



Improved and Coherent Implementation of Conventions Relevant to Protected Areas in Georgia

Guidelines for the effective and coherent implementation of MEAs through national legislation, policy and programmes



tematea

Issue based modules for coherent implementation of biodiversity related conventions

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Abbreviations

APA	Agency of Protected Areas
BS	Biodiversity Service
BR	Biosphere Reserve
CBC	Caucasus Biodiversity Council
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
ECP	Eco-regional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPNRC	Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
FP	Focal Point
GCCW	Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographical Information System
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IBM	Issues Based Module
IMCAM	Integrated Marine and Coastal Area Management
IPA	Important Plant Areas
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IUCN POSC	IUCN Programme Office for the Southern Caucasus
IWBC	International Waterbird Census
MAB	Man and Biosphere
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MoE	Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources of Georgia
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MWB	Migratory Waterbirds
NBMS	National Biodiversity Monitoring System
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCC	National Coordination Committee
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non-timber Forest Products
PA	Protected Area
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PoW PA	Programme of Work on Protected Areas
Ramsar	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
RAPPAM	Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Areas Management
REDD	Reduced Emissions through Deforestation and Degradation
SOCAR	State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic
TBPA	Transboundary Protected Area
TJS	Transboundary Joint Secretariat for the Southern Caucasus
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
US DoI	United States Department of Interior
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas
WHC	World Heritage Convention
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Introduction

These guidelines are the outcome of a national consultation and capacity building process that was convened in 2007/08 by the IUCN Programme Office for the Southern Caucasus, in collaboration with the Countdown 2010 and TEMATEA Secretariats. Their aim is to guide the improved, coherent and coordinated implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) relevant to protected areas (PAs) in Georgia. Their development has been funded by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the framework of the project *Halting the Loss of Biodiversity in the Southern Caucasus*. The guideline production process consisted of the following five steps:

1. TEMATEA IBM on PA: The national consultation process has been based on the TEMATEA Issue-based Module (IBM) on PAs, a web-based tool for the improved and coherent implementation of PA-related commitments originating from the main MEAs (www.tematea.org).

2. Inventory of current implementation: The IBM was used as a framework for a desk study in which Georgian legislation, programmes, policies and strategies were collected, analyzed and compared to obligations taken under MEAs with relevance to PAs (CBD, CMS, Ramsar Convention, UNFCCC, UNCCD, World Heritage Convention) to which Georgia is Party. In addition, national experts and MEA Focal Points (FP) contributed to this inventory of current implementation.

3. Identification of strengths, weaknesses and recommendations: Based on the inventory, strengths and weaknesses of national MEA implementation on PAs were identified by IUCN POSC, in consultation with MEA Focal Points, and draft recommendations for improved coherence, effectiveness and collaboration were derived and summarized in a discussion document.

4. National consultation process: These recommendations, as well as practical options for their future implementation, were discussed with stakeholders (Annex 1) during an extended consultation process which consisted of two capacity building workshops, numerous bilateral meetings and solicitation of comments on a succession of refined versions of the discussion document.

5. Guideline production: The comments and additions received during the national consultation process were then used to derive a general set of simple, easy-to use general guidelines for the effective, coherent and coordinated implementation of MEAs related to PAs in Georgia, to extract the 67 most relevant actions for the contribution of each of the major stakeholders to improved MEA implementation in specific areas, and to collectively identify four main directions for follow-up to the national consultation process. These outcomes are presented in more detail below.

The national consultation and capacity building process involved a wide range of stakeholders from the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources (MoE), other Ministries and Government institutions, the NGO sector and the knowledge community.

I. General guidelines for the effective, coherent and coordinated implementation of MEAs related to PAs in Georgia

In addition to specific actions that will be taken to improve the coherence of MEA implementation in the various subject areas identified by the TEMATEA IBM on PA, the national consultation process led to agreement on four simple principles for routine use by FPs and implementing institutions. These principles will be applied routinely by all stakeholders to ensure all relevant MEA commitments and obligations are taken into account, and all relevant MEA focal points, implementing institutions and major stakeholders are consulted in the course of policy development, implementation and management of a given issue.

1. Use of the TEMATEA IBM on PA: The TEMATEA IBM on PA compiles information on relevant commitments and obligations for all aspects of PA policy, management etc. Having been publicised during the national consultation process in Georgia, it will be consulted routinely by MEA FPs, as well as implementing and legislative organisations, as a database on all MEA commitments relevant to a given policy development, management decision, MEA report etc. This will enable these stakeholders to have the full picture of relevant commitments and obligations when planning and deciding management or policy steps, and to modify their approach in order to optimise implementation across the entire range of relevant commitments.

2. Communication amongst MEA FPs and with policy makers, implementers and other stakeholders: The national consultation process on PA-related MEA commitments in Georgia revealed the need for intensive and regular communication between Convention FPs. Beyond this, it showed that communication of commitments and obligations with policy-making and implementing institutions is crucial for effective national implementation, and should become more regular and inclusive. On the one hand, MEA FPs cannot implement “their” convention on their own, while on the other hand, national policy makers as well as implementers need constantly updated information from focal points to guide and inform their work. Regular communication meetings between MEA FPs and the main implementing government institutions will be intensified and used to ensure information flow between MEA FPs and implementers.

3. Engaging government institutions and other stakeholders outside the PA field: The inventory of the current implementation of MEA commitments in Georgia revealed the high dependence of effective and coherent implementation on institutions and stakeholders who are primarily responsible for subjects other than PAs but whose actions strongly influence the success of PA policy and management, and hence the implementation of MEA commitments and obligations on this issue. The national consultation process succeeded to engage many of these actors, but there is agreement among consultation participants that the challenge of involving key stakeholders outside the PA field - like the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture – remains, partly reflecting current development and policy priorities in Georgia. This challenge will need to be tackled on a case-by-case basis in the future.

4. Use of ongoing and upcoming policy processes to promote the multi-convention approach to MEAs relevant to PAs: The participants of the national consultation process agreed that there currently is a favourable situation for the introduction of the multi-convention approach on PAs in Georgia, because there are several ongoing and upcoming policy formulation and strategic planning processes into which the approach can be integrated. This was used to devise three of the specific follow-ups of the Georgian TEMATEA consultation, but it is also a general principle for promoting the multi-convention approach. This principle will be applied in additional policy processes as and when they become relevant in the future, through reference to the specific action items of this guideline document and the IBM on PAs itself.

II. Follow-up

The discussion of options for follow-up in the course of the national consultation showed that there is strong interest in using the outcomes of the consultation beyond the lifespan of the current project, but that the application of outcomes should be integrated into existing policy processes which already have strong national ownership and momentum, rather than installing yet another, competing process. Based on this consideration, four main directions for follow-up were identified from an initial long-list of options and agreed by key stakeholders:

1. Integration of the multi-convention approach to MEA commitments on PAs into the draft PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia, which is currently developed by the Agency of Protected Areas (APA) at the Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources (MoE) of Georgia: The APA manages the Georgian PA system and is hence the main government agency in the PA field, a key practical implementer of MEA commitments and a strong PA champion in communication with other government

stakeholders. By systematically integrating commitments from all major MEAs into its draft strategy, which is being drafted with support from the IUCN Programme Office for the Southern Caucasus, the APA is currently adopting the multi-convention approach as a core principle for national policy formulation and implementation in Georgia.

2. Integration of the multi-convention approach and of relevant commitments into the upcoming revision of Georgia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP):

The NBSAP, as Georgia's central policy document on biodiversity conservation, including PAs, will be revised in 2009, based on a participatory process. Based on the capacity developed during the TEMATEA consultation in Georgia, the Biodiversity Service (BS) at the MoE commits to take a multi-convention approach during the upcoming revision and to integrate actions aimed at a more coordinated implementation of MEA obligations into the plan as appropriate. This will be supported through active participation of IUCN POSC in the participatory consultation process leading to the revised NBSAP.

3. Complementation of the national prioritization and implementation process of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoW PA) through consideration of related commitments under MEAs other than the PoW PA:

In contrast to other issues where key commitments are distributed more evenly between MEAs, the vast majority of directly relevant commitments on all aspects of PAs is concentrated in CBD, and particularly in the CBD PoW PA. Therefore, the PoW can be considered a framework to organise implementation of PA-related commitments from all major MEAs, and the TEMATEA IBM on PA can be used to identify these related commitments for each action in the PoW. The National Coordination Committee on the PoW PA, with support from the Caucasus 2012 Protected Area Project which is being implemented by WWF and funded by the MAVA Foundation, will prioritize and facilitate actions from the PoW in Georgia, and in the process consider related commitments from other MEAs as shown in the TEMATEA IBM on PA.

4. Continued promotion of the multi-convention approach to PA-related commitments by IUCN POSC:

As a result of the capacity built through the TEMATEA exercise in Georgia, and supported through the continued presence of IUCN POSC as a major stakeholder on protected Areas issues in the country, a multi-convention approach on PAs will continue in Georgia beyond the lifespan of the project. The relevant governmental bodies, in particular the Ministry of Environment, APA and the BPS, will engage additional stakeholders for enhanced overall coherence of MEA implementation during its future activities.

III. Structure and criteria for the guidelines on specific actions

These guidelines recommend 67 specific actions for a more coherent and coordinated implementation of MEAs in Georgia, which were developed from an earlier set of recommendations during the national consultation process. They are aimed at various specific stakeholders, and are structured according to the sections of the TEMATEA IBM on PAs, including the following chapters:

1. Assessment: Better implementation of obligations and commitments that relate to gathering and interpreting information on all PA processes and the methods used to do this: monitoring, research, inventories, assessing projects, developing standards and indicators and establishing mechanisms to document knowledge.

2. Legislation and Policy: Better implementation of obligations and commitments that refer directly to policy and legislation, national-scale plans, programmes and strategies. The section also covers the establishment, development and promotion of policies and legislation, and provisions referring directly to the establishment of PAs.

3. Management: Better implementation of obligations and commitments on management planning and intervention: application of assessment results, conservation, sustainable use and restoration of habitats.

4. Economic Instruments: Better implementation of provisions on economic strategies and methods for achieving biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in PAs: incentives, market-based mechanisms, valuation, financial strategies for PAs, distribution of benefits (e.g. compensation to local communities).

5. Provision of Resources: The chapter on the provision of resources includes obligations and commitments relating to providing funding and technical resources for biodiversity conservation in protected areas (PAs). Technical resources include training, the transfer of technologies and the building of institutional capacity.

6. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA): Better implementation of obligations and commitments relating to raising awareness of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in PAs: campaigns targeted at raising awareness, dissemination of scientific research, provision of information and reporting on information and progress to conventions and Parties.

7. Cooperation: Better implementation of obligations and commitments relating to coordination across sectors, internationally and nationally, and partnerships between Parties and organizations. The cooperation section is closely aligned to the CEPA section.

8. Stakeholders and indigenous and local communities: Better implementation of obligations relating to stakeholders, as well as indigenous and local communities.

