

Inter-Linkages

Synergies and Coordination between Multilateral Environmental Agreements

United Nations University

Tokyo, Japan
July 1999

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Synergies and Coordination between
Multilateral Environmental Agreements



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CITES - Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

CMS - Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

ITTO - International Tropical Timber Organization

LRTAP - Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution

OZONE - Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol

RAMSAR - The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

UN DOALOS - UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea

DESA - UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WB - The World Bank Group

WMO - World Meteorological Organization

GLOBE Japan - Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment

FIELD - Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development

IISD - International Institute for Sustainable Development

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Foreword

The United Nations University International Conference on Inter-linkages: Synergies and Coordination between Multilateral Environmental Agreements, 14-16 July, 1999, attracted a significant number of high level participants and representatives from a number of Environmental Secretariats, various members of the UN family, and the governments of concerned countries. The active support of these institutions and organizations served as a testament to both the timeliness and the importance of the conference and the issues to which it was addressed.

The main theme of the conference was the search for effective environmental management through the development of better-integrated management mechanisms, based on synergies that exist naturally within the global environment. At present, the international legislative environment does not always promote the development of a coordinated approach to the solving of common problems. Yet, it is crucial that multilateral environmental agreements be considered within the broader context provided by the increasingly more complex web of international treaties, conventions, and agreements.

The UNU organised the Inter-linkages conference with the aim of exploring the potential for a more integrated approach to environmental treaty making and environmental management. Underpinning the initiative, was the assumption that the global environment is naturally synergistic and that any approach to environmental problem solving would be more efficient, and more effective, if this factor were used to greater advantage. The global environment, in its entirety, is composed of complex, interrelated ecosystems. Yet, we are only just now beginning to understand the implications of these natural inter-linkages for effective environmental management.

A recognition of the need for a more synergistic, integrated, approach to environmental management is already making its way into the institutional decision making process. Many agencies have taken the lead on this issue and several important initiatives are already underway. These have included the UNDP/ Sustainable Energy and Environment Division (SEED) Expert Meeting on Synergies in National Implementation between the Rio Agreements 1997, the World Bank/NASA/UNEP report entitled *Protecting Our Planet Securing Our Future 1998*, and the UNEP/World Conservation Monitoring Center's *Feasibility Study for Information Management Infrastructure*, also 1997.

Calls for a more integrated approach are also beginning to emanate from within the UN system and at the executive level of a number of multilateral environmental agreements. At the *Rio plus Five General Assembly Special Session (A/S-19/29, 27 June, 1997)*, for example, the Assembly adopted a report touching on issues of collaboration in regard to the implementation of the various Rio conventions. In the same year, in his *Programme for Reform*, the UN Secretary General, himself, highlighted the need for a more integrated, systematic, approach to policies and programmes. In 1998 the UN Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements endorsed these views when it found that current UN activities are characterized by substantial overlaps, unrecognized linkages and gaps.

To explore these implications the UNU brought together, within the conference arena, a number of eminent academics and practitioners, scientists, government representatives, and experts in the field. We particularly endeavored to ensure the participation of senior representatives from all the key environment related secretariats. Our aim was to provide a forum through which the natural synergies within our environment could be examined within the broader context of environmental management. The objective was to generate discussion on the practical steps that can be taken to more effectively utilize these natural synergies, as we believe that they may hold the key to better integrated, effective, and efficient coordination between different multilateral environmental agreements.

The specific aims of the conference were:

- * To create awareness of the importance of synergies and coordination at the public, governmental, and inter-governmental level.
- * To survey existing initiatives on synergies and coordination between MEAs.
- * To foster discussion and interaction among international institutions, academics, practitioners, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders who can cooperate to identify and examine opportunities for synergy and coordination.
- * To identify concrete mechanisms, 'next steps', and feasible win-win paths forward on this important issue.

In an effort to foster meaningful discussion the conference, for the most part, was divided into four working groups. These groups provided a more focused setting in which significant progress was made in relation to crucial aspects of the current system of environmental management.

The first working group focused upon information systems and information exchange. It is the field of information that provides, potentially, the greatest opportunity for creating synergies and inter-linkages between multilateral environmental agreements. This working group examined the issue of information harmonization, exchange, and reporting requirements among environmental and sustainable development institutions. The group identified a number of practical ways to improve the sharing of sets of data at the international institutional level. Several methods of harmonizing the reporting requirements and information systems of various environmental conventions were also identified. In addition, a number of ways to improve the collection, organization, and dissemination of information relevant to each convention process were proposed.

The second working group focused upon the issue of finance as this provides one of the keys to achieving sustainable development. As the number and variety of environment related conventions increases, the need to make the 'environmental dollar' stretch even further only becomes greater. The group addressed their task with the recognition that financial mechanisms could be made more efficient, not only, in terms of their lending and reporting requirements and practices, but also in the sense that they play a strategic role in the quest for greater integration. It was noted that financial mechanisms could have a positive impact on environmental management if they succeed in directing finance in such a way that promotes the development of synergistic projects and initiatives. The group offered several recommendations in terms of how this could be achieved.

The 'issue management' approach, identified within the report of the Secretary General on *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, provided the focus of the third working group. In his report, the Secretary General defined the 'issue management concept' as a practical method of coordinating activities that require an integrated, systematic, approach to issues mandated by various governing bodies of the UN, and involved inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. Yet, the issue management approach has not been developed to the point where it has been operationalized extensively within multilateral environmental agreements and institutions.

The issue management working group examined the issue of land management as a case study for issue management and, from this, explored how the approach could best be utilized within the field of environmental management. The group formulated a set of guiding principles relevant to the implementation of the issue management approach between environmental secretariats and institutions.

The fourth working group, focusing on scientific mechanisms, was open to the public and also

broadcast via the internet. This working group endeavored to explore the inter-linkages that exist at the scientific level within the global environment, and outlined the practical measures necessary to ensure that these inter-linkages are utilized effectively within our system of environmental governance. Emphasis was placed on identifying the types of mechanisms that will be required to locate synergies and incorporate them within the scientific and technical requirements of existing, as well as future, conventions.

Within the overall conference structure, a special working group was also convened to discuss the broader issue of Synergies for Sustainable Development. This working group was comprised of eminent experts whose lengthy practical experience offered them a unique, and valuable, perspective from which to examine and assess the current system of environmental management. This group considered the manner in which environmental treaties are negotiated. They examined how this impacts on the level of policy coherence, coordination and synergism between environmental treaties and between the environment and other multilateral regimes. They also explored ways in which the process of treaty making can be improved in order to increase policy coherence, coordination and synergism.

The Inter-linkages Conference extended upon various other initiatives that have been undertaken within the UNU, and by both the Institute of Advanced Studies, and the Global Environmental Information Centre in relation to the issue of environmental inter-linkages. The conference represented only the beginning of a process of exploration of the potential for integration at both the national, and the international level, necessary to ensure effective and efficient environmental governance. To this end the UNU intends to continue its work in this area with a specific focus on the potential for greater integration and policy co-ordination at the national level. We propose to host a similar conference, in the year 2000, that will reflect this specific focus.

