

PROGRAMME OF WORK ON PROTECTED AREAS OF THE CBD: ACTUAL SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

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Six years ago, in February 2004, the CBD Parties made the most comprehensive and specific protected area commitments ever made by the international community, by adopting the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA). The objectives, structure, and targets of the PoWPA are given in Annexure. The PoWPA enshrines the development of participatory, ecologically representative and effectively managed national and regional systems of protected areas, stretching where necessary across national boundaries, integrating into other land uses and contributing to human well-being. By emphasizing the equitable sharing of costs and benefits, recognizing the various governance types and by giving prominence to management effectiveness and multiple benefits, the PoWPA is the most comprehensive global plan of action for effective implementation of protected areas (from designation to ongoing and effective management) and can be considered as a defining framework or “blueprint” for protected areas for the next decades (Stolton *et al* 2008; Chape *et al* 2008). It is not an exaggeration to claim that the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas is the Convention’s most successful initiative, as since CBD came into force in 1993, the world’s protected areas have increased by nearly 100% in absolute numbers and by about 60% in total area.

Objectives, structure and targets of PoWPA

The overall objective of the PoWPA is to establish and maintain, by 2010, for terrestrial areas and by 2012 for marine areas, “comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative systems of protected areas” that, collectively, will significantly reduce the rate of loss of global biodiversity.

Contents of the programme of work

The programme of work on protected areas consists of four interlinked elements mutually reinforcing and cross-cutting in their implementation. In essence, programme element 1 deals with what and where protected area systems need to conserve. Programme elements 2 and 3 address the enabling activities that will ensure the successful implementation of the other programme elements, including issues such as the policy environment, governance, participation and capacity-building. Programme element 4 covers the steps needed for assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of actions taken under programme elements 1 to 3. Each programme element consists of specific goals, outcome-oriented targets and related activities. The programme of work contains 16 goals with corresponding targets that set specific dates by which respective goals have to be completed. In many cases, the programme of work identifies indicators needed for measuring progress towards the goals. A list of activities, 92 in total, follows each paired goal and target.

Programme elements

Programme element 1 “Direct actions for planning, selecting, establishing, strengthening and managing protected area systems and sites” is in many ways the essence of the programme of work. The goals, targets and activities of this programme element, taken together, define the objectives, nature and extent of the national protected area systems that will ultimately constitute an effective and ecologically representative global network of national and regional protected area systems. Programme element 1 includes establishing and strengthening national and regional systems of protected areas; integrating protected areas into the larger landscape and seascape, and into various sectors of planning; strengthening collaboration between countries for transboundary protected areas conservation; improving site-based planning and management; and preventing the negative impacts of key threats on protected areas.

Programme element 2 is on “governance, participation, equity and benefit-sharing.” Simply stated, achieving the ultimate goal of the programme of work – establishing comprehensive, ecologically representative and effective protected area systems – requires serious and systematic attention to socioeconomic and institutional matters, not just to biological factors and criteria. This programme element includes promoting equity and benefit-sharing through increasing the benefits of protected areas for indigenous and local communities, and enhancing the involvement of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders. The central importance for protected areas of

governance, participation, equity and benefit-sharing is underscored by devoting one of the four elements of the programme of work to this set of enabling activities.

Programme element 3 “Enabling activities” is about creating an environment that would ensure successful implementation of the other programme elements. It includes providing policies and institutional mechanisms; building capacity for the planning, designating, establishing and managing protected areas; applying appropriate technologies; ensuring financial sustainability; and strengthening communication, education and public awareness. Programme element 3 provides an umbrella for a number of crucial areas where action is needed to establish the conditions and generate the resources, capacities and public support to plan, establish and effectively manage comprehensive, ecologically representative systems of protected areas. Achieving the goals and targets under this programme activity clearly requires action by policy- and decision-makers of many sectors other besides protected areas. Policies, laws and resulting economic incentives in the broader economy are the responsibility of a wide range of government agencies and legislative bodies. In many cases, they can only be changed with strong leadership from senior political leaders.

Programme element 4 “Standards, assessment and monitoring” includes developing and adopting minimum standards and best practices; evaluating and improving the effectiveness of protected area management; assessing and monitoring protected area status and trends; and ensuring that scientific knowledge contributes to protected area establishment and effectiveness. Programme element 4 addresses the need for Parties to put in place systems to assess and monitor the effectiveness of their protected area systems. To do so requires a set of standards and criteria, against which to measure the effectiveness of management, a system for evaluating the effectiveness of management interventions, and ongoing monitoring of status and trends of both protected areas themselves and the biodiversity that they contain. In addition, it is widely recognized that scientific knowledge of biodiversity needs to be improved and more widely disseminated to those responsible for protected areas management. Implementing the goals under programme element 4 is therefore essential for determining whether the actions taken under programme elements 1 to 3 have their intended impacts, and for allowing for changes in management strategies and actions where that is not the case.

Targets

The programme of work on protected areas contains specific time-bound targets primarily organized around national-level actions. The overall target date for implementation of the programme of work is 2010 for terrestrial and 2012 for marine areas. The Conference of the Parties adopted intermediate targets for many activities with time-bound deadlines of either 2008, 2010/2012 or 2015, in recognition of the fact that many of the goals and targets will require a phased, step-by-step approach.

Among the seven goals of the programme of work on protected areas for which Parties agreed to achieve by 2008, progress at global level was fair in preventing and mitigating the negative impacts of key threats (goal 1.5), in reviewing and revising appropriate policies (goal 3.1), in strengthening communication and public awareness (goal 3.5), and in developing minimum standards (goal 4.1), and the targets were partially achieved. However, in promoting equity and benefit sharing (goal 2.1), in enhancing involvement of indigenous and local communities (goal 2.2) and in ensuring financial sustainability (goal 3.4), the progress was limited and way behind in achieving the targets. For the six goals with target date of 2010, progress was fair in establishing and strengthening national and regional protected area systems (goals 1.1), in establishing regional networks and transboundary protected areas (goal 1.3), in developing comprehensive capacity building (goal 3.2), in developing and applying appropriate technologies (goal 3.3), in evaluating protected area management effectiveness (goal 4.2), and in the effective monitoring of protected area coverage, status and trends (goal 4.3), and the targets could be partially achieved. Progress in site based protected area planning and management (goal 1.4) with target date of 2012 was fair and the target will likely be partially achieved. In integrating protected areas into broader land- and sea-scapes (goal 1.2), with target date of 2015, some progress is obvious and the target may likely be achieved provided more efforts are put in place in the next five years. Goal 4.4 on ensuring scientific knowledge in establishment and management of protected areas, showed good progress to date Among Africa, Asia, Latin America and Central and Easter Europe regions. Latin America and CEE regions showed relatively better overall progress than Asia and Africa regions.

PoWPA Beyond 2010 – Perspectives for the Future

Despite considerable progress, there are still some areas that are lagging behind.

- The social costs and benefits, the effective participation of indigenous and local communities and the diversification of various governance types need more commitment and resolute actions.
- The evaluation and improvement of management effectiveness, and the development and implementation of sustainable finance plans with diversified portfolios of traditional and innovative financial mechanisms need enhanced measures.
- Marine Protected Areas: although the terrestrial protected areas coverage exceeds 12% of the world's terrestrial surface, marine protected areas (MPAs) cover only 5.9% of the world's territorial waters, growing in a mean annual growth rate 4.6% per annum.
- Climate change considerations for both mitigation and adaptation responses need to be incorporated.

These issues will be considered by the SBSTTA at its 14th meeting in May, while undertaking the in-depth review of the programme of the work prior to COP 10.