Criteria for the inclusion of actions in the guidelines

1. Multi-convention approach or inter-agency collaboration focus: The aim of the TEMATEA consultation process on PA was not simply to improve implementation of individual PA-related commitments from each MEA, but also to introduce a collaborative multi-convention approach to the ways in which they are implemented, and to build the necessary capacity among all key actors to implement this approach. This is reflected in the focus of the guidelines, which concentrate on actions that are clearly based on a multi-convention approach or on improved inter-agency communication and collaboration in the implementation of individual commitments. This focus does not imply that all other commitments from each MEA are either fully implemented or not important; it simply follows from the purpose of this particular process.

2. Relevance to PAs in Georgia: An additional criterion that is used to focus the actions in the guidelines is the relevance to Georgian PAs. While numerous indirectly relevant commitments and their improved implementation were included where they had clear links to PAs, others with only marginal links were omitted from the final list of actions, following stakeholder requests to keep the process outcome PA-focused.

3. Defined actors: A third criterion is the need for defined actors for each action in the guidelines. The consultation process succeeded in engaging an unprecedented range of actors from various institutions relevant to PAs. However, as a result of current development priorities in Georgia, some of the actors that are not primarily concerned with PAs but nevertheless have a strong influence on the effectiveness of the Georgian PA system (e.g. Ministry of the Economy, regarding licenses and permits), could not be engaged fully. This challenge will be met through continued promotion of PA-related commitments during the follow-up of the project by all main stakeholders of the process.

1. Assessment

The assessment chapter includes ways to improve the implementation of commitments that relate to gathering and interpreting information on all PA processes and the methods used to do this. It therefore includes monitoring, research, inventories, assessing projects, developing standards and indicators and establishing mechanisms to document knowledge.

1.1. General evaluation and actions

Integration of MEA commitments into the PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan: Of the ongoing processes aimed at improved biodiversity governance in Georgia, one contributes particularly to the implementation of obligations related to PA assessment, monitoring and research: the *Long-term Strategy and Action Plan for PA System Development*, which is currently being developed by the Agency of Protected Areas (APA), in collaboration with IUCN POSC, will contain a section on assessment and monitoring. The TEMATEA IBM on PA will be consulted during its further development and implementation.

Action 1.1: *The MoE, particularly the APA (as the owner of the PA system development strategy) take into account MEA commitments and as detailed in the assessment activity of the TEMATEA IBM on PA while further developing and implementing the PA System Development Strategy and Action Plan and NBMS, respectively.*

1.2. Site assessment

The National Red List as a tool for site prioritization: Reflecting the need to base conservation site prioritization on the distribution of species of conservation value, as a major criterion, both CBD and Ramsar give high priority to broad species-based approaches in PA site assessment. In the Georgian context, the absence of some taxonomic groups, such as herbaceous plants (a major component of the endemic flora of the Caucasus Biodiversity Hotspot) from the national Red List and of freshwater habitats and biota in general from available datasets and prioritization systems was identified during the consultation process as a particular gap in this regard. For instance, 35 obligations from MEAs (mainly Ramsar, but also CBD, WHC and others) with relevance to site-related assessments and potential PA designation that are currently not met or only partially met, relate to the urgent need for a National Wetland Inventory and Biodiversity Assessment.

Action 1.2: *The National Red List Commission and academic institutions, as well as the BS and the APA will facilitate further updates and extensions (e.g. herbaceous plants, freshwater fauna) of the National Red List, as the main basis for site prioritization, and the application of corresponding site assessment methodologies (e.g. Important Plant Area methodology, Freshwater and Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, PA Gap Analysis, Wetland Inventory).*

There are several tools and methodologies already available for assessments like these. For instance, guidelines of the IUCN Red List Unit can be used as a basis for necessary assessments in Georgia, and the implementation of the Ramsar obligation to identify national contributions to **flyway-scale site networks for migratory waterbirds** (MWB), as well as similar obligations under CMS, can be facilitated through application of the current *Wings over Wetlands* project's Critical Site Network Tool, which has been developed by Wetlands International.

1.3. Assessment of impacts, threats and resources on PAs

1.3.1. Threat assessment

Fulfilling commitments on biodiversity-inclusive Environmental Impact Assessment: The main challenge to the implementation of commitments on threat assessment in Georgia is the inclusion of potential direct and indirect impacts of infrastructure development, agriculture, fisheries and tourism on PAs and their biota in relevant national legislation, implementing regulations and implementation practice on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). There are 18 relevant commitments from various MEAs on this issue, which should be implemented in future revisions of national legislation and practice.

Action 1.3: *The MoE and the Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Committee (EPNRC) of the Parliament of Georgia review existing EIA legislation and implementing regulations with regard to MEA obligations that call for the inclusion of possible impacts of developments on PAs and their biota. They include provisions implementing these obligations in future revisions of the Law on the Environmental Impact Permit, and in the ongoing development of the MoE Provision on Environmental Impact Assessment.*

This process can be supported through national application of the CBD Voluntary Guidelines on Biodiversity-inclusive EIA, and through the corresponding development of capacity and expertise. Besides this key issue, a number of additional assessments are required to meet Georgia's obligations under various MEAs: for example, CMS prescribes an assessment of **fisheries' by-catch** on migratory species, and UNCCD contains an obligation to assess the **causes and consequences of desertification** in affected areas and determine priority actions. Both obligations are relevant to PAs and efforts should be taken to implement them, subject to resource availability and national priorities. These should also be integrated into EIA law.

1.3.2. PA effectiveness assessment

A comprehensive PA Management Effectiveness Assessment using Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Areas Management (RAPPAM) methodology was carried out jointly by IUCN and WWF in December 2008, within the framework of the WWF project *Protected Areas for a Living Planet*. Three additional assessments (on capacity development needs, financial needs and institutional/legislative gaps) have also been carried out. The first two of these assessments will directly address obligations under the PoW PA while the third will assess whether the institutional framework of Georgia's PA network conforms to its MEA commitments, namely from the PoW PA. Therefore, a great effort to respond to international obligations on PA effectiveness assessment has already been undertaken in Georgia in the recent past. While these assessments have primarily been focussed on the PoW on PA, they also fulfil related commitments from other MEAs.

Assessments of the national PA system: Beyond these basic assessments, both CBD Decision VIII/24 and the CBD PoW PA contain obligations to conduct more general and far-reaching assessments of national PA systems. These assessments – principally of PA system values and cultural as well as socio-economic benefits, stakeholder involvement and participation in PAs, integration of PA into general spatial/sector planning, and PA gap analysis – will form an important foundation for the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation across sectors, and hence for developing a much broader and more effective approach to PAs and nature conservation in Georgia. Therefore, these assessments should be initiated immediately and with high priority as they would also benefit meeting commitments under other MEAs.

Action 1.4: *The National Coordination Committee (NCC) on the PoW PA, and the APA collaborate to mobilise the necessary funding and to develop the required capacity and expertise to conduct in-depth assessments of the current state and trends of (1) socio-economic and cultural PA system values benefits, (2) stakeholder involvement and participation in PAs (particularly local communities), (3) integration of PA into general spatial/sector planning, and*

(4) PA gap analysis as required under CBD Decision VIII/24 and the CBD PoW PA, while also taking into account needs identified under other MEAs.

1.4. Monitoring of PAs

1.4.1. PA Monitoring

Coverage of PAs in the national Biodiversity Monitoring System of Georgia: With the impending formal establishment of the *National Biodiversity Monitoring System*, the BS at the MoE has created an institutional framework for the implementation of biodiversity monitoring related obligations (including, but not restricted to those focused on PAs) at the national level. The system will include three PA-related indicators (one pressure indicator and two response indicators). While this lays the foundation for an inclusion of PA monitoring at the national level, the further development of the system will also offer an opportunity to systematically include additional indicators that are referring to relevant commitments from MEAs.

Action 1.5: *The BS at the MoE includes monitoring activities, criteria and indicators prescribed in the relevant obligations from MEAs (listed in TEMATEA IBM on PAs) in the NBMS, during its further development.*

Maintenance and development of monitoring capacity: Regular PA monitoring using a defined set of indicators is an obligation not only under CBD but also under Ramsar (for Ramsar sites), UNCCD (for PAs in regions prone to desertification), and CMS (for PAs with migratory populations). Furthermore, CBD Decision 7/28 and other provisions call for an application of monitoring results to the improvement of PA management. Georgia currently fulfils 17 out of 22 directly relevant commitments and obligations in this field. This shows that the institutional basis and capacity for biodiversity monitoring, assessment and research needs to be further developed to ensure the implementation of all commitments. The adoption of PA management plans with clearly defined targets is a key prerequisite for this because the management of individual PAs is monitored against such targets.

Action 1.6: *The APA, with support from other parts of the MoE, academic organisations and NGOs as necessary, maintains and further develops its capacity and expertise for PA assessment and monitoring, taking into account commitments listed in the Assessment section of the IBM on PA. As a prerequisite, the APA continues to develop and enforce PA Management Plans with clearly defined targets and monitoring sections.*

Resumption of International Waterbird Census: Ramsar also requests parties to monitor wetland dependent species, including waterbirds, while CMS contains specific commitments for the establishment of PAs for migratory species, which would rely on monitoring data for site identification. In this context, the lack of International Waterbird Census (IWBC) data from Georgia for all but two years (2003, 2005) is a serious shortcoming which needs to be addressed urgently.

Action 1.7: *The BS, conservation NGOs (particularly Georgian Center for the Conservation of Wildlife (GCCW) as the national BirdLife partner) and academic institutions collaborate to initiate and fund the resumption of IWBC counts including in relevant PAs (e.g. Kolkheti NP, Ktsia-Tabatskuri Managed Reserve, planned PAs in Javakheti).*

1.4.2. Support and facilitation of PA monitoring

Creating enabling conditions for PA monitoring requires technical infrastructure, strategic planning and cooperation within and among countries. These needs are reflected by the commitments in the TEMATEA-section on support and facilitation of PA monitoring.

Use of technology in PA monitoring: Relating to technology, the CBD PoW PA calls for application of new technologies (GIS, remote sensing, databases) in PA monitoring. GIS is already being used in the monitoring of some PAs in Georgia. Together with the other technologies listed, it could be particularly useful for the monitoring of the only Georgian Marine Protected Area, which is an obligation under the CBD PoW PA and the PoW on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.

Action 1.8: *The APA continues to employ GIS based monitoring and disseminates expertise and skills to PAs where this is not applied to date. The Agency assesses the feasibility and potential added value of additional new techniques, such as remote sensing, to the monitoring of PAs, including coastal and marine PAs.*

1.5. Research on PAs

1.5.1. PA Research

Collaboration with Academia on PA Research: The TEMATEA IBM on PA contains only indirectly relevant commitments on conducting research in PAs. These commitments encourage national science foundations and academic institutions to focus their research funding and work on the support of PA management. Research needs that are identified by MEAs but have not been fulfilled to date are concentrated on wetland biota on the one hand and on the role and importance of forest biodiversity on the other hand. Root causes of threats are also listed as important research areas by the IBM. Research needs regarding root causes of threats to biodiversity in PAs, the biodiversity of mountains, dry and sub-humid lands and agricultural systems are also covered by some obligations. Besides these issues, an important and still poorly understood aspect of PAs is the interaction of ecological, social and economic factors in determining their effectiveness. This is reflected by the CBD PoW PA, which calls for the promotion of interdisciplinary research to further understanding of these interactions.