Given its unique position between academia and the UN system the UNU is well placed to host this important initiative. The University's task is to undertake advanced research into pressing global issues of importance to the UN and its member states and there is, perhaps, no other issue that fits this description as completely as the need to protect our global environment, not just for ourselves, but for succeeding generations.

The University is indebted to the many participants and contributors who helped make the conference a success. In particular, we would like to thank the authors who provided background papers prior to the conference (listed in Annex One). We would also like to express our appreciation to the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD), for their efforts in providing summary reports for the conference, including, the initial draft of this report. Thank you, also, to the staff at UNU Headquarters, GEIC, and the UNU/IAS for their unending dedication and support, without which, the conference would simply not have been possible.

Hans van Ginkel
Rector, United Nations University

1. Introduction

Defining the Origin and the Scope of the Challenge

In the environmental realm, treaty making has often been segregated on the basis of topic, sector, or territory. The result has been the negotiation of treaties that may overlap and conflict with each other. In some instances, the implementation of one treaty may undermine the very principles upon which another is based. It is also the case that the network of environmentally related treaties, that has expanded along with our understanding of our planet, is in danger of becoming unnecessarily complicated. This places additional burdens at the national level, as signatories struggle to meet their obligations under several different agreements.

If MEAs were better co-ordinated, this may help to alleviate some of these burdens and also:

- * Promote the efficient use of international and national resources;
- * Ensure that internationally agreed environmental laws and policies are mutually supportive, and;
- * Balance the potentially competing international agendas for promoting environmental protection and the law, policy, and institutions designed to promote other objectives, such as enhancing international trade and investment.

Research and analysis recognises that the need for greater international cooperation is not unique to global environmental governance. The fundamental starting point for any international law and policy making is the sovereign and independent nation state. States have tended to consent to new laws and institutions, such as MEAs, in an ad hoc manner, and only when growing awareness, and political momentum, force a response to a new problem. This momentum can be channelled through a variety of existing institutions and may lead to the creation of new institutions. The result is fragmentation.

There have been a number of proposals to create an overarching, unitary structure for global environmental governance. Yet states have not yet, nor are they likely to soon, consented to such an approach. The co-ordination efforts of overarching bodies such as the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have been difficult because their mandates have been too vague and too broad, particularly in relation to the powers states have been willing to grant them. Besides, shortcomings in the effectiveness of MEAs are, in part, attributable to weaknesses in the ability of international law and international institutions generally to create or enforce rules. No amount of co-ordination of MEAs will overcome these fundamental shortcomings.

Divergent views exist in terms of the scope and seriousness of the implications of this fragmented governance for the effectiveness of MEAs. Some analysts call for strong co-ordination between MEAs, while others suggest that the absence of centralised procedures and institutions is a strength of the status quo, as it promotes healthy competition and opportunities for learning.

The ability of the international system to generate new MEAs is often cited as evidence of the success of the present system. It is also common, however, to express concern over the bewildering number of MEAs, and to invoke an image of overlap and confusion. Treaty secretariats have indeed been physically dispersed around the globe, and intergovernmental meetings tend to take place in whatever country is willing and able to host them. It is possible to calculate the real and growing costs to international institutions, governments, and organisations that participate in MEAs. These costs, when multiplied by a large and growing number of agreements and meetings, can appear overwhelming.

Within a practical analysis, however, fewer than a dozen MEAs emerge as being sufficiently global in their membership and in their reach to merit serious concern regarding overlap or conflict. While there is a growing appreciation of environmental relationships across national boundaries and regions, a relatively narrow range of environmental threats are truly global in scale. The challenges of global environmental governance are neither unique, nor insurmountable, and progress has already been made to promote coherence and effectiveness.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Research reveals that, despite the apparent incoherence in the process by which MEAs are designed, the international community has been remarkably adept at anticipating and avoiding conflict, both among MEAs and between MEAs and other, potentially competing, regimes.

This coherence has been achieved through:

- * Formal mechanisms,
- * Informal, pragmatic approaches to implementation, and
- * The self-restraint of policy makers, who have chosen not to exploit gaps or conflicts that might otherwise have led to disputes.

Indeed, it is possible to catalogue an impressive number of mechanisms, both formal and informal, that have already been put in place to promote co-ordination of environmental policy at the international level.

Formal co-ordination through the conscious design of treaty rules, and through the decisions of Conferences of the Parties, has proved useful in staking out the distinct jurisdictions of certain MEAs. These rules and decisions may help avoid potential conflicts. This co-ordination has, however, taken place without the intervention of an overarching institution or process. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that an overarching regime might have led to harder bargaining between parties, detrimental trade-offs, and weaker rules.

Agreeing upon formal rules for accommodating potential conflicts between MEAs and, for example, the WTO, may prove more difficult. While a wide array of proposals has emerged as to how best to balance the potentially competing objectives of environmental protection and trade liberalisation, agreement has not yet been possible. Recent developments in WTO jurisprudence suggest that trade-related environmental measures, when backed by an MEA, would be more than likely to survive a WTO challenge. While some comfort can be taken from the fact that no MEA has yet been challenged directly under the WTO, if a dispute does arise, it will likely be the WTO's compulsory dispute settlement system that makes the final judgement as to which regime prevails.

The physical dispersal of treaty secretariats has been cited, by some, as a major lost opportunity for synergy and co-ordination. As intergovernmental meetings often take place at the seat of the secretariat, this dispersal has also had an impact on the ability of governments to provide regular representation to these meetings. Specifically, opportunities to support the permanent representation of developing country government delegations working on international environmental issues in a single location were clearly lost. It has, however, been suggested that physical co-location would not, in itself, have guaranteed synergies, and that well-managed agencies located in different parts of the world have had long histories of close collaboration.

Some MEA secretariats have sought, with the support of their parties, to patch themselves together through the use of formal agreements. These have proved to be generally formalistic and empty documents, although they have encouraged a process of interaction and provided a mandate for information exchange and reciprocal representation between regimes that could prove useful. Similar techniques have also been employed to link MEAs with potential "competitors" such as the WTO. MEA Secretariats are regularly invited to brief the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment on MEA trade-related issues.

A kind of spontaneous and organic co-ordination has taken place through the efforts of individual participants in the MEA processes. The proliferation of regimes and the significant (though still limited) resources made available through MEAs, has led to the emergence of a new breed of "super-delegate", and to the growing number of specialist MEA-focused NGOs. These individuals and groups may spend their entire working year following the meetings of the various MEA institutions, drawing attention to potential conflicts and cross-pollinating ideas between agreements.

Co-ordination between institutions appears to have developed more readily when a clear division of labour is made between policy-making functions, and the provision of scientific and technical expertise or capacity building. The scientific, technical and capacity building resources of the UN system, and other existing international and non-governmental organisations, have served the policy making needs of the treaty bodies well, particularly in the areas of climate change and biodiversity. Through the efforts of these institutions, international instruments have been gradually coming to terms with the ecological interconnectivity of the areas they seek to regulate, and a number of potential conflicts have been avoided.

