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**Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda**  
**Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology**  
**Final report of the Group of Experts**

**Report of the fifth meeting of the Group of Experts  
of the Committee on Science and Technology**

**Note by the secretariat\***

**Addendum**

**Development of synergy with other related conventions**

*Summary*

As part of the work programme mandated by the Conference of the Parties, the Group of Experts (GoE) of the Committee on Science and Technology worked on developing synergy with other conventions dealing with the environment and sustainable development. To this end, the outcomes of a series of workshops on synergy approaches, facilitated by the secretariat and its partners, have been assessed by the GoE and compiled into a document entitled “Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops”.

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\* The submission of this document was delayed due to the short time available between the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. MANDATE.....	1	3
II. BACKGROUND .....	2-7	3
III. OBJECTIVE OF THE PUBLICATION.....	8-12	4

## I. Mandate

1. By its decision 15/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties requested the Group of Experts (GoE) of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to prioritize its work plan as contained in the framework annexed to that decision, in the light of the comments, observations and recommendations made by the CST at its sixth session, and in particular on the basis of feasibility and relevance to the implementation of the Convention. One of the tasks on the work programme of the GoE was the development of synergy with other relevant conventions. The secretariat, with its partners, facilitated the convening of a series of workshops on synergy approaches, the outcomes of which were assessed by the GoE as a support to development of synergy among conventions on environment and sustainable development.

## II. Background

2. Developing countries that are Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, face the challenge of seeking cost-efficient ways to simultaneously implement their obligations under these instruments. More often than not, the approach to implementation of these environmental conventions is sectoral. This leads to a rather compartmentalized outlook to key decision-making, and tends to undermine the effectiveness of implementation. This scenario exists despite the fact that there are possibilities to develop a synergistic approach to the issues covered by these treaties. Furthermore, the complexities and challenges associated with the effective implementation of the various multilateral environmental agreements sometimes revolve around the way the individual Conferences of the Parties approach the issue of synergistic implementation.

3. Avoidance of duplication of effort and taking advantage of the convergence of interest among these conventions are the overriding factors in pursuing collaboration towards better integrated and holistic approaches to implementation. The work programme of the GoE, as adopted by decision 15/COP.6, was the basis for this undertaking, specifically the task of developing synergy with other related conventions, organizations and intergovernmental treaties in order to avoid duplication of effort and establish mechanisms for interaction. At the request of developing countries, the secretariat had been facilitating the holding of workshops, at regional, national and local levels, where the various stakeholders came together to deliberate on modalities for close collaboration among the Rio conventions and the Ramsar Convention. The rationale behind these efforts is to look for possibilities to reap the benefits of close collaboration among the entities and stakeholders charged with the implementation of these conventions.

4. At the regional level, four workshops were held in Africa. Their objectives were to develop and/or strengthen cooperation in the implementation of the Rio conventions and other related conventions, by enhancing cooperation among relevant stakeholders working at the national level; and to exchange views on potential initiatives of work and lessons learned for the implementation of the conventions. Among the activities at the workshops were reviews and analyses of case studies, lessons learned and constraints, and formulation of recommendations.

5. At the national level, 13 workshops were held (four in Asia, five in Africa and four in Latin America and the Caribbean). The participants were national focal points as well as relevant stakeholders, including representatives from relevant ministries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local experts. The reports from these workshops were expected:

(a) To reflect demand driven concerns and to summarize findings and lessons learned in the area of synergy in the national context;

(b) To identify outcomes of relevance for the development of joint work programmes between the conventions;

(c) To identify priority needs for Parties in terms of information management, capacity-building and guidelines;

(d) To seek financial support.

6. At the local level, four workshops were convened – in Kazakhstan, Kenya, Namibia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The workshops brought together local communities involved in the implementation of the Rio conventions, local farmers, experts, extension officers, academics, government ministries and NGOs. The main expected outcomes included the identification of strategies for formulating joint projects, the identification of key areas and constraints for synergistic implementation, the examination of lessons learned, and deciding on actions to be taken.

7. The GoE assessed the outcomes of all the above-mentioned workshops and compiled the findings in a publication entitled “Opportunities for Synergy Among the Environmental Conventions: Results of National and Local Level Workshops”.

### **III. Objective of the publication**

8. Although the geographic and substantive scope of the workshops may not have been adequate for the preparation of specific conclusions or recommendations on synergy, they nevertheless provided valuable insights on how to develop the process of synergistic implementation of the environmental conventions at the local level. Some workshop reports provided were lengthy, detailing programmes for strengthening synergy, whereas others were brief summaries of the deliberations. Nevertheless, considering the critical mass of experience and lessons learned, interesting concepts, examples, recommendations and guidelines could be extracted, compiled and analysed.

9. The review of the workshop reports was expected to culminate in a product that could be easily used to promote synergy. It was to be aimed at enhancing capacities of country Parties to develop synergistic approaches that benefit people, for the implementation of the environmental conventions. The objective was to produce information about experiences gained, best practices and methods developed so far, and to trigger ideas on how to enhance the synergistic implementation of the conventions at national and local levels.

10. The publication should be a reference tool for people working on synergy approaches. The aim was to produce not a treatise but rather a compilation of concepts, options, and opportunities from which readers could get needed information for implementation of synergy at the national level.

11. The publication was designed to attempt to find out how the countries themselves perceive and conceptualize the implementation of synergy; which options and opportunities have been developed in designing national political and operational frameworks for synergy; and which concrete actions at the local level have been proposed by the Parties.

12. The dissemination of the outcomes of this work through the publication is expected to help other country Parties that may be planning or preparing synergistic implementation of the three Rio conventions and the Ramsar Convention and encourage further support for such initiatives. Copies of the publication will be handed out during the introduction of this item of the agenda of the CST at its eighth session.

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