Action 1.9: *The APA engages academic institutions (e.g. the Institutes of Botany and Zoology of the Academy of Sciences and the Biodiversity Centre at Chavchavadze State University), and the National Science Foundation at the Ministry of Education of Georgia, as well as international science and research donors, to support research that supports better management of Georgian PAs, particularly in priority research areas highlighted by MEA commitments.*

1.6. Documentation of knowledge on PAs

The only directly relevant obligation regarding the documentation of knowledge on PAs refers to technologies to manage them and to conserve their biodiversity. This obligation is currently not being implemented in Georgia. Since PA management approaches in the country are generally based on documented, internationally established approaches (such as the Transboundary Joint Secretariat for the Caucasus (TJS) and IUCN guidelines) or written recommendations from consultants, their documentation could easily be based on such documents. This documentation will at the same time serve as a tool to identify knowledge and skills gaps.

Repository of PA management methodologies: In addition, there are indirectly relevant provisions from various MEAs that refer to the compilation and documentation of PA data and information that already exist, but are not necessarily readily available. These include data inventories of wetlands (RAMSAR) and World Heritage Sites (WHC), and information on management practices for PAs in dry and sub-humid lands, the conservation of which was the subject of a recent United Nations Development Program/Global Environmental Facility (UNDP/GEF) project.

Action 1.10: *The APA establishes a repository of PA management methodologies used in Georgian PAs, based on already existing documents (Management Plans, IUCN guidelines, TJS guidelines etc.). It uses the repository to document additional PA-related information*

(relevant to RAMSAR, WHC and UNCCD) and to identify knowledge and skills gaps, as prescribed by the IBM on PA.

1.7. Development of standards, criteria and indicators for assessing PAs

Integration of MEA commitments during the upcoming NBSAP revision: Georgia's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) includes a number of targets and corresponding indicators for national PA system development, as prescribed by the CBD PoW on PA. The implementation and practicability of these targets should be assessed during the upcoming revision of the NBSAP. It should also be monitored by the NCC on the PoW PA.

Action 1.11: *The MoE (particularly the BS and APA), during the upcoming NBSAP revision, reviews the practicability and implementation of the original PA-related targets in the NBSAP of Georgia, referring to Activity 1.1.1. of the PoW PA and related MEA obligations and commitments. It amends the targets as necessary to better reflect Georgia's international commitments.*

Definition of national PA targets: No outcome-oriented national targets on the extent, representativeness and effectiveness of the national PA system of Georgia have been compiled, and Georgia has not participated in the *State of the World's PAs* assessment process.

Action 1.12: *The APA includes, during the further development of a National Long-term PA System Strategy and Action Plan, outcome-oriented targets on the extent, representativeness and effectiveness of the national PA system of Georgia.*

1.8. Development of tools for assessing PAs

Contribution to the World Database on PAs: According to CBD and other MEAs, Georgia has a responsibility to provide data and information about PAs, to be built into toolkits that are used for conservation monitoring and planning at the international level. Among these tools, the **World Database on Protected Areas** (WDPA) occupies a central position. However, information about Georgian PAs within the WDPA is currently outdated and incomplete. A regional (South Caucasus) database on PAs is being prepared by WWF Caucasus and would have maximal impact if shared with the MoEs of Georgia and its neighbours, and fed into the WDPA.

Action 1.13: *The APA liaises with UNEP-WCMC to arrange input of the data and information gathered about Georgian PAs into the World Database on Protected Areas. As a preparatory step, APA and WWF jointly assess the feasibility of using data from the WWF regional PA database as a contribution to Georgia's input into the WDPA.*

Inclusion of the CBD Programme of Work on Forest Biodiversity into the multi-convention approach: In addition to these directly relevant obligations, five CBD-decisions from the **Extended PoW on Forest Biodiversity** are relevant to the development of assessment tool development in forest areas, including potential future forest PAs. They focus on forest monitoring capacity, information systems for forest genetic diversity, as well as the adoption of internationally established forest classification, inventory and survey systems. These obligations are relevant to PAs because reliable information on forest status and biodiversity inside and outside PAs is a prerequisite for the future development of the PA system and possible ecological networks linking PAs.

Action 1.14: *The Forestry Department of the MoE, with the support of relevant legislative and executive institutions continues to implement Georgia's obligations under the CBD Extended*

PoW on Forest Biodiversity, including those on assessment and monitoring, and liaises with the APA to exchange relevant information.

2. Legislative Measures and National Policies

2.1. Review and development of policy and legislation for PAs

2.1.1. Development of national policies

The TEMATEA IBM on PAs reveals a wide range of obligations for the development of national policies on PAs, some of which are already being implemented in Georgia. An important policy document is the NBSAP of Georgia, which will be revised in 2009. Relevant policy recommendations of the national TEMATEA process will be integrated into the revised NBSAP. Obligations and commitments from MEAs other than CBD, for many of which there are no funding mechanisms, will qualify for the CBD related funding mechanisms if they are included in the NBSAP. This approach will be taken where appropriate, and will allow a much wider implementation of MEA obligations in Georgia.

Meeting MEA commitments relevant to illegal resource use in PAs: The PoW PA, but also several other MEAs such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), encourage the development of policies to halt the illegal exploitation of resources from PAs. In Georgia, examples of natural resources in PAs prone to illegal exploitation are timber, wild animals (through illegal hunting), and the rejuvenation of forests (through overgrazing). In its NBSAP (2005), the Forest Policy of Georgia (2007), and other laws and policies, Georgia has taken steps to control the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The Environmental Inspectorate and other law enforcement agencies are supporting the rangers of individual PAs to enforce existing legislation. At the same time, the illegal exploitation of natural resources in PAs through illegal logging, poaching, and other practices appears to continue. Additional measures are necessary to halt illegal resource exploitation.

Action 2.1: *The MoE (including the APA, BS and Forestry Department) continue to develop and implement national policies and action plans to halt the illegal exploitation of resources from PAs, with particular emphasis on Georgia's commitments under the CBD PoW PA, CITES and other MEAs.*

National Wetland Policy: Another gap in the range of PA-related policies in Georgia is a National Wetland Policy, which is required under Ramsar (Res. VII.6, 9), has strong synergies with obligations from other conventions, and is supported by the NBSAP of Georgia.

Action 2.2: *The MoE continues to support the development of a National Wetlands Policy, taking into account obligations not only from Ramsar, but also from other relevant MEAs as shown by the TEMATEA IBM on PAs.*

Implementation of commitments on Biosphere Reserves: The MAB Programme, and its 1995 Seville Strategy promote Biosphere Reserves (BRs), which have much in common with PAs but are directed not exclusively at conservation objectives, but also at development and education objectives. This is closely related to commitments under CBD, according to which the establishment of reserves with the inclusion of sustainable-development objectives, including income generation and employment for local communities, should be promoted.

Although the Georgian PA law mentions BRs, Georgia has not designated any BRs and does not participate actively in UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme yet. As the establishment of BRs (Kazbegi and possibly additional BRs) is currently planned in Georgia, a systematic integration of the guidance available from the Seville Strategy and supplementary resources into the PA policy framework in Georgia, and active participation in the MAB Programme are urgently needed. The systematic application of the Seville Strategy in national

policy will also ensure that new BRs fulfil their conservation objective, and hence contribute to a better implementation of other PA-related MEAs.

Action 2.3: *The MoE, particularly the APA, and the TJS the support the inclusion of the necessary legal basis for BR establishment in Georgian PA legislation, taking into account the Seville Strategy and other relevant MEA obligations and commitments. They engage the EPNRC at the Parliament of Georgia to support creating the necessary legal framework for PAs.*

Joining PAs of various types into a national PA network: The development of BRs and possibly World Heritage Sites and additional Ramsar sites will widen the range and complexity of PA types in Georgia. This development will increase the need for the integration of the various PAs within a national PA network, and the development of a unified policy and legislative framework to guide its development. This need is explicitly acknowledged in Ramsar Resolution IX. 22, 10, which calls for the integration of efforts towards a broader PA system, but it is also implicit in many other obligations.

Action 2.4: *The MoE, with support from the US DoI Technical Assistance Programme and other relevant organisations, creates a clear and consistent policy and legislative framework for the development of the Georgian PA system, comprising PAs of all IUCN categories, BRs, World Heritage Sites and Ramsar Sites, and in accordance with obligations from all relevant MEAs.*

Mainstreaming of PAs in national policy and planning: PAs are influenced not only by activities of the APA and similar agencies that are officially responsible for them, but also by those of a wide range of other sectors. This creates the need to integrate policies that are explicitly focused on PAs and biodiversity within a wider, cross-sectoral and inter-agency policy framework, and to mainstream the development and effective management of PAs within national development strategies, governmental programmes and other policies (CBD Art. 6, b, Dec. VII/28, 12).

Action 2.5: *The MoE, and the EPNRC of the Parliament of Georgia collaborate to integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in PAs into sectoral and cross-sectoral plans, government programmes and policies, taking into account commitments as identified by TEMATEA.*

Two examples of such plans and policies are those on sustainable tourism development, and on climate change: The development of tourism in Georgian PAs is a priority of the Government's mid-term action plan for 2008-2010. Since visitor numbers in Georgian PAs are likely to continue increasing in the near future, following a decline triggered by the 2008 August conflict, it is particularly timely to implement CBD Decision VII.14, 10, which calls for the adoption of policies and legislation to manage impacts of tourism development on landscapes, as well as cultural and natural heritage. The necessary inter-sector cooperation between the MoE and Ministry of Economy and its Tourism Department will be one example of Action 19 above.

The Unit of Hydrometeorology and Climate Change is currently working on its Second National Communication to UNFCCC. Once finished, this communication will be a good basis for the development of national policy and strategic programme on climate change. This will be the appropriate stage to include consideration of PAs into policy and programme development, aimed at the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem resilience to imminent climate change. Such an inclusion is an obligation under CBD (Dec. VIII/30, 1).

2.1.2. Implementation of national policies

An important responsibility arising from all obligations on national policy and development is to close implementation gaps for existing and future policies and legislation in Georgia. This is a cross-cutting responsibility that is shared by all stakeholders of the TEMATEA consultation process.

2.2. Review and development of legislation for PAs

2.2.1. Development of national legislation

Consideration of MEA commitments during the harmonization of national legislation: A central obligation of the CBD PoW PA, which is further supported by additional provisions of other MEAs, is the development and adoption of a legal framework for national and sub-national PA systems, including the establishment of new PAs. Additional provisions range from the promotion of a broad set of PA governance types by legal and/or policy, financial and community mechanisms (PoW PA Act 2.1.1), to the identification of legal gaps (Act. 3.1.1), to the harmonization of sectoral policies and laws (Act. 3.1.3), as well as the legal framework for wetland PAs (Ramsar Rec. 4.4) and World Heritage sites (WHC Art. 5, d). The law of Georgia on the System of Protected Territories (1996) is the central law regarding the national PA system. An assessment of national legislation relevant to PAs is currently underway, in the framework of the US DoI International Technical Assistance Programme. This assessment will form the basis of recommendations and draft amendments to the MoE for a more effective and coherent PA legislation, according to implementers.

