



Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and the UN Millennium Declaration

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Summary

This paper begins to examine the close and critical relationships among: biodiversity and ecosystem services; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and the goals set out in the UN Millennium Declaration, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The strong international consensus behind the Millennium Declaration makes it a unique and powerful basis for development cooperation. There is dawning recognition among decision-makers that biodiversity and ecosystem services are central to achieving the MDGs. This has created extremely important opportunities: biodiversity specialists can make a decisive contribution to the UN strategy for the MDGs, while the MDGs offer a gateway opportunity to advance conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The 'WEHAB' framework launched by the Secretary-General in May 2002 reinforced recognition of biodiversity, creating further opportunities.

The UN strategy for the MDGs has four main elements: the Millennium Project; the Millennium Campaign; Country-Level Monitoring; and Country-Level Operations of the UN agencies. The MDGs come from Section III (development and poverty eradication) of the Millennium Declaration. The Secretary-General's Road Map, which presents a plan for achieving the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, focuses on the MDGs, among other things providing an indicator framework.

Ecosystem services such as soil protection, pollution control and water purification have great economic value. Ecosystems provide food, health care and income generation opportunities. The sharpest interface between conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and poverty reduction is at the local community level, which is also where ingenuity, learning and innovation can be found, as exemplified by the projects selected as finalists for the Equator Initiative awards in 2002 (see www.EquatorInitiative.org). Of course, biodiversity also has an intrinsic value, as the Preamble to the CBD recognizes, and this is interwoven with cultural, spiritual and other human values.

A key challenge now is how to 'scale up': how to capture the lessons generated by projects such as those recognized by the Equator Initiative and translate them into wider application at the policy-making level. Another immediate challenge concerns follow-up of WEHAB: this paper proposes that a top priority for biodiversity practitioners after WSSD is taking the "B" for biodiversity forward in ways that help achieve the MDGs.

A New Paradigm for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

A powerful new understanding is emerging about the central role biodiversity and ecosystem services have to play in the achievement of the MDGs. Initiatives such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

(www.millenniumassessment.org) and the Equator Initiative signalled the emerging change. The Equator Initiative has published a series of papers, in cooperation with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and others, that have helped set the agenda for the new debate (the papers are available at www.EquatorInitiative.org).

Other developments include, for example, a major paper on 'Linking Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management', prepared for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg 2002) by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the European Commission, UNDP and the World Bank.

In a ground-breaking speech in May 2002, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan set out proposed priorities for the WSSD under the innovative 'WEHAB' framework, recognizing biodiversity and sustainable ecosystem management as one of the five priorities: water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity. The WEHAB concept, which provided a basis for major plenary discussions at the WSSD, is proposed here to be of fundamental importance to the UN strategy for the MDGs. We argue that all five WEHAB priorities, including biodiversity, are essential for achieving the MDGs. It is important to note that the WEHAB concept does not represent a return to a 'sectoral' approach: integration of the five themes is a defining feature.

The biodiversity area has lacked the targets and timetables that are usually needed to redirect policy-making. This has begun to change. The Plan of Implementation adopted at the WSSD contains a target of achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, which echoes a similar call by Ministers at the Sixth Conference of the Parties (COP 6) of the CBD. In follow-up of the call made at COP 6, the WEHAB Working Group published *A Framework for Action on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management* in August 2002 (the lead authors were grateful for insightful input from representatives of a wide range of governmental, non-governmental and multilateral institutions). This paper presents detailed frameworks for action, as a starting point for moving the WEHAB concept forward and for developing and deepening the analysis of links between biodiversity and the MDGs. The suggested frameworks had WSSD Type 2 partnerships in mind, but are not limited to these (further information about Type 2 partnerships is available at www.johannesburgsummit.org).

Crucially, the WEHAB working group paper on biodiversity highlights the need to shift focus from the proximate causes of biodiversity loss to the underlying causes. It focuses on two key Action Areas: integration of biodiversity in country development programmes and economic sectors; and halting the loss of biodiversity and restoring, if possible, biodiversity in degraded areas, as part of reversing loss of environmental resources. Importantly, reflecting the close linkage between the WEHAB framework and the MDGs, the two Action Areas in this WEHAB paper are built upon and consistent with targets of MDG 7 to 'ensure environmental sustainability.' The action frameworks provide indicative targets or milestones, with examples of activities – a 'menu' for further development of activities. The paper is available for download at http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/wehab_papers/wehab_biodiversity.pdf.

The linkages between biodiversity and the MDGs are far from fully understood. Papers such as those produced by the Equator Initiative and IIED, and the recently released Interim Executive Summary of a project of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, with WHO and UNEP, entitled: *Biodiversity: Its Importance to Human Health*, (which can be downloaded at <http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/resources.html>) have begun to explore the issues. However, there is an urgent need for further analytical work, in particular relating to the indicator framework for the MDGs. The framework was developed in consultations involving the UN, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic and Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank. The framework is crucial for making the linkages between biodiversity and the MDGs. However,

it is widely recognized that the existing framework needs further development, and it is important that biodiversity specialists contribute to this (this document can be downloaded at <http://www.undp.org/mdg/Millennium%20Development%20Goals.pdf>).

