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332	Yes	Yes
Is form complete:	Organisation name:	
Yes	University of Massachusetts Boston / Universidad EAFIT	
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Global catastrophic risks mitigated	Risk multipliers managed	Implementation timeframe
Climate change	Institutions that lack inclusivity or accountability	Short
Eco-system collapse		
Unknown risks		
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Assessing the implementation of biodiversity

governance: Methods, structures and synergies

This proposal addresses the existing governance mechanisms for biodiversity. It uses the concept of implementation to evaluate how MEAs for biodiversity are working and how they can strengthen their role and contribution to the solution of biodiversity loss.

DETAILS

<https://www.cbd.int>

<https://www.cbd.int/mechanisms/>

<https://www.ramsar.org>

<https://www.ramsar.org/resources/implementing-management-activities>

<https://www.cites.org>

<https://cites.org/legislation>

https://www.cites.org/eng/resources/reports/Implementation_report

<https://www.cms.int>

<https://www.unccd.int>

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/efb0/1f84/a892b98d2982a829962b6371/wg2020-02-03-en.pdf>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg15>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg17>

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Reducing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

No. There are no aspects of the proposal that have the converse effect of reducing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance.

Conversing effect of increasing conflict and political violence

No. There are no aspects of this proposal that have a converse effect of increasing conflict and political violence.

Enhancing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

This proposal certainly increases inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance. By building the assessments on the implementation of biodiversity governance mechanisms and making them public, it would be possible to open the process of implementation to more and stronger engagement from different actors beyond national governments. The data and knowledge repository created by this proposal is also a source of accountability for national governments and for all the organizations that take part in the implementation of biodiversity governance. The purpose is not based on moral suasion, but on providing all the actors with the required information and knowledge to call for more effective governance mechanisms.

Furthermore, as part of the goals of this proposal, the process towards the definition and implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Resolution CBD/COP/DEC/14/34) specifically calls for the active engagement of government, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and other actors. Offering them the outcomes of this research can be a solid foundation for them to work on a “strong ownership of the framework” and on the support of its implementation.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Implementation strategy

The implementation of this proposal departs from the analysis of five of the existing governance mechanisms that address biodiversity loss and ecosystems management: the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It departs from the work already developed around the Environmental Conventions Index (ECI), a method that evaluates the extent to which countries are translating their international commitments to biodiversity conservation into national policies.

This work has already analyzed some of the agreements, included in this proposal. However, the goal of this proposal is threefold: One, to expand the analysis of the implementation of governance mechanisms to all the MEAs included in this proposal. Two, to evaluate how these governance mechanisms can develop additional synergies not only in terms of their contribution to halt biodiversity loss, but also regarding their organizational structures, their operations at the national level, and their contribution to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG15 Life on Land. And three, to connect the role of the different MEAs with the definitions that will be established by the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that is currently being negotiated in the context of the United Nations.

The implementation strategy will convene the research teams in two universities that have already worked in similar projects. Based on their existing work, especially on the Environmental Conventions Index, the research will define

specific standardized assessments and research mechanisms to fulfill the objectives mentioned above.

This proposal, however, faces obstacles in different fronts. Even though at the institutional level it is clear that there is a need for governance assessments that increase accountability and strengthen the implementation of national policies for the solution of global environmental problems, both MEAs and countries do not have the required resources to guarantee that data collection, national reporting and analysis is done in a consistent basis. This certainly affects the availability of information required to implement this proposal. Furthermore, the proposal requires the support from governance mechanisms—within the United Nations and the MEAs secretariats—in order to use this analysis as an important reference to measure progress by country and by convention. By making the implementation of this proposal and its outcomes an important reference within the system of global environmental governance it will be possible to establish a virtuous cycle that makes the assessments proposed here useful tools for the existing governance mechanisms. Finally, financial resources are required to support the research teams, and to make the results of this proposal available to the public and visible.

Political will exists to realise this proposal

There is definitive political will to strengthen the system of global governance for biodiversity. In the context of the negotiations for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework it is clear that countries are interested in defining stronger mechanisms to halt biodiversity loss and to ensure ecosystems resilience. The current negotiations for the new framework evidence a decisive interest to work with member states to strengthen their contributions to the implementation existing and new biodiversity commitments.

In this sense, it is possible to argue that there is political will for the realization of this proposal. In addition, the developments around the United Nations 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development also highlight the importance of data, information, monitoring and assessment, and accountability. As indicated by SDG17, part of the partnerships required for the Sustainable Development Goals require initiatives that measure progress on sustainable development, and capacity-building in developing countries. The outcomes of this proposal can be used to reinforce these approaches offering useful data to monitor progress on SDG15 and other ecosystem-related goals. In addition, the information about best practices and challenges at the national level can be a key input in the design and implementation of targeted capacity-building mechanisms that increase the implementation and then effectiveness of biodiversity MEAs and the Post-2020 framework.

It will be important to highlight that part of the political will behind the implementation of this proposal has already been materialized in different agreements that the University of Massachusetts Boston has led to implement the related research process. UMass Boston has worked with governments such as Switzerland, Finland and Rwanda and with the United Nations Environment Programme in related projects that evidence the relevance of this work and the interest of governments and international organizations in this type of approach to strengthen and monitor global biodiversity governance mechanisms.