Action 2.6: *The MoE and EPNRC of the Parliament of Georgia continue to develop and harmonize legislation with relevance to PAs, directed at a better implementation of international commitments and obligations, and based on recommendations from technical assistance projects as well as appropriate stakeholder participation.*

One example for this activity are integrated policies and strategies that encompass PAs and their surrounding land, for instance for coastal and marine areas. While Ramsar recommends general Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approaches to achieve this integration (Rec. 6.8, 10), CBD (Dec. VIII.22) refers to the IMCAM-concept, which is similar to ICZM but also covers areas beyond the immediate coast, and puts a stronger emphasis on biodiversity conservation. In Georgia, a law on ICZM has been drafted (but not been adopted to date), and a number of activities aiming at the development and piloting of ICZM have been implemented. CBD obligations regarding IMCAM are officially not being implemented. Since there is considerable overlap between ICZM and IMCAM, the adoption and implementation of the draft law on ICZM would also fulfil part of Georgia's obligation to conduct IMCAM. It needs to be explored if the existing draft law on ICZM can be extended to meet the definition of IMCAM (see relevant CBD guidelines), and to fully comply with CBD Dec. VIII.22.

Another example for the need to harmonize legislation is the potential threat to the biodiversity within and around Georgian PAs from the collection and trade of endangered species, which is addressed by CITES. While the collection of specimens from PAs of IUCN Category 1 and 2, as well as the collection of specimens listed in the Red Book and Red List of Georgia, are already banned under existing Georgian law, CITES Decision 13.26 and related CITES provisions call for more comprehensive policies and legislation (e.g. on tenure, access, harvesting and transporting of specimens) to effectively control potential threats. The *Law on Off-take and Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*, which is currently being drafted by the MoE, will establish additional safeguards against the loss of biodiversity in Protected Areas to collection and trade if it implements these commitments.

Revision of national Red List legislation: A particularly important ongoing legislative process which is relevant to the implementation of CBD (particularly Art. 8, k) and other MEAs in Georgia, and will affect the development and management of the national PA system, is the revision of the national Law on the Red List of Threatened Species. This revision is currently being prepared by an expert commission at the MoE. One of the issues under consideration is the inclusion of an obligation to develop and implement recovery plans for threatened species in the national Red List. These recovery plans might include recommendations for habitat protection, including adjustments of the PA system.

Action 2.7: *The MoE and the expert commission for the revision of the national Red List Law ensure that the revised Law on the Red List of Threatened Species serves as an appropriate tool for the protection of threatened species and populations, in accordance with CBD Article 8, k, CITES, and CMS, and that it makes use of the full range of species protection measures for threatened species, including habitat protection through PAs where appropriate.*

2.3. Establishment and designation of new PAs

CBD, as the framework convention on biodiversity, obliges Parties to establish PA systems (CBD Art. 8, a), and gives additional guidance with regard to the types of PAs that should be included (e.g. marine and inland waters – PoW PA 1.1.3), methods for site selection (e.g. gap analyses – PoW PA 1.1.6, incorporation of Important Plant Areas (IPAs) – CBD Dec. VI.9, 2), management and ownership (e.g. promotion of private and community PAs – CBD Dec. VI/22, 28), and other issues. This general framework is filled in by more specific obligations from other MEAs, namely Ramsar (with various obligations related to the creation of Ramsar sites and wetland PAs), CMS (with obligations regarding PAs protecting the critical site network of migratory species), and WHC (related to the nomination and tentative listing of new World Heritage Sites). Other MEAs and programmes, such as the joint work programme of CBD and UNCCD, contain indirectly relevant obligations. All of them need to be integrated when planning the further development of the Georgian PA system.

Georgia's 38 PAs currently cover 6.7% of the country's territory. They are comprised of the main IUCN PA categories and include Ramsar sites (Kolkheti National Park and Kobuleti Nature Reserve), but no BRs and no mixed or natural World Heritage Sites. There are currently plans to extend a number and area of existing PAs. In addition, as mentioned above, the APA is currently developing a long-term strategy and action plan for PA system development in Georgia, which will be aimed at forging the various PAs in the country into a coherent national PA system. The ongoing planning phase is an opportunity to optimize the effectiveness of the national PA system to support the implementation of the entire range of biodiversity-related MEAs.

Creation of new PAs based on ECP recommendations: CBD Decision VI/9, 2 sets global targets for a significant reduction of the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Among those targets is the conservation of at least 10% of each of the world's ecological regions. This target is not binding at the national level. However, a long-term target of at least 10% PA coverage would be appropriate contribution for a country like Georgia, which is part of the Caucasus global biodiversity hotspot. An even higher PA coverage target of 20% was adopted in 1997 but has not officially been endorsed by the current administration. Equally important as the percentage of Georgia's territory that is covered by PAs is the representation of various ecosystem and habitat types, and the overall connectivity and functionality of the national PA system. The Eco-regional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus (2006, ECP) contains specific plans for the conservation of various ecosystem types and general recommendations for linking individual PAs and priority conservation areas into a coherent ecological network, which spans Georgia as well as its neighbouring countries.

Action 2.8: *The APA continues to identify and prioritize additional sites for the establishment of PAs (including all IUCN categories, PAs in BRs, Wetland PAs at Ramsar sites, natural/mixed World Heritage Sites and PAs covering corridors), considering the recommendations of the ECP and MEA obligations, aiming at a significant increase in PA coverage.*

Action 2.9: *The NCC on PoW PA ensures, while developing recommendations for the creation of new PAs and the consolidation of the Georgian PA network in accordance with the CBD PoW PA, that relevant obligations from other MEAs (particularly Ramsar, CMS and WHC) are equally taken into account.*

Complementing these general actions, additional actions on site assessment, policy development and management improvements will support and inform the extension of Georgia's

PA system: The development of a National Wetland Policy (see 2.1.1) will provide guidance on the identification and designation of new Ramsar sites and wetland PAs, the application of the Critical Site Network Tool of the project *Wings over Wetlands* (see 1.2) will assist in including critical MWB sites in the national PA network, as requested by CMS Res. 5.4, and progress with the designation of Georgian mixed and natural World Heritage Sites (see 3.3) will support their inclusion into the network, and fulfil obligations from WHC decision 19 COM.

3. Management

3.1. PA management planning and strategies

3.1.1. Use of plans and strategies to manage PAs

Standardisation of PA management planning: Beyond the basic requirement to develop and apply management plans for all Georgian PAs, the IBM Section of the TEMATEA PA Module on the use of plans and strategies for PA management contains important commitments on the standardisation and guidelines on management planning at the national level, for the strategic planning of PA systems, including buffer zones, corridors and similar, and on the integration of PAs into general spatial planning on the landscape scale. IUCN PA Management Planning Guidelines in Georgian have been introduced to Georgian PA managers. These guidelines and national guidelines that are based on them (such as the KfW TJS national management planning guidelines which are currently being produced), are the appropriate tool to fulfil obligations such as CBD Article 8. However, they should be checked regarding their suitability to plan activities in response to the whole range of MEA obligations (including on migratory species and climate change adaptation).

Action 3.1: *The APA adapts the IUCN/WCPA Best Practice PA Guidelines to provide for the implementation of all MEA obligations relevant to PA management and use them as national guidance on PA management planning. It develops management plans for those PAs that do not have them yet, based on these guidelines, as well as the KfW TJS Guidelines that are based on them.*

Ecological network development: The use of planning and strategies for PA management planning is not only important for individual PAs, but also for PA systems at the regional and national level. A number of obligations focus on this aspect, namely on connections between PAs through corridors, management of ecological networks to maintain ecological processes within PAs (CBD Decision VII/28), for provision of climate change adaptation measures within ecosystems (Dec. VII.15, 12) and the national PA system (CBD Decision VII/28), as well as integrated planning systems for wetland conservation on the catchment scale (Ramsar Rec. 2.3.). The Eco-regional Conservation Plan (ECP) offers a basis for an ecological network connecting PAs throughout the Caucasus, including Georgia.

Action 3.2: *The APA considers MEA commitments and the ECP framework for ecological network development (particularly regarding the Pan-European Ecological Network) during the design and further development of the National PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan. It implements new provisions for the establishment and management of buffer zones, transition zones, and ecological corridors around PAs once they have been created in Georgian policy and legislation. The Georgian PA system is managed as an ecological network, aimed at maintaining ecological processes within PAs.*

Action 3.3: *The PoW PA NCC liaises with the MoE and CBC regarding implementation of PoW PA obligations relevant to the creation of a national ecological network, using information from ECP for detailed guidance. It takes into account obligations from MEAs other than the PoW PA (particularly Ramsar, the CBD Extended PoW on Forest Biodiversity and CMS), as detailed in TEMATEA, in national ecological network design.*

In addition, the TEMATEA IBM on PA lists several commitments on the implementation of policies and plans for PAs. Although these are referring to specific obligations, they improve the overall consistency of MEA implementation and are therefore within the scope of these guidelines:

CMS Resolution 8.2. calls for site protection for migratory species habitats. Another Resolution (Res. 8. 12.) repeats this provision, with a particular focus on migratory raptors and owls. Several existing or planned PAs (including Kolkheti National Park, the planned Javakheti NP and a planned PA on the mouth of the River Chorokhi) comprise important migratory bird (including owl and raptor) habitats, but the necessary extensive data for a the systematic implementation of this provision are currently not available.

Ecological network development, including for migratory bird and plant conservation:

CBD Decision VI/9, 2 prescribes the conservation of the world's plant biodiversity *in situ*. Most of the biodiversity that distinguishes the Caucasus as a global biodiversity hotspot is comprised of plants. A regional Red List of Threatened Plants is currently being compiled (coordinated by the IUCN Species Programme), and another IUCN project on Caucasus Important Plant Areas is nearing its completion. These projects will provide the necessary data for a gap analysis, to decide if the Georgian PA network adequately conserves plants. They will also yield recommendations for possible new PAs to improve plant conservation in Georgia, and thereby contribute to meeting this obligation.

