

UNESCO International Year of Biodiversity: Science Policy Conference



The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), one of the key players in the 2002 CBD, organized the UNESCO IYB Biodiversity Science Policy Conference from the 25-29 January 2010 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. The objective was to discuss new techniques & tools and scientific findings on biodiversity issues for providing a focus for global policies. UNESCO organized a high-level launch of the IYB in Paris on 21-22 January 2010. The Science Policy Conference was the first activity since that launch. The Conference's main goal was to highlight new findings of the scientific community to shape decisions regarding biodiversity conservation globally. At the end of the 5-day conference, a set of recommendations were finalized to be presented for consideration and action at a number of international meetings such as the Trondheim Conference on post-2010 Biodiversity Target in February, the United Nations General Assembly special biodiversity session in September, the 185th session of the Executive Board of UNESCO, the Conference of Parties of the CBD in Nagoya in October, among others.

Several major sessions in the Conference included presentations and discussions along with highlighting the priority actions and recommendations. The details of these sessions will be published in the next issue of Zoos' Print, but a summary of recommendations for each session is highlighted below.

Taxonomy: Recommendations include preserving the taxonomic knowledge of local and indigenous communities; accelerate discovery and descriptions using cyber taxonomy and other innovative techniques; prioritizing taxonomy based on needs and gaps; training and outreach programmes; and recognizing taxonomy as an important aspect of cutting-edge science.

Conservation biogeography: Recommendations include use of biogeographic knowledge to expand and strengthen protected areas; plan sustainability by using data with social, economic and cultural aspects; restoration and rewilding; influence marine conservation policies; and networks and communication between stakeholders for mitigating negative impacts.

Indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation: Recommendations are to build linkages between locals and scientists to benefit all stakeholders; and promote means of transmitting local knowledge to ensure continuity of local knowledge.

Biodiversity and gender: Recommendations are for equal participation in decision making; implement gender plan of action of CBD; measures to ensure fair

distribution of benefits of biodiversity to both females and males; and develop national and regional capacities to include gender issues in biodiversity conservation.

Priority setting in conservation – strengthening site-scale approaches: Recommendations include conserving most important sites for biodiversity and not just a percent; conserve important centres of endemism and single locations of highly threatened species; sub-global plans to include most important biodiversity sites as a basis; certification schemes for safeguarding biodiversity; and consolidation of existing key biodiversity areas.

Managing biodiversity at the landscape level: Recommendations include the optimization of ecosystem services; interactive knowledge use between indigenous people and newcomers for adaptive management; conserve traditional practices; recognize differing values of local communities in biodiversity conservation; and improve conservation efforts of biodiversity-rich urban areas.

Biodiversity and development: Recommendations are for economic accounting of non-market goods and services; facilitate holistic accounting of alternative scenarios for biodiversity use; mainstream biodiversity in all development areas; and establish rewarding partnerships at all levels.

Community education and public awareness: Recommendations include network of educators; identify personalities to communicate biodiversity conservation issues; connect stakeholders and policy makers through interactive media; build partnerships between all stakeholders; encourage citizen science; and promote good practices case studies.

The South Asian region was represented by three Indians who presented on three different issues: Dr. Priyadarshanan Dharmarajan from ATREE presented on "Taxonomy as an Interdisciplinary Science for Human Well-being" in the session 'Meeting new demands and overcoming barriers in education and communication' on 27 January; Sanjay Molur of ZOO and WILD presented on "Alliance for Zero Extinction Sites: Preventing Extinction, and Ensuring People's Well-being" in the session 'Conservation targets and priorities: moving to the site scale' on 28 January; and Dr. Ashok Khosla of DA and IUCN presented on "Examples of Incorporation of Biodiversity Science into Decision Making in Several Key Regions of the World" in the session 'Mainstreaming biodiversity into decision-making: Towards a biodiversity science policy' on 29 January 2010.