

Third National Report of Belgium to the Convention on Biological Diversity

C. ARTICLES OF THE CONVENTION

Article 5 – Cooperation

9. Is your country actively cooperating with other Parties in respect of areas beyond national jurisdiction for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity?

a) No	
b) Yes, bilateral cooperation (please give details below)	X
c) Yes, multilateral cooperation (please give details below)	X
d) Yes, regional and/or subregional cooperation (please give details below)	X
e) Yes, other forms of cooperation (please give details below)	X

Further comments on cooperation with other Parties in respect of areas beyond national jurisdiction for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Projects mentioned below are ongoing, some being in final stage.

The **Flemish Community**: bilateral co-operation

Chile

1996: UGent-KULeuven-Universidad de Concepcion: Reconstruction, monitoring and remediation on freshwater environments based on the use of biological indicator species.

1999: UGent-VIB-University of Chile-Instituto de Ciencias Biomedicas: The use of the micro-array technique as a tool for gene expression analysis in molecular biology.

1999: University Austral de Chile: Comparison of ecosystem functioning and biogeochemical cycles in temperate forests in southern Chile and the Flemish Region.

China

1998: UGent-VIB-Chinese Academy of Sciences-Institute of Botany: Biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use of *Lilium* in China.

1999: KULeuven-UGent-Salt research Institute-Biology Department: Study of the biodiversity of Chinese *Artemia* Strains and their possible application in research and aquaculture.

Costa-Rica

2000: Belgian Landscape Foundation: Eco-model project 'Centro Neotrópico Sarapiquis' – La Virgen de Sarapiquis.

Hungary

1999: KULeuven-UGent-Hungarian Natural History Museum-Department of Zoology: Biodiversity in temporary aquatic habitats: species richness and genetic diversity in branchiopods.

1996: Institute for Forestry and Game Management: 'Selection and improvement of fast growing tree species'.

Poland

1996: KULeuven-UGent-University of Wroclaw: Search for the most potent and protease resistant peptides of particular insect species for eventual exploitation in pest control measures.

1998: UGent-VUB-Agricultural University of Warsaw: Environmental river catchment by natural or artificial wetlands.

2000: UGent-UA-VUB-Agricultural University of Warsaw: Ecological responses to changing hydrological conditions in floodplains.

Institute for Forestry and Game Management: Study of the genetic diversity of the oak. Putting laboratory facilities and means at a PhD-student's disposal.

South-Africa

1995: Ghent University: Marine biology.
1996: KULeuven-LUC-University Potchefstroom: Purification and characterisation of natural toxins from scorpions living in southern Africa targeting ion channels in humans and insects.
1996: Ghent University: feasibility study: Quality of education at the Botany Department.
1996, 1998: Ghent University: Marine biology and nematology: tuition on biodiversity of species and their habitats.
1996: Ghent University: Bilateral tuition project on plant biotechnology.
1997: UA-VUB-University Zululand: Comparative study of bioaccumulation and effects of metals in mussels between a temperate and subtropical region: the Scheldt estuary (Antwerp harbour) and the Richards Bay Harbour.
1998: KULeuven-LUC-VUB-University of Stellenbosch: Neural networks and advances methods for monitoring and control of flotation plants.
1998: UGent-VUB-University of Cape Town: Biodiversity studies on seaweed and echinoderms in the transition between temperate southern Africa and the tropical western Indian Ocean.
1998: Ghent University: Co-operation between the Ghent University and the University of the North (UNIN) in South-Africa in support of the post-graduate course on biotechnology.

Bolivia

Ethno-botanical research is performed in Bolivia by the Ghent University in co-operation with Ametrac (Bolivia).

The **Flemish Community**: projects under international agreements and programmes, and multilateral co-operation

The Flemish Government Direction for Nature

Bonn Convention: Reintroduction of Sahelo-Saharan antelopes in Northern Africa - pilot project in co-operation with Tunisia.

Under AEWA agreement: Technical and financial support of the publication of the Wader Atlas.

Under EUROBATS agreement: Technical and financial support for the development and publication of brochures for awareness programme on bat conservation in Eastern-European countries.

Bern Convention: Support for the development of the Emerald ecological network in Eastern-European countries.