Action 3.4: *The APA considers CMS commitments like those on migratory bird habitat conservation and commitments under CBD regarding in-situ plant conservation during ecological network development (particularly regarding the Pan-European Ecological Network), and successively integrates them into the relevant parts of the National Long-term PA System Strategy and Action Plan during further development. It uses available data from the Regional IUCN Plant Red List project and of the IUCN Caucasus IPA project to evaluate the effectiveness of Georgia's PA network for plant conservation to meet obligations from CBD Decision VI/9.*

Integration of PAs into spatial planning: Individual PAs are also part of their surrounding landscape, and need to be managed as part of that landscape to be effective. PA management needs to be integrated into general spatial planning and management, and general development plans at the local, regional and national level need to pay special attention to PAs. This need is expressed both generally (CBD Decision VII/28), and specifically in provisions about integrated watershed/river basin management (e.g. Ramsar Recommendation 2.3., 6.2.5.), ICZM and IMCAM (CBD), and integrated land use planning (e.g. CBD Decision III/11, 17). It is also spelled out by CBD Article 8, 2, which calls for environmentally sound and sustainable development around PAs to increase their protection. With regard to wetlands, Ramsar Res. IX.3, 17 specifies that wetland conservation should be integrated in development projects, poverty-reduction strategies and similar plans. Since many new regional development plans will be developed in Georgia over the next few years, it appears timely to promote the systematic inclusion of PA issues in regional development, following the guidance of these MEAs.

Action 3.5: *The APA engages local and regional government institutions responsible for cadastral issues and spatial planning to disseminate information about PAs and the use of their surrounding landscape, and to integrate PA management into wider landscape management.*

Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach: An important concept of CBD, which is also implicit in management and planning obligations under all other MEAs, is the ecosystem approach. The ecosystem approach is a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. Its application will help to reach a balance of the three objectives (conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing) of the Convention. It is based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies and recognizes that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems. The need to implement the ecosystem approach in PA planning is emphasized in a wide range of CBD obligations, for instance on general policy development and planning (CBD VII/11), sustainable forest management (CBD VI/22, 28), sustainable tourism

development (CBD V/24, 4), integrated river basin management (CBD IV/4, 4), Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management (CBD VI/23, 5), and other issues. Other conventions, such as Ramsar and CMS, have a similar approach. Applying the Ecosystem Approach to MEA implementation also means taking a holistic view towards the parallel and coordinated implementation of obligations from all MEAs, and identifying where different MEAs say the same thing in different words.

Action 3.6: *The MoE (particularly the APA and BS) promotes systematic implementation of the ecosystem approach into PA and PA system planning where it is prescribed by CBD or where it can be applied to obligations from other MEAs, and builds capacity among relevant planners and managers for its implementation.*

Commitments on sustainable tourism development in and around PAs: Apart from the abovementioned provisions on the application of the ecosystem approach in sustainable and equitable tourism development, a separate provision (CBD VII/14) calls for sustainable tourism development in general, for observing the IUCN PA Categories, and for the appropriate zoning of tourism in and around PAs. Tourism development offers significant potential benefits for Georgian PAs but it also implies risks to ecological sustainability and equitability. Monitoring and control of these risks should be included into the planning of responsible Government institutions, and existing plans for tourism development in and around PAs should be checked both with respect to their general impact on biodiversity and other values of PAs and regarding their suitability to accommodate further increases in tourist numbers in the future.

Action 3.7: *The APA ensures implementation of all relevant MEA commitments on sustainable tourism development in and around PAs in the PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan.*

3.1.2. Implementation of policies and plans for PAs

Use of PA Management Effectiveness Assessment results: CBD Decision VII/28 calls for the implementation of recommendations from PA Management Effectiveness Assessments in PA management. Georgia is in a good position to fulfil this obligation because a RAPPAM PAME has been carried out within the framework of WWF's Caucasus 2012 *Protected Areas Project* in 2008/2009. Therefore, the APA will have at its disposal an up-to-date assessment as a basis for adaptive PA management, and as a prerequisite to meet the above obligation.

Action 3.8: *The APA uses the outcomes of the 2008/2009 PA Management Effectiveness Assessment to inform its PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan development.*

Control of threats from infrastructure developments to PAs: CBD Decision VII/5 focuses on the management of threats (including those from transport and shipping) to maximize the effectiveness of marine and coastal PAs. Related to these commitments, the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008 and Rec. 5.3. put particular emphasis on the maintenance of the ecological character of Ramsar sites, by defining and implementing appropriate measures (Rec. 2.3.). This provision is supported by another provision to include the measures for maintaining the benefits from wetlands (including Ramsar sites) into management planning (Res. IX.4, 28). Georgia has only one MPA (at Kolkheti NP) where natural resource use and transportation are forbidden. However, the newly constructed Kulevi Oil Terminal is situated in the immediate vicinity of this MPA, and potentially threatens its effectiveness for marine biodiversity conservation. Therefore, implementation of the above provision requires that management of threats to Kolkheti MPA from Kulevi Oil Terminal is included into the MPA's Management Plan.

Action 3.9: *The APA considers relevant commitments from all MEAs and includes management and control of threats from Kulevi Oil Terminal, as well as the maintenance of the ecological character of the MPA into the Management Plan of the Kolkheti MPA at the next scheduled revision. It engages other State Agencies and State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), as the current operator of Kulevi Oil Terminal to support implementing the Management Plan.*

Management of PAs in dry and sub-humid lands: The joint work programme of the CBD and the UNCCD on the biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands, as well as the CBD PoW on dry and sub-humid land, and UNFCCC contain a number of provisions relevant to the management of PAs in dry and sub-humid areas.

Action 3.10: *The APA uses the IBM on PAs to identify necessary action regarding MEA provisions on dry and sub-humid land biodiversity in Georgia, and includes management implications in the Management Plans of Georgian PAs in dry and sub-humid areas (e.g. Chachuna SNR, Vashlovani PAs).*

3.2. Mitigate or removal of external threats to PAs

3.2.1. Threats from IAS

CBD obliges its Parties to control risks associated with IAS in PAs (Dec. VII.28, 19). The Ramsar Convention does the same with regard to Ramsar Sites, while CMS, CITES and WHC also contain commitments relevant to IAS. In addition, both CBD and Ramsar contain commitments on the control of IAS throughout the landscape and various ecosystems (such as forests, dry and sub-humid lands, wetlands, and isolated mountain areas, the later being of particular relevance in Georgia), be it inside or outside PAs. This integrative approach is particularly sensible in relation to IAS, as their distribution will not stop at PA borders once they have been introduced to their vicinity.

Identification and control of IAS: While some IAS have been identified in Kolkheti NP and a project proposal for their control has been submitted, there are no national-level emergency plans in place to control threats from IAS in Georgian PAs. The first element of such plans is the development of the necessary expertise and capacity to detect IAS threats. This development can be based on existing projects, such as the ongoing development of an IAS checklist (plants) for Georgia, and additional complementary projects. However, PA managers and particular the research and monitoring units at PA administrations also need to be sensitized for the fact that IAS threats, by their very nature, can be unpredictable and involve species that are not covered by existing checklists.

Action 3.11: *The APA distributes the “Checklist of alien and invasive plants of Georgia”, which is currently under development at the Institute of Botany, to all PAs in Georgia, supports projects aiming at developing a similar list for animals, and includes IAS detection and control in PA staff training and capacity building. The APA maintains sufficient monitoring capacity to detect and control emerging threats from IAS and follows emerging IAS threats in neighbouring countries, aimed at establishing an early warning system on IAS threats.*

Action 3.12: *Academic institutions, such as the Biodiversity Centre at Chavchavadze State University, continue to study IAS (particularly aquatic species and animals) including threats, links to other threats like pollution and climate change, detection methods and mitigation measures, and make the results of this research available to the APA.*

3.2.2. Threats from climate change

Consideration of PAs during the planning and implementation of climate change mitigation projects: Only three obligations from MEAs (CBD and Ramsar) with indirect relevance to PAs are included in TEMATEA. They deal with the need to ensure that future activities for climate change mitigation in the context of UNFCCC implementation are consistent with biodiversity conservation.

Action 3.13: *The UNFCCC Focal Point within the MoE and agencies responsible for UNFCCC-related projects within the MoE consult the BS and APA during the planning and implementation of future UNFCCC projects, regarding possible biodiversity effects of planned activities. They*

consider the introduction of biodiversity-inclusive EIAs for climate change mitigation or adaptation measures, whenever appropriate.

3.3. Maintenance of healthy habitats and resources

Management of emerging effects of climate change on PAs: A particularly important emerging challenge to the maintenance of healthy habitats and ecosystems is climate change. This is a relatively new issue and there is still a lack of data about future needs for adaptive ecosystem management to address it. However, preparations for climate change adaptation need to be initiated now to allow timely action in the future. CBD (Dec. VII.15. 12) calls for management to maximise ecosystem resilience and hence adaptation capacity. While there are some measures that will contribute to this in any case (such as ecological networks with high connectivity, and effectively managed PAs), there is no systematic assessment of the likely future adaptation needs for Georgian ecosystems. Such an assessment, for which methodologies are now available, will inform Georgia's management planning on ecosystem adaptation to climate change, in accordance with the Country's MEA commitments, and will also serve as a public awareness raising tool.

Action 3.14: *The MoE promotes and supports studies of the imminent climate change effects on ecosystems, biodiversity and PAs in Georgia. It integrates their outcomes with those of ongoing case studies on revealed climate change effects and with lessons learned from ongoing adaptation projects, and uses them for planning and public awareness raising.*

Collaboration for the establishment of mixed and natural WH sites: A Georgian example of the need for inter-ministerial communication as a prerequisite for effective PA system development is World Heritage sites: The responsibility for them lies with the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport in Georgia. Georgia currently has no natural or combined heritage sites listed on the World Heritage List under the WHC. WHC Article 4 calls for the identification, protection and conservation of such sites. Therefore, efforts to identify natural heritage sites and to initiate the listing, fundraising and management planning process for them should be renewed in close cooperation with the MoE, and particularly the APA. During this process, commitments from all other MEAs as listed in the IBM on PA should also be taken into account.

Action 3.15: *The Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sport and the MoE continue to collaborate to list new natural and combined WH sites in Georgia, based on natural value criteria, and consider the widening of the listing of cultural sites such as Upper Svaneti (to combined cultural/natural) if feasible.*

3.4. Restoration of habitats and resources

Ecosystem restoration is considered a second choice after the conservation of existing systems, as it is often more costly and less effective. Ramsar Resolution VIII.16, 10, spells out that "the restoration or creation of wetlands cannot replace the loss of natural wetlands". Considering the relative wealth of less degraded ecosystems inside and outside PAs in Georgia, as well as budgetary constraints to often relatively expensive restoration projects, the conservation of existing ecosystems will usually be the most cost-effective conservation approach, and should take precedent over restoration in most cases. However, both Ramsar and CBD contain various provisions with regard to the restorations of wetlands and ecosystems in general, which should be used in conjunction whenever appropriate

Commitments on habitat restoration: Commitments on wetland restoration include institutional responsibilities for wetland restoration (Ramsar Rec. 4. 1.), prioritization of the restoration of key wetland sites (Ramsar Rec. 6.15, 10), restoration to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters (Ramsar Res. IX.9, 12), and other measures. Commitments on general ecosystem rehabilitation and restoration focus specifically on restoration measures in PAs (CBD Dec. VII/28, 19), on restoration of areas as a contribution to ecological networks (CBD Dec.

VII/28), restoration of degraded secondary forests (CBD Dec. VI.22, 28), and other measures. CMS Res. 8.2 calls for the restoration of habitats of Appendix I species, 16 of which occur in Georgia.