These observations do not imply that conflicts will never arise, or that greater efforts at co-ordination are unwarranted. Even the suggestion that the lack of co-ordination leads to healthy competition implicitly recognises that the MEAs are and must be sufficiently "linked", formally or informally, to be able to "compete" through exchange information and experience.

A fundamental starting point for environmental law and policy is science. The bio-/geo-physical relationships between the sectors, substances, and activities that MEAs seek to protect or regulate, provide an obvious organising principle for MEA co-ordination. From this starting point, researchers often call for closer co-ordination on the basis of ecosystems, target substances, or protected species. Broader organising principles, most notably the concept of "sustainable development", have provided a less concrete and, therefore, a less helpful basis for co-ordination.

A common denominator for such analyses is an emphasis on improving the individual and combined environmental effectiveness and cost effectiveness of MEAs. One methodology for assessing the effectiveness of each MEA is to analyse its ability to promote, as efficiently as possible:

- * Output (decision making that leads to new rules and norms)
- * Outcome (changes in behaviour in the target actors)
- * Impacts (the desired improvements in the environment problem)

Co-ordination has the potential to improve each of these aspects of MEA effectiveness by promoting the coherence of rules and norms, sending mutually enforcing signals about behavioural change, and ensuring that the desired impacts on the environment of one regime do not undermine the desired impacts of another.

Pragmatic approaches to designing effective institutions support the adage that "form should

follow function." It is possible to identify a range of functions typically carried out by the procedures and institutions created by MEA.

Among the functions identified are:

- * Agenda setting
- * Decision-making for rules and norms
- * Information gathering and management
- * Scientific, technological and economic assessments
- * Capacity Building
- * Technical and Financial Support
- * Assessment of Country Performance
- * Non-compliance Response/Dispute Settlement
- * Review of Regime Performance

Different types of institutions have been built up either within, or external to, MEAs that have been designed or assigned to carry out these functions.

These include:

- * Conferences of Parties
- * Secretariats
- * Bodies for Scientific and Technological Advice
- * Bodies for Technical Assessment of Information
- * Bodies for Assessing Compliance and Responding to Non-Compliance
- * Financial Institutions
- * Capacity Building Institutions

The principle of subsidiarity, which calls for decisions to be taken at a level appropriate to the problem they address, is often emphasised. It has been noted that many of the ecosystems of concern are best defined, understood, and protected at the regional or local level rather than the global level. A number of studies suggest that, within certain sectors, MEAs or other international agreements or institutions that have a broad mandate and offer general, unifying, principles could serve as umbrella agreements. These, or new umbrella agreements, could co-ordinate the narrower and more implementation-focused efforts of other MEAs, or help to provide a regular focal point for agenda setting and co-ordination. It has also been suggested, however, that global co-ordination could lead to unnecessary inflexibility, and in some circumstances should be restricted to dealing with conflict avoidance, the provision of financial assistance, and to facilitating information exchange for "lessons learned".

The related principle of comparative advantage recognises that international institutions are endowed with different mandates, legal personality and capacity, resources, and expertise. The most successful attempts at formal co-operation have been careful to recognise this principle in dividing labour among international institutions. Several studies have emphasised the difference between primarily administrative agencies (such as Secretariats) which are generally constrained to operating within the mandate given to them by governments; and intergovernmental bodies (such as the treaty COPs) which can by the volition of their member states change their own mandates and direction.

Finally, initiatives on inter-linkages must be sensitive to fact that efforts at co-ordination will arouse

vested institutional interests or, what could be described as, the threat of "turf wars". Drives for efficiency, while often motivated by the scarcity of resources, do not necessary lead to the availability of additional resources. In other words, existing institutions are perfectly aware that efficiency gains, whether they are achieved through increased co-ordination or heightened competition, may lead to a bottom line of budget cuts and job losses. Better-resourced MEAs are likely to prove less willing to co-operate out of concern that they will end up with a smaller slice of the pie; less-efficient, or under-resourced, institutions may press for heightened levels of co-operation in an attempt to benefit from others' resources.

2. Harmonisation of Information Systems and Information Exchanges

Background

An important aspect of synergy that can exist between MEAs, lies in the harmonisation of methodologies, procedures, and formats for the gathering and analysis of information, required of the Parties to environmental and sustainable development agreements. The importance of information lies in the fact that it is usually the basis of most aspects of a multilateral agreement. From negotiation to compliance, all parties to an agreement need information in a prompt and reliable way. Studies on existing conventions on the environment have shown, however, that much work is still required in this area.

One key problem with information use and provision relating to MEAs is that, often, the ways in which information is prepared and used varies from one convention to another. This places a burden, not only the signatory countries who are party to these conventions, but also the secretariats themselves as they cannot easily share knowledge between them. Obviously, the problem is not purely structural as the type of information required by each user also varies. Yet, opportunities do exist in the harmonisation of information systems and exchanges between MEAs.

Information is key at both the national and international levels. At the national level, information harmonisation can lead to increased capacity and better compliance to convention requirements. At the international level, opportunities exist to increase the amount and quality of information available and at the same time find new ways of utilising information

The benefits of information harmonisation are that it could lead to greater compliance with reporting requirements, more effective monitoring, more accessible information, and better, more consistent, information. Another significant benefit is that more efficient harmonisation has the potential to reduce the costs involved in providing and processing relevant information.

Recommendations

There are several ways of exploring the use of information. The discussion in this report focuses on the information needs of regimes that deal with overlapping ecosystems or substances. An attempt has also been made to provide examples of "best practice" that may serve to provide universal lessons for regimes that may have no substantive overlaps.

Through examining the efforts made, thus far, by treaty secretariats, and NGOs in identifying informational synergies and techniques, a range of different services and functions related to information can be identified. These include capacity building and the training of negotiators, compliance assessment, and attempts to raise public awareness. Information technologies such as databases, list serves, and web sites have vastly improved the ability of MEAs to process and disseminate information.

General overviews of the potential synergies in information and reporting requirements are provided in the *UNDP Sustainable Energy and Environment Division (UNDP/SEED) report, Synergies in National Implementation between the Rio Agreements (1997)*. Within this study it is noted that there are three areas of physical overlap among the main Rio instruments: forests, dry land areas, and the impacts of

climate change. These areas could, if made the focus of a collaborative effort between the concerned agencies, yield valuable synergistic actions.

Specifically, it is recommended in the report that Parties seek ways to:

- * Establish common definitions of terms and indicators
- * Establish commonality in data among the instruments
- * Identify where data already exist
- * Encourage custodians of data to share with other institutions
- * Identify data gaps and develop plans to fill them
- * Develop the necessary capacity for data integration and analysis

In regard to the biodiversity-related treaties, the *Feasibility Study for Information Management Infrastructure* (1998), sponsored by UNEP and carried out by the World Conservation Monitoring Center, has proved to be useful. This study provides the outline of a feasibility study for the harmonisation of information management structure, at both the international and the national level, for five MEAs: the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species, the Convention on Migratory Species, the Ramsar Convention, and the World Heritage Convention.

