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## Background paper 8

### **Integrating biodiversity and the value of ecosystem services into other sectors**

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The dominant approach to conservation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the establishment of protected areas from which people were mostly (or totally) excluded. The rationale behind this approach was that the best – and probably only – way to preserve biodiversity was to isolate it from its biggest enemy: the human species. For many years, and until the 1980s, when decentralised, community-based and participatory approaches emerged, the general thinking was that conservation was a matter for conservationists, who, in turn and at times, had a tendency to think about themselves as the “guardians of the temple” and the only ones being able to look after the environment and consequently, the future of the planet.

In 1992, the idea of opening up to non-purely-conservationist sectors was written down in the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity through Article 6b: Each Contracting Party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities, integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. A series of guidelines and tools – such as the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) – were developed, and the idea that conservation was not limited to the strict competencies of conservationists was further strengthened, more recently, through the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (Strategic Goal A: Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society; and Aichi targets 1 to 4 in particular).

While the need to incorporate biodiversity concerns into other sectoral policies and practices is, nowadays, commonly accepted by the conservation community, examples of successful experiences are still rare, and often time-limited. The current economic crisis which affects many of the European Union’s economies illustrates that, whenever times get tougher, there is a tendency to first forget about environmental commitments and cut into the Ministries of Environment’s budgets is still deeply rooted in our mentalities. Conservation is still seen as a luxury or a “nice-to-have” by many governments, proving that the efforts undertaken until now to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into the general streamline thinking has, at least partly, failed.

This session will have a look at both the theory and the practice of “mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors”. From the tools available, to practical experiences, successes and failures, participants will be invited to reflect on the elements needed for a successful

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mainstreaming to occur, and the barriers that are still to be removed for biodiversity and the value of ecosystem services to be as universally accepted as the principles of human rights or economic growth. Through a couple of questions (detailed at the end of this document), participants will be invited to give practical feedback from their own countries, in order to identify common elements and factors that would need to be addressed through a more regional or global approach.

## **What to mainstream, and what for?**

Without being exaggeratedly pessimistic we need to recognise that environmental arguments do not tend to have a huge weight in political or economic discussions. While we are all willing to be “eco-friendly” citizens, entrepreneurs, businessmen, or politicians, we are often brought back to reality by what always seems to appear as easier, cheaper, more realistic, or more profitable arguments. Conserving nature seems to be one of everyone’s top priorities, but at the end of the day, and except in a limited number of successful cases, the rate of biodiversity loss has still not been reversed (or even halted); ecosystems, habitats and the services they provide are still being degraded and lost; climate change negotiations are reaching a dead-end; and any reform to existing policies always seem to go in the way of “less” instead of “more” for the environment. It is clear that leaving conservation only to conservationists won’t get us to the desired outcomes...

Mainstreaming biodiversity is about integrating environmental concerns into the operations of other sectors, traditionally not related or little sympathetic to these. In a way, mainstreaming biodiversity is about making sure that environmental concerns are shared by all those having an impact on or earning benefits from biodiversity and ecosystem services. And the most important lesson of the last ten years is that any conservation will not be possible, on the longer run, without this integration.

The first step in mainstreaming biodiversity is to define a bit more precisely what we mean by “biodiversity concerns” and what we want to achieve through this integration. Biodiversity concerns include, for example, the loss of species, genes and habitats, the deterioration of ecological processes, and loss of ecosystem goods and services.

The main objective of such integration into non-conservation sectors would be to:

- minimise and mitigate threats and/or impacts;
- restore and/or improve integrity;
- ensure ecological resilience;
- maintain ecosystem services.

However, the most important element of this all is to realise that to mainstream biodiversity concerns to other sectors, we essentially need to convince these sectors that our concerns are, actually, also their concerns. It is not by simply saying that the conservation of nature is everyone’s duty that we will achieve any major change. We need to move from the traditional discourse of “You have to conserve nature because it is important for everybody”, to a more engaging “Take a look at what the conservation of nature could bring to you”. We need to shift from “Nature is having problems, do something!” to “Nature can be a solution for you!”...