Action 3.16: *The APA takes into account commitments of relevant MEAs, particularly CBD, CMS and Ramsar when prioritizing, planning and implementing ecosystem or habitat restoration projects in and around Georgian PAs.*

3.5. Management of resource use in PAs

Natural resource use is a main cause of conflict surrounding PAs, and one of the main challenges to successful PA management. CBD Art. 8, c obliges Parties to “manage biological resource use important for biodiversity conservation within or outside PAs, to ensure their conservation and sustainable use”. Additional provisions deal with the control of illegal trade in natural resources from PAs (CBD Dec. VII/28, 21), the sustainable use of marine resources in coastal and marine PAs (CBD Dec. VIII.22, 3), and arrangements for the sustainable use of natural resources by local communities in or around PAs (CBD Dec. VIII.23, 3).

Collaborative management of natural resource use in and around PAs: While PA management in Georgia is regulated by the *Law of Georgia on the Protected Areas System* and specific laws for individual PAs, natural resource use in general is regulated by the *Law of Georgia on Licences and Permits*. The legal situation for natural resource use within PA (other than IUCN Category 1) is unclear, and is further discussed in the section of this document that deals with policy and legislation. Regardless of possible improvements of the legal basis for natural resource use in PAs, close communication between the Service of Licences and Permits and the APA will remain crucial for effective natural resource management in Georgian PAs.

Action 3.17: *The APA engages the Forestry Department and the Service for Licences and Permits to discuss all decisions regarding natural resource use, and comply with the abovementioned MEA provisions when issuing licenses for natural resource use in and around PAs.*

Natural resource use by local communities: With regard to arrangements for the sustainable use of natural resources by local communities in or around PAs other than IUCN Category 1 (CBD Dec. VIII.23, 3), it appears problematic that licences for natural resource use (with the exception of fuel wood collection) are auctioned, according to the Law on Licences and permits, because successful participation in auctions is difficult for small-scale local users of natural resources. Access of local communities to the sustainable exploitation of traditionally used natural resources (e.g. fish, berries, other Non-timber Forest Products (NTFPs)) should be made easier, possibly by following the example of exemptions from the licensing procedure such as for fuel wood collection.

Action 3.18: *The APA consults with the Service of Licences and Permits to ensure the legitimate rights of local communities for the sustainable use of natural resources are respected and safeguarded through the granting procedure for natural resource use licences in and around PAs.*

While the sustainable resource use by local communities should not be illegalized through licensing procedures that exclude the rural poor, there are cases of illegal resource use that need to be reduced, based on existing laws. The PoW PA calls for improved governance and enforcement to halt the illegal exploitation of natural resources from PAs. CBD Dec. VIII.22, 3 repeats this obligation with special emphasis on coastal and marine resources, while similar provisions exist for forest resources.

3.6. Enforcement and support of PA management

Decentralisation of PA management: The capacity of PA management authorities for effective management and enforcement is key to achieving PA conservation objectives. Accordingly, CBD Decisions VIII/24, VII/14/10 and VII/28, 19 emphasize the need to strengthen the mandate and develop the capacity of management authorities for all aspects of PA management, through training, support and provision of equipment and resources. An important implication of the need for successful PA management is that as much capacity and responsibility as possible (including for financial management, as stipulated in CBD Dec. VIII/24) is concentrated at the actual PAs, in order to facilitate direct management responses and effective enforcement.

Action 3.19: *The APA delegates management responsibility (including financial responsibility) and develops management capacity at the level of individual PAs, to the extent possible within the current legal framework, to support effective management of PAs.*

4. Economic Instruments

The need for inter-convention and inter-agency communication and cooperation is particularly important with regard to economic instruments because the financial and economic mechanisms connected with the various MEAs differ fundamentally. This is also true for Georgia where economic constraints are a main root cause of current threats to its biodiversity. Economic instruments play a crucial role in controlling these threats and in safeguarding the sustainable development of the country's PA system. In addition, both positive and negative incentives for effective biodiversity conservation in PAs are usually influenced by Ministries and government institutions other than the MoE.

4.1. Support to positive incentives for PAs

4.1.1. Support or development of positive incentives

Application of the "Polluter Pays" principle: The only directly relevant obligations regarding positive incentives are from the CBD PoW on PA, which calls for financial mechanisms to redress damage to PAs, as well as the identification, establishment and further development of positive incentives to support the existence or creation of PAs. With regard to the first of these obligations, a more explicit inclusion of the "Polluter Pays" principle, and its systematic application to damages to PAs, should be ensured, and the principle should be anchored in relevant legislation, such as EIA legislation. It should also be ensured that the state income from such payments is actually used for the repair or mitigation of damage to PAs. Otherwise such incentives could easily turn into perverse incentives, because the income from payments could be perceived as an additional source of revenue by the State.

Action 4.1: *The US DoI Technical Assistance Programme and the NCC on PoW PA promotes inclusion of the "Polluter Pays" principle in new and revised legislation with regard to PAs. Consider obligations from all relevant MEAs when defining what constitutes damage to PAs and their biodiversity.*

Compensation payments as an incentive for PA establishment and protection: A common problem affecting the establishment of PAs in Georgia has been a lack of coordination of the establishment of new PAs with other land use and ownership forms, and the fact that already gazetted PAs were often ignored when state-owned lands were sold or leased to private persons. This has created ownership and land use conflicts in some new PAs which will take years to be solved in the courts. One possible financial incentive to address these conflicts in newly established PAs would be compensation programmes for land owners and leasers.

Action 4.2: *The APA, together with municipalities and other relevant institutions, explores the potential use of compensation programmes to land-owners (including in cases with unclear legal status of land ownership) as a positive incentive to support the establishment of new PAs, in accordance with its commitments under CBD and the PoW PA.*

Multi-convention use of GEF as a financing mechanism: CBD, including the CBD PoW on PA, has a funding mechanism through the GEF that is not directly available to other biodiversity MEAs such as Ramsar. Ramsar contains provisions for the development of positive incentives for the conservation of wetlands as well. By pointing out the relevance of the fulfilment of Ramsar obligations to meeting CBD obligations, such as those listed above, GEF funding could effectively be used for the implementation of these obligations. For example, development of a National Wetlands Policy, which is primarily a Ramsar obligation, could be GEF eligible because it is also an objective of the NBSAP. An additional possible way of funding of positive economic incentives for PAs might be the Clean Development Mechanism under UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol. The potential use of this mechanism for PA-related incentives needs to be further explored.

Action 4.3: *The APA and the NCC on PoW PA take a multi-convention approach when fundraising using GEF and other funding mechanisms such as CDM. They use commitments in Georgia's NBSAP to include actions aimed at fulfilling obligations from MEAs other than CBD in fundraising proposals to GEF, as appropriate, and engage the national UNFCCC body to further explore the use of CDM for PA-related fundraising.*

4.1.2. Identification, removal and mitigation of perverse incentives and their effects

Use of TEMATEA IBM on PA to address perverse incentives: In the context of this IBM, perverse incentives are incentives that encourage behaviour or activities which damage PAs. In most cases perverse incentives are put into place not by MEAs but by activities of other sectors, such as agriculture or infrastructure development. In order to be able to address them, the MoE needs to establish close communications with other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economic Development. The MoE also needs to raise the profile of PAs at the Government level, to ensure that biodiversity conservation in PAs is sufficiently prioritized. One way of achieving this is by basing the argument on the combined responsibilities from MEAs, as compiled in the TEMATEA IBM on PAs.

Action 4.4: *The MoE and particularly the APA develop capacity to identify and inter-ministerial communication mechanisms to address perverse incentives with damaging effects to PAs from MEAs and sectoral policies and activities (e.g. agriculture, infrastructure development). They use the TEMATEA IBM on PAs as a discussion tool at the government level to demonstrate international obligations of Georgia to protect biodiversity in PAs.*

4.2. Distribution of resources from and to PAs

A sustainable system of PA financing is a commitment under various MEAs: CBD Dec. VIII/24 calls for financial plans to implement and manage national and regional PA systems, for the inclusion of regulatory and voluntary mechanisms to it, and for an ongoing and focused dialogue on financing the PoW PA. This is complemented by similar obligations from WHC, Ramsar and UNCCD.

Sustainable PA financing: Georgian PAs currently are net sinks of financial resources because the various ecosystem services they provide are not yet valorised financially. Therefore, the discussion of resource distribution and PAs needs to focus on the mobilisation of funds for PAs, rather than from them.

Action 4.5: *The APA, NCC on PoW PA and UNDP (during the further development of a current sustainable financing project for the Georgian PA system) take into account obligations from CBD, WHC, Ramsar and UNCCD, and consider a wide range of financing instruments involving the private sector, voluntary payments and natural resource use, when developing sustainable financing and resource provision strategies for the Georgian PA system.*

4.3. Development of financial strategies for PAs

Use of guidelines for the development of economic opportunities in PAs: The PoW PA includes an activity on the identification and fostering of economic opportunities for goods and services produced by PAs or reliant on their ecosystem services. It also suggests to use benefits from PAs for poverty reduction, consistent with PA management objectives. This is highly relevant to Georgia as tourism development in PAs - based on services produced by them - is a priority of the MoE and APA. Additional guidance is provided by the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, according to which tourism revenues should be channelled towards the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity including PAs, education programmes and local community development. An additional provision is included in CITES. In combination, these obligations provide important guidance for the development of tourism and other activities based on natural resources and ecosystem services from Georgian PAs.

Action 4.6: *The NCC on PoW PA consults the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, as well as additional commitments from CITES and other MEAs when devising action on fostering economic opportunities for goods and services produced by PAs.*

Access and benefit sharing: A related, but different issue is the equitable sharing of access and benefits from genetic resources in Georgian PAs. Commitments to access and benefit sharing are particularly prominent in CBD. There is a great, as yet underused potential for the use of genetic resources from Georgian PAs. Arrangements for access and benefit sharing according to MEA (particularly CBD) obligations, and involving national and local stakeholders, should therefore be put into place to be prepared for intensified use of genetic resources in the future.

Action 4.7: *The APA, BD, and the Service for Licenses and Permits develop, in a participatory way and taking into commitments from CBD, CITES and other MEAs, a policy for access and benefit sharing from genetic resources associated with biodiversity inside and outside Georgian PAs. They include this policy in general PA-related policy and planning.*

5. Provision of Resources

5.1. Funding for PAs

5.1.1. Provision of international funding

Georgia is a country with an economy in transition and a recipient of international donor funding. It does not fund development projects, and does not provide funding for PAs abroad.

5.1.2. Provision of domestic funding, including to wetlands

None of the main biodiversity-related MEAs contains explicit funding obligations, let alone targets for the domestic PA system of Parties. However, CBD Dec. VIII.24, 26 encourages Parties to mobilize funding for the implementation of the PoW PA, which may include direct funding for PAs. This obligation is complemented by Ramsar obligations to offer funding for wetland inventories and management planning, and recommendations from the MAB Seville

strategy for the funding of Biosphere Reserves, which will become relevant to Georgia in the future once BRs are established (see 2.1.1).