EU-Birds Directive: Financial support for the Conference Bird Census 2001, especially for participation of Eastern-European delegates.

Institute for Forestry and Game Management

Under COST-action E4: European 'Forest Reserves Research Network' (1996-1999) (\pm 15 European countries), financing of meetings (2 per year).

Concerted action (PL97-3575): 'Indicators for monitoring and evaluation of forest biodiversity in Europe' (1996-1999), financing of meetings and publications by EU (AIR).

European Commission and ECE-ICP Forests of the UN: Forest Condition in Europe, Pan-European, yearly financing.

ICP Forests: 'Forest Soil Expert Panel' (financing of meetings).

COST-action E12: 'Urban Forests and Trees' (1997-2002), 27 European countries, financing of meetings.

COST-action E6: 'Eurosylva-Tree physiology' (1996-2000), 15 countries, financing of meetings.

EUFORGEN: European Forest Genetic Resources programme. Steering Committee. Financing meetings (every 4 year) (\pm 20 European countries). *Populus nigra* network (1 meeting per year).

'Noble Hardwoods'-network (1 meeting per year). 'Social hardwoods' network (1 meeting per year).

EC-AIR project: Inter-Disciplinary Research for Poplar Improvement (IRPI), 1993-1996 (Italy, France, UK, Luxembourg, Ireland).

'Co-ordination for conservation, characterisation, collection and utilisation of genetic resources of European Elms'. (1997-2001), (France, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, UK).

EU-FAIR: 'Genetic diversity in river populations of European Black poplar for evaluation of biodiversity, conservation strategies, nature development and genetic improvement.'(1998-2001) (Netherlands, Spain, France, UK, Austria, Germany, Hungary).

FAO: Afforestation, Forestry Research, Planning and Development in the Three North Region (1996-1997), Partner China. Training of technicians and making available the genetic material of the poplar (financing by DGIS).

Afforestation, Forestry Research, Planning and Development in the Three North Region, Phase II (1998-2002), Partner China, consultancy.

FAIR5-QLRT-2000-00631: 'Improving *Fraxinus* (Ash) productivity for European needs by testing,

selection, propagation and promotion of improved genetic resources' (2001-2004) (UK, France, Germany, Ireland).

EU-LIFE project: 'Biological Indicator of Pisciculture Integration for the Evaluation of the Ecological Quality of Lotic Systems' (1997-2000) (research programme). This project has the objective to realise the development and the standardisation of a fishing index for the global quality evaluation of all watercourses within the hydrographical basin of the Meuse. Partners are The Netherlands, the Walloon provinces, France.

EU-programme 'Studies in support of the common fisheries policy'. In the framework of this programme, the Institute participates in a concerted action 'Management of European eel: Establishment of a recruitment monitoring system (GLASS EEL)' (1/12/99 till 30/11/2001), in which 12 countries participate. This project concerns the following sub-aspects with regard to the glass eel research: development of a monitoring stations-network; international standardisation of the monitoring methodology; development of data exchange procedures; providing historical data; costs for meetings and publications.

In the framework of dry- and sub-humid lands, the Ghent University had or has co-operation projects with partners in Israel and Egypt (*i.a.* germplasm collection of *Pistacia* spp., Kenya (agroforestry & ethnobotany), Togo (influence of dams on natural environment), Senegal (vegetation modeling, ethnobotany), Morocco and Namibia (both ethnobotany).

Walloon Region: overview of ongoing projects

The Walloon Region contributes to the implementation of Article 5 of the CBD in Europe a.o. through the following instruments: Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy, the Bern Convention, the Bonn Convention, the Ramsar Convention, the Habitats and Birds Directives of the EU, the Benelux Convention.

Bilateral co-operation with neighbouring countries (GD Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands, Germany) does exist for the management of transboundary protected areas, such as the High Fens Eiffel Natural Reserve with Germany and the management of the Our Valley area together with Luxembourg and Germany in the frame of the Benelux Convention and EU framework.

A project plan for the transboundary management of an ecological network between GD Luxembourg and the Walloon Region is being developed. Joint actions are also implemented with The Netherlands in the frame of Salmon reintroduction in the river Meuse basin (project Salmon 2000).

In the frame of the Ramsar Convention, the Walloon Region supports the management of wet zones crossed by the black stork in its migration between Europe and Senegal.

