

2012: A Summary



Conventions, Conferences & Standards

Summary:

- ◆ The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) Rio de Janeiro Rio +20 (June 20th – 22nd)
- ◆ IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) Jeju, The Republic of Korea (September 6th – 12th)
- ◆ Convention of Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties (COP) 11 Hyderabad, India (October 8th - 19th)
- ◆ Re-Launch of International Finance Corporation Performance Standards (January)

Rio +20

In June, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Marking the 20th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and therefore more commonly known as Rio+20, it was the biggest UN conference held to date with an estimated 50,000 delegates. Building on the discussions and agreements of not only the first Rio Earth Summit, but also of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002, Rio+20 brought together political leaders from across the world to discuss social, environmental and economic issues.



Under the Rio umbrella, the subject of biodiversity is articulated and elaborated through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is one of the three “Rio Conventions” which was first opened for signature at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Rio+20 re-enforced the approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity taken by the CBD, and governments reiterated their commitment to the CBD, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing.

The outcome document from Rio+20 was called “*The Future We Want*”. As with most outputs from Intergovernmental conferences, this is a negotiated document which represents the opinions of the different parties, resulting from the discussions and arrived at by consensus. This has both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand it is a text that has been mutually agreed by governments, and therefore carries some political ‘weight’, however at the other end of the scale there are inevitably those who feel that the document does not go far enough.

The output document does not contain many specific targets and is considerably shorter than the outputs from previous Rio and Johannesburg conferences. However, the groundwork for the direction sustainable development should take was laid out in these previous documents. This conference built upon the past work and committed to continue the process towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet.



Rio+20: Sustainable Development Goals

One of the key outcomes of Rio+20 was the decision to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals. Intended to supersede, and build upon, the Millennium Development Goals (the target date for which is 2015), the Sustainable Development Goals will be developed by an intergovernmental working group over the coming years, and this work has already started. The goals will be based on a number of key criteria including that they respect the Rio Principles* and they

are based on the outputs of previous World Summits. Their main purpose will be to encourage focused and coherent action on sustainable development, serving as a driver for implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable development considerations into all sectors.

*The 27 Rio Principles were declared at The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit in 1992).



Rio+20: Marine Environment

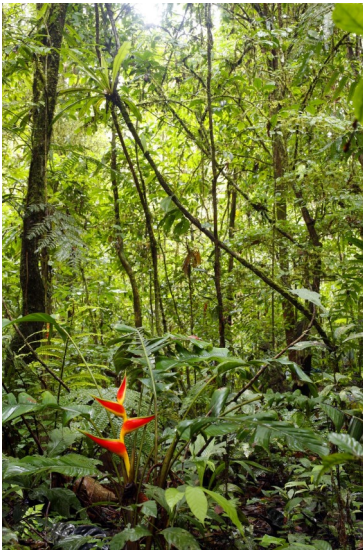
The marine environment continues to be a global concern, and the importance of the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources was stressed in *The Future We Want* in a dedicated section on 'Oceans and Seas'. Particular attention was given to conservation and sustainable use in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. Governments committed to taking a decision on the development of an international instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Another key issue was a commitment to take action to reduce the incidence and impacts of pollution on marine ecosystems. Pollution types mentioned included marine debris, especially plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and nitrogen-based compounds. The commitment mentioned more effective implementation of relevant conventions adopted in the framework of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Rio +20: Friends of Paragraph 47

While global mandatory sustainability reporting had been discussed in the lead up to Rio+20, this was not included in the output document *The Future We Want*. While paragraph 47 acknowledges the importance of corporate sustainability reporting, it goes no further than encouraging companies – and especially publically listed and large companies – to integrate sustainability reporting into their reporting cycles. The cause for better reporting has been taken up by a group of countries called 'Friends of Paragraph 47'. The aim is to encourage and support advanced corporate sustainability reporting, possibly leading to a global reporting framework – building on what is said in paragraph 47 and taking it further. Whilst governments are unlikely to agree to mandatory reporting, this focus on sustainability reporting at Rio+20 may help drive the development of voluntary reporting approaches.

