

Statement of Capability for UNEP-WCMC August 6th 2010 (Draft)

What is the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre?

The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre is part of the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA). Based in Cambridge, UK, we work in collaboration with a 'Not-for-Profit' to fulfil our role as UNEP's specialist Centre for biodiversity information and assessment.

What is the Centre's purpose?

We aim to support UNEP's mission by putting the best available biodiversity data and information in front of national, regional and global decision makers. Working with partners worldwide we collate and integrate data and information on biodiversity and ecosystems. We synthesise and analyse these data to create a comprehensive picture of the state of biodiversity and ecosystems around the world.

The UNEP-WCMC Mandate(s)

In decision GC.22/1/III (2003), the UNEP Governing Council gave UNEP-WCMC the mandate to provide a range of biodiversity related services to UNEP, the biodiversity-related conventions and their constituent party-states, and other bodies in the non-governmental and private sectors. It noted *"the successful integration of the World Conservation Monitoring Centre into the United Nations Environment Programme's biodiversity-related activities since the Centre's change of status in June 2000 to that of a specialist biodiversity information and assessment centre"*, and it supported the ED's *"policy of broadening the Centre's role to provide a range of biodiversity-related services to the United Nations Environment Programme, the biodiversity-related conventions and their constituent party States, and other bodies in the non-governmental and private sectors"*. More recently, the Convention on Biological Diversity emphasised the importance of the part to be played by UNEP-WCMC in COP Decisions VII/4, VII/10, VII/28 and VII/30.

How is the Centre constituted?

UNEP-WCMC was founded in 2000 as a partnership between UNEP and WCMC2000, a UK not-for-profit. This arrangement delivered to UNEP the expert services of around 45 scientists, together with a range of databases and technical platforms. In 2010 the legal and governance arrangements for the Centre were renegotiated and a new 'Collaboration Agreement' was introduced with the assistance and approval of the UN Office of Legal Affairs. It was signed by the Executive Director and took effect on 1st July 2010. These new institutional arrangements hinge around Article 2 which states that *"The office established by UNEP at 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL will be known as the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), a global centre of excellence in the Biodiversity Field, and will also serve as the place of collaboration between UNEP and WCMC 2000 ("the Collaboration" as further described in this Agreement"*.

A Summary of Capacity

The team within the offices of UNEP-WCMC currently consists over 78 scientists and 6 senior technologists. It includes 14 Heads of Programme/senior staff with PhD qualifications and most of the rest of the team are qualified to Masters level. The scientific staff is distributed between 9 specialist programmes as follows:

- 1) Agriculture, Biomass and Food Security;
- 2) Biodiversity Scientific Support;
- 3) Biodiversity Informatics;
- 4) Business, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services;
- 5) Climate change, Biodiversity and Ecosystems;
- 6) Ecosystem Assessment;
- 7) Marine Assessment and Decision-support;
- 8) Protected Areas and Connectivity;
- 9) Species of Global Concern.

Additionally, the Centre works closely with a wide range of specialist consultants and we share data and other forms of information with 20+ specialist organizations around the world.

An outline of Capabilities

Although some exceptions are mentioned below, the Centre has the competence to address **almost any** aspect of science, assessment and policy analysis related to biodiversity and ecosystems. However, the Centre is currently particularly strong in the following areas:

1. Mapping and quantifying carbon (and freshwater in terrestrial and coastal ecosystems);
2. Defining and mapping critical areas for biodiversity and ecosystem services;
3. Assessing the role of ecosystems in climate mitigation and adaptation;
4. Assessing and monitoring biodiversity and other opportunities and impacts of REDD+;
5. National and sub-national level ecosystem assessments;
6. Assessing species in key MEAs such as CITES;
7. Assessing the impacts of agricultural development on biodiversity and ecosystems;
8. Assessing the impact of extractive industries on biodiversity and ecosystems;
9. Mapping, quantifying and valuing critical coastal and marine ecosystems;
10. Developing biodiversity and ecosystem services indicators;
11. Building the capacity and competencies of partners in the developing world;
12. Global biodiversity modelling and prioritisation;
13. Undertaking protected area gap analysis and management effectiveness;
14. Producing tools for data integration and risk assessment;

More generally, UNEP-WCMC hosts a range of important UNEP datasets and fulfils a range of UNEP functions; it also specialises in hosting small but important global biodiversity processes, thus the Centre:

- a) Is custodian of a range of important global datasets such as the World Database of Protected Areas and the world database on critical coastal ecosystems.
- b) Produces the UNEP indicators to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and we undertook most of the work underpinning the GBO₃.
- c) Acts as Secretariat for the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, the Conservation Commons and the Global Marine and Coastal Data Partnership.

There are two major areas in the field of biodiversity in which we recognise that the Centre doesn't have significant in-house expertise, these are Access and Benefit Sharing and the impacts of genetically modified organisms on biodiversity. We are also currently seeking to strengthen our capacity in the field of natural resource economics.

The benefits of working with UNEP-WCMC

The benefits to UNEP Divisions of UNEP-WCMC and the collaboration that takes place within it are *inter alia* that it:

1. Creates the capacity to influence a broader audience which UNEP can't easily reach.
2. Simplifies contracting for expert services via a pre-qualified 'preferred contractor'.
3. Generates co-financing for UNEP's Program of Work.
4. Secures additional, consistent and high quality capacity and competencies.
5. Does so at a much lower cost and more flexibly than through hiring UNEP staff.
6. It reduces reliance on consultants and the risk of malfeasance in this regard.
7. Provides a reliable long term repository of knowledge and databases.
8. Provides a reservoir of expertise familiar with, and experienced in working with UNEP.
9. Identifies UNEP as an internationally recognised leader in the field of biodiversity.

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