

Moving towards auditing biodiversity

Progress to date

Activities completed and update on future work

The two project leaders, the SAs of Canada and Brazil, have completed a draft of the biodiversity paper. However, they will continue to integrate their two sections in the coming months.

Several activities led to the completion of this draft.

Information requested

In December 2005, the SA of Brazil sent a questionnaire on biodiversity to all WGEA members that had conducted environmental audits on biodiversity. These members were identified using the WGEA list of audits (<http://www.environmental-auditing.org/intosai/wgea.nsf/viewMemberList>). In addition to the questionnaire, information on biodiversity audits was collected on the WGEA website under Environmental Audits Worldwide. The questionnaire was sent later than initially planned.

One of the main purposes of the questionnaire was to collect case studies to identify threats to biodiversity and to illustrate lines of inquiry, objectives, scope, criteria, and possible recommendations. The case studies can also illustrate good practices—that is, the capacity of some countries to restore biodiversity with good and often simple ideas.

The responses to this questionnaire were crucial for chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the paper. Unfortunately, only 18 of the 54 identified SAs completed and returned the questionnaires.

At the tenth WGEA meeting (WG10) in Moscow, we collected information on

- **Biodiversity issues.** Mr. Lee from the United Nations Environmental Programme presented the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment findings, which relate to biodiversity issues. In addition, Mr. Zedan, the Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, gave a presentation on the importance of biological diversity. These two presentations provided good material for the first chapter of our paper.
- **Biodiversity audits.** Twelve SAs presented papers that were included in the compendium; six of them (Austria, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Mongolia, Paraguay and the Russian Federation) gave presentations during the meeting. After these presentations, the SAs broke into small groups to discuss key biodiversity issues. The WG10 minutes included a summary of these discussions. These papers, presentations, and discussions helped us draft chapters 3 and 4 of our paper.
- **Challenges of biodiversity audits.** During WG10, about 20 participants took part in the parallel session on moving towards auditing biodiversity and discussed the challenges of biodiversity audits.

Subcommittees

The biodiversity subcommittee members represent the following countries: Australia, Cameroon, Indonesia, Norway, Peru, Poland, Zimbabwe, and since WG10 in Moscow, the Ukraine.

The draft questionnaire was sent to the subcommittees in September 2005 and four of the subcommittee members sent comments.

Because the fifth steering committee meeting (SC5) was rescheduled, we had the time to consult our subcommittee in June 2006, on the draft we were going to present in Indonesia. Except for one, all subcommittee members sent us comments.

We also sent the draft to four subcommittee members that are named in the case studies. One subcommittee member gave us comments on the whole paper; another commented on the case study that concerned his SAI, stating that it was accurate.

For the draft that we are presenting at SC5 in Vancouver, we have incorporated some of the comments. However, because some of the comments were contradictory, we prefer to wait until we have discussed these with steering committee members before we incorporate them in our paper.

Lessons Learned

We would have liked to receive a better response to the questionnaire we sent. Because we only received responses from 16 SAIs, most of them from Europe, our case studies are not representative of all regions. However, it is possible that SAIs from other regions do not have a lot of experience with biodiversity audits. We hope to discuss this issue during SC5 in Vancouver, Canada.

Having two SAIs working on a same paper can make the process more challenging. In addition, if some of the staff members change, as occurred with the SAI of Brazil, the new staff members have to become familiar with the project's objectives and WGEA business. However, the benefit of having two SAIs working together is the opportunity to comment on each other's section. Our next challenge is to better co-ordinate the two sections of the paper.

Future steps

After SC5 in Vancouver, Canada, we will do the following:

- Incorporate comments from the steering committee and from our subcommittee.
- Continue to follow-up on new developments in biodiversity issues that could be relevant to our paper.
- Work at improving the co-ordination of the two sections of our paper.
- Plan to consult our subcommittee on the second draft of our paper in October 2006 and have a solid draft for our next steering committee meeting.
- During the summer 2007, we plan to translate the final document into the four other INTOSAI languages and welcome help from any SAIs that can assist with the translation of the document. The SAI of Egypt has already agreed to translate it into Arabic and the SAI of Canada has agreed to translate it into French. We still have to find SAIs to

translate the document in German and in Spanish. We hope to have the translated documents for the XIX INCOSAI.

Critical issues to consider

Please consider the following questions when reading our first draft. We will discuss them at SC5 and your input is crucial to improving our paper.

1. Are there sections that are not sufficiently developed or too detailed for this type of paper (appendixes included)?
2. Are the audit examples appropriate?
3. Is the terminology clear, consistent and easily understandable for SAIs?
4. What illustrations should we include: photos taken during audits, photos showing degradations of ecosystems worldwide, specific figures, tables or diagrams?

At SC5, we would also like to discuss the following issues:

5. How can RWGEA co-ordinators help us collect other case studies on biodiversity audits in order to have better world coverage?
6. Who would be willing to translate the document in German and in Spanish?

Comments we will receive from steering committee members during SC5 and SC6 will be essential to prepare a draft for consultation with the WGEA members. According to the schedule prepared by the WGEA Secretariat, the paper should be almost final by WG11 in Tanzania.

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