Co-ordinated approaches to information management in these regimes could:

- * Encourage development of good information management practice
- * Facilitate integration and/or sharing of information
- * Ensure that only necessary information is requested from parties
- * Ensure that information is used in an efficient manner

Their analysis suggests that a standard approach to information collection would:

- * Enable the data to be used easily for more than one convention
- * Facilitate the production of cross-convention summaries (where there are links)
- * Serve to encourage greater co-ordination between national agencies/focal points

Specific actions that would be required to implement their recommendations focus on the need to ensure consistency in the use of vocabulary, terminology, and information technology.

The climate change regime could, some have suggested, learn lessons from the Montreal Protocol's efforts to gather and analyse data on the trade, production, and consumption of target gases. In particular co-operating through the World Customs Organisation in developing harmonised customs codes for the trade in relevant substances may help Parties to track the substances necessary to estimate, or double-check, emissions data. The role of financial institutions and implementing agencies in building the necessary capacity for information management in developing country Parties will also provide valuable lessons and opportunities for synergies between the ozone and climate change regimes. There are also opportunities for capacity building in the area of information management.

There are key issues that relate to information harmonisation within MEAs:

(i) *Sharing Data Internationally*

Data sharing and transparency are desirable, and normal in scientific circles, but are not universally welcomed in the political arena. Sharing of data in this sense, refers to the exchange of information between MEAs (i.e. between secretariats of conventions) and between secretariats and the public.

Internet technology and e-mail are breaking down the barriers, although they are not yet available everywhere and this constrains capacity in some parts of the world. This does not mean, however, that the potential for harmonisation should be driven, or constrained, by technology. Rather the technology needed to achieve identified objectives for information exchange and harmonisation must be identified and delivered at the implementation stage.

Data and information range from measured atmospheric-oceanographic-biosphere-solid earth variables to national implementation reports from parties and analytical documentation from MEA secretariats. Significant data reporting is currently required of Parties to more than fifteen different MEAs. This data is assembled and archived by the respective secretariats which submit reports to their governing bodies for review and action.

While biodiversity-related treaties are exchanging their data among themselves successfully, similar practices could be promoted among emissions-related MEAs. Before investing in broadening the scope of practices, past experience should be built upon (such as the WCMC *Feasibility Study* and UNDP *Synergy Workshop*) and some pilot studies should be undertaken.

In addition, it would be helpful to convene key information persons from MEA secretariats and relevant supporting organisations (including knowledge-brokers such as UNEP, WCMC, IPCC, IISD, UNU/GEIC) to discuss strategies for synergy. One topic of discussion could be a common entry point via the World Wide Web for all MEAs. As well as assisting policy-makers and researchers, a shared home on the web could help create a positive perception of synergy and co-ordination.

A point of reference in the future should be the upcoming review of Chapter 40 of Agenda 21 (on information needs) by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in 2001, and the "Rio + 10" meeting in 2002.

(ii) *Harmonising Reporting*

Many governments have expressed the concern that they are becoming over-burdened by MEA with reporting requirements, and that reporting has become an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Many governments already gather information for their own national requirements. Efforts could be made to reduce the reporting burden, and build the capacity to provide data, if international reporting obligations were synchronised and mainstreamed with national requirements.

The biodiversity-related treaties have already been analysed systematically to identify the information needs implied by their provisions. Those needs have been classified and compared across treaties in a matrix of data elements. This effort has identified real opportunities to use national data for two or more MEA reports. On the other hand, the procedure also identifies MEA information needs that are not yet met by national practices and need to be introduced. These analyses should be extended to other treaties as necessary.

Information needed for MEA reporting is typically dispersed among several ministries. This means that each ministry is constantly addressing other ministries for missing data. An analytical approach that identifies the fundamental data elements will allow each ministry to provide easy access to data within its competence, allowing report compilers to prepare their integrated reports with the minimum of inconvenience. This approach (modular reporting) implies the development of a core team of specialists working across ministries, communicating and co-operating with each other (see Capacity Building below). This concept parallels the Conventions Co-ordination Meetings facilitated by UNEP.

(iii) *Improving Data Collection*

Substantial increases in finance available for data collection are unlikely in the present climate and efforts

will need to focus on achieving more with the same resources. However, financial mechanisms (such as the GEF for the Rio conventions) should recognise that information management is a legitimate priority, and should not be capped to make room for infrastructure-based investments. MEA secretariats should be more aggressive in recommending frameworks, methodologies and best practice for data collection to their Parties. Existing additional sources of repeatedly monitored data should be identified and exploited where they meet the required standards.

For example:

- * Other global data-gathering networks should be identified and mobilised to assist data gathering for one or more MEAs;
- * IUCN's Commissions could be harnessed by states party to MEAs, such as; the CBD, World Heritage and Ramsar Conventions to help provide data on species and protected areas, thereby reducing duplicative reporting;
- * Regional organisations are developing environmental information infrastructures and data collection procedures. These programmes should be encouraged to harmonise with MEAs;
- * Universities and research groups sometimes monitor environmental variables. They should be encouraged to support national implementation of MEAs;
- * Remote sensing/GIS is an under-utilised resource that should be focused, more explicitly, on MEA monitoring and implementation;
- * Development banks are rich sources of baseline data deriving from their project cycles. Ways should be found to capture, repatriate, and mobilise those data for application to national monitoring programmes;
- * Improvements in data retrieval could be accomplished by adopting common thesauri and key words.

(iv) *Improving Public Information*

Any attempt to improve public awareness of MEAs should have clearly defined rationales, target groups, and success criteria. The Rio conventions explicitly encourage public awareness, as well as co-operation between conventions. However, MEAs should not focus on the delivery of direct mass public information services. A better strategy is to build relationships with intermediaries such as media, NGOs, and the private sector and provide them with materials for onward transmission. In doing so, concrete examples of environmental data, or analyses that appeal directly to the public, should be used (such as personal CO₂ output tables). This strategy for improving public information dissemination through intermediaries depends upon adequate engagement of those intermediaries in MEA processes, without compromising inter-governmental business. Transmission of information to the public in appropriate languages is fundamental to success, although this will require additional financial resources.

