Countdown 2010 Assessment Tool

Draft Work Plan

November 2005

Contents

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Introduction

At the request of participants at the expert workshop that took place in Copenhagen (3-4th November, 2005), the Countdown 2010 Secretariat has prepared a draft work plan to identify what role a Countdown (hereafter called 'C2010') assessment tool would have, what its audience would be and how it would be developed. The work plan then contains a proposal for a methodology, time plan and communication strategy for such an assessment tool. Once a tool has been developed it will be consulted with experts and pilot-tested at the regional (sub-national) and national level.

What is the Countdown 2010?

The Countdown 2010 is a broad alliance of actors from all sectors that are working to achieve the 2010 biodiversity commitment through a clear goal and set of objectives. Currently the partners include governments, state agencies, international organisations, NGOs and private sector companies. These partners work together on a Steering Group, for which IUCN manages the secretariat.

Who is its Audience?

The C2010 aims to address both policy-makers in administrations at the local to national levels and also the civil society. For the purposes of this initiative, civil society is taken to mean members of NGOs and the informed public. However it does not necessarily relate to the general public, and any presentation of the assessment tool would not in its initial stages be targeted towards the general public. Therefore the priority for the Assessment is to communicate the state of progress towards the 2010 target to policy makers in a position to influence actions that could enhance further progress, and then a broader constituency that can bring pressure to bear on these policy makers.

It should be remembered that the audience is also likely to change depending on the level of governance that is being addressed. For example the closer the assessments are made to local administrations, the most the message should be tailored to the public. At the EU level, the message will primarily be targeted at policy makers.

Why assess progress towards the 2010 target?

Biodiversity has proven to be a difficult subject to support at the political level. Commitments were made at the global level to work towards the conservation of biological diversity. Then in Europe, strong targets were agreed to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Although biologists agree that it will be extremely difficult to meet the 2010 target either globally or in Europe, it is very important to have tools that are capable of tracking and monitoring this change. At this stage is arguable that we do not have these tools. Currently we have valuable proxies which measure components of biodiversity (e.g. Common Birds Indicator), but so far these have required large data collection initiatives. But these are two sides of the coin, on one side is the state of biodiversity, and the other side is what we are doing to improve this state. Currently monitoring tools highlight this approach by reflecting back on the state of species. For example the argument goes that as long as the state of biodiversity improves then generally the policies are being effective. However the C2010 has provided a mechanism to look at our policy responses in more detail and to raise awareness at the highest level. In most cases the actions that have most impact on nature are not carried out by the Environment Ministries, but by the Transport, Energy Trade or Development ministries.

There is a desperate need to link different sectors closely into efforts to halt the loss of biodiversity. If the EU level can provide a representative example of what is happening at the national level, each of the sectoral DGs is preparing its own set of monitoring tools. Being part of the Environment sector, we are interested in those developed under processes such as the CBD, but other sectors are less interested in these approaches. Furthermore they are not willing to change their approach.

The C2010 provides a possibility to address not only efforts undertaken by Environment and nature conservation authorities to halt biodiversity loss, but by the other sectors as well.

What will a C2010 assessment tool measure?

The C2010 Assessment Tool will measure the level of policy implementation necessary to meet the 2010 target. In this sense the tool will measure whether sufficient policies are in place to meet the target and will then go on to measure the level and quality of implementation. The Tool has to also be ‘2010 proof’ in that it should measure progress beyond the 2010 target as well, and not be limited within this 2006-2010 timeframe. Furthermore the tool should identify areas of good progress and required improvement.

The tool should also be applicable at different levels of governance. The C2010 contains members at the super-national level (e.g. the EU), national, regional and local levels. Therefore when developing a tool to assess policy progress the aim is also create one that functions at each of these levels of governance. Although there is will certain targets or goals that are not applicable at all levels, the framework provided by the assessment tool will apply to all.

The basis for measuring policy implementation will be provided by the commitments made either through the Message from Malahide targets or National/Local Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

How does the C2010 fit with other current initiatives?

The CBD agreed a small number of headline indicators that would be used to assess progress at the global level towards the 2010 target and to communicate information concerning trends in biodiversity. These indicators are aimed to be applicable from the global down to the local level and are seen as tools for the implementation of the CBD and of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. The first report for these indicators will be in the Global Biodiversity Outlook scheduled for release in 2006.

