectors and promoting sustainable production and consumption;
  - iii. integrating more effectively biodiversity considerations into policies and actions dealing with adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change;
  - iv. strengthening the evidence base to promote and support the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, in particular by enhancing approaches to the collection, management and dissemination of scientific data and by demonstrating the benefits of biodiversity to human well-being (e.g. through ecosystem valuation);
- 3.2 Support for biodiversity conservation in the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies was also highlighted by the IDMGB as an area for operational focus. This is a high priority for JNCC, and is addressed through our Overseas Territories programme.

- 3.3 Although the priorities set out in 3.1 refer only to biodiversity (because of the scope of the WSSD 2010 target and the remit of the IDMGB), implementation of the priorities by JNCC should also include geodiversity.

#### 4. Results of the review

- 4.1 The main conclusions arising from the review are:

- i. the major conventions (e.g. CBD, CITES and Ramsar) are generally the most effective at countering biodiversity loss and offer the greatest opportunity to promote the priority themes listed in 3.1. The CBD emerges as the agreement with the greatest scope in this respect, perhaps not surprisingly given its *de facto* role as an umbrella agreement;
- ii. these major agreements currently receive the greatest input of resources from JNCC;
- iii. most of the minor agreements, which are more typically focused on a limited range of taxa and/or which have a regional focus (e.g. the African-Eurasian Waterbirds Agreement and the Agreement on the Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas) currently receive significantly less effort from JNCC. However, low resource input does not necessarily imply that the agreements have no benefits or are of low importance – it may simply mean that they do not demand much input between meetings;
- iv. in some cases, JNCC invests significant effort into taxon- or region-specific agreements. An example is the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels – the relevant species are a high priority in global terms and, through our Overseas Territories, the UK holds approximately 40% of the world's breeding albatrosses.

- 4.2 By and large, JNCC resources are therefore already focused on those agreements which are likely to be the most effective and which offer the greatest scope to address priority issues. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to consider whether this greater resource input is being used to best effect (indeed, whether the input is large enough in some cases) and whether we are taking a co-ordinated approach to similar issues across agreements. The most influential agreements can also be the ones that are hardest to influence and it may be that we could get greater returns for our effort elsewhere. JNCC or UK input may be disproportionately more important to the minor agreements than it is to some of the major ones.

- 4.3 One shortcoming of the review to date is that it has only looked at where JNCC currently puts effort. It has not identified mechanisms with which JNCC does not currently engage but which might offer opportunities to pursue thematic priorities. Examples might include the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and mechanisms to address global forest conservation and management. Likewise, we need to be aware of agreements which are on the

horizon and to consider what priority we should give to supporting these. For example, an agreement is currently being negotiated on migratory African-Eurasian raptors under the CMS umbrella and where the UK, with JNCC support, has taken a lead role.

## 5. Next steps

- 5.1 In order to facilitate a coherent and consistent approach to the four thematic priorities within and between the various mechanisms, we will prepare an action plan for each theme. In the course of this process we will:
- i. review our resource input into the various mechanisms to ensure this is being used most effectively and is commensurate with the nature conservation gains that can be achieved;
  - ii. undertake gap analyses for each thematic priority so that we can identify areas where effort ought to be directed;
  - iii. prepare position statements on key issues to underpin our provision of advice;
  - iv. clarify if, and how, we might focus effort geographically or on key ecosystems;
  - v. consider how JNCC or, indeed, the UK might enhance the effectiveness of our input to agreements without a significant increase in resources.
- 5.2 We may have to accept that agreements with low resource input, and with less scope to promote broader issues, are of lower priority if resources are limited. However, any decision to reduce JNCC input to agreements where our input is already low should be taken only after consultation with key stakeholders and after a review of the risks and benefits of such reduction, recognising that our input may be proportionately more significant in smaller agreements.
- 5.3 We will review our style of engagement with the various mechanisms to identify where JNCC input might have greatest influence, e.g. whether this is best achieved through greater input to the technical bodies of Conventions, through European Community co-ordination processes and/or to the Conferences of the Parties.
- 5.4 The conservation of geodiversity is outside the scope of nearly all of the international mechanisms considered here (although it forms a component of the World Heritage Convention). However, this issue will be addressed as part of an assessment of JNCC's future Earth heritage priorities that will be presented to the Joint Committee later in 2007. We will also review marine mechanisms as part of a review of the future direction of JNCC's Marine Management Advice programme.