Burkina Faso

- Support to the computerisation of forest management (UCL grant)
- Rehabilitation of the dams of Barka, Kouzougou and Naggio (SHER grant)
- Scientific valorisation of the Nazinga ranch (Nature+ grant)
- Preservation and protection of the forest gallery in the Sourou valley (FUL & Coprod grants)

Morocco

- Development of an information system and internet server on biodiversity (UMH grant)
- Support to the computerisation of forest management (UCL grant)
- Establishment of a thematic House of the Cedar

Romania

- Support to the computerisation of forest management (UCL grant)
- Analysis and protection of pristine forests (UCL grants)

Mauritania

- Extension of the green belt of Nouackchott (FAO grant)

Congo

- Reactivation of the hunting domain of Bombo Lumene (Nature+ grant)

The **French Community:** bilateral and multilateral co-operation projects

Africa (various countries involved)

1993-2004: Ecofac – 'Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des ecosystems forestiers en Afrique centrale' [the ULB is associated to this project, executed in co-operation with the universities of

Yaoundé (Cameroun), Brazzaville (Congo) and Bangui (Central African Republic), the 'Institut de recherché en écologie tropicale' (Gabon), the National Herbarium of Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tomé; financing: EU–DG 8].

2001-2002: Plamenet – 'Les plantes médicinales africaines sur Internet' [ULB in co-operation with the Universities of Monastir (Tunisia), Abomey-Calavi (Benin), Yaoundé (Cameroun) and Bujumbura (Burundi); financing: 'Fonds Francophone des Inforoutes'].

2001-2004: Diveac – 'Diversité végétale en Afrique centrale' [ULB and FUSAGx in co-operation with the universities of Yaoundé (Cameroun) and Bangui (Central African Republic) and the National Herbarium of Equatorial Guinea; financing: 'Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française' and Belgian Development Cooperation].

2001-2004: 'Assistance technique au Programme de conservation et utilisation rationnelle des aires protégées contigues du Bénin, du Burkina Faso, du Niger et de leurs zones d'influence' [ULB is associated to this project, executed in co-operation with the universities of Benin and Niamey (Niger), and with the 'Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique' (Burkina Faso); financing: EU–DG 8].

Benin

1998-2002: Organisation of a third cycle on the management of natural resources [ULB in co-operation with the 'Université d'Abomey-Calavi' (Benin); financing: 'Coopération Universitaire Institutionnelle'].

1999-2001: Control of fires in Benin [ULB in co-operation with the 'Université d'Abomey-Calavi' (Benin); financing: 'Commissariat Général aux Relations Internationales de la Communauté Wallonie-Bruxelles'].

1999-2005: Study of the avifauna of the wet zones in the southern part of Benin and of the demographical and ethological features of avian species eligible to be domesticated (Anatidae, Galliformes) [ULg in co-operation with the 'Université Nationale du Bénin'].

2001-2002: 'Approche juridico-politique de la gestion des déchets et de la conservation de la biodiversité au Bénin' [IGEAT (ULB) and CEDRE (FUSL) in co-operation with the 'Université Nationale du Bénin'; financing: 'Conseil Interuniversitaire de la Communauté française'].

Costa Rica

1993-2000: *In situ* conservation of populations of *Phaseolus lunatus* [FUSAGx in co-operation with the 'Universidad de Costa Rica' and IPGRI (Italy); financing: Belgian Development Cooperation].

Cuba

2002-2005: Biocomplexity and endemic fungal resources in Cuba [FUL, ULg and UCL in co-operation with the 'Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática' (Cuba)].

Democratic Republic of Congo

2001-2003: The 'Cuvette Centrale' as reservoir of medicinal plants [ULB is associated to this project, executed in co-operation with the 'Institut Pédagogique National de Kinshasa'].

Ecuador

2000-2003: Use of molecular data for the management of the Galapagos giant tortoise populations [ULB in co-operation with the Charles Darwin Research Station, the 'Parque Nacional Galapagos' (Ecuador) and the Yale University (USA)].

Equatorial Guinea

1997-2002: Curef – 'Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des ecosystems forestiers de Guinée Equatoriale' [ULB is associated to this project, executed in co-operation with the National Herbarium of Equatorial Guinea].