The Context

The UN Millennium Declaration

The UN Millennium Declaration, adopted in September 2000 by 189 UN Member States, reaffirmed the international community's commitment to the fundamental values of the UN (UN Doc. A/RES/55/2). In the Millennium Declaration, governments confirmed that people have a right to a future free from poverty, hunger, violence, oppression and injustice. Governments made a high-level commitment to achieving specific goals in the following areas:

- Peace, security and disarmament;
- Development and poverty eradication (Section III - the Millennium Development Goals);
- Protecting our common environment;
- Human rights, democracy and good governance;
- Protecting the vulnerable;
- Meeting the special needs of Africa; and
- Strengthening the UN.

In addition to development and poverty eradication, the goals of the Millennium Declaration address issues such as the world drug problem; human rights; protection of civilians in complex emergencies; helping Africa tackle the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases; and giving greater opportunities to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society actors and the private sector to contribute to the realization of the UN's goals and programmes.

Partnerships and stakeholder involvement are important elements of the UN strategy for the MDGs. A key challenge in the area of biodiversity will be to expand current efforts beyond the UN and intergovernmental processes.

The Secretary-General's Road Map and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In a resolution following the Millennium Declaration, the UN General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a 'Road Map', setting out in detail how the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration could be achieved. From the outset, the Secretary-General's Road Map (UN Doc. A/56/326) recognized certain key factors:

- Most of the targets set by the Millennium Declaration are not new. They derive from the global conferences of the 1990s and from the body of international norms and laws that have been codified over the past half-century.
- The action plans for reaching the targets have for the most part already been agreed and adopted.
- The missing factor is political will to implement the commitments that governments have made.

National reporting is a key part of the UN strategy for the MDGs, a responsibility entrusted to UNDP by the UN Secretary-General. User-friendly MDG reports measure progress and raise awareness. Several countries have already submitted reports (see www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html). The Secretary-General will report on progress on the Millennium Declaration to the UN General Assembly,

focusing on selected themes each year, with a comprehensive progress report every five years. In 2002 the themes are preventing armed conflict and the treatment and prevention of diseases, including HIV/AIDS and malaria. In 2003, the Secretary-General will report on the themes of financing for development and strategies for sustainable development.

All the goals in the Millennium Declaration and the Secretary-General's Road Map are meant to support and reinforce each other, so achievement of the MDGs is linked to achievement of the other goals. With the UN strategy for the MDGs, a plan for achievement of the MDGs is advancing, with targets and indicators to measure progress against. There could be scope to develop similar targets and/or indicators for the other goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The UN Strategy for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN strategy for the MDGs strikes at the heart of the development challenge, with a coordinated approach on issues such as hunger, health and environmental sustainability. The strategy comprises four main elements:

1. The Millennium Project is a global research project which analyzes policy options, with the aim of identifying the best strategies for achieving the MDGs. Ten thematically oriented Task Forces, which include members from the public and private sectors, and from civil society organizations, are undertaking research. The UN Experts Group for the Millennium Project facilitates collaboration with the UN system to ensure the project builds on the best work carried out by the UN agencies. There is strong support for the Millennium Project's intellectual autonomy to put forward optimal strategies to the Secretary General. Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, leads the UN Millennium Project (see www.unmillenniumproject.org).
2. The Millennium Campaign, led by Eveline Herfkens, the Secretary-General's Executive Coordinator, and former Minister of International Cooperation, Netherlands, is aimed at mobilizing political support for the MDGs. The campaign will initiate and coordinate national campaigns around the world to raise awareness on the MDGs.
3. Country-Level Monitoring is led by the UN and coordinated by Jan Vandemoortele from UNDP. Key outputs are national MDG reports, which support advocacy and building awareness on MDGs.
4. Country-Level Operations of the UN agencies are led and coordinated by the UN Development Group (UNDG).

As highlighted by a recent article by Professor Sachs in *The Economist* magazine (*Weapons of mass salvation*, 26 October), donor countries need to engage fully in the UN strategy. Millennium Development Goal 8, to 'develop a global partnership for development', is crucial.

Biodiversity and the Millennium Declaration

Biodiversity is linked to many of the goals of the Millennium Declaration. For example, the section on human rights, democracy and good governance in the Secretary-General's Road Map addresses issues of concern to indigenous communities, recognized as having a unique role in relation to biodiversity.

The section on 'Protecting our common environment', as set out in the Secretary-General's Road Map, is particularly relevant. It includes the following goals:

- To make every effort to ensure the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, preferably by the tenth anniversary of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 2002, and to embark on the required reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases;
- To intensify our collective efforts for the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests;
- To press for the full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa;
- To stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources by developing water management strategies at the regional, national and local levels which promote both equitable access and adequate supplies;
- To intensify our collective efforts to reduce the number and effects of natural and man-made disasters.

