



International targets and environmental policy integration: The 2010 Biodiversity Target and its impact on international policy and national implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean



José Octavio Velázquez Gomar*

Sustainability Research Institute, School of Earth and Environment, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

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ABSTRACT

International environmental policy has evolved from a focus on single issues to more integrated approaches under the framework of sustainable development. This transition has been accompanied by a growing use of targets among international organisations. Targets have long been used in industry and corporate planning, but some have questioned their relevance in the ambit of environmental and sustainable development policy. This paper addresses the question of whether international targets help advance environmental policy integration in international governance. It explores whether the international target of significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2002, enabled co-ordination and coherence in international biodiversity governance. The effects of the Target on the cluster of biodiversity-related conventions and their implementation in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are examined. The analysis is based on official documents and interviews with secretariat officials, international experts and national focal points conducted between September 2011 and April 2012. A claim is made that the 2010 Biodiversity Target was, in essence, a conservation goal that did not fully honour the CBD's sustainable development mission. The Target triggered increased co-operation in the biodiversity cluster without bringing greater alignment of policies and implementation activities around the CBD's sustainability principles. The study suggests that, if targets are to advance EPI among international institutions, they need to be appropriated by relevant stakeholders and supported by implementation strategies that secure their continuous commitment.

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1. Introduction

International environmental policy has become embedded in the broader institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) (Bernstein and Brunnée, 2011; Najam, 2005). This raises the need for environmental policy integration (EPI) among international institutions (Nilsson et al., 2009). EPI involves the balancing of different environmental objectives as well as the incorporation of environmental considerations into other policies (Oberthür, 2009). The evolution of international environmental policy from its original piecemeal, sectoral approach towards more integrated, cross-sectoral approaches has gone hand-in-hand with the increasing popularity of outcome-oriented targets among international organisations (Quntal et al., 2011). Targets are seen as an

essential component of sustainable development (see Dernbach, 2005), but the relationship between international targets and EPI has been little explored. International targets can mobilise audiences and harness political commitment (see Wood, 2011; Manning, 2010; Vandemoortele, 2009; Roberts, 2005), but it remains unclear whether they lead to sustained institutional support for EPI. Some consider that the conventional style of international governance based on internationally agreed goals and targets has become exhausted, and believe that more decentralised forms of international co-operation are needed (e.g. Halsnæs and Shukla, 2008).

This paper examines whether international targets contribute to EPI in international governance. It does so by looking at the case of the 2010 Biodiversity Target, a political commitment to significantly reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 as a contribution to efforts to reduce poverty (see CBD Decision VI/26 par. 11). The Target was adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (The Hague, 7–19 April 2002), and endorsed by

* Corresponding author at: Sustainability Research Institute, School of Earth and Environment, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK. Tel.: +44 113 343 2846.
E-mail address: ee08jovg@leeds.ac.uk

world leaders at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, 26 August–4 September 2002). In an overall evaluation of the 2010 Target, the CBD's Global Biodiversity Outlook observed that it helped stimulate action to protect biodiversity, but that actions to address the underlying drivers of biodiversity loss were insufficient (CBD Secretariat, 2010). It concluded that the Target was not met. Failure to convey the CBD's message beyond the constituencies supportive of the convention was considered one of the main reasons for this (ibid.). Analysing the impact of the 2010 Target on EPI in international biodiversity governance seems timely as the international community makes headway towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets established at CBD CoP10 (Aichi Prefecture, Nagoya, 18–29 October 2010).

This contribution analyses the effects of the 2010 Biodiversity Target on internal EPI as opposed to external EPI, the typical interest of EPI studies. External EPI or environmental mainstreaming is critical to reducing human pressures on the environment, but internal EPI or harmonisation of distinct environmental objectives is no less important, with scholars suggesting that the way in which policies are integrated within one sector determines the success of policy integration across sectors (see Uglund and Veggeland, 2006). The empirical focus is on the influence of the 2010 Target on synergies among biodiversity-related conventions at the level of international policy and national implementation.