(v) *Capacity Building*

National capacity to gather, organise and mobilise data relevant to MEAs is fundamental to MEA success. Without this, opportunities will be lost to critically assess baseline circumstances, define priorities, and evaluate progress. Without these fundamental skills, existing investments will be short-lived and fail to improve environmental conditions. In parallel, states need the capacity to engage in dialogue with stakeholders, analyse MEA-derived scientific information and develop appropriate policies through negotiations. These political skills are as important as the technical and scientific skills whose necessity is perhaps more self-evident. Capacity building should be focused on the development of national core teams able to handle MEA information as needed for assessment and reporting. In some areas (such as the Caribbean), small nations may work together to develop regional core teams. The focus of these teams should be on both MEAs and national planning objectives/needs. Inter-disciplinary linkages

should be encouraged, for example to health, housing, education, energy and transport. Synergy of capacity building programmes with educational policy is particularly important in order to adjust national mind-sets and avoid repetitive and expensive reinforcement of capacity in the older, professional cadres. Capacity-building programmes should build upon existing training opportunities, methodologies, and lessons learned. There is the potential for a customisable "toolbox" approach.

Conclusions

Effective management of information and the development of a knowledge base are essential to the successful implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. Without baseline environmental assessments and regular monitoring of indicators and success criteria, MEAs will fall into disrepute and be marginalised from national level environmental programmes. For this reason, serious attention should be paid to information management in MEAs.

Synergies between MEAs are hindered by incompatibilities in information systems, and in methodologies and schedules for assessment and reporting. The harmonisation of information systems and information exchange should be a high priority in the work plans of MEAs.

Conferences of the Parties to the MEAs should all include harmonisation and rationalisation of information systems on their agendas, and empower their secretariats to take the first steps towards identifying needs and opportunities. One way forward would be for the UN General Assembly to request all MEAs to find ways to improve data harmonisation and usefulness. However, recognising that secretariats often lack sufficient human resources in information systems, and also the fact that many secretariats will share the same needs, it would be operationally efficient to engage specialised service providers to support these endeavours.

It is important to establish a target date for real advances in information support to environmental assessment and planning. Rio + 10 (Stockholm + 30) conferences will take place in 2002, and a state of the world report will certainly be required as part of those events. A needs assessment for that report should be drawn up, information sources and gaps identified, and full advantage taken of the assessment and reporting potential that rests with the multilateral environmental agreements. Meanwhile the CSD will consider Chapter 40 of Agenda 21 in April 2001, on the subject "Information for Decision-Makers". The special session of the UN General Assembly on the *Programme of Actions for Small Island Developing States* in 1999, and the *World Bank Conference on Knowledge Management* offer further opportunities to take these ideas forward.

These recommendations should assist in moving forward from the era of environmental data and information to the era of environmental knowledge. This switch in terminology implies more than mere window-dressing. It means harnessing the full power of information technology and of scientific environmental assessment to safeguard the environmental quality of the earth.

3. Finance

Background

Clearly, finance is an area where substantial conceptual and institutional overlaps already exist. The concept of common but differentiated responsibilities, incremental costs financing and additional financial resources already bind the ozone, biodiversity and climate change regimes together. The Global Environment Facility, which funds all three regimes, is the leading example of a MEA inter-linkage. This section aims to identify potential synergies that may arise from the design, financing, and implementation of activities and projects in countries eligible for financial support under MEAs.

Generally, the critical role for financial institutions and implementing agencies is in the provision of a common resource to more than one MEA. The formal aspects of the relationship between various MEAs and the Global Environment Facility suggest that these inter-linkages may provide a model for similar bonds between MEAs, or between MEAs and other international institutions. There is a broader range of financial mechanisms that directly, or indirectly, support the co-ordination of finance policy and financial flows to MEAs. These include both government and private sector initiatives.

Recommendations

A possible list of immediate and concrete measures that the donor community might undertake, in collaboration with recipient countries and financial institutions, to promote synergies in the design and implementation of projects undertaken to promote MEAs may include:

- * The systematic review of ongoing projects;
- * Reviewing the environmental impact assessment procedures for bilateral development co-operation, and;
- * Raising public awareness of global environmental issues.

The financial mechanism of one MEA could, for example, fund the incremental cost of upgrading the projects or activities funded by the financial mechanism of another MEA to ensure that the objectives of both regimes are met. A need exists, for financial resources to be focused on capacity building, based on concrete examples of where minimal investments have reaped substantial rewards in the form of behavioural change.

Two specific opportunities for synergy and coordination in MEA finance may be, usefully, explored in more detail.

These are:

- * The potential for funding agencies to do more to promote projects that may create synergistic effects across more than one area of global environmental concern;
- * The potential for these agencies to develop a more systematic approach to recipient and project eligibility requirements, and monitoring and evaluation.

Other issues worthy of further consideration include:

- * How current financial mechanisms, existing arrangements, and donor institutions can encourage and support projects that promote synergies;
- * What possibilities exist for creating common lending criteria, reporting policies between multilateral and bilateral donor agencies;
- * What are the opportunities to strengthen capacity at the national level that promotes integrated and better co-ordinated policy making processes and synergistic implementation of environmental and sustainable development agreements, and;
- * What innovative and alternative financing methods are possible, at the national and local level, for projects that have multiple or synergistic benefits.

(i) *Synergies at the National Level*

MEA focal points should make greater efforts to engage relevant economic and financial planning authorities to identify how MEA commitments fit into national development frameworks. This co-ordination work would require specific resources.

The capacity building priorities at the national level include:

- * Developing the capacity of actors to understand and identify synergies for relevant MEAs;
- * Increased awareness of existing funding resources and means to access them;
- * Capacity to assess, monitor and report on the progress achieved in implementing MEAs. This should include the efforts by local actors and small and medium-size enterprises;
- * Evaluation and valuation methods, as well as environmental impact assessments.

(ii) *Role of External Actors in Promoting Synergies in Finance for Sustainable Development*

The consideration of the scope for creating common lending criteria and policies among multilateral and bilateral funding agencies may not be feasible at this time. One common lending criteria, the concept of incremental cost, has proved difficult to operationalise and can undermine the principle of host country "ownership" by overemphasising the global benefits associated with any project. In the meantime, systematic efforts to collect case material documenting the scope for synergies between MEA objectives and broader sustainable development priorities would be useful. There is a need for reliable statistical information on donor funding.

Principles that could promote synergistic funding by external actors include:

- * Flexible program-based approaches with long-term funding time-frames should be preferred over project-based approaches;
- * De-centralised management incorporating democratic governance and ownership;
- * Local capacity building;
- * Resource flows that leverage additional local resources;
- * Greater use of qualitative criteria in project evaluations;
- * Greater flexibility in the criteria for allocating resources for MEA implementation.

(iii) *Innovative Financing*

In the long-term, an assessment of the adequacy of existing mechanisms and the need for new financial mechanisms could be considered. National environmental funds and the proposed Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol, provided they are structured properly and account for development objectives, could play a positive role in developing synergistic projects.

Special efforts should be made to promote public-private partnerships at the local level to develop synergies. The use of incentive-based instruments at the national level to internalise environmental externalities may help make available additional fiscal resources to realise MEA objectives and commitments.

Conclusions

Synergies among MEAs should be pursued only where significant benefit is identified. Activities must be demand-driven. Capacity to develop synergistic projects is required at all levels, most critically at the local and national level. It is even more important to seek synergies between MEAs and socio-economic development priorities, including poverty reduction. This is relevant at the local, regional, and national levels.