Europe (more general)

1999-2005: Comparative phylogeography of forest rodents; phylogeography of specific parasites [ULg in collaboration with the universities of Montpellier (II) and Perpignan and the 'Museu Nacional de Historia Natural' (Portugal); financing: *i.a.* FNRS].

Madagascar

2000-2001: 'Etude structurelle et fonctionelle du benthos dominant les communautés biotiques associées aux ecosystems coralliens' [UMH in co-operation with the University of Tulear (Madagascar); financing: Fonds de la Recherche Fondamentale Collective – FNRS].

1998-2002: Mariculture of Holothuroidea [UMH in co-operation with the University of Tulear (Madagascar); financing: Belgian Development Cooperation].

Morocco

1995-2005: 'Recherche sur les facteurs explicatifs de la biodiversité des auxiliaires (prédateurs et parasitoïdes) en vergers de pommes, en vue de renforcer le contrôle naturel des ravageurs (acariens phytophages et psylles)' [UCL in co-operation with 'l'Ecole Nationale d'Agriculture' (Morocco)].

Papua New Guinea

1985-ongoing: Systematics and ecology of macro-algae, marine vascular plants, lichens and lignicolous Fungi [ULg in co-operation with the University and the Forest Research Institute of Papua New Guinea; financing: 'Fonds de la Recherche Fondamentale Collective' – FNRS].

Federal level: co-operation projects involving scientific institutions

The **National Botanic Garden of Belgium** published the proceedings of the AETFAT conference held in Meise [Syst. Geogr. Plants 71 (2): 1151 pag]. Cameroonian botanists, the next organisers of the conference in 2007, asked for support of the NBGB.

The project with CECODI (Benin) came to an end, but the collaboration with the different partners went on. Within the region there is a big interest in ethnomycology, especially since the 'Guide des Champignons comestibles du Bénin' was published in 2002. The NBGB continues collaboration with mycologists in the region (Benin, Burkina Faso, etc.).

In 2005 the Garden organised a course on field mycology in Gabon for the Central-African region. The course was made possible through funding of the CIFOR in collaboration with the Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques et Technologiques (Libreville, Gabon).

Since 2005 the Garden is responsible for the rehabilitation of the botanic garden in Kisantu, a project funded by the European Union as part of the programme 'Renforcement des capacités de gestion de l'ICCN et appui à la réhabilitation d'aires protégées en République Démocratique du Congo'. The rehabilitation programme, including renewal of buildings is a two years project. The main fields of interest are institutional capacity building, education, collection management and development and infrastructure.

The department of African Zoology of the **Royal Museum for Central Africa** (RMCA) has bilateral development co-operation projects with African partners in several countries, covering the following fields: ornithology (BirdLife - Cameroon, MUIENR - Uganda, UNIKIS – DR Congo, CNDRS - Comoros, UCT – South Africa), entomology and invertebrates (NMK - Kenya, Ivory Coast, SADC region, BEST – DR Congo), ichthyology (TAFIRI - Tanzania, Fisheries Dept. - Zambia) and mammalogy (UNIKIS – DR Congo). Projects have a general focus on education capacity building (museology) and/or taxonomic expertise support for biodiversity inventories.

Specific projects on freshwater biodiversity resources in Africa and South-East Asia involve active co-operation with institutions in the Ivory Coast, Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Vietnam and Indonesia. These projects are *inter alia* financed by the DGDC, the European Union and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature.

The African Biodiversity Information Centre (ABIC) is housed at the Royal Museum for Central Africa and funded by the Belgian Development Cooperation. The RMCA has the largest zoological collections from central Africa in the world, and ABIC organises training internships for students from developing countries, with an emphasis on datamining and transfer of collection information. ABIC engages in co-operation agreements with the source institutions of the students to ensure support for the valorisation of the transferred information after the training. Internships are individually adapted to meet the needs and requirements of the applicants.

The **Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences** is cooperating in the European Union Project PASCALIS (Protocols for the Assessment and Conservation of Aquatic life in the Subsurface). The objective of the project is the assessment and conservation of groundwater biodiversity in Europe. Partners are universities and museums in France, Spain, Italy and Slovenia.