The original Friends of Paragraph 47 are the governments of Brazil, Denmark, France and South Africa. The group has published its charter and invited other governments to join. Norway has expressed its intention to join. UNEP, in partnership with the Global Reporting Initiative, has been asked to be the secretariat for the group.



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Convention on Biological Diversity

The governing body of the CBD is the Conference of the Parties (COP). It is hosted every two years and intended to advance implementation of the Convention through generating decisions which aim to guide the development of biodiversity strategy at the national level. The 11th Conference of the Parties (COP 11) took place in October 2012. COP 11 reinforced the COP 10 (2010) outcomes which were the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefits Sharing, and the development of a resource mobilisation strategy for their implementation at all levels. COP 11 also, sought to find ways to increase implementation, calling on businesses to adopt policies and procedures to respect the goals and targets previously set out.

CBD: Aichi Targets Relevant for Business

Businesses were encouraged to analyse impacts, dependencies, opportunities and risks with respect to biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Aichi targets with particular business relevance include:

- ◆ Target 4, which calls on businesses to take steps to achieve or implement plans for sustainable production and consumption of natural resources.
- ◆ Target 5, which aims to halve, or bring close to zero, the rate of loss of natural habitats including forests.
- ◆ Target 8, which aims to bring pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity by 2020
- ◆ Target 11, which aims to protect at least 17% of terrestrial land and inland water and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020.



UNEP-WCMC World Database on Protected Areas provides information on the areas of the world designated for protection under national legislation and international agreements and conventions.

CBD: Marine issues at COP 11

The CBD COP reinforced the need for recognising and recording marine areas in need of protection in open-ocean waters and deep-sea habitats (referred to as Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas or EBSAs). There are seven criteria for identifying EBSAs including uniqueness, importance for endangered species and

biological productivity. EBSAs can occur both within and beyond national jurisdiction. The EBSA process facilitates valuable scientific collaboration, enhancing knowledge of marine biodiversity in open-ocean and deep-sea habitats. While many areas designated as EBSAs may merit protection, any agreed

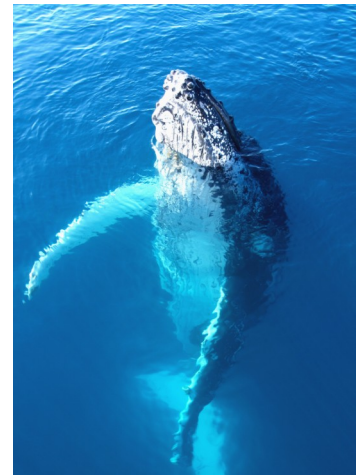
management in the future will remain the remit of the competent authorities and therefore the designation of an EBSA does not carry associated legal protection. A report describing areas which meet EBSA criteria is included in the CBD EBSA Repository and is

annexed to COP11 Decision XI/17. The CBD holds a repository for EBSA boundary submissions, which is yet to be populated but will provide a useful source of information and global spatial data once this process is complete.

Apart from EBSAs there was also a call on governments and relevant organisations to take measures to minimise adverse effects of underwater noise on marine biodiversity.

Other marine threats that were highlighted at COP 11 include ocean acidification, coral bleaching, and pollution.

A request was also made to the CBD Executive Secretary to disseminate awareness-raising materials on voluntary guidelines for environmental assessment and marine spatial planning to decision makers.



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IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC)

IUCN is the largest global environmental organisation, with a huge membership of 200+ government and 900+ non-government organisations. Every 4 years, the IUCN hosts the World Conservation Congress, a large conservation event bringing together individuals to discuss urgent environment and development issues. The aim is to improve management of

the natural environment for human, social and economic development. Each congress sees the adoption of a number of Resolutions and Recommendations by IUCN members that guide the work of the IUCN over the subsequent 4 years and, as a result, influence global conservation policy and action. The congress decides on the direction of IUCN policy engagement. Focal

themes of the 2012 WCC were food security, climate change, economic & social development, equitable governance, and valuing and conserving nature.

