

SAMOA, ON BEHALF OF THE ALLIANCE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES (AOSIS)

Cooperation between the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification

Introduction

Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS) welcomes this opportunity to submit its initial views on the issue of “Cooperation between the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification”.

At present the implementation of the UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) are mainly implemented in parallel rather than jointly notwithstanding the important symbiotic relationships that exist between the three convention subject areas. AOSIS believes that the objectives of all three conventions are inextricably interlinked and therefore require coordinated responses to be successfully implemented. Additionally there are positive synergies that can be captured and negative outcomes that can be avoided through improved cooperation among and between the three instruments at various levels. There are also opportunities for promoting institutional linkages to avoid redundancy of effort and advance economies of scale: a matter of particular concern to AOSIS member States with limited financial and human resources. This is especially significant for those AOSIS member States combating desertification given the general paucity of resources available through international financing mechanisms for activities relating to implementation of the CCD.

AOSIS therefore fully supports the current initiatives to improve the coordination and explore options for further cooperation between the UNFCCC and other Conventions, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). This submission sets out a number of initial ideas to further elaborate and focus this work.

Interlinkages between Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Desertification

Climate Change impacts upon biodiversity and desertification both directly, through climatic alterations, and indirectly, through human responses to climate change. These impacts, many of which are identified in the IPCC's Third Assessment Report (TAR), manifest themselves in a number of ways.

a) The impact of climate change on habitat conditions for both flora and fauna may be greater than their ability to adapt and thus lead to reduced biodiversity and increased desertification

A large number of AOSIS members are already observing significant loss of coastal and marine biodiversity as a result of increased stress on coral reef atolls, mangroves

and sea grass beds, all of which depend on consistent climatic conditions and will be adversely affected by rising sea levels and increasing sea and air temperatures. Of particular concern to AOSIS members is the increasing occurrence of coral bleaching and its impact on fish stocks and on the protective functions of reefs against tropical storms.

Terrestrial biodiversity is also vulnerable in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The IPCC's TAR concludes that globally, thirty-three percent of the world's threatened flora is endemic to islands and twenty-three percent of threatened birds reside on islands. The sheer vulnerability of SIDS is therefore conducive to exacerbating the rate of extinction of flora and fauna which is placed under risk by habitats rendered unsuitable due to climate change.

Climate change is also likely to lead to diminished agricultural productivity associated with desertification, the uncontrollable spread of agricultural pests, and the loss of genetic diversity. The limited arable land and soil salinization make the agriculture sector in many SIDS particularly vulnerable. Crop modelling assessments conducted by the IPCC furthermore indicate that even marginal temperature increases may adversely affect yields in tropical and sub-tropical areas (such as many SIDS) where crops are presently at or near their maximum temperature tolerances.

b) Climate change mitigation measures, in particular in the form of land use, land use change and forestry measures, should not negatively impact biodiversity or lead to increased desertification

There may be a strong incentive to focus the implementation of climate change mitigation measures in the form of LULUCF activities on the potential of these activities to sequester carbon. Maximisation of carbon sequestration in LULUCF activities may conflict with the need to preserve biodiversity and avoid desertification, the objectives of the CBD and CCD. Indeed, many of the LULUCF proposals that have been suggested in recent years would cause serious stress on the ecosystem as a whole. Monocultures and plantations should not replace natural or old growth forests. Reforestation activities should not replace valuable non-forest ecosystems with forests consisting of a limited number of species. Wrongly implemented LULUCF projects could exhaust soil fertility, negatively impact biodiversity (particularly endemic species), and lead to desertification.

c) Adaptation to climate change and response measures under the CBD and CCD should be mutually reinforcing

There are important opportunities in promoting cooperation between activities to adapt to climate change and response measures under the CBD and CCD to preserve biodiversity and prevent desertification. For example the preservation of mangroves and coral reefs is likely to maintain or increase the coastal protection of SIDS, avoiding the necessity to implement artificial protection measures. Integration of CBD and CCD concerns into the implementation of adaptation activities may also avoid 'maladaptation' and promote the implementation of more holistic and sustainable long-term adaptation options.

Concrete proposals for areas of further cooperation and coordination

The various issues of concern identified above must be translated in a concrete work plan, which addresses these issues in an integrated manner across all three instruments, the UNFCCC, the CBD and the CCD. AOSIS would like to propose the following areas of work in which the issues identified in the previous paragraph should be addressed:

a) Implementation of Joint Implementation and the Clean Development Mechanism

The implementation of joint implementation (JI) and clean development mechanism (CDM) projects should take into account the requirements of the CBD and the CCD to ensure that the climate change objectives are met without causing or aggravating other environmental problems. Further cooperation between the three instruments could include discussions on the development of specific criteria for the protection of biodiversity and the prevention of desertification as well as guidelines on environmental impact assessment and the application of the ecosystem approach in the context of the implementation of these mechanisms.

b) Implementation of Article 3.3 and 3.4 activities

The implementation of activities under Article 3.3 and 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol must respect the requirements set out in the CDB and CCD. In order to improve the availability of information on how Parties intend to do so, AOSIS has proposed that Annex I Parties provide ‘a description of their national legislative arrangements and administrative procedures’ to ensure that the implementation of these activities ‘contributes to the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of natural resources’ in their reporting of supplementary information under Article 7.2 of the Kyoto Protocol. Cooperation between the three instruments should address further ways to integrate the biodiversity and desertification concerns in the implementation of Article 3.3 and 3.4 activities.

c) Adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change and response measures under CCD and CBD

The Bonn agreement has provided the essential basis for the implementation of adaptation projects. Cooperation in the implementation of adaptation activities under the UNFCCC and the implementation of response measures under the CBD and the CCD is important in order to improve the combined effectiveness of these activities, as well as to avoid a negative impact on issues covered under one of the other instruments (maladaptation). Further cooperation should look at the links between adaptation measures under the FCCC and response measures under CBD and CCD and develop ways to promote mutually reinforcing activities.

d) Development and transfer of technologies

All three instruments contain provisions that promote the development and transfer of technologies, but none of them assimilate the goals and requirements of the other instruments to provide a coherent policy. A further cooperation between these three instruments may need to be examined in order to mutually reinforce the development and transfer of technologies under each of these instruments.

e) Capacity building in non-Annex I Parties

Capacity building in non-Annex I Parties is essential for the implementation of all three instruments. Work on further cooperation between the three conventions should examine the extent to which such cooperation could reinforce capacity building initiatives under each instrument. The cooperation of the financial mechanism and its Capacity Development Initiative is also an important consideration.

f) Coordination of Enabling Activities

Implementation of Enabling Activities under the UNFCCC and the CBD can provide opportunities for coordination and pooling of limited technical and financial resources through workshops and other mechanisms, while at the same time resulting in outputs of direct relevance to implementation of activities under the CCD. Such joint initiatives should be encouraged particularly through regional workshops and information exchange networks that highlight the inter-linkages between the three subject areas.

Process

AOSIS supports the organization of a joint FCCC/CDB/CCD workshop, as suggested in the report of SBSTA 14 (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/2, p. 11). The purpose of this workshop should be to elaborate a joint work plan for further coordination and cooperation between these three instruments, based on the issues identified in this submission. It will be important to ensure that the necessary expertise is made available at the workshop, and that organizations involved in cross-cutting issues of relevance to all three conventions are represented at the workshop. This is particularly important for SIDS, and AOSIS invites the Secretariat to give consideration to inviting regional and inter-regional experts from SIDS, their organizations and the international community. The workshop should be held before the 16th session of the subsidiary bodies, the results to be made available at that session.