The goal to '....press for full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa' is a key commitment on biodiversity. This paper focuses on the CBD, but it should be noted that full implementation of the Desertification Convention and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) must be a high international priority. Governments have recognized that implementation of the CBD and the Desertification Convention (and the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol) need to be coordinated closely. The CBD provides a mechanism for cooperation across many issue areas which can support achievement of the MDGs.

Indicators, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Millennium Declaration

Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals is to 'ensure environmental sustainability,' and the targets are:

- **Target 9.** Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- **Target 10.** Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
- **Target 11.** By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

The base year for the targets is 1990. The targets are accompanied by seven indicators (for the full list, see <http://www.undp.org/mdg/Millennium%20Development%20Goals.pdf>).

There are multiple links between the indicators and biodiversity. For example, Indicator # 29 addresses the proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source - protected areas and functioning ecosystems can help maintain water supplies. Other indicators relate to health - as noted, close links exist between biodiversity and human health. This paper addresses two indicators for Millennium Development Goal 7, which are also priority issues for the Convention on Biological Diversity:

Indicator # 25. Proportion of land area covered by forest

Indicator # 26. Land area protected to maintain biological diversity

The issue areas covered by these indicators (forests and protected land area) are mission-critical to the CBD. The CBD, which covers a broad range of issues at the centre of the North-South agenda, from biosafety and forests to endangered species and benefit-sharing, is a mega-convention that has not yet

come into its own. Critics have focused on its tendency to process, rather than results, and its difficulties in setting priorities that could focus the work of the vast, unwieldy convention. In April 2002, the Sixth Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 6) marked the tenth anniversary of the CBD (www.biodiv.org).

The dramatic decline in world forest cover and degradation of forest ecosystems has been a focus of international concern. There have been hopes that the CBD could make progress where other international bodies have failed. The adoption of a revised work programme on forests was one of the priority agenda items at COP 6. While this reflected progress, it does not appear to have caused a breakthrough.

The forest issue is related closely to protected areas. The CBD is due to consider protected areas or 'areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity' as one of the main themes at the next, Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP 7) in March 2004. Prior to this, the CBD's Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) will consider protected areas. The World Parks Congress in September 2003 will be another important preparatory event. A successful COP 7 outcome on protected areas could bolster the revised work programme on forests. With protected areas as a main theme, CBD COP 7 will be in a position to take decisions which contribute directly to achievement of Goal 7 of the MDGs, through indicators #25 and #26. This could be an opportunity for biodiversity to step into the international decision-making arena and for the CBD to move from special-interest convention into the international mainstream.

The CBD may also wish to consider how it can ensure that the Millennium Declaration goal of achieving full implementation of the CBD is reached. Presumably, the ideal scenario is satisfactory progress towards the objectives of the CBD: conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, including access and transfer of technology. A reality-check of implementation to date and continuing human-caused loss of species and habitats suggests that this is still far off.

The CBD could consider setting specific criteria for full implementation for the purposes of the Millennium Declaration, by identifying high-priority actions that are closely and directly linked to achievement of the MDGs and other goals. Recent efforts to adopt a Strategic Plan for the CBD suggest that this may be difficult, but the goals of the Millennium Declaration could provide an opportunity to refine further priorities on the basis of the Strategic Plan.

The UN General Assembly considers the CBD annually. With full respect for the CBD's Conference of the Parties, as the decision-making body of the CBD, the General Assembly could address some of the links between the CBD and the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

Moving Ahead

The future may view the MDGs as extremely low in aspiration, for a world as rich as ours. For example, Target 2 of the goal to 'Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger' (Goal 1) accepts that hundreds of millions of women, children and men will still suffer from hunger in the year 2015. Here and now, the political and practical challenges of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by that date are daunting.

Biodiversity specialists, who tend to be creative pioneers of on-the-ground solutions, can bring enormous commitment and expertise to the UN strategy for the MDGs. In turn, the UN strategy can help raise biodiversity higher on the agendas of key decision-makers. Biodiversity specialists have

started to succeed in making their voice heard beyond their own community in 2002, as evidenced by the recognition of the role biodiversity has to play in the achievement of the MDGs and the inclusion of biodiversity as one of the five WEHAB priorities. As many observers have recognized, if this is to turn into a real breakthrough, the momentum has to be maintained. It should be noted that while the MDGs and the CBD are important routes for moving the biodiversity agenda of WEHAB forward, they are not the only ones.

The response to the key challenges of 'scaling up' experiences from the local community level and taking the 'B' in WEHAB forward can draw on the great knowledge - both formal and informal - which can be found in the biodiversity community. It can build on the strong, diverse partnerships and networks that bring together implementers of local projects, campaigners, scientists and international policy specialists in adaptive learning processes within this community. Events such as the World Parks Congress in 2003 and the Seventh Conference of the Parties (COP 7) of the CBD in 2004 will be critical - if they succeed in reaching out beyond their specialist audiences. The main test may be whether the biodiversity community can mobilize its formidable resources and take full advantage of the new appreciation of biodiversity and the enthusiasm generated by recent developments.

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