With respect to the Antarctic Treaty, Belgium co-operates with other parties in the framework of the SCAR programme (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, working group Biology). URL: www.scar.org. Ant'phipoda, another RBINS project on the Antarctic, is a web reference centre on marine biodiversity in the Antarctic, and is devoted to amphipod crustaceans.

The RBINS actively participates in the development of the ENBI initiative (European Network of Biodiversity Information), which is the European Union's contribution to GBIF. It is also a member of

ENHSIN (European Natural History Specimen Information Network) and is the co-ordinator of the European network of museums CASTEX dealing with the best use of natural specimen in scientific touring exhibition.

The RBINS has obtained the EU label of 'Major European Infrastructure' and participated to ABC (Access to Belgian Collection of interest for biodiversity) from 2001 to 2003, allowing 75 scientists to visit the zoological and palaeontological collections of the institute. From 2004 to 2009, the RBINS is representing Belgium in the SYNTHESYS project, coordinated by the Natural History Museum of London and involving 20 biological collections. Under SYNTHESYS, the RBINS is coordinating the venue of scientific visitors coming to Brussels (RBINS), Tervuren (RMCA) or Meise (NBGB).

The RBINS is also the country representative in the Network of Excellency EDIT (2005-2010) standing for European Distributed Institutes of Taxonomy. RBINS is coordinating the taxonomy training activities of this new large biodiversity-oriented network.

The **Belgian CHM partnership** with developing countries is continuing (see Second National Report for more information) and includes now cooperation with 21 countries and 3 subregional networks. The cooperation with countries includes capacity building of CHM National Focal Points, hosting of the national CHMs, technical advice, scientific cooperation and training of national BCH focal points to use the BCH portal (<http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/belgium/cooperation/partnership/partner-inf.htm>). Furthermore one regional CHM workshop in Burkina Faso, December 2003 (<http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/belgium/cooperation/partnership/workshopouaga/workbur2003.htm>) and a sub-regional CHM training course in Burundi, January 2005 (<http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/belgium/cooperation/partnership/formregionalburundi/formbur2005.htm>) have been organised.

There has been cooperation with Bulgaria on the development of a metadata tool, with the Netherlands on their CHM partnership initiative, with the European Community on their CHM, and with Germany. In June 2003, a meeting has been organised in Belgium on practical cooperation between national CHM's. National focal points from eight European countries participated in the meeting.

Multilateral cooperation on project development and training has been undertaken with the South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), the 'Commission des Ministres en charge des Forêts en Afrique Centrale' (COMIFAC) and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean.

The **Belgian Focal Point to the GTI** has recently (2001) been assigned to the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, the largest of Belgium's federal natural history institutions. This NFP has, ever since it became fully operational back in 2004, been actively seeking cooperation and benefit sharing with other contracting parties to the CBD and this mainly through a pragmatic capacity building programme. It does so in joint cooperation with other competent Belgian taxonomic bodies (such as the RMCA, the NBGB and the BCCM, a.o.). The Belgian programme operates through two parallel, but complementary approaches (the top-down and the bottom-up; see below) and ensures individual and institutional cooperation that aim at conservation and sustainable use of the fundamental components of biodiversity (from genes to ecosystems), however with as central axis the recognition of the only fundamental unit in nature: the species. More information on Belgium's capacity building programme in taxonomy can be retrieved from the Belgian NFP's website, located at: <http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be//belgium/cooperation/projects/gti/eligible.htm>

Here it suffices to highlight some of its first results (see also Franklin & Van Goethem 2004, Franklin *et al.*, submitted, Samyn *et al.*, submitted a&b)

Individual support: in 2004, through two open calls, 51 capacity building proposals have been received by the Belgian Focal Point to the GTI (11 following the first and 40 following the second call). These were geographically distributed over the African (24), the Asian (18) and the South and Central American (6) developing regions. Of these 51 projects, the Belgian Focal Point to the GTI selected eighteen projects for direct, individual support (9 from Africa, 6 from Asia and 3 from South & Central America).

To date (June 2005), twelve visitors have benefited from non-taxon specific as well as taxon specific training in taxonomy. One additional candidate will benefit from a capacity building visit to Belgium later this year (July to mid August) and at least five other selected candidates (together with some ten, largely externally funded, other candidates) will benefit from a regional training workshop in Thailand (on the taxonomy of Rotifera and Echinodermata).