There is a need to harmonise host and donor priorities in project preparation and design. Implementation of MEAs in developing countries and countries in transition must reinforce and complement socio-economic development objectives in order to be sustainable. There is a need for building the capacity of developing country negotiators to participate effectively in MEA negotiations. Consideration should continue to be given to enhancing the effectiveness of the financing mechanisms for the Conventions and creating synergies where possible. Financial mechanisms under MEAs need to be distinguished from development assistance as they arise from convention commitments under the principle of common, but differentiated responsibilities. The complexity of the existing procedures for the disbursement of multilateral and bilateral assistance has been clearly identified. There is a need to improve the efficiency of the process at the approval and disbursement stages. MDBs and development co-operation agencies should embody the general principles of environmental law in their policies and operations.

4. Issue Management

Background

According to the *Report of the Secretary General: Renewing the UN - a Programme for Reform* (Doc. A/51/950, July 14, 1997), 'issue management' is a practical method of coordinating activities that require an integrated, systematic approach to issues mandated by various governing bodies of the UN, and aimed at involving inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. The issue management concept calls for the creation of task forces, or working parties, relating to specific issues of concern. The UN Secretary General's report cites the working parties established for the preparation of UNCED, and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, to promote coordinated follow-up to global conferences and to implement the system-wide special initiative on Africa. Such issue-based groups are to work on an ad hoc basis and are to be composed of principal organizations with an interest, or capacity, in the specific issue. Each task force is expected to select a lead organization that would provide the services of a secretariat. The task forces are expected to agree on how:

- * To make information on their respective plans or activities in the area concerned available, on the basis of full transparency, to all other participants;
- * To inform and consult other participants of proposed new initiatives;
- * To contribute to a planning framework for the area concerned which will enable the plans and activities of each participant to be reviewed within the framework of the whole range of activities being carried on by all participants in the area concerned; and
- * To consult with each other with a view to developing an agreed set of priorities for the area concerned and on the measures through which each participating organisation can best contribute to these priorities and to achieve a more rationale and cost-effective use of their respective capacities and resources.

Recommendations

When considering the appropriateness of the issue management approach, in general, and when applied to regional, eco-systems based, environmental challenges, three important questions need to be addressed:

1. How to focus issues management on actual problems at the regional level and their ecological linkages;
2. How to design issue clusters so that they facilitate and reinforce co-ordinated institutional support of MEAs;
3. How to link the inter-agency approach to issue management with the co-ordination of intergovernmental processes.

A useful method of testing the appropriateness and effectiveness of issue management is to consider the approach within the context of a crosscutting issue such as land management. Land management provides a suitable example because the policies and activities of MEAs, UN bodies, and other international and regional mechanisms directly, or indirectly, affect the way that land is used and the biodiversity it will support. Parties to these MEAs should examine their decisions and recommendations with a view to their impact on the land management objectives of the other MEAs. To that purpose, an

issue management approach would facilitate the development of a common set of priorities that, for example, encourages the sustainable use of land providing for the human and social needs.

To evaluate issue management as an effective approach to land management it is first necessary to identify the relevant MEAs and other main actors including UN departments, programmes and agencies, other IGOs and NGOs. It is also useful to identify the 'entry point' for each MEA to the issue of land management, as well as the functional areas of work, and the relevant processes and mechanisms. It would then, in accordance with the issue management approach, become possible to discuss a set of priorities for a land management task force that would be common to all MEAs.

A number of other crosscutting issues exist, for which, the issue management approach may facilitate the development of synergies among the MEAs. These issues include:

- * Environmentally sound technology transfer and development;
- * Renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- * Wetland, marine and coastal management;
- * Watershed and mountain ecosystem management;
- * Protected areas management;
- * Education and capacity building;
- * National reporting and planning;
- * Trade and investment;
- * Human settlements;
- * Participatory approaches in policy and decision-making;
- * Impact assessment and risk assessment;
- * Dispute settlements and other legal procedures and principles;
- * Tourism, and;
- * Other crosscutting socio-economic issues.

Using land management as a case study, it is possible to develop a set of recommendations, which include some tentative guidelines and related actions that could be applied to other crosscutting issues. It would be beneficial for further work in this area to focus, in particular, on the development of other case studies that could cover the following needs:

- * Identify policies and measures contained in MEAs that may conflict with the objectives of other MEAs and develop a compatibility-based approach when negotiating future agreements, protocols and COP decisions;
- * Identify provisions, policies and practices of each MEA that have an impact (positive or negative) on the objectives of the other MEAs (e.g. the potential impact of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to the Climate Change Convention, or of CITES on land use management);
- * Identify the impacts of other international processes (e.g. the upcoming WTO Millennium Round) on the objectives of the MEAs and consider common approaches to address them, and;
- * Identify areas in which MEA implementation would be enhanced by integrating efforts and developing synergies (e.g. co-ordination in the development of a Programme of Work on drylands between CBD and the UNCCD; regulation of species trade between CITES and the CBD; marine and coastal resource management between UNCLOS and the CBD-Jakarta Mandate; and land-based sources of marine pollution between UNEP GPA, Regional Seas Conventions, and ongoing negotiations on Persistent Organic Pollutants).

Conclusions

Overall, the concept of issue management may serve as a useful tool for enhancing and developing synergies between the MEAs and should be developed further. This might include consideration of the timing of work (agendas and work programmes) of various MEAs, with a view to avoiding the development of conflicting measures (e.g. measures under the Montreal Protocol to introduce hydrofluorocarbons - HFCs as a substitute for chlorofluorocarbons - CFCs, conflict with the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol). It would also include building linkages to enhance the development and implementation of programmes of work.

It may also be useful to make an examination of how to operationalize the concept with a particular focus on exploring the methodologies for setting goals, establishing benchmarks, and developing accountability mechanisms and measurement indicators.

5. Scientific Mechanisms

Background

Scientific assessment and expert advice have become essential components within international decision making and consensus building. The UNEP Report on *International Scientific Advisory Processes on the Environment and Sustainable Development* identifies several key roles that scientific advice fulfils.

These include:

- * Scientific-based policy-making processes used to enable policy making to move forward by creating common understanding of scientific knowledge;
- * Assessment processes that engage scientific communities around the world in order to create a "peer-reviewed" scientific body of knowledge on a certain issue including "major gaps" in knowledge;
- * Scientific and advisory bodies that offer specific technical advice to parties to conventions or treaties; and environmental observing systems that monitor, collect and disseminate data on particular environmental problems.

The growing importance of science within policy making, and the recognition of the co-dependence of ecosystems, has given rise to questions of whether more integrated scientific mechanisms or processes between multilateral environmental agreements would be more conducive to identifying synergistic policies and exploiting the bio-/geo-physical relationships between the MEAs.