Mainstreaming biodiversity to other sectors primarily means that we won’t be preaching to the converted anymore but rather reaching out to brand new audiences, with a different vision of the world, and in many cases, with drastically different interests (at least at first glance). The key to convincing these audiences is to make them understand that we are not conserving nature because we love plants and animals but rather because the complex

processes of nature might represent a business opportunity and an additional income we are only starting to quantify, if properly managed.

Only by identifying the interests that conservation and the sector we are targeting have in common, will we be able to convince this sector to review and maybe improve its way of operating, to integrate new thinking, to invest in the natural capital in order to run its business more efficiently (and sustainably) on the long term.

## **How to mainstream?**

A wide range of approaches and tools are available to mainstream biodiversity and the value of ecosystem services across sectors. Unfortunately, there is no one single best option, and everything will depend on the circumstances, and will probably require a combination of several of these options. For the sake of this document, we will divide the available tools in three categories: the ones dealing with macro- (and generally public-) policy processes, the partnerships involving the private sector on a voluntary basis, and the initiatives aimed at influencing markets and economies from the basis, through consumers choices and initiatives, for example.

### **a. Mainstreaming biodiversity through policy reform**

Public policies (at national or supra-national level) offer a way to make sure provisions for environmental safeguards are integrated into relatively wide sectors and fields of actions. The National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) set the tone for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in a country. But unfortunately, NBSAPs alone will only result in a good will declaration, setting the minimum requirements to be hopefully applied across the board. If environmental concerns are not integrated in other policies, NBSAPs are more likely to be and remain a set of periodically revised empty shells.

A variety of other policies offer additional entry points, into sectors that might not have conservation as their primary objective. These can be, for example, national development and aid policies, the PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), the NAPAs (National Adaptation Programmes of Actions) and other climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, spatial planning policies, etc. Another level includes all sectoral policies regulating specific activities like forestry, fisheries, hunting, or agriculture, for example, or economic and social sectors like transportation, tourism, health, energy, banking, etc. Education policies are of particular importance in this regard, as they offer a way to integrate biodiversity concerns into curricula and secure a longer-term mainstreaming.

The inclusion of environmental provisions into these policies can be a powerful way to make sure biodiversity and ecosystem services are properly recognised and taken into account at national level. In some cases, this can be done by incorporating the obligation to undertake an environmental impact assessment (EIA) before any further action is taken, but a more effective way is to really dig into each policy, identify the drivers that could undermine biodiversity conservation and agree on the measures that could allow reducing or removing their impacts.

Natural infrastructures and the role nature can play in the adaptation to climate change is a good example of this. While recognising that reducing the effect of climate change will require a wide range of actions, from technological, to educational and social, and from economic incentives and sanctions to political solutions, we also need to realise that nature can bring part of the solutions we might be looking for. Many examples are here to demonstrate the real contribution of nature to the climate change debate, for instance, both

on the mitigation side, with the inclusion of concepts like REDD+ into international negotiations<sup>2</sup>, and on the adaptation front, with promising experiences like IUCN's Mangroves for the Future initiative (a disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiative aiming at better integrated coastal management and restoration<sup>3</sup>). In both cases, the integrated "conservation + development" approach allows field experience to inform simultaneously environmental and development/aid policies, as well as to lay down the foundation for longer-term reflexion on the positive economic impact nature can bring to communities; a first step towards a greener economy.