What if political will does not exist yet

Some positions about this proposal may evidence a lack of political will. In particular, countries may not be interested in being assessed or ranked in terms of their implementation of national policies. Nonetheless, this proposal can build

the required political will to support the process. And the interest of countries in obtaining this type of evaluation can also mobilize the financial resources required for its implementation.

The political will to increase the interest and commitment of governments and international organizations to this type of assessment would be developed working with the MEAs and the biodiversity governance mechanisms. The proposal will convene representatives from different countries to discuss the implementation of the biodiversity governance mechanisms, comparing their assessments and experience with the results of this proposal's research. This will be a way for countries to recognize the importance of independent monitoring, giving them the possibility of identifying the areas in which they need further work, establishing cooperation mechanisms among governments, and creating the policy space for learning from other countries' best practices and challenges.

Making the outcomes of this proposal available as a policy resource for countries and international organizations will also be a way to create the political will that is required to support it. If we guarantee the durability of this type of analysis and establish a cycle of reviews that fulfill the three objectives of assessing implementation, strengthening the governance structures and connecting both trends to the Post-2020 framework, we can make this assessment part of the governance system as well guaranteeing that countries have a solid structure of support to strengthen their contribution to the reduction of biodiversity loss and the building of resilience for ecosystems.

MITIGATING RISKS

Mitigating climate change

The environmental contribution of this proposal is directly connected to halting biodiversity loss and increasing the resilience of ecosystems. Furthermore, its contribution focuses on the implementation of governance mechanisms. By strengthening the implementation of MEAs and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, this proposal contributes to enhance the effectiveness of these instruments and their role in solving environmental challenges.

However, by contributing to address biodiversity loss and ecosystems instability, the proposal addresses the connection between biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation. This connection is twofold. As explained by the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, climate change is one of the key drivers of biodiversity loss and is forcing biodiversity to mutate is main characteristics. Problems such as habitat fragmentation and species extinction have climate change as one of their causes. On the other side, biodiversity conservation can definitively be considered a positive influence for climate change, as biodiversity provides essential ecosystem services that reduce the negative effects of temperature increases. Natural instruments such as carbon storage and ecosystems resilience to natural disasters are some examples on how biodiversity can be a positive factor to address climate change. Ecosystem services can also serve as cost-effective adaptation strategies, but this requires adaptive management and stronger monitoring and evaluation systems.

A second dimension in which this proposal can contribute to climate change is through its governance dimension. Any governance-related lessons from the biodiversity MEAs could certainly be applied to climate change

governance, especially in mechanisms such as the Paris Agreement. Working with the biodiversity MEAs can provide best practices in areas such as reporting, monitoring, data analysis, capacity-building, and the strengthening of governance structures that can be used to improve the implementation of the climate change agreements and their contribution to address the planetary crisis behind them.

Mitigating eco-system collapse

The main goal of this proposal is definitively linked to the prevention of ecosystems collapse. By improving the governance structures for biodiversity and their implementation, this proposal guarantees that governments have the required resources and support mechanisms to develop and implement effective national policies which contribute to biodiversity conservation. Specifically, the work with five of the existing biodiversity MEAs will contribute to different planetary challenges that, if not addressed, would certainly lead to ecosystems collapse. The objectives of these MEAs will contribute to biodiversity changes such as:

- The sustainable use of biological resources.
- The access to genetic resources and the equitable distribution of the benefits that result from their use.
- The conservation of wetlands, and their ecosystems.
- The protection of migratory species.
- The protection of fauna and flora from the threats of illegal wildlife trade.
- The protection of land ecosystems
- The promotion of land degradation neutrality and the prevention of desertification and drought.

An important part of the contribution of this proposal would be associated to the assessment of the policies for biodiversity conservation at the national level. The national policies will be evaluated in five different dimensions that will include legislation and regulatory measures, institutional arrangements, data collection, analysis and reporting, financial contributions and resources mobilization, and the technical measures that protect biodiversity in each of the policy issues addressed by the MEAs.

Mitigating unknown risks

This proposal has a clear governance focus. It is directly related to the objective of improving the implementation of MEAs, the creation of a data and knowledge repository that supports capacity-building strategies, identifying best practices and challenges and designing specific programs in which countries can work together and serve as hubs that transmit lessons about how to guarantee the implementation and effectiveness of biodiversity policies. In the identification of best practices and challenges, this research will also inquire about the role of the governance structures from MEAs and the influence they may have in the implementation of national policies. This data can be used by governance institutions to improve their responses and effectiveness. Furthermore, the lessons in terms of governance from this proposal can be connected to other policy issues addressed through multilateral agreements.

Another area in which this proposal supports multilateral governance institutions, is through the identification of possible synergies among governance mechanisms. The aim of this proposal is to build on some of the synergies that have already been identified among MEAs, and on the developments of other policy agendas such as the United

Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The overall goal is to contribute to the strengthening of the existing governance structures, designing and implementing measures for effective processes in areas such as reporting, monitoring, data analysis, capacity-building and resource mobilization. All of this will allow the multilateral governance structures to be more and better prepared to respond to emerging and unknown risks.