In order to determine the value and the role of such an integrated approach, consideration must be given to the scientific mechanisms in place and the question of whether new mechanisms are required. An evaluation of existing mechanisms must take into account the natural and social dimensions of the issues, the technical and policy nexus, and the opportunity for synergies and the trade-offs that might exist among potential environmental policies. In discussing global MEAs, it must also be noted that related issues at the regional and local level must also be considered in the overall development context. The following recommendations and conclusions are based on these prerequisites.

Recommendations and Conclusions

(i) *Mechanisms to Identify and Examine Key Issues and Gaps in Scientific and Policy Interlinkages*

In order to identify and further examine key issues and inter-linkages, an open-ended ad hoc panel comprising scientific, technical, and economic experts and policy makers could be established. Such a panel, could be convened by UNEP, and should explore issues from both (a) the MEA point of view (environmental perspective), and (b) a regional and development perspective. The panel should be geographically and gender balanced and should represent a broad range of stakeholders, including convention secretariats, representatives of MEA scientific and technical bodies, key agencies, scientific and technical experts, environmental NGOs, and the private sector. The work of the panel would build upon existing assessments and could provide direction for future assessments.

(ii) *Scientific Capacity to Address Environmental Issues in the Development Context*

There is a need for improved utilisation of existing and long-term development of scientific and policy capability.

In particular there is need for:

- * Enhanced inter-disciplinary and social science expertise;
- * Identification and networking of experts, especially in developing countries; and
- * Enhanced scientific and technical capacity building for negotiators, to build upon pilot efforts (e.g., UNU/IAS, UNEP).
- * Improved dialogue between the scientific and policy communities in order to enhance mutual understanding

It should also be recognised that there is a need for long term scientific and technical capacity building for developing countries for improved negotiations and more effective implementation of environmental conventions. Practical steps toward improving capacity in developing countries could include the development of regional research centres, building upon initiatives such as those of the ICSU, IGBP, and START.

(iii) *Assessment Processes*

In order to improve the integration of the various scientific assessments without conducting a special assessment for inter-linkages, the individual thematic assessments (e.g., climate change, ozone, biodiversity, desertification etc.) should also investigate relevant linkages. For example, the IPCC should examine the implications of climate change on biodiversity and desertification etc., and the Summaries for Policymakers in the assessments should stress the key inter-linkages. Better co-ordination among assessments would also help avoid duplication. It is also recommended that assessments be policy relevant, without being policy prescriptive, and explain the implications of uncertainties for policy making.

(iv) *Communications*

The complex output of assessments may be presented in simple language focussing on the information needed for policy formulation.

There is a need for

- * Improved communication with different sectoral ministries such as through inter-sectoral workshops;
- * The assessment should highlight the message of inter-linkages;
- * Availability in different languages (translations);
- * Enhanced utilisation of internet resources;
- * Reaching beyond convention participants through NGOs and media.

The general public could be made more aware of their vulnerability to, and influence on, environmental changes and their possible response options. There is a need to translate the assessments into a form more suitable for education.

(v) *Precautionary Principle*

The need to examine the operationalisation of the precautionary principle is also an issue that continues to require the diligence and attention of the scientific and international community.

6. Institutional Aspects of Synergies for Sustainable Development

Background

Reform of the institutions and governance structures in place to respond to environmental problems and the challenges of sustainable development has appeared on many political agendas of late. In 1997, when Kofi Annan took office, he responded to these calls by initiating the study of crosscutting UN reforms. Part of this process included the creation of a Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. The Task Force, in carrying out its mandate, found that existing UN structures and arrangements in the field of the environment and human settlement revealed "basic and pervasive...overlaps, unrecognized linkages and gaps". To address these problems the task force made several concrete recommendations in terms of the execution of the work of the institutions involved in protecting the environment.

The Task Force recommended that the Executive Director of UNEP should continue to sponsor joint meetings of heads of Secretariats and should use this forum to recommend actions to ensure that work programmes are complementary, fill gaps, take advantage of synergies, and avoid overlap and duplication. The Task Force recommended that the President of the UNEP Governing Council consult the Presidents of selected MEA Conferences of Parties on arrangements for periodic meetings between representatives of these MEAs to address crosscutting issues. The Task Force proposed, further, that efforts should be made to co-locate new MEAs with other MEAs in the same cluster (e.g. biological resources, chemicals/waste, marine pollution) and that, in the longer term, umbrella conventions covering each cluster should be negotiated.

Several questions remain, however, as to whether the response will be adequate in the medium, and long term, and whether deeper structural realignments are necessary. Questions have been raised as to whether UNEP's mandate is broad enough to address the devolution of responsibility to the regional level which is perceived, by many, as being desirable for the implementation of MEAs. It is also questionable whether the UNEP mandate is adequate to address relationships with institutions outside the MEA community such as the WTO, or in a broader development context. Fundamental underlying concerns remain, in terms of whether formal efforts at co-ordination will add value to present institutional arrangements.

The following recommendations and conclusions address some of these concerns in the context of potential synergies at the national, intergovernmental, and interagency level. These are based on four major clusters of functions carried out by international bodies related to MEAs:

- * Agenda setting/development of rules and norms;
- * Information gathering and management: scientific, technological and economic assessment;
- * Capacity building and technical and financial support;
- * Assessment of country performance, non-compliance response/dispute settlement, and review of regime performance.

Recommendations and Conclusions

(i) *Agenda Setting/Development of Rules and Norms*

National Level

National planning processes for the implementation of MEAs should be mainstreamed into national development activities, taking into account interrelationships among MEAs. In recipient countries, this will help ensure that donor activities reflect national priorities.

National governments, with the support of MEA secretariats, should initiate efforts to identify synergies and facilitate collaboration between MEAs. Capacity building at the national level, carried out by international institutions, would promote awareness of any specific inter-linkages between MEAs. The promotion of synergies between national government activities and policies relating to MEAs could be based on a bottom up approach moving from the local, to the national and the regional levels.

The full and effective participation of national delegations at the regional and global level, particularly those from developing countries, is essential for promoting synergies and improving the quality of decision-making.

Intergovernmental Level

Initiatives to convene the presidents or bureau members of related MEAs may be useful to resolve short-term problems. This would, however, be of limited value in terms of addressing long-term synergies as the terms and mandates of these officers vary significantly from agreement to agreement.

Existing intergovernmental forums at the regional level could be used to identify and realise synergies among MEAs, and to strengthen government involvement.

When related MEAs are being negotiated, or renegotiated, a group of technical and legal experts established at the global level could usefully help to harmonise the use of terms or encourage a cross-fertilisation of ideas between negotiating groups.

Efforts to promote synergy among MEAs should have, as their principal objective, the sharing of experiences. Such efforts may also help to ensure compatibility and may lead to the harmonisation of approaches.

Interagency Level

Collaboration between MEA secretariats has occurred informally on a case-by-case basis. Formal agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding between MEA secretariats may not be particularly useful or necessary in promoting these exchanges.

UNEP could, using existing structures, provide a forum for MEA secretariats at both the regional and global level, to identify areas for collaboration on concrete and specific activities such as information exchange, common research agendas, or the streamlining of national communications reports. Where such collaboration requires additional resources, or the endorsement by governments, the UNEP Executive Director should draw this need to the attention of relevant international institutions.

