

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Follow Up Initiative and the links with IMoSEB: A Concept note from the Advisory Group for MA Follow Up.

Preamble

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was requested by the Conference of Parties of four biodiversity-related Conventions (Biodiversity, Wetlands, Desertification, and Migratory Species) and commissioned by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2000 to provide a synthesis of the state of knowledge concerning the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and actions that could be taken to respond to harmful changes. The final results were presented in 2005 to the Secretary General and the world's media. The MA reported for the first time that 66% of the ecosystem services it had assessed were in decline and downward trend can be expected to continue if immediate action is not taken. The MA had also for the first time explicitly made the link between ecosystem services and human well-being and warned the world's leaders that continued decline in ecosystem services will be a barrier for many developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In October of 2007, UNEP with support from the Swedish Ministry for the Environment took the initiative to bring together many of the original partners of the MA (see annex one for list of participants), in Stockholm, to determine a course of action to implement some of the main recommendations from both the GEF terminal evaluation of the MA, and the evaluation of the MA by the United Kingdom House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee.

It is now well recognized that the MA:

- Made explicit the link between biodiversity, ecosystem services and human development
- Acknowledged the importance of scale issues in addressing the biodiversity- ecosystem service-human development links
- Demonstrated the importance and value of policy driven scientific assessments
- Underscored the need for some form of an inter-governmental process for ensuring a higher level of uptake of assessment findings

The meeting also took note of plans for implementation activities developed under the purview of the then MA Board. It was agreed to continue efforts to develop practical tools and methodologies to implement the MA findings at the

national and regional levels. In addition, work is ongoing to support existing sub-global assessments and stimulate the development of new ones. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on enhanced collaboration between developed and developing countries in order to harmonize tools and methodologies and consequently MA findings to ensure generation of reliable knowledge bases. The science community is also identifying gaps in scientific understanding that hampered the possibility to assess some ecosystem services in the first MA. This should result in further scientific research to fill some of the knowledge gaps.

The MA follow up program will be coordinated by the Advisory Group on MA Follow Up constituted by individuals and institutional representatives with support from a secretariat hosted by UNEP in collaboration with UNDP and support from the Swedish Ministry of Environment.

Recommendations for a second global ecosystem service assessment

At the time of the first MA, the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being were already a critical concern for development (desertification, growing freshwater scarcity, declining fisheries, biodiversity loss, etc.). Additionally, there are challenges especially for developing countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and in particular MDG 1 and 7; as they seek to translate the linkages between ecosystem changes and the human well-being into relevant data that will facilitate development of appropriate indicators to influence policy for optimized resource allocation. Thus, there is an urgent need to meet decision-makers' needs for credible scientific information that will inform wise decisions in response to these continued threats to the sustainability of the biosphere.

After reviewing an inventory of current scientific assessments that relate to ecosystem and human well-being, the Stockholm MA follow up group identified the IMoSEB process as having particular potential to serve their goals for a second global ecosystem assessment.

In the spirit of seeking to build on existing processes and progress before creating a new process, the group drafted the following set of recommendations aimed at ensuring the IMoSEB process benefits from the experience of the MA and can serve as a mechanism to achieve many of the same objectives that might be pursued through a second global (and multiscale) MA assessment.

Recommendation One

Any follow up global exercise on biodiversity and ecosystem services should incorporate the conceptual framework established by the MA and now widely used by governments and other agencies around the world as the foundational block for considering the links between biodiversity, ecosystems, and people.

Recommendation Two

Any follow up exercise on biodiversity and ecosystem services should use results generated from the MA implementation phase, including the ongoing sub-global activities of the MA, as substantial inputs for the respective exercises.

Recommendations Three

Any follow up exercise on biodiversity and ecosystem services should as much as possible interact with other key processes including the IPCC for climate change and the Potsdam initiative on the macroeconomics of biodiversity.

Recommendation Four

Any follow up exercise on biodiversity and ecosystem services should be guided by requests from a range of stakeholders, including relevant UN-organizations, biodiversity-related MEAs, country needs (developing and developed) countries, the civil society and the private sector.

Recommendation Five

Any follow up exercise on biodiversity and ecosystem services should take a human development perspective as the starting point, *through using the ecosystem services "lens"* rather than primarily assess trends in biodiversity per se (and/or conservation of biodiversity) as commonly done in the past.

It is strongly believed that the impact of any potential processes addressing biodiversity and ecosystem assessment will be greatly enhanced if it takes into consideration the groundwork laid by the first assessment and the ongoing MA follow up process. The MA follow up partners encourage IMoSEB to take into consideration the recommendations put forward in this concept note in any further deliberations that IMoSEB will undertake and to engage in a dialog with the Advisory Group on MA Follow Up.