Dialogues for Collaborative Action on the Links Between Biological and Cultural Diversity
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The Dialogues for Collaborative Action on the Links Between Biological and Cultural Diversity are coordinated by the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation (CBC) at the American Museum of Natural History and the Joint Programme between UNESCO and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) on Biological and Cultural Diversity.

The Dialogues for Collaborative Action on the Links Between Biological and Cultural Diversity (hereby referred to as Dialogues for Action) are a series of events organized within the framework of the UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme to explore the meaning and values of the links between biological and cultural diversity and their implications for solutions to global problems facing humanity (such as climate change, desertification, unsustainable use of limited natural resources).

Background

In April 2014, the Government of Italy and the University of Florence initiated the 1st European Conference for the Implementation of the UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme on Biological and Cultural Diversity in partnership with UNESCO and the SCBD. Building on the success of the European conference, the 1st Asian Conference on Biocultural Diversity took place in 2016 in Japan as a collaboration between UNESCO, SCBD, UNU, and the Governments of the Ishikawa Prefecture and Nanao City.

Additional discussions have been held at capacity building workshops for indigenous and local communities and national focal points for traditional knowledge facilitated by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Future events are currently being planned for the Pacific, Latin American, and North American regions, including an academic conference hosted by the University of Montreal and the Centre for Indigenous Conservation Alternatives in October 2018 in Montreal, Canada.

Links between biological and cultural diversity

The links between biological and cultural diversity refer to the co-evolution of life in all of its manifestations, encompassing biological, linguistic, and cultural diversity, and the relationships between people and nature—often also referred to as biocultural diversity.

Over millennia, humans have developed a vast variety of cultures, languages, and knowledge and management systems through close interactions with their natural surroundings. Culturally grounded values and practices regarding the relationship between people and nature are often closely interlinked with human well-being and environmental stewardship.

Numerous examples showcase the dynamic interplay between nature and culture creating cultural landscapes, e.g. traditional agricultural systems, traditional water and fire management, sacred natural sites, and culturally significant species.

In addition, diverse knowledge and resource management systems can generate and sustain biological and landscape diversity, providing human and ecological systems with greater adaptive capacity to cope with disturbances, including human-induced climate change and severe weather events. Similarly, cultural diversity supports resilient human systems that are capable of adapting to changing times.

The links between biological and cultural dimensions of diversity highlight the need for holistic approaches in management of people and the environment. However, there has been a persistent systemic disconnect, where policies, tools, and legal frameworks dealing with nature and culture separately have often led to differing and sometimes conflicting agendas. As such, there is an urgent need to foster dialogue and collaboration across multiple knowledge systems, sectors, disciplines, and scales to strengthen the integration, interdependence, and positive relationship between biological and cultural diversity.

**Objectives**

The Dialogues for Action aim to connect a broad range of people involved with management and protection of nature and culture (including Indigenous peoples and local communities, policy makers, researchers, and conservation professionals) for collectively thinking about future action, research directions, and policy recommendations to promote and strengthen the links between biological and cultural diversity in resource management and decision-making.

The initiative presents a timely opportunity for a wide range of voices to offer inputs to key international policy processes. This includes providing insights to encourage the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to embed considerations of the links between biological and cultural diversity into the Post-2020 arrangements for the Convention.

The objectives of the Dialogues for Action are to:

- Provide an opportunity for exchange and co-creation of knowledge on the meaning, value, and policy and management implications of the links between biological and cultural diversity.
- Develop policy recommendations to promote resilient communities and strengthen the links between biological and cultural diversity; including key insights to inform consultations on development of the CBD Post-2020 arrangements, and implementation of international agreements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement and UNESCO’s Conventions on culture.
- Foster an international network for continued dialogue and collaboration.

**Activities and Expected Outcomes**

The Dialogues for Action will take place as a collaborative process in five stages:

1. Preparatory steering committee meeting: April 2017, New York, US
2. Action Group meetings on key topics: 2017-2018, multiple locations
3. Synthesis of interim results and inputs to inform the consultations on the development of the CBD Post-2020 arrangements: Interim report to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 14), 10 - 22 November 2018, Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt
4. Synthesis of final results: Final report to CBD COP 15, November 2020, China
5. Biocultural Summit: 2020 (TBD)
Action Groups

A critical aspect of the Dialogues is connecting a range of actors engaged in biological and cultural diversity to form a series of thematic 'Action Groups' across the globe. These groups can take many forms in structure and work process (e.g. as a single meeting or ongoing discussions) and will offer an interactive framework in which stakeholders can convene and integrate different perspectives and expertise.

The Action Groups are intended to bring the Dialogues to diverse locations and stakeholders across multiple regions, including in conjunction with existing meetings or initiatives. As such, the Dialogues will foster collaboration and strengthen collective impact among people or organizations interested in connecting with a broader network.

Depending on participant priorities and interests, Action Groups can be formed to address a range of topics contributing to the objectives of the Dialogues. Groups have already formed around the following issues:

- How to synthesize and harmonize across efforts to design inclusive indicators of biocultural wellbeing.
- Human rights; how emerging regimes on nature rights intersect with human rights.
- Multiple knowledge systems, indigenous knowledge-science, and decision making.
- How existing systems of governance can be more inclusive of nature-culture linkages.

If you are interested in leading an Action Group, please contact Hellin Brink (hbrink@amnh.org) for more information!

Expected outcomes

Results and lessons learned from the Dialogues will be synthesized into final products by the Dialogue coordinators. The expected outcomes include:

- Policy recommendations on actions at different levels to promote resilient communities and strengthen the links between biological and cultural diversity.
- A report with key insights and lessons learned to inform consultations on development of the CBD Post-2020 arrangements.
- A final report to be presented to CBD COP 15.
- Detailed case studies of biocultural approaches to inspire action.
- An international network for continued dialogue and collaboration on the links between biological and cultural diversity.
- An official Declaration.
For more information, please reach out to one of the coordinators:

**Center for Biodiversity and Conservation**
The Center for Biodiversity and Conservation (CBC)⁴ at the American Museum of Natural History works together with a range of partners to support, develop, and implement biocultural approaches to management and conservation. This includes exploring development and use of biocultural indicators that capture feedbacks between human well-being and ecological health, as well as how to manage and adapt for resilience in a way that is culturally appropriate.

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**The UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme on the Links Between Biological and Cultural Diversity**
The Joint Programme between UNESCO and the CBD Secretariat (SCBD)⁵ was developed at the International Conference on Biological and Cultural Diversity in Montreal, Canada in 2010. Recognizing that biological and cultural diversity are not only closely interlinked but also mutually reinforcing, the key objective of the programme is to strengthen linkages between biological and cultural diversity initiatives, foster capacity building, and enhance synergies between interlinked provisions of international conventions and frameworks dealing with biological and cultural diversity.

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⁴ Center for Biodiversity and Conservation: www.amnh.org/cbc
⁵ UNESCO-SCBD Joint Programme: https://www.cbd.int/lbcd/