(ii) *Information Gathering and Management, Scientific, Technological and Economic Assessment*

Intergovernmental level

Promoting complementarity in national reporting obligations and formats among MEAs, where it

would result in efficiencies at the national or international level, should be promoted. The development of a common reporting system may require decisions to be taken by MEA governing bodies, and will require additional financial and technical resources at the inter agency level. This additional effort can only be justified where genuine efficiency gains can be identified.

MEA governing bodies should seek to prioritise the research needs of each regime. Where priorities for research coincide across different regimes, national governments and international institutions should target resources to exploit synergies in these areas.

It is essential that each MEA explore the potential for synergies across the networks of research institutions that support its activities. Additional financial resources are needed to support these research activities, and may be provided through existing financial institutions.

Interagency level

In the short term, technical bodies within each MEA could identify appropriate technologies and practices, taking into account the impacts of such technologies and practices across different environmental media. Over the longer term this task could be carried out by expert working groups, organised on a sector-by-sector basis.

Assessments of risks and impacts, carried out by independent expert bodies, have been essential contributors to the effectiveness of a number of MEAs. Synergies could be promoted if these assessments took into account the interrelationships between the risks and impacts each MEA in an effort to avoid or reduce them.

(iii) Capacity Building and Technical and Financial Support

It is important that capacity building be thematic and institutional. A thematic approach is necessary for ensuring that synergies existing in particular areas, such as the cluster of MEAs that relate to energy, or the cluster that relates to biodiversity protection, are identified and utilised. An institutional approach is necessary to ensure that knowledge and capacity are sustained.

National level

Capacity building at the national level, carried out by international institutions, should promote awareness of any specific inter-linkages between and synergies among MEAs. Such capacity building programmes should promote the exchange of information, such as examples of best practice from national experiences.

International institutions, including MEA secretariats, should collaborate in producing basic "tool kits" or "road maps" for national decision makers. One approach would be to promote the development of tool kits that would support more than one agreement. In circumstances where MEA requirements cover the same, or similar, sectors and/or activities, training and capacity building could take into account, for example, synergies in implementation of customs codes, or pollution monitoring and control.

A broader approach would identify the full range of interrelationship between MEAs, and provide examples of how national policy, implementing legislation, and institutional design, might take into account these interrelationships. Minimum standards for implementing legislation, available for each MEA, could be compiled and any overlaps and complementarities could be identified.

In recommending both these approaches, it is recognised that national circumstances will vary widely and that it is, therefore, not possible to advocate any one blanket approach for national implementa-

tion strategies.

Capacity building on MEAs should be forward looking, and should seek to raise awareness of upcoming MEA negotiations, and assist national governments to identify inter-linkages between these new initiatives and existing MEAs.

National governments could examine (if they have not already done so) the potential benefits of having a national focal point responsible for more than one MEA, and encourage collaboration with focal points for related issues at national and regional levels.

Participatory sustainable development programmes should be designed in a synergistic manner so as to deliver obligations under many MEAs.

Intergovernmental Level

Governments should act at the regional level to develop priorities for capacity building and financial and technical assistance, particularly where they reflect transboundary environmental concerns.

Interagency Level

International institutions should support regional inter-linkages between national and regional focal points. These institutions should build their own capacity to provide training and assistance on the interrelationships between MEAs.

(iv) *Assessment of Country Performance, Non-compliance Response/Dispute Settlement and Review of Regime Performance*

National Level

Compliance with certain MEAs could be enhanced through a common national framework on regulatory enforcement in areas such as legislative design and customs regulation.

Intergovernmental Level

It is the responsibility of each governing body to ensure compliance with its parties' treaty obligations. Significant lessons can be learned for the design of effective compliance procedures from other MEAs and, importantly, from other international review and compliance procedures that are often overlooked by international environmental policy makers.

With regard to the review of country and regime performance, the OECD country environmental performance reviews provide one example of the in-depth review relevant to more than one MEA. Other process, such as the UNEP GEO programme, and the work of the UN-ECE and non-governmental organisations could contribute to an integrated performance review. Regional level reviews can usefully supplement both country-specific and MEA specific reviews. Examples from other regimes, such as the WTO's Trade Policy Review Mechanism may also provide useful models for strengthening MEAs.

Interagency Level

MEA and IGO Secretariats can help support such country level and regional level reviews.

Conclusion

At both the general and specific level the conference produced substantive results. The conclusions outlined within each issue group have provided concrete proposals that may be used to pave the road forward. A particularly positive aspect, highlighted within the conference findings, is the growing awareness for the need to take account of natural synergies and inter-linkages within the process of building a system of environmental governance.

Much work has already been undertaken in this area and it is important that momentum is maintained. The UNU proposes to follow-up its own efforts in collaboration with existing, and new, partners, in identifying and exploring potential synergies and inter-linkages that exist at both the international and the national level of environmental policy making. It is only through exploring inter-linkages from both these perspectives, that it becomes possible to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the existing system, with an aim to creating the types of international institutions that will be necessary to meet the challenges of the future.

Annex One

Background Papers

Lee A. Kimball

"Institutional Linkages among Multilateral Environmental Agreements: A Structured Approach Based on Scale and Function"

Sebastian Oberthur

"Linkages between the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols"

Juan Overjero

"The Contribution of Biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements to Sustainable development: A Discussion of Some of the Issues"

Joy Hyvarinen

"Synergies and Co-ordination of International Instruments in the Area of Oceans and Seas"

Glen Paoletto

"Capacity Building Systems for Inter-linkages"

Jerry Harrison and Mark Collins

"Harmonizing the Information Management Infrastructure for Biodiversity-related Treaties"

Alexander Gillespie

"Sinks, Biodiversity and Forests: The Implications of the Kyoto Protocol upon the Other Primary UNCED Instruments"

David Victor

"The Market for International Environmental Protection Services and the Perils of Co-ordination"

Gary Sampson

"World Trade Organization and Agreements to Deal with the Environment"

Steinar Andresen and Jon Birger Skjærseth

"Can International Environmental Secretariats Promote Effective Co-operation?"

Geir Ulfstein

"The Proposed GEO and its Relationship to Existing MEAs"

Silvano Briceño

"Institutional Linkages among Multilateral Environmental Agreements: An Organizational and Educational Development Perspective"

Jacob Lau Holst

"Elements for a more Cost-effective Global Governance of the Biodiversity-related Conventions"

Remy Paris

"Capacity Building and Multilateral Environmental Agreements"

Laura B. Campbell

"Trade and Investment Provisions of Multilateral Environmental Agreements"

Faizal Parish

"Case Study on Wetlands and the Sequestration of Carbon: Linkages between Climate Change and Wetlands Treaties"

Jacob Werksman

"Formal Linkages and Multilateral Environmental Agreements"

Bret Orlando

"Issue Management"



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