The funding for the establishment and the creation of infrastructure in most Georgian PAs has predominantly been sourced from international donors, with some contributions from the Georgian State Budget. Their running costs are sourced from the State Budget, which constrains the overall funding available. In order to ease this constraint, the Caucasus Protected Areas Fund was established by international donors in 2006, aiming at a target capital of EUR 45 Mio to contribute 50% to the running costs of high priority PAs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Sources of PA funding: In order to meet the various MEA commitments of Georgia, three complementary approaches need to be taken: (1) Budget funding for the establishment and running costs of Georgian PAs should be increased, as far as possible in the current financial situation. (2) The donor coordination by the Georgian Government should ensure that sufficient funding for the implementation of existing plans and targets on PA system development, in accordance to MEA commitments, is sourced from international donors. (3) New innovative ways to achieve financial sustainability of PAs (e.g. through natural resource use, involvement of the private sector, or payments for environmental services) should be developed and piloted.

Action 5.1: *The NCC for PoW on PA promotes meeting PoW and related commitments on provision of PA funds in Georgia through increased funding for PAs from the state budget.*

Action 5.2: *The MoE, through its existing mechanisms of donor coordination, takes into account Georgia's MEA commitments as listed in the IBM on PA when prioritising international donor funding for nature conservation projects in Georgia.*

5.2. Capacity building for PAs

In agreement with obligations from various MEAs, the Georgian Government has identified the improvement of the capacity of Government Institutions, including those tasked with PA management, as a major priority.

5.2.1. Education and training

The CBD PoW PA (Act. 3.2.1), as the framework programme on biodiversity, calls for the creation of curricula, resources and programs for the sustained delivery of PA management training. Ramsar Article 4, 5 and Res. IX.6, 12 contains a similar provision which is specific to wetlands. Additional commitments under both MEAs specify the need of training and education on a range of specific subjects. The MAB Seville Strategy does the same for BR Managers.

Implementation of MEA commitments through the establishment of a joint training centre:

In practice, Georgian Ramsar sites and BRs will most likely be managed as PAs of one or several of the IUCN Categories, and the main PA management principles and skills will be relevant to possible future mixed and natural WH sites as well. In addition, there will often be an exchange of managers between the various PA types, and there is a wide range of training frameworks, modules, resources, etc. that have been developed in the context of different MEAs and may be more or less applicable to any given PA in Georgia. Therefore, an effective concerted approach to the education and training needs and obligation under the various MEAs would be the establishment of a joint training centre for the Georgian PA system. The establishment of a training centre for PA management is one of the objectives of the ongoing US DI funded International Technical Assistance Program. Once established, the ToR of this centre could be defined in such a way that it serves the training and education needs of all PA types in the country, and hence makes a contribution to meeting the corresponding MEA obligations. The centre could build on wide inter-agency participation, including the national knowledge community (e.g. Ranger Course at Ilia Chavchavadze State University) and

international organisations with expertise on PAs, to ensure an integrative approach and the application of international best practice in PA training.

Action 5.3: *The MoE, particularly the APA, implements MEA commitments on provision of education and training to PAs, by promoting the extension of the planned US DoI training centre for PA management, to act as an integrated training and education centre for the Georgian PA system, with wide stakeholder participation in curriculum development, based on national experience and internationally established training guidelines and tools from biodiversity-related MEAs.*

5.2.2. Technology development and transfer

Use of a joint training centre as a hub for technology transfer: A joint training centre of the PA system can also create the enabling conditions to transfer technology for improved PA management, as required under the CBD PoW PA, and UNFCCC. Furthermore, it can become a focal point for the communication between the MoE and APA on the one hand and the academic and research sector on the other hand. Technology needs can be formulated, based on the requirements of PA management, and communicated to academic institutions that are able to develop solutions to meet these needs. In this way, the centre could become a catalyst for the guided development of technology for PA management and biodiversity management in general, which is also required under the CBD PoW on Mountain Biodiversity and UNCCD.

Action 5.4: *The APA considers including the promotion of technology development and transfer in the mission of the suggested joint training centre for the PA system of Georgia and establishes regular communication between PA managers and academic/research institutions, taking into account education and training commitments under CBD and UNFCCC.*

5.2.3. Institutional capacity building

Similar to the training and education of individual PA staff, which tend to be applicable in various types of PAs and institutional contexts, the institutional capacity building needs in various parts of the institutional setup that manages the Georgian PA system are likely to have considerable overlap. Greater capacity to function effectively as a Government organisation will benefit any institution within the Georgian PA system.

Consideration of MEA commitments on institutional capacity development: Based on this understanding, the institutional capacity building needs that are identified by various biodiversity-related MEAs can be seen and addressed in concert. The capacity for improved governance by PA management authorities, including financial planning (CBD Dec. VIII/24, 18g), the capacity to collaborate across sectors (CBD PoW PA 3.2.4), the capacity to protect and conserve cultural and natural heritage (WHC article 5, b) or wetlands (Ramsar Strategic Plan 2003-2008), and the capacity to reach various other targets, can all be addressed through similar measures of institutional capacity building. For this purpose, a concerted approach to institutional capacity building that takes into account Georgia's obligations under all MEAs listed under the TEMATEA IBM on PA, should be taken. One framework within which such an approach can be implemented is international donor projects on institutional capacity building for the Georgian MoE, such as a project that is being initiated by the German Technical Cooperation.

Action 5.5: *The MoE takes into account the multiple commitments from MEAs when designing and implementing technical cooperation projects on institutional capacity building.*

Advisory board on climate change adaptation and mitigation: However, there also are more technical issues that need a more specific capacity developing approach. Capacity for the integration of climate change adaptation concerns into development strategies (UNFCCC Dec. 1/CP.8), including those related to the PA system, and into wetland management (Ramsar Res.

VIII.3, 19), relies on technical expertise, in addition to the ability for cross-sectoral communication, and will be addressed through regular expert involvement.

Action 5.6: *The MoE establishes an interdisciplinary expert advisory board on climate change adaptation and mitigation, with participation of the BS, the knowledge community and relevant nature conservation NGOs, to ensure that climate change adaptation is included into government development strategies in accordance to existing commitments, including those concerning PAs and wetlands.*

Development of the capacity for international cooperation: An important aspect of the institutional capacity is the ability and capacity to cooperate internationally, and to integrate national policy and management into the international context. This capacity need is spelled out by the CBD PoW on Mountain Biodiversity (Goal 3.4), but is implicit in other MEAs. In Georgia and the surrounding Caucasus region, an important mechanism to build this capacity is CBC, which is primarily concerned with the implementation of the ECP but has a capacity to develop into a more general institution for the regional coordination of PA-related activities in the region.

Action 5.7: *The Caucasus Biodiversity Council (CBC) further develops its regional focus of work and engages additional stakeholders, particularly decision makers from governments, to assume a more general role as a facilitator of regional collaboration for conservation in the Caucasus. The MoE continues to participate at a high level in CBC and uses it to integrate national conservation efforts into the eco-regional context.*

6. Communication, Education and Public Awareness

6.1. Reporting to Conventions and Communication with Parties

6.1.1. Reporting to Conventions and Parties

Although each MEA has its own reporting requirements, there are cases where information required for reporting to one MEA may be used in reports to others. This is particularly true for potential reporting overlaps between Ramsar and CBD, from which all directly relevant obligations in this sub-section of the IBM are taken.

The second and third reports of Georgia to CBD are currently being prepared. In addition, there is another CBD commitment to thematic reports on issues like PA financing or mountain ecosystems, which is not met currently. Ramsar reporting obligations tend to be more ad-hoc and event-based. The fact that these have not been fully met thus far could either mean that there have been none of the events that would require reporting, that the corresponding information was not available, or that it was available but not reported.

Multi-convention approach to reporting: There are numerous indirectly relevant reporting requirements from various MEAs that are currently not met by Georgia. The reason is either lack of data availability (e.g. in the case of reporting requirements on the ecological state of Ramsar sites, and freshwater biodiversity in general, required under Ramsar, or reporting on the inventory of heritage and the state of WH sites to WHC), or the fact that activities that are supposed to be reported have not been conducted in Georgia. The underlying monitoring, policy and management issues are discussed in the respective sections.

Action 6.1: *The CBD and Ramsar focal points within the MoE liaise among each other, and with other MEA FPs including the Aarhus Convention FP, to identify overlaps between current and future reporting requirements between MEAs, and coordinate reporting so as to minimise time and resource expenditure. They check the TEMATEA IBM for reporting implications whenever gaps in the implementation of obligations referring to monitoring, management or policy/legislation are closed.*

Listing of natural and combined World Heritage sites: An important PA-related shortcoming of WHC implementation in Georgia with implications for other MEAs relates to the balance between the numbers of cultural and natural properties included in the World Heritage List and the national tentative list (Dec. 27 COM 14). Among the 15 properties listed on Georgia's tentative WH list are only three of the mixed category and none of the natural heritage category. This imbalance could be redressed by including additional natural or mixed sites, taking into account recommendations from PA gap analyses and complementing the existing PA system of Georgia. This would create synergies with the implementation of other MEAs, including the CBD PoW PA and the Aarhus Convention.

Action 6.2: *The Ministry of Culture, Monuments Protection and Sport considers the inclusion of additional natural or mixed heritage sites in the tentative World Heritage list of Georgia, based on consultation with the MoE (particularly APA) and nature conservation NGOs. It includes these institutions in the management planning for any additional sites.*

6.1.2. Information sharing with Parties

The main factor limiting the extent of information sharing between Georgia and other MEA Parties is the lack of much of the information that is supposed to be exchanged, according to CBD, Ramsar and WHC commitments. In cases where the necessary data are available, international data exchange and communication may contribute significantly to improved MEA implementation, and therefore all available mechanisms should be used to facilitate information exchange. Information sharing with neighbouring parties on regional issues (e.g. transboundary PAs and wetlands, IAS) is particularly important.

6.2. Dissemination of information to others

Georgia has made considerable progress with commitments regarding the dissemination of information connected to its PAs. The APA website and publications offer general information, the Aarhus Centre Georgia, which has maintained close contacts with the MoE, has offered mechanisms to access more specific data, and a Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism will be established within the framework of an ongoing GEF project.

6.3. Understanding and awareness-raising

6.3.1. Awareness-raising in the public

Enhancing the impact of CEPA activities: Some commitments to public awareness raising for biodiversity conservation, including PAs, are met in a comprehensive way in Georgia. The APA has published numerous information materials in print and other media. Both CENN and Buneba Print (with support by conservation NGO GCCW) produce journals which cover PAs in some of their editions. Hence, the various subject fields that are required to be included in CEPA, according to the MEAs included in the TEMATEA IBM on PA, are covered to a considerable degree by existing publications. The problem is that the circulation of most of these products is much too low to achieve a significant impact, and that the profile of biodiversity conservation and PAs in television (by far the most important medium in Georgia) and in formal education is too low.

