

CONCLUDING ADDRESS: TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS ON INVASIVE SPECIES

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From a broad perspective, we need to know how the learning from this workshop will instigate certain processes and feed into other existing processes, and for the next few minutes in particular, to consider these challenges in terms of the formation of international partnerships.

We subscribe to numerous legally binding conventions and guidelines: There are the WTO (World Trade Organization) Guidelines, the RAMSAR Convention for the protection of wetlands, The Madrid protocol and associated measures for the registration of trade marks. Of all of these, the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) is the international agreement best-acknowledged in dealing with the Alien Invasive Species issue. This Convention contains specific articles with specific mandates that relate to specific actions that need to be implemented. However, this Convention also has certain limitations in terms of alien invasive species.

The point that I wish to make is that there is a lot going on already in this regard. As far as I know, there are 36 global and regional binding agreements relevant to this issue, but none is fully comprehensive. The CBD is probably the closest to being fully comprehensive but still there are some limitations as I have mentioned. There is also a serious lack of cross-sector co-operation and that is true for both the national, regional and international levels. In future, we need to focus on and do much better in this particular area and this gap has been alluded to by many speakers during this conference.

I want to focus your attention on what we have been struggling with so far within the Biodiversity Convention, and to show that some of these are the same concerns, quite naturally, that have emerged here at this conference. In particular I would like to refer to the development and improvement of guiding principles recommended by SBSTTA (the scientific and technical advisory body of the Biodiversity Convention).

SBSTTA has, at the beginning of February, proposed significant interim guidelines (and principles and it is important that we should consider them as being interim, because there is much more input to come). These include aspects around the Precautionary Approach, a three-stage hierarchical approach: Prevention, Eradication and Control. There is the legal system approach and the consideration of socio-economic aspects. It is important to consider all within the system context. Then there is State responsibility: the responsibility to not place other states at risk through the export of invaders and to not import any species that could spread into neighbouring states. Research is also necessary: Scientists can teach us how to operate and they can provide us with guidelines about how to import and export in order to avoid and mitigate alien invasion impacts. Education and public awareness and other measures such as border control are vitally important, together with the effective exchange of information, co-operation and capacity building. All these principles are developed and explained and are the same as those that have been under discussion here.

But we, here at this conference, have actually progressed a bit further than merely the discussion and debate of these issues and it is important that the material from this conference is on the table when we address these issues again in Nairobi in May.

I feel that intentional intervention in the form of authorisation will also be an important future aspect of invasive control. In other words, the prohibition of the importation of any item

unless authorisation is granted, but we need clear criteria and effective indicators for what is supposed to be, or suspected to be detrimental impacts in this regard.

And there is a need for information and vector control, which are also reflected, in the SBSTTA interim guidelines and principles.

In addition to these, there is a request to present case studies on how to deal with alien invasive species.

This workshop is the start of a very important vehicle for working bilaterally and also regionally and globally. We (the scientific and technical advisory committee) plan to integrate the outcomes of this workshop into our own thinking and decision-making processes. Moreover, we should ensure that we are feeding this workshop's material into the other existing processes so that they can be consolidated into a common direction, to co-ordinate actions and to avoid duplication. This is absolutely necessary and absolutely possible.

In March, we want to have comprehensive scientific and technical discussion with input from GISP (the Global Invasive Species Programme). Hopefully this meeting will see the revision of the interim principles and recommendations based on new material that has emanated from this workshop and elsewhere.

During the workshop scheduled for May, the invasive species issue will receive prominent focus. Decisions will be taken here around the further development of principles and guidelines, finance options for various sectors, work progress, co-operation between the various sectors, further assessment and research, public guidance, which will be extremely important, also possibly developing criteria for funding development corporation agencies.

Gap analysis will also be very important. We need to assess what we have in place already; as I've said initially there is a lot going on out there. There will probably also be decisions around whether it is necessary to start developing a protocol for international negotiation and co-operation processes – the development of such a protocol will take at least 4 years; this is a crude estimate but I would think that at this conference these points have already been discussed with great intensity and that we have progressed substantially down this road over the last 3 days. It is very important that we don't wait until we have such a protocol in place. There is plenty of scope for co-operative initiatives at all levels, national, international and regional. For example, I would like to see this bilateral initiative here expanded to the SADC countries to form a regional co-operation with regard to the invasive species issue.

Within specific initiatives, the cross-sectoral issue should receive sharp focus in the years to come, as it is extremely important. The sooner we start dealing with sectors, both the public and private sectors will benefit from sector buy-in and co-operation.

There is plenty of scope for further prevention and control tools to be developed also new techniques to manage the input of invasive species information networks. The GISP has made a good start of such a network as well as data collection initiatives.

In terms of all of these initiatives, there is an array of various global partnerships that could and need to be built to support and feed into the official processes.

I would like to also focus a little bit on sector co-operation and integrated vector management. Jim Carlton came up with the notion of integrated vector management and it is an excellent way of expressing the need to look at vectors and to see them in their context. We need to concentrate on this but to also include the sectors at the same time.

And we also need to engage the involvement of the four "t"s: trade, transport, travel and tourism. We need to start interacting with them as a matter of priority and we must start to generate, encourage and foster sector responsibility, sector integration and public and private partnerships with sectors. Cross-sectoral cooperation is essential, not only for the sake of integrating sectoral inputs but also to facilitate a more holistic and comprehensive perspective of the problem. We need to start doing this at the national level because many nations

participate in various international processes and agreements. It is essential that those people and groups attending the various conferences, forums and conventions, are co-ordinated amongst themselves.

That is easier said than done, because of territoriality in this area, but it is critical that this sort of co-operation is promoted as much as possible.

What we need now is a comprehensive, integrated approach but with specific actions. And this is what Jeff McNeely was saying: there is the general comprehensive way of looking at this issue but also the specific and pressing need to act. We need to address both of these needs. We also need more innovative approaches to solving these issues, as we are all too traditional in the way the we go about finding and implementing solutions.

There have been so many excellent statements here about how to create partnerships. I think it is extremely important to integrate sector activities at the national level. In this regard, the credibility of the Alien Invasive Species science is very important and we need to guard strongly against pseudo-science.

We need to create ownership of the problem. Much of this challenge lies in the communication and education aspects of alien species control. We need to create ownership of the problem within sectors, within the various groups that are interested in controlling invasives and we need to create an acceptance of responsibility. We should use existing institutions and processes to support this framework and should try to influence them to put the invasive species issue on their agenda.

We have to prepare for, and document failures. We should not pursue the 100% solution only. It will be necessary to make exceptions to the 100% solution because some of these invasives are useful, and we have to find the right levels of management and control. We need to place more focus on how we can make the best use of local involvement, best practices, the inclusion of social economics and forging partnerships and in particular some of the ideas that Charles Perrings put forward. We have to learn the language of the sector and to communicate in terms familiar to them. Early education is essential – again, this is easier said than done. And involve both the provider and receiver (country or area) of the invasions in partnerships and negotiations.

We need to set priorities and be pragmatic.

As a closing statement, I would like to share with you my view on, and the way in which I consider biodiversity: Biodiversity is the life insurance of life itself. Intraspecific variation is species insurance. Species diversity is the insurance of ecosystem functioning, and ecosystem diversity is the guarantee for ecosystem services and sustainable development.

Thankyou.