Six major biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) are generally recognised (see UNEP-WCMC, 2012; Urho, 2009), including the CBD as framework convention, and five specialist regimes: (1) the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention); (2) the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (WHC); (3) the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); (4) the 1979 Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS); and (5) the 2001 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). The six conventions, through their secretariats, comprise the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG). At its first formal meeting in 2004, the BLG made the 2010 Biodiversity Target one of its top priorities (see CBD Doc BLG-2), and the governing bodies of the five founding conventions (the ITPGRFA joined the group in 2006) adopted or acknowledged the Target at their next meetings (see EMG Secretariat, 2008; CBD Secretariat, 2006). This paper explores whether such political commitment enabled institutional alignment in the cluster and cohesion in national implementation, focussing on experiences in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) as one of the most biologically diverse regions in the world (Bovarnick and Alpizar, 2010). Previous studies looking at how international commitments under different environmental agreements are implemented at the national level have explored developments in Africa (e.g. Masundire, 2006) and the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. Chasek, 2010; Boyer et al., 2002; Van Toen, 2001), but not yet in LAC. Empirical evidence is collected from official documents and interviews with secretariat officials, international experts and CBD's national focal points carried out between September 2011 and April 2012.

The links between international targets and EPI are examined in the next section. The paper then describes the 2010 Biodiversity Target and considers whether it promoted EPI in international biodiversity governance. Materials and methods are discussed next. Ensuing sections explore the impact of the 2010 Biodiversity Target on the cohesiveness of institutional arrangements in the biodiversity cluster and national implementation systems in LAC countries. Empirical observations are then discussed followed by concluding remarks.

2. International targets and EPI: exploring the links

For purposes of clarity, targets need to be conceptualised alongside goals, objectives, instruments and indicators. From a policy perspective, McCallum (1989) explains that targets are intermediate variables between instruments and goals. Instruments are “directly controlled by the relevant policy authority” (p. 3), whilst goals “represent the ultimate objectives of policy” (ibid.). Goals are sometimes disaggregated into more specific objectives (Sondik et al., 2010; Slocombe, 1998). Targets are “readily observable, usually quantifiable, events or characteristics that can be aimed for as part of a goal or objective” (Slocombe, 1998). McCallum (1989, p. 4) points out that targets serve “as an operational guide to policy when the latter is conducted according to a two-stage process” in which (1) “the policy authority first chooses a time path for some target variable (or variables) that promises to lead to desirable outcomes for the goal variables”; and (2) policy efforts are then directed towards achieving “the designated path for the target variable”. Indicators provide information on the current state of the problem of focus (McCallum, 1989). They “are a priori identified system characteristics that can provide feedback on progress toward goals and objectives” (Slocombe, 1998, p. 484).

Targets are a distinctive feature of new public management or “managing by objectives” (Billé et al., 2010), and have their origins in the ambit of industry and corporate planning (Bridgewater, 2011). Targets can be output-oriented (when the focus is on process and compliance), or outcome-oriented (when the focus is on the benefits arising from public sector activities) (see Perrin, 2006). Good targets are commonly described as being Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART) (Bridgewater, 2011; Wood, 2011).

Few international treaties, notably the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, incorporate environmental or sustainable development targets (Parris and Kates, 2003). Nevertheless, targets of a soft (non-binding) nature addressing different aspects of human development have long been used, with their origins tracing back to the UN Development Decade of the 1960s (see Jolly, 2003). Similarly, targets of different kinds and forms have been common in international environmental policy since the 1970s (Bridgewater, 2011; UNEP, 2010). A gradual move towards results-based management supported by quantitative targets started at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June) and acquired notoriety at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit (New York, 6–8 September), where world leaders agreed on a number of targets, ranging from poverty eradication to environmental sustainability, to be met by 2015 (or in one case by 2020) (see Geoghegan and Renard, 2008; Garonna and Menozzi, 2001). These provided the basic structure of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that emerged one year later in a road map towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration prepared by the UN Secretary-General (endorsed by the UN General Assembly through Resolution 56/95 of 14 December 2001).

As Geoghegan and Renard (2008, p. 80) notice, “targets have gained increased international prominence through the MDGs, and target-setting has become an essential part of virtually every international process”. The latest UN major summit, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) (20–22 June 2012), launched a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will build upon the MDGs and should be in line with the UN development agenda beyond 2015 (see UN General Assembly Res. 66/288).

If, as Stuart and Collen (2013) put it, we live in a “target-driven world”, it is pertinent to ask whether targets contribute to the

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