At the European level, a series of headline indicators similar to those of the CBD were proposed at the Biodiversity Stakeholders Conference in Malahide in May 2004 (then adopted by the EU Environment Council in June 2005). Based on this an initiative was launched through the EEA called *Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators 2010 (SEBI2010)* to propose data for these headline indicators and to streamline them at the EU and pan-European level (through the PEBLDS process).

At present both these initiatives (global and European) concentrate on State and Pressure indicators and to a lesser extent response. The response indicators are formulated such as “extent of area under sustainable management” or “coverage of protected areas”. These indicators are the products of policy actions and therefore they provide one measure of the policy response to biodiversity change and the 2010 target. However they primarily look at the presence of responses and not their effectiveness. In the sense of the indicators, effectiveness is shown through changes in the state of biodiversity, i.e. policies are effective if species increase or habitats improve. However in most cases there will be a time-lag between the implementation of policy, and a change in state of biodiversity that can be identified in indicators. Furthermore a great number of factors could come into play to change affect this relationship between indicator and policy. Therefore the C2010 tool aims to measure policy implementation and effectiveness as a function of the targets agreed by experts to be supportive of biodiversity. This will tell us whether we are doing all we can to protect biodiversity. Measuring policy implementation will start with the presence of policies that support biodiversity and then move onto effectiveness. For example concerning protected areas the state indicators under SEBI2010 will measure the “coverage of protected areas” and the C2010 tool can go further to score the:- proportion of sites with management plans, implementation of management plans, training of PA staff, financial resources for PAs etc.

Thus there is a clear niche for the C2010 assessment tool to measure effectiveness of policy responses and link them to state and trends data. Although changes in policy are very difficult to link to changes in state of biodiversity both due to the resulting time lag between action and effect, but also due to the complexity of systems. But for the C2010 the importance is to raise awareness concerning these policy actions and future needs. To some extent it will be possible to assume the positive link between action and effect.

Proposed Methodology

The methodology presented in this section is based on a number of sources including work carried out by IEEP and EEA on measuring Environmental Policy Integration, IISD work on Sustainable Development, OECD on Sustainable development indicators. The section presents the proposed tools that the assessments will use, the methodology and communication of the results. Finally this section details the next steps that will be taken to derive final tool ready for implementation.

The Assessment Toolkit

The Secretariat will develop a series of tools that will allow C2010 assessments to take place in different regions and at different administrative levels. The Toolkit will contain the following:

- *Assessment Framework* – this document contains the structure of the assessment; identifying the topics for questions, types of questions to ask and the range of scores available for each question type. This will allow assessors to tailor their assessments to suit local conditions, but keep questions within the same framework to allow comparability.
- *Sample questionnaire* – based on the framework identified above, the Secretariat will include an ideal questionnaire that can be used as a basis for developing individual assessments.
- *Assessment manual* – a support document explaining the rationale and background for each of the assessment areas. The manual will show how to carry out assessments and report the results. Most importantly the manual will contain the guidelines on how to apply scores for each questions, i.e. when should the assessors assign each score.
- *Communications guide* – this guide will show how assessors should develop the reports that will communicate the results. The style of reporting is essential for the successful uptake of the results and message. This guide will provide support to assessors, but will also ensure that communications materials can be prepared with local concerns in mind, but following a common template.

The Assessors

The C2010 assessments should be carried out in an open and transparent manner, but in such way that also ensures that results are timely and achieved at a rate that allows comparison between regions and countries. Therefore this tool is being designed not for implementation by the Secretariat of C2010 (although in some cases it will be able to carry out assessments), but by experts or small teams of experts working at the regional level of the assessment.

Each assessment will constitute a small project, and the assessor acts as the coordinator for the project. Selecting assessors will be carried out by the C2010 Secretariat. In some European countries there are structures in place that can support this, for example IUCN National Committees which represent the members of IUCN in that country. In other countries the C2010 is starting to establish working groups of local partners and C2010 members. In countries where no such structures exist, the assessment process could provide the incentive to form a working group or individual partner organisations could be contracted to provide the assessment.

