

Progress in implementing the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

Peter Wyse Jackson

National Botanic Gardens of Ireland. Dublin. Ireland

In 2002 the international community adopted the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) through the United National Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The Strategy and its different elements are now well known, including its objectives as well as the 16 outcome orientated targets it incorporates, to be achieved by 2010. However, after five years of its operation, it has been urgent to review progress in its implementation. Is the Strategy achieving what it set out to do? Are countries fully engaged in its implementation? What new measures will be needed to ensure that the targets are met by 2010? What steps need to be taken for plant conservation beyond 2010?

In 2007 the CBD began a process to undertaken an in-depth review of the strategy, highlighting not only progress and achievements but also constraints and difficulties encountered. The in-depth review will be considered at the forthcoming 9th Conference of the Parties of the CBD due to be held in Bonn, Germany in May 2008.

The in-depth review currently being undertaken has shown that GSPC implementation is patchy. Excellent progress has been made in a number of countries where National Plant Conservation Strategies have been developed and where they are being implemented. Other important initiatives have included the establishment of the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation (GPPC) to ensure that major organisations combine their efforts in support of GSPC implementation. In addition, excellent progress has for certain targets and also by certain sectors, such as the botanic garden community, to achieve enhanced plant conservation through ex situ programmes, species recovery and environmental education.

In other areas progress has been disappointing to date. The Convention requested countries to nominate National Focal Points for the GSPC in each country but to date only about 60 countries have done so, less than one third of the signatory countries of the CBD. The objective of such focal points is to help coordinate national efforts on GSPC implementation. Reports to the Convention indicate that the majority of countries are implementing the GSPC as part of

their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, but that does not necessarily ensure that they are engaged fully with the Strategy or regard it as a high priority. The in-depth review also indicates that less than 10% of countries have set national targets for GSPC to date and the main constraints to national implementation reported include:

- Lack of data, tools & technologies
- Limited funding
- Poor sectoral coordination and limited institutional capacity and capabilities
- Lack of appropriate policies and legal frameworks at the national level

Since the Strategy was developed, a new concern affecting biodiversity has increasingly come to the top of the agenda of the international community – climate change. Most predictions of loss of plant species were formulated without taking the impact of climate change fully into consideration. Recent work by various authors have highlighted that climate change will make the situation for tens of thousands of species much worse than had been previously predicted. The recent *Gran Canaria II Declaration* on climate change highlighted the threats to plant diversity and noted that the following categories of plants will be particularly at risk:

- Plants with nowhere to go
- Plants with restricted range
- Plants with limited dispersal capacity
- Plants with long generation times
- Plants with high habitat/niche specialisation and/or narrow tolerance of climatic variables
- Plants with co-evolved or synchronous relationships with other species

It is clear that new work is required in most countries to evaluate the impact of climate change on specific plant species. For example, recent work undertaken by this author in Ireland will be described, which indicates that some 20% of the native flora of Ireland may be threatened by climate change by 2050.

A key challenge over the coming two years will not only be to ensure that renewed effort and urgency is given to the achievement of the Strategy and its targets but also to put in place a second phase for the Strategy, to go beyond 2010. It is clear that despite massive efforts to raise the plant conservation agenda internationally, much of them successful, the work has really only just begun if a significant proportion of the world's flora is not to disappear over the coming decades. This paper will outline progress made to date and highlight not only the achievement and progress made and constraints to the achievement of the Strategy but also future prospects for plant conservation beyond 2010.

Recibido: 15 de abril de 2009.

Direcc. del autor: National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland. Email: peter.wysejackson@opw.ie