## **b. Mainstreaming biodiversity through improving practices**

More and more examples are showing that initiatives undertaken by or with the private sector can be a powerful mechanism to conserve biodiversity. These initiatives can range from a simple partnership with an individual company in a specific area, to a broader alliance with a group of companies or a sector of activities in order to improve its operations, for example. Engagement with the private sector can happen under many forms and result in a wide variety of products ranging from simple and informal "good practices" documents, to more ambitious and binding guidelines, codes of conduct or standards. Many examples are available, among which the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries<sup>4</sup>, the WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism<sup>5</sup> or the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development<sup>6</sup>, with various levels of usefulness or concrete implementation. In all cases, the fundamental factor for a successful partnership is the active participation of all stakeholders. This is also a good way to make sure the partnership is really about improving practices and generating benefits for both the company/sector and for conservation, and to avoid more superficial marketing or "green washing" attempts. Starting small can also be a useful philosophy and an important factor of success for a partnership with the private sector.

The Western Grey Whale Conservation Initiative<sup>7</sup> is a good example of successful partnership with a perceived "high-footprint company". In 2004, Sakhalin Energy, an oil and gas consortium consisting of Gazprom, Shell, Mitsui and Mitsubishi, joined forces with IUCN to create a mechanism for helping the company minimize the potential impacts of its operations to the whale population around the Sakhalin Island. This was done through the establishment of an Independent Scientific Panel to advise the company directly and on regular basis, and coordinate research in order to strengthen monitoring and mitigation efforts. The positive aspect of this engagement is such that the initiative is now looking at growing into a comprehensive conservation strategy, taking into account all significant threats, not only around Sakhalin Island but throughout the entire geographic range of this population, with a broader engagement of the range states, relevant companies and civil society for the population to survive and recover. Similar independent panels have also proven to be an efficient partnership mechanism with the mining, oil and gas industry, in Mauritania, Nigeria, and Switzerland, among others.

In the tourism sector, and in complement to the WTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism or the CBD Sustainable Tourism Guidelines, IUCN has also developed Biodiversity Principles for Siting and Design of Hotels and Resorts, and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biological

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<sup>2</sup> See the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication's e-course on climate change and REDD+ for more information (<http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cec/?6729/Free-e-Course-on-Climate-Change-and-REDD>)

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org/> for more information.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/v9878e/v9878e00.HTM> for more information.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.unwto.org/ethics/index.php> for more information.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/tou-gdl-en.pdf> for more details.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.iucn.org/wgwap/> for more information.

Resources in Hotels and Resorts<sup>8</sup>, highlighting, in both, the potential added value nature can bring to the tourism sector.

In all cases, conveying simple and concrete messages is fundamental: nature is not a limitation but rather an opportunity for business development. It may sound a bit selfish, but part of human nature makes it easier for us to care about things that directly impact our daily lives. For example, as recently stated in a BBC article, fishing every last tuna will result in thousands of people in the fishing industry losing their jobs. Likewise, if every lion or elephant is shot, the tourist trade will suffer. Extinction can cost in hard cash, and this is definitely an argument that would speak to any good businessman or politician<sup>9,10</sup>.

Putting a price on nature is one of the options, in this regard. Although often criticized by the purists for allowing “biodiversity banking” while overlooking the intrinsic irreplaceability of nature, several initiatives have been developed, in recent years, in the field of valuation of ecosystem goods and services (the TEEB<sup>11</sup> study is probably the most famous one) and consequently, on how to integrate this value into accounting processes at national level, or within the financial management and investment planning of a private company. Money is always a stronger argument when talking with the private sector. Offsetting schemes come, in this sense, as a complement to the environmental impact assessment mentioned earlier, and lead to emerging initiatives like the “No Net Loss” and similar concepts.

### **c. Bottom-up initiatives**

Equally important, as stakeholders’ active involvement for a successful mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services into other sectors, is communication. We could argue that conservationists care about nature because they know a lot about it. In the same way, the general public can be a powerful vehicle for conservation messages and indirectly to mainstream environmental concerns into other sectors. But for this, they need to know and understand what nature can offer them. Public awareness is one of the keys to successful conservation. In a world driven by markets, consumers can be a powerful way to influence the private sector or even the public sector’s practices. A compelling and growing evidence of this is given by the number of existing and emerging certification schemes, informing consumers about the best possible choice they can make for the environment. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)<sup>12</sup>, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)<sup>13</sup> or the European Union’s Organic Agriculture label<sup>14</sup> are just a few examples of this.