The C2010 assessment first and foremost looks at the implementation of national and regional policy, and therefore is rating the performance of administrative bodies. One option would be to approach these bodies to answer questionnaires or perform a form of 'self-assessment'. However this approach has been rejected given the level of reporting demands usually placed on biodiversity experts within administrations. This reporting burden (i.e. to CBD, Ramsar, CMS, CITES etc) increases as one moves further east in Europe. The methodology outlined below discusses in more detail how to engage with administrations to ensure their involvement.

Developing the Assessment Tools

Here the work plan proposes a structure for the assessment tools and a methodology to be followed for the assessments. The methodology would be finalised as the assessment tools are completed and consulted.

Assessment framework

The assessment framework provides the structure for the assessments that take place in each region. It shows the target areas for each section of questions and identifies the question types to be asked, e.g. presence, implementation, effectiveness, and awareness questions. As mentioned previously, the framework must be relevant to the different sectors and to the issues within different regions. At the same time, it should be practical and focus on a limited number of areas. Assessors will use this framework to ask questions that are within similar topics but that are also relevant to their regions. Table 1 below gives an example of what the assessment framework will look like.

This framework will be consulted with experts and will not change in structure between assessments. The activities that will contribute to the scores generated for each of the different categories will differ for each region. The detailed explanation of what each component measures will be included in the Manual. However here we provide a brief overview of the ideas behind each category:

- Policy presence – this question asks whether the region has put the required policies in place. This question may not only apply to policies stipulated under EU legislation or obligation, but also further policies required to meet the associated target.
- Policy awareness – this questions the prominence of the policy and its awareness. There are several ways in which this can be highlighted, i.e. through events and publications or through project results. This question would also look towards the leadership element of other policy integration indicators (e.g. the EPI), to see how the administration is leading on the issue.
- Policy implementation – this question will assess the implementation of policies, so have the activities that they propose been enacted and are the necessary tools in place?
- Policy integration – this measures the level to which this policy is being integrated with the necessary sectors. For example targets requiring forestry management to become fully sustainable must be integrated with forestry sectors and businesses.
- Policy effectiveness – this measures how successful implementation has been up to date and its prospects for support the realisation of the target.

Based on this framework, for which the final version will be developed and consulted in the coming months, a sample questionnaire containing specific questions and the assessment manual explaining exactly how to carry out the assessments will be developed.

	Targets and Questions	Range	Score
Sector	*The Sector heading, e.g. forestry, protected areas, species etc.*		
Indicator	*Current State or Trend indicators – where possible the final agreed indicator, otherwise use descriptive proxy*		
Objective	*The stated policy objective within the governing document. There is usually an over-arching objective for the sector.*		
Target	*Specific target used within the governing document*		
1	Question 1: policy presence – are policies in place to address this issue	0-1	
2	Question 2: policy awareness – what is the level of awareness and political imperative for this issue	1-4	
3	Question 3: policy implementation – to what extent has the policy been implemented	1-4	
4	Question 4: policy integration – is this policy integrated with the necessary sectors	1-4	
5	Question 5: policy effectiveness – how well is the policy working to achieve its target.	1-4	
Target	*Specific target used within the governing document*		
1	Question 1: policy presence – are policies in place to address this issue	0-1	
2	Question 2: policy awareness – what is the level of awareness and political imperative for this issue	1-4	
3	Question 3: policy implementation – to what extent has the policy been implemented	1-4	
4	Question 4: policy integration – is this policy integrated with the necessary sectors	1-4	
5	Question 5: policy effectiveness – how well is the policy working to achieve its target.	1-4	

Table 1: Example of the proposed structure for the assessment framework

Integrating State of the Environment Information

Together with the assessment framework, which will give an indication of the effectiveness of policy responses to meet the C2010 goal, we will also identify how we can integrate information on the state of the environment. As part of the assessment questions will ask whether there is sufficient monitoring to identify changes in the state of biodiversity and also the C2010 will work with the major initiatives assessing the state of the environment such as SEBI2010 and the Ecological Footprint. The Secretariat will further discuss options for integrating ecological footprint assessments, where required, into the C2010 assessment process, thus expanding the wealth of information concerning human pressure on ecosystems. Furthermore the secretariat will work with the European Environment Agency to identify how the C2010 assessments could be integrated with its State of the Environment reporting.