IUCN highlighted their knowledge products at the WCC. These products are intended to provide information for spatially focused decision making.

WCC: Jeju Declaration at the WCC

At the end of the WCC a declaration was published. The declaration is not a negotiated document so does not necessarily build on all the views of the IUCN members. The Jeju declaration highlights that nature is part of the solution rather than the problem and identifies actions necessary to conserve biodiversity. The actions particularly highlighted were better

protected area management, establishment of species recovery programmes and the reduction in the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.



IUCN Knowledge Products

Currently Available:

- ◆ **IUCN Red List of Threatened Species**
- ◆ **World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)** including Protected Planet (managed in collaboration with UNEP-WCMC)

Under Development:

- ◆ **Key Biodiversity Areas-** IUCN are developing a global standard to be used for the identification of sites which contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity.
- ◆ **IUCN Red List of Ecosystems-** Information on the state of the world's ecosystems at different geographic scales. Its central objective is to assess the risk of ecosystem collapse)

Identified but not developed:

- ◆ **Human Dependency on Nature-** Values nature's direct contribution to people's livelihoods
- ◆ **Natural Resource Governance Framework-** A set of criteria around rights, equity and benefits issues

WCC: Biodiversity Offsetting

Central to the business and biodiversity events at WCC were discussions around biodiversity offsetting as a conservation mechanism for countering biodiversity impact from development activities. The IUCN adopted a resolution in support of biodiversity offsetting, fundamental in demonstrating support from the conservation community for an approach which has often been viewed as controversial. The resolution was titled “Biodiversity offsets and related compensatory approaches” (WCC-2012-Res-110-EN) and, on the understanding that “the best practice of biodiversity offsets is to address the residual impacts only after the full mitigation hierarchy is applied”, they acknowledge that the “effectiveness of biodiversity offsets in practice is dependent on the existence of an enabling policy environment”. The resolution calls for a working group to be convened to develop an IUCN policy on offsetting. The intention is not for IUCN to develop a framework for offsetting but that the working group will consider the desirability of IUCN developing global biodiversity offset guidelines. The resolution notes the work carried out by the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP) who have carried out much of the groundwork in the development of the biodiversity offsetting approach and released a Standard on Biodiversity Offsets in January 2012.

WCC: Net Positive Impact



(image: Melissa Tolley 2008)

Linked to the biodiversity offsetting agenda at WCC was the formal release of Rio Tinto’s methodology for calculating biodiversity losses and gains through implementation of the mitigation hierarchy in order to forecast progress towards net positive impact, detailed in a pilot study at a mine site in Madagascar. In 2004 Rio Tinto committed to a net positive impact on biodiversity strategy, an approach which has received increasing interest within the mining sector and more broadly across industry. The Rio Tinto Madagascar case study is the first publically available document detailing the biodiversity metrics used to calculate Net Positive Impact.

International Finance Corporation Performance Standard 6

The IFC Performance Standards, originally released in 2006, were revised over a 2 year consultation period and re-launched in January 2012. Performance Standard 6 on *Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources* quickly gained global interest and is promoted as good practice for biodiversity management within the business sector. In addition to its



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relevance to all companies taking funding from the IFC, or finance from institutions adopting the Equator Principles, there is also increasing interest among some sectors to adhere to the performance standard as a voluntary commitment to biodiversity management (unconnected to financing). Greatest interest has developed in the extractives sector and the first publicly available PS6 assessment documents were released in 2012 for a copper mine in Mongolia. The CBD Business and Biodiversity Decisions from COP11 called upon businesses to “consider the revised IFC Performance Standards”. Based around the evaluation of habitats as “modified”, “natural” and “critical”, PS6 presents a way to assess the biodiversity value of an area and tailor management responses accordingly, with emphasis on implementation of the mitigation hierarchy.



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