Action 6.3: *The APA engages the private sector and international donors to initiate the production of TV programmes which raise awareness and inform about Georgian PAs, as well as biodiversity in general, particularly covering the topics listed in Section 6.3.1. of the IBM on PAs. They liaise with the Ministry of Education to promote the inclusion of PA issues in school books.*

6.3.2. Awareness-raising in organizations and specific groups

The only directly relevant obligation in this sub-section is from the CBD PoW PA (Activity 3.5.2) and calls for CEPA programmes for local communities and policy makers. This obligation is discussed in the participation section (Chapter 8) of this document.

6.3.3. Evaluation and planning of awareness campaigns

Integration of CBD and Ramsar commitments on CEPA: With regard to the planning of awareness campaigns, which contains commitments under CBD and Ramsar, the main objective of the APA should be to develop an integrated CEPA concept that takes into account national priorities, alongside with commitments from both conventions.

Action 6.4: *The APA includes CEPA-related obligations of CBD and Ramsar (and of the MAB Programme, as soon as there will be BRs in Georgia) into its general CEPA strategy, which is planned as part of the long-term strategy and action plan for the PA system in Georgia.*

The evaluation of CEPA activities could be made easier through the application of the indicator “Awareness on Biodiversity” which is currently being developed for use in Georgia and its neighbouring countries by IUCN POSC.

7. Cooperation

Considering the political challenges to effective international cooperation by Georgia on PAs the level, extent and success of international cooperation in this region are very encouraging. Key milestones in the development of regional collaboration have been the ECP – with CBC as a coordinating body for implementation - and the creation of the TJS by KfW. In addition to regional cooperation on transboundary PAs, there are other equally relevant areas of international cooperation, which are also discussed in this section. Finally, the TEMATEA IBM on PA identifies not only needs for international, but also for inter-sector cooperation.

7.1 Cooperate on transboundary PAs

There are several transboundary Protected Areas (TBPA) projects at varying stages of realization at the borders with most neighbouring countries: KfW is funding the establishment of the Lake Arpi-Javakheti TBPA at the border with Armenia, and an MoU with Azerbaijan has already been signed on Lagodekhi-Zakatala TBPA. Another MoU is under consideration for a new TBPA between Georgia and Turkey. The ECP identifies further transboundary priority conservation areas in all major biomes of the region, where additional TBPAs may be created in the future.

With several TBPA projects on the basis of bilateral agreements underway, and with the ECP as a blueprint for future integration of the regional ecological network, Georgia already fulfils some MEA obligations on TBPA: CBD (Decision VIII/30, 4) calls for regional cooperation to enhance habitat connectivity, and the CBD PoW PA (Act. 1.3.1.) promotes effective regional PA networks.

Creation of new TBPAs on the basis of the ECP: In addition, with the creation of the TJS and Georgia's participation in CBD, the foundation has been laid for collaborative TBPA management, for the development of joint PA standards and practices, and for improved scientific and technical cooperation related to PAs in the three South Caucasus countries, as is again prescribed by the CBD PoW PA. The challenge now is to build on this foundation and to achieve the full potential of regional cooperation on PAs.

Action 7.1: *The MoE, particularly the APA continues activities aimed at the establishment of TBPA's with neighbouring countries, as detailed in the ECP and in accordance with relevant commitments under CBC and other MEAs.*

7.2 Cooperate internationally

Commitments to cooperate internationally: TBPA's are only one field of international cooperation treated by MEAs on PA. In addition, both CBD and other conventions prescribe international research and financial collaboration on PAs (CBD Dec. VII/28), coordinated public awareness raising (Ramsar Recommendation 5.8.), the integration of PAs into international frameworks for climate change mitigation and adaptation (UNFCCC Art. 4), collaboration with regard to World Heritage sites (WHC Decision 29 COM 10), and collaboration in the field of marine conservation (e.g. CBD Dec. VIII/21). The general message from this wide range of commitments on international cooperation is that involving partner States or international organisations should be considered whenever beneficial. The appropriate type of international cooperation may vary – from bilateral cooperation, e.g. on conservation finance, to collaboration with international organisations, e.g. on standards and tools for PA management. Georgia already fulfils some, but not all of these commitments.

Action 7.2: *The MoE, particularly the APA, use the TEMATEA IBM on PA to identify areas where Georgia's international obligations can be met better through intensified cooperation with States, international organizations and NGOs.*

Inter-agency cooperation with regard to Reduced Emissions through Deforestation and Degradation (REDD): Of particular relevance in this respect is the connection between PAs and international obligations on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Forest PAs may become important within the framework of the UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol's REDD programme. Additional ways of increasing the importance of PAs for climate change mitigation may arise in the near future. Apart from this, international cooperation should be intensified to support the development and implementation of climate change adaptation strategies.

Action 7.3: *The Unit of Hydrometeorology and Climate Change and the APA at the MoE: maintain regular communications on new ways of integrating PAs into Georgia's activities towards climate change mitigation and adaptation, within the framework of UNFCCC and other relevant MEAs, as identified by the TEMATEA IBM on PA.*

Implementation of commitments related to cooperation in the Black Sea region: Georgia is part of the Black Sea region. While conventions of relevance to this area, such as the *Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution* are not considered in this evaluation, several obligations from global MEAs are also relevant to it. For instance, Ramsar calls for international collaboration for raising public awareness, while CBD elaborates obligations for the conservation, management and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction.

Action 7.4: *The MoE considers the whole range of relevant MEA obligations, as identified by the IBM on PA, while developing international collaboration in the Black Sea region.*

7.3 Cooperation with organisations

Multi stakeholder cooperation on PAs: The TEMATEA IBM on PAs also identifies important areas of inter-sector cooperation, for instance between different Ministries or between the MoE and NGOs. Some of these areas have been treated in the policy section (Chapter 2) and in other sections of this evaluation. Others, which also have an element of international collaboration, deserve to be mentioned separately: Activity 3.2.4. of the PoW PA calls for cross-sector collaboration for PA management on the regional, national and local levels. UNCCD repeats this call with particular reference to arid and semi-arid areas. More specifically, the MAB

Recommendations (Goal 2) recommend multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve wide support for trans-boundary Biosphere Reserves.

Action 7.5: *The MoE (particularly the APA) take into account commitments regarding international cross-sector collaboration at the local to regional level in the establishment and management of new PA, particularly Biosphere Reserves.*

8. Stakeholders and indigenous and local communities

Participation of stakeholders and indigenous and local communities in PAs is a cross-cutting challenge that is relevant to all aspects of PA management, policy, decision making etc. It is most explicitly and comprehensively spelled out in the obligations of CBD, while other MEAs contain supplementary obligations. Strong stakeholder participation is particularly important in Georgia, where the rural population is relatively poor and depends on natural resource use to support their livelihoods, and where at the same time PA enforcement capacity is relatively limited. This means that PAs rely on the support of the local population for their effectiveness, and that, at the same time, agreements and compromises regarding resource use and benefit sharing in PAs have to be made between the APA on the one hand and stakeholders and local communities on the other hand.

8.1. Participatory PA establishment and management

According to CBD (V.16, 3; PoW PA), Ramsar (Res. VII/8, 15), and other MEAs, local communities need to be closely involved in the establishment and management of PAs, including their planning, zoning, and governance. The CBD PoW PA also prescribes that indigenous and local communities should be supported regarding their ability to participate in PA planning and management, for instance through legislation, capacity building and provision of resources. They should also be involved in collaborative research on PAs. Ramsar repeats these obligations with a special focus on wetlands, and refers to a set of specific Ramsar guidelines on local communities' and indigenous peoples' participation in wetland management.

Strengthening the policy and institutional basis for local stakeholder participation in PAs: Measured against these obligations, current practice regarding indigenous and local stakeholder participation in Georgia, leaves room for improvement. Although the general legislative framework of Georgia foresees participation, these provisions are only partly implemented. PA Scientific Advisory boards are only partly functional, and are no other institutionalised participation mechanisms. The weakness of the institutional and policy basis for participatory PA management means that Georgia currently fails to fulfil part of its commitments under CBD and a number of other MEAs.

Action 8.1: *The APA develops and implements a policy on the participation of stakeholders and local communities in the planning and management of PAs, in accordance with MEA obligations as identified by the TEMATEA IBM on PAs. The APA ensures appropriate and timely public participation during the PA designation and planning process, in accordance with relevant regional and international agreements and the IUCN/WCPA Best Practice PA Guidelines. It clarifies options regarding community PAs and co-managed PAs and collaborates with NGOs and international donors to support capacity development of local stakeholders aimed at more effective participation in PA planning and management.*

Action 8.2: *The APA continues to re-establish or establish Scientific Advisory Boards in all Georgian PAs, with appropriate participation. It develops general Terms of Reference for PA Scientific Advisory Boards, which clearly set out participation mechanisms for local stakeholders.*

8.2. Creation of benefits of PAs to stakeholders and local communities and reduction of negative impacts

Local communities around PAs in Georgia economically depend on resources in and around PAs, and sometimes have traditional use rights to them. A fair and equitable management of resource access where it can be maintained in a sustainable way, or adequate compensation for these stakeholders where this is not possible, are therefore key elements of local stakeholder participation in PAs.

Facilitating benefits for local stakeholders of PAs: According to CBD, the establishment of reserves with the inclusion of sustainable development objectives, including income generation and employment for local communities, should be promoted. One possible framework to achieve this might be Biosphere Reserves, as detailed in the Seville Strategy (1996). The establishment of PAs that benefit local communities, including by respecting, preserving and maintaining their traditional knowledge, is also prescribed by the CBD POW PA. A related commitment, also from the CBD PoW on PA, focuses on the avoidance and mitigation of costs (both economic and socio-cultural) of PAs to local communities. This obligation also foresees compensation in cases where costs cannot be avoided.

Action 8.3: *The MoE and particularly the APA include in the PA System Long-term Strategy and Action Plan policy provisions for the use of PA benefits and resources by local stakeholders, and of their participation in the economic use of PA services (e.g. tourism), provided they are in agreement with conservation objectives. They establish procedures to minimise or compensate for costs of new and existing PAs to local communities.*

8.3. Preservation of the customs, knowledge and resources of stakeholders and local communities

Monitoring and application of lessons learned in traditional use zones of Georgian PAs: This section contains commitments under CBD and Ramsar, the most important of which are on the preservation of resources of stakeholders and local communities. Georgia has established traditional use zones for activities like fisheries, forestry, grazing and mowing in several of its PAs, thereby fulfilling these obligations at least partly. The experiences from such zones should be applied in other PAs, where appropriate, and local stakeholders should be engaged by PA administrations and the APA to develop practices of resource use that meet both the legitimate needs of local communities and PA conservation objectives.

Action 8.4: *The APA monitors the economic and ecological effects of traditional use zones in Georgian PAs and applies the lessons learned when establishing new PAs, taking into account relevant Ramsar and CBD obligations as listed by TEMATEA. The APA maintains a dialogue with traditional resource users to optimize the combined outcome of natural resource use for livelihood support and biodiversity conservation.*

Annex 1: List of stakeholders who provided comments and/or participated in consultations, bilateral meetings, national workshops and discussion events on the improved and coherent national implementation of biodiversity related conventions based on issue-based modules.

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