To ensure durability of training received in Belgium, the GTI tutor or equivalent (dependent on the taxon), also has the possibility to carry out follow-up training visits in the developing country. For instance, the Belgian GTI tutor assisted by independently funded colleagues from the RBINS and from the RMCA, carried out two visits (November 2004 and May 2005) to a developing country that actively requested complementary field-training (the Comoros, on Holothuroidea *i.e.* sea cucumbers). The latter support has resulted not only in an increased understanding of the taxonomy of sea cucumbers, but also in the arming of a local Focal Point (Point focal holothuries) that now has the scientific weapons and ammunition to feed forward jurisdiction for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The latter Focal Point has for example succeeded in pushing a strict governmental interdiction of sea cucumber fisheries in the Comoros (decree nr. 0413/MDRPAE/CAB, dated 20.12.2004).

Institutional support: to date (June 2005) institutional support is given mainly through *in-situ* capacity building projects. Three one-year projects have directly been funded by the Belgian GTI in 2004 (Taxonomy of rodents in DR Congo, Entomology in Cambodia and Herpetofauna in Guyana). These projects have been allocated a one-year extension in 2005, exactly to ensure that sustainability of first results be assured for the better and larger benefit of the local scientific, and in the long term economic, community. These projects boost understanding of ecosystem function through transmitting, transforming, increasing and challenging knowledge at the taxo-systematic level. This allows to respond with more vigour to open questions in evolutionary biology (e.g. speciation, extinction), ecology (e.g. carrying capacity, redundancy, biodiversity estimates), conservation biology (e.g. setting conservation priorities), biogeography (e.g. ecological and historical biogeography, consequence of alien, invasive species). In short, by rendering local scientists and their respective institutions more operable in terms of taxonomy *sensu lato*, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity can be more readily obtained.

More information on the capacity building efforts of the Belgian GTI NFP is to be found in:

- Franklin, A. & Van Goethem, J.L. (eds), 2004. Report on Implementation of Programme of Work for the Global Taxonomy Initiative. Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, Brussels, 25 pp.
- Franklin A., Segers H., Samyn Y., Réveillon A., Van Goethem J.L. 2005 (submitted). Taxonomic capacity and implementation of the Global Taxonomy Initiative in Belgium. *Proceedings of the Workshop 'Building Capacity for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI) in a larger Europe', Vilm, Germany, 21-24.06.2004.*
- Samyn Y., Réveillon A., Franklin A. & Van Goethem J.L. 2005a (submitted). One Year of Taxonomic Capacity Building by the Belgian Focal Point to the Global Taxonomy Initiative. *Proceedings of the 3rd GBIF Science Symposium, Brussels, 18-19.04.2005.*
- Samyn Y., Réveillon A., Franklin A. & Van Goethem J.L. 2005b (submitted). Le renforcement des capacités en taxonomie: résultats obtenus après une année de travail au Point focal belge pour l'Initiative taxonomique mondiale. *Proceedings of the symposium 'Ecosystèmes côtiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest'.*

Several references in other sections of this national report are made to **Belgian Development Cooperation** support to biodiversity programmes in other countries. In summary these are:

- support to the Wetland strategic plan, Uganda;
- MIKE-UNEP project, (Africa unspecified);
- sustainable management of Kilombero 'Ramsar' site, Tanzania;
- 'Plan Binacional', Ecuador & Peru;
- sustainable management by communities in the buffer zone of Selous game reserve, Tanzania;
- community support to promote biodiversity in the World Heritage Site of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

10. Is your country working with other Parties to develop regional, subregional or bioregional mechanisms and networks to support implementation of the Convention? (decision VI/27 A)