Conducting the Assessment

The proposed approach for the assessment follows three stages:

a) *Preliminary assessment*

In the first stage the assessors will use bilateral interviews and existing data sources to complete the questionnaires and to attribute the preliminary scores based on the guidelines in the Assessment Manual. They are free to consult with external partners and organisations. Each score given should contain a justification explaining the reason behind the score. Some of the score will be completely qualitative, i.e. expert opinion based, and others will be more quantitative. This initial assessment should take a maximum of 1 month.

b) *Consultation*

The assessment must be widely consulted to ensure that the results are justifiable and represent the views of the Countdown partners in each region. Furthermore a consultation will allow administration officials to take part in the assessment and highlight situations where the scores may be adjusted in relation to previously unknown information.

The desired form of consultation will be a 1-2 day workshop in the region. Experts from administrations and NGOs will be invited to discuss the outcomes and assessments and possible messages for future activities. This process can be positive in its approach, identifying gaps and opportunities.

Should a workshop not be possible, an online consultation may present an alternative, although these are usually less successful and therefore remain a back-up option.

c) *Final assessment*

The results of the consultation are then fed into the assessment by the assessors to produce the final assessment and scores. This data is then entered into a central database and the communications materials and messages are prepared.

Ensuring independence

An important issue when using an expert opinion based approach is how to ensure the independence of the assessments and that the scores are justifiable. The methodology requires that the assessors provide written justification for each assessment to explain each score. Then the broad consultation phase will at least ensure that the opinions are broad based.

In the event of disagreement over the scores, the assessors have the first level of control concerning changes. If they are happy that a suggested change is valid, then it can be made. However if there is disagreement, it will be referred to the Secretariat which will seek third party advice. To ensure that the score remain accessible, organisations will be able to challenge them at any time through a form of appeal process. Through these mechanisms, the Secretariat hope to ensure that the results, which will not be quantitative, will be rigorous and justifiable.

Storing Data

The C2010 Secretariat will develop an online database accessible to assessors when conducting the assessments. This structured database will allow them to enter the scores and text justifications. There will be a public user interface for the database that will allow users to see the approved scores for regions or topics. A user would be able select specific sectors or questions to see how different regions performed, to receive aggregated information from several regions or at the European level or see the full report for a particular region. Information on the website will be displayed using a form of C2010 gauge designed for the tool (see later communications section). Users will also be able to access full reports and supporting documents.

Communicating the Results

Based on the data collected and the assessments made, there would be three main communications products:

a) *Scorecard or fact sheet*
This will contain key human and ecosystem well being data, critical ecological footprint data, state and trend indicators (European or national), cumulative scores from assessment. This will also highlight some major positive and negative points.

b) *Assessment Report*
This will be a short report that supports and interprets the information presented in the fact sheet. This will be slightly glossier in design containing images and text boxes. This document will concentrate on the story presented by the state of biodiversity in that country, using the information to back up the statements. Each of the different scored components is essentially a snapshot of a highly interlinked process, where each component can either impact positively or negatively on another one. The report has to show this inter-relation in terms of the state of the ecosystem and efforts of the administration to halt biodiversity loss.

c) *Press Releases*
Press releases will be prepared for each of the assessments highlighting the main issues raised in the assessment and the imperative for action.

