

Moving Towards Auditing Biodiversity

1. Progress to date

The project leaders, the Brazilian Court of Audit and the Office of the Auditor General of Canada, defined the orientation of the Moving Towards Auditing Biodiversity paper and presented a draft project work plan to the fourth meeting of the steering committee in Prague. Based on suggestions from the steering committee, this work plan was revised and is included in the Moscow meeting material. This paper will give information to SAls wishing to plan and carry out audits on biodiversity.

1a. Research and activities completed

- We have started to conduct research for section 2 of our paper “background on biodiversity”. Our objective is to adapt the material developed during the environmental audit course on biodiversity, produced by the WGEA and the IDI. In addition, we are synthesizing information from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report and from the Web on biodiversity.
- In October, we will send an electronic questionnaire on biodiversity, based on our work plan objectives, to SAls that have conducted audits on biodiversity issues.
- Based on the WGEA Web site (Environmental Audits Worldwide), we identified SAls that conducted audits on biodiversity. These SAls will be receiving the questionnaire on biodiversity. However, the WGEA Web site is not exhaustive. As a result, we asked the regional coordinators for the names of SAls in their region that have carried out audits on biodiversity in order to send them the biodiversity questionnaire.

1b. Information request

The discussion with other SAls is crucial for the quality of our paper. For that reason, the Moving Towards Auditing Biodiversity parallel session will be held at the WGEA meeting in Moscow on Monday afternoon, 31 October 2005. The purpose of this parallel session is to collect information to improve our paper on How to Determine the Focus of Biodiversity Audits, by discussing the difficulties in conducting audits on biodiversity. The issues that will be discussed during the session are

- SAls mandates and competencies needed to conduct an audit on biodiversity;
- identification of the main threats to biodiversity;
- identification of the environmental, social, and economic impacts (positive and negative ones) on biodiversity related to actions, projects, and programs;
- mapping out the actors, their competencies, and relationships; and
- identification of the audit topics or lines of inquiry on biodiversity audits.

1c. Subcommittees

The subcommittee—Australia, Cameroon, Indonesia, Norway, Peru, Poland, and Zimbabwe—plays an important role, contributing in the methodologies and reviewing different draft material.

The first version of the questionnaire was sent in September to the sub-committee, which was asked to respond to the questions and to propose improvements to the questionnaire. In October, after the suggestions are incorporated, the questionnaire will be sent to all SAIs that have experience in biodiversity audits.

In the near future, we expect to send the drafts of the paper to our sub-committee members for their review.

2. Future steps:

After collecting the information with the questionnaire, the following activities are planned:

- We will compile the information obtained from the questionnaire.
- We are hoping that all the SAIs that receive the questionnaire will complete it on time, as this information is essential for completing our work plan. The information will allow us to develop case studies for our paper and to provide examples of good practices as stated in our project work plan. Regional coordinators can also help us collect the information.
- We will do research, using the Web and technical books, on economic valuation and indicators of biodiversity and include the information in the appendices of the paper.
- We will be ready to present a first draft of our paper to the next meeting of the steering committee in June 2006. We are hoping to translate the final document into the five INTOSAI languages and welcome help from any SAIs that can help translate the document. The SAI of Egypt has already accepted to translate it in Arabic and the SAI of Canada in French. We still have to find SAIs to translate the document in German and Spanish.
- We are thinking of creating a database with examples of biodiversity audits that would make searches easier for SAIs that are planning and carrying out audits. We will discuss the feasibility of this project with the Information Technology department of the SAI of Canada, which is maintaining the WGEA Web site.

3. Additional comments:

The theme of biological diversity evolves quickly and new scientific discoveries happen regularly. We are already thinking of new ways to update SAIs on biodiversity issues, including following the example of our colleagues in Norway and the Netherlands and creating a section on biodiversity on the WGEA Web site.

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