a) No

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b) No, but consultations are under way	
c) Yes, some mechanisms and networks have been established (please provide details below)	
d) Yes, existing mechanisms have been strengthened (please provide details below)	X
Further comments on development of regional, subregional or bioregional mechanisms and networks to support implementation of the Convention.	
<p>Multilateral cooperation on project development and training has been undertaken with the 'South Asian Co-operative Environment Programme', the 'Commission des Ministres en charge des Forêts en Afrique Centrale' (COMIFAC) and the 'Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas in the Mediterranean'.</p> <p>Participation in regional and sub-regional mechanisms which contribute to the implementation of the Convention involves a variety of mechanisms at a variety of levels. These include activities in the framework of transboundary projects (INTERREG, LIFE-Nature) for area specific nature conservation planning that supports implementation of the CBD. Within the European Union there is the cooperation in the framework of the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Biodiversity Expert Groups involved in the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans.</p> <p>At the Pan-European regional level, there is a participation in the range of activities of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy process (PEBLDS), which is recognised as a regional implementation of CBD.</p> <p>In the framework of the Benelux Union:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the 'Plan de Base Ecologique et Paysager Transfrontalier' and the 'Grensoverschrijdend Ecologisch Basisplan' (see question 6); - the working group on environmental communication and education; - the 'Three Countries Parc – Open space without borders' (see question 6). <p>The Nature Directors of the three Benelux countries regularly meet to agree on joint positions in relation to European and international issues on nature.</p>	

11. Is your country taking steps to harmonise national policies and programmes, with a view to optimising policy coherence, synergies and efficiency in the implementation of various multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) and relevant regional initiatives at the national level? (decision VI/20)	
a) No	
b) No, but steps are under consideration	
c) Yes, some steps are being taken (please specify below)	X
d) Yes, comprehensive steps are being taken (please specify below)	
Further comments on the harmonisation of policies and programmes at the national level.	
<p>Belgian environmental policy coherence is ensured by a strong coordination of international, European and national environmental policy which involves the following structures: Inter-ministerial Conference for Environment (ICE), Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy (CCIEP), Steering Committees of CCIEP (Biodiversity, Nature, Forests, Agriculture, Water, Soil, Climate, North Sea & Oceans, Atmosphere, Waste, ...), Directorate General for Europe, Consultation Committee for Desertification, National Climate Commission, Interdepartmental Commission on Sustainable Development.</p> <p>One single Focal Point (either one Region or the Federal level) has been designated to coordinate sharing of information for the various global agreements (CITES, CMS, Ramsar, WHC, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD, UNFF, UNCLOS) and regional agreements (Bern, AEW, ASCOBANS, EUROBATS, OSPAR, LANDSCAPE, MCPFE, PEBLDS (Emerald network), EU Birds directive, EU Habitats directive,</p>	

EU Regulation on CITES).

Contact points in Belgium for international nature- and biodiversity-related agreements, organisations and programmes are available on the B CHM at the following URL:

http://bch-cbd.naturalsciences.be/belgium/biodiversity/contactpoints/contact_points.htm.

National efforts to improve synergies among MEA's in general, the biodiversity conventions and the Rio conventions are undertaken:

- although the mechanism for policy coordination is well established in Belgium (partly due to the repartition of environmental competencies between the Federal government and the three Regions), there are no real coordination mechanisms to also ensure coherence in the implementation of projects under the three Rio conventions and the MEA's in general. Only now processes are being developed to ensure coherence in implementation under the three Rio conventions;
- this lack has been identified by the Steering Groups for both biodiversity and climate and a decision was taken by the Steering Group for Greenhouse Effect to investigate possibilities to develop an ad hoc group synergies to ensure the coordination among the Belgian actors involved in implementing the three conventions, in both national and international projects. It should bring together experts from different steering groups. One of the issues that will be looked at by this group will be the development of a list of criteria that can be used by the different actors involved in projects on climate, biodiversity and/or desertification. Screening against these criteria will improve understanding of linkages among these issues and build awareness;
- more specifically, the forest policy in the three regions is based on the principle of multifunctionality of forests. This principle implies that forest policy has to be based on an integrated approach. International commitments are taken into account when forest policy is being developed and implemented. The way in which this is actually carried out can vary according to the issues at hand. Systems of policy planning involve different actors and stakeholders, from official side as well as from major groups and stakeholders. This means that a broad range of views and issues are being tabled and taken on board when policy initiatives are being prepared and implemented.

In 2004, the **Flemish Region** initiated, organised and co-financed a workshop (in Haasrode) for harmonisation and streamlining biodiversity reporting under the MEA's.

Box XLI.

Please elaborate below on the implementation of this strategy specifically focusing on:

- a) outcomes and impacts of actions taken;
- b) contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention;
- c) contribution to progress towards the 2010 target;
- d) progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans;
- e) contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- f) constraints encountered in implementation.