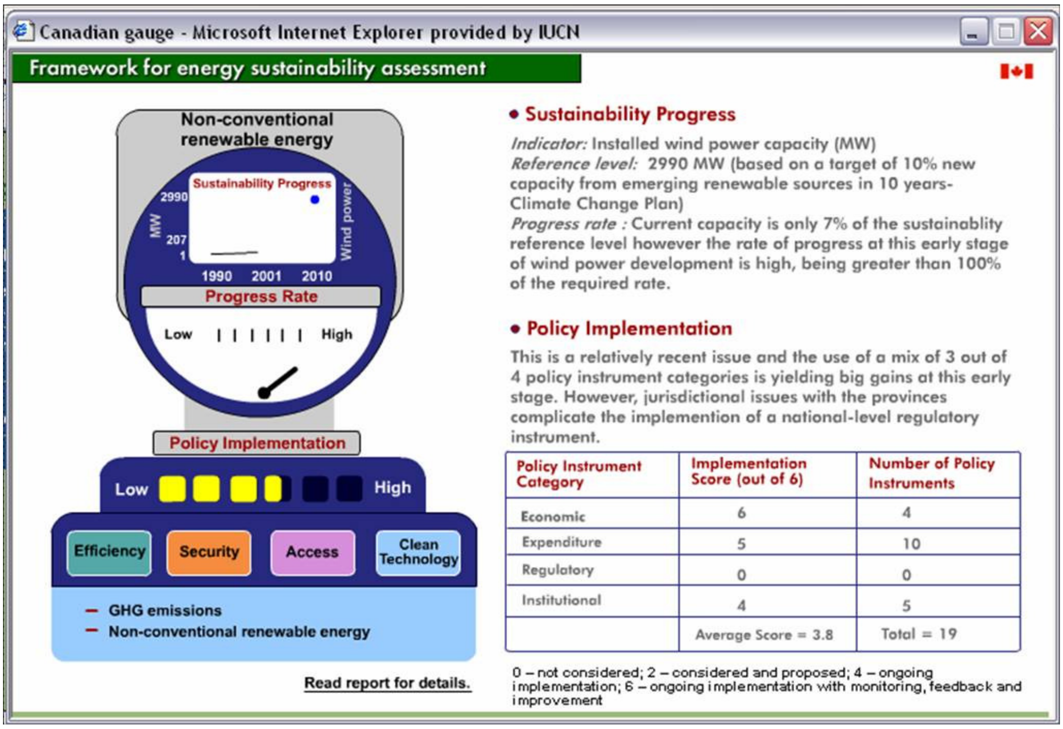

Figure 1: The IISD Energy Sustainability Gauge

The Scorecard in more detail

The visual appearance and method of delivery must be striking, clear and informative. These are difficult conditions to satisfy at the same time. One possible model or example can be seen in the *Energy Sustainability Gauge* tool developed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Canada (http://www.teriin.org/ee/gbr/fesa.htm). The project aimed to facilitate decision makers and the public in studying the transition to sustainable energy development and to foster a better integration of sustainability imperatives in energy sector policy in Canada and India. To do this the project tracks progress based on easily understood indicators and through a web-based interactive tool called the *Energy Sustainability Gauge* (see figure 1).

This innovative approach that is also seen in the IISD tool “Dashboard of Sustainability” provides a visually striking layout that can be presented easily in both online and print formats. It lends itself well to publication in the form of a small ‘scorecard’ or as a more complete report. Furthermore it would be possible to generate these gauges for countries, sectors or even individual targets.

In a similar fashion to that shown in figure 1, the gauge could provide the overall impression of the assessment results, with some scores and facts presented next to it. This score card would also contain the appropriate State and Trend indicators for the sector.

When presented online the scorecard and gauge can be produced directly from the database by the user, allowing them to download images of custom scorecards.

The Next Steps

There are a number of steps that will happen in the coming months to develop the final product that will be ready for implementation.

1) *Developing the Assessment Toolbox*
   The tools described in the sections above will be developed in the first two months of 2006. This will include the draft assessment framework, questionnaire, manual and website. Consultations will be sought with experts in the field of indicator development and assessment methodologies.

2) *Consulting experts*
   Once the preliminary package has been completed it will be submitted for consideration to a number of experts at the European and global level for consideration and comment. Also members of the major ongoing initiatives to develop state and trends indicators will be fully informed and consulted throughout the process.

3) *Pilot Testing*
   Once a final methodology has been developed, it will be pilot tested in four regions: Western Europe country level, Western Europe regional level, Eastern Europe country level and Eastern Europe regional level. This will show how well the tool responds to application at different administrative levels and also to different levels of data availability. Based on the results of these assessments final changes to materials and guidelines will be made. Partners are currently being sought to implement these pilot studies.

The following table sets out some of the deadlines that will be met before the tool is ready for pilot testing:

Date	Action
November 2005	The Conference Report and Work Plan are complete
December 2005	A draft tool is prepared
January 2006	Preliminary consultation on the draft Methodology is complete
	Web site is completed
February 2006	Broad consultation has been completed
	Presentations at the Biodiversity in Europe meeting in Croatia
March 2006	Pilot testing can begin