For this last category of initiatives to be successful, maybe more than for any other, communication is a crucial element. A strong and clear message about the importance of biodiversity is needed, and this message will need to answer two basic questions: “What difference will my choice make?” and “Why should I care?”. As for the business sector, consumers or the civil society will need to perceive what biodiversity holds for them; what benefit they can get from conservation; and how conservation can help improve their daily lives. Consequently, based on this information, they can make their choices of products, life-styles, societies, economies, etc.

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<sup>8</sup> More information on IUCN’s tourism-related publications can be found at:

[http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp\\_work/by\\_sector/tourism/hotels\\_\\_\\_resorts/publications/](http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp_work/by_sector/tourism/hotels___resorts/publications/)

<sup>9</sup> Shukman David. Why such a fuss about extinction? BBC 25/03/2013 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-21866456>).

<sup>10</sup> The IUCN Business Engagement Strategy gives some examples of major biodiversity and ecosystem services risks & opportunity drivers for business (see Table 1 in the document,

[https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn\\_business\\_engagement\\_strategy\\_final.pdf](https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_business_engagement_strategy_final.pdf))

<sup>11</sup> The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity: [www.teebweb.org/](http://www.teebweb.org/)

<sup>12</sup> See: [www.msc.org/](http://www.msc.org/)

<sup>13</sup> See: [www.fsc.org/](http://www.fsc.org/)

<sup>14</sup> See: [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/consumer-confidence/logo-labelling\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/consumer-confidence/logo-labelling_en)

Public awareness is a way to harness the regulatory role of markets and therefore influence private and public policies. The board members of private companies are also consumers and will react both according to their consumer instincts, as well as to the pressure other consumers will put on the activities of their respective companies. Politicians will act – or react – in similar ways to the society’s pressure with new regulations on the private sector’s activities, incentives for “greener” and more sustainable practices, etc. Bottom-up initiatives through an informed general public can, therefore, help close the loop and make sure that decision-makers (both public and private) see another good reason to change the way they operate or legislate.

An example of this is the “Nature-based solutions” campaign that IUCN is about to launch: a simple and strong message of the benefits that people can get from this all. The idea behind the campaign is that nature should be considered as real capital and a prerequisite for socio-economic development rather than an impediment to it. Nature can provide part of the solutions societies are looking for to tackle the main global challenges, and these solutions are cost-effective complements to other types of interventions. It can be applied to all levels and branches of the government, the private sector, and the general public, in order for each element to complement and multiply the actions of the others.

### Conclusion

Sectoral mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services is not an option, but rather a prerequisite to achieve concrete and durable change in favour of the environment. This document is a mere hint to what sectoral mainstreaming entails. The use of one or (preferably) several tools and strategies outlined here will ensure that the goals of NBSAPs are accepted by a wider range of sectors, stakeholders and decision-makers. It will also allow NBSAPs to play the role they have been developed for and to reinforce and normalize the idea that natural capital is as valuable (or more) for a country than the rest of the elements of its so-called “real” capital<sup>15</sup>.

The condition for this to happen is for conservationists to get out of their traditional thinking and communication schemes, and reach out to new audiences in a way that will speak to them: nature is not a problem; it is part of the solution!

### Discussion Questions:

- Can you provide an example of specific instances where mainstreaming in your country has been successful/unsuccessful?
- What approaches to mainstreaming biodiversity were used and what were the factors of success/failure?
- What would be the main limitation for mainstreaming biodiversity into other sectors in your country?
- How can international organisations best support national initiatives for mainstreaming biodiversity and ecosystem services?

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<sup>15</sup> Capital: Set of goods, accumulated possessions calculated to bring in income (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)