

European Conference on Invasive Alien Species, 15-16 January, 2008, Madrid, Spain

The Global Invasive Species Programme and European policies for Invasive Alien Species

Presented by Geoffrey Howard, Global Invasive Species Programme
g.howard@gisp.org

Introduction

This paper introduces the current phase of the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and its objectives and responsibilities in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It then examines relationships and connections between GISP and Europe related to Invasive Alien Species and then goes on to suggest some areas of Policy and Capacity Building that Europe may want to consider in the global context.

The Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) is a partnership involving IUCN, CABI, TNC and SANBI¹, which is now in its second phase. GISP's first phase included the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and focused on publicizing threats to biodiversity from IAS and on developing a Global Strategy² and a "toolbox" to address the threats³ as well as a range of other awareness and information publications in IAS. The Global Strategy has since been used as a model for both regional and national Invasive Species Strategies and still serves that purpose.

The GISP partnership assists with global issues of invasive alien species and promotes information exchange and policy development for IAS management within and between countries and regions. GISP held regional consultations to collect information and perspectives in the Baltic-Nordic, Mesoamerican and Caribbean, South American, South and Southeast Asian, Australia-Pacific and African (East, Southern and West) Regions from 1999-2004. These discussions produced reports which are available on the GISP website www.gisp.org and they were then summarized and synthesised and published as a series of collated findings and supra-regional needs in a separate publication⁴ (also available on the GISP website).

GISP has since shifted its focus from regional to global-and-local and moved its Secretariat from the USA to South Africa and, in late 2007, to Nairobi, Kenya. The Secretariat is now located at the offices of CABI Africa. GISP II's main objectives are to:

1. Influence and support governance, policies and institutional arrangements for addressing IAS,
2. Facilitate information exchange on IAS,
3. Promote global awareness of the threats and solutions for IAS for public and private sector decision-makers and users

¹ IUCN – The World Conservation Union, CAB International, The Nature Conservancy, the South African National Biodiversity Institute

² GISP 2002 (IUCN, SCOPE, CABI) **Global Strategy on Invasive Alien Species**

³ GISP 2001 (Wittenburg & Cock) **Invasive Alien Species: A toolkit of best prevention and management practices**

The GISP partners are providing both technical and administrative support and staffing a management team comprised of CABI, IUCN and TNC with input from SANBI. The Secretariat and most of GISP's programmes are supported by the technical partners and several donors, led by the World Bank together with SwedBio, UNEP-GEF and others on specific projects. The 2008 GISP workplan includes many activities related to the CBD, information sharing, capacity building and support to developing countries – including on-ground assistance with the preparation of National Invasive Species Strategies and help with the economics of IAS impacts on biodiversity and development.

GISP has a special responsibility to the Convention on Biological Diversity in relation to Article 8 (h) to supply technical support and information on IAS issues – through Decisions:

- COP V/8 – inviting and requesting GISP (and other international organisations) to assist in a range of IAS issues,
- COP VI/23 – recognising and welcoming GISP as a source of technical information and urging and requesting GISP to assist with the implementation of the guiding principles,
- Target 10 (on IAS) of the Global Strategy on Plant Conservation and IAS indicators for the 2010 Biodiversity Targets.

As a result GISP has frequent contact with the Secretariat of CBD and has prepared several seminal papers on IAS and such ecosystems as inland waters and marine environments as well as contributing to several CBD joint programmes of work that involve IAS. Most recently GISP assisted CBD Sec. to encourage States Parties and International Organisations to contribute to the In-Depth Review of IAS which will be discussed at COP-9 (Bonn, May 2008). The COP will review implementation of all IAS-related decisions and Europe (both regional and through individual countries) can play a critical role by supporting:

- National implementation of CBD obligations in a logically structured manner,
- Regional coordination and mechanisms to enhance national capacity,
- International guidance for priority pathways and supporting information systems.

GISP's relationship with Europe (both continental and in the EU dependent territories) relates to geographic issues, IAS strategies, capacity building - mainly in developing countries - for IAS management and policies, and development partnerships (donor support).

Continental Europe is geographically linked to the: Mediterranean, Red Sea & Indian Ocean, Eastern Atlantic and Baltic Sea - as well as to North Africa, the "Middle East", West Asia & Russia. Europe has 21 External Territories (countries and islands) to which it is linked by responsibility and history. Pathways and vectors abound in these linkages – so it is incumbent upon Europe to be aware and vigilant about the IAS situation in all those areas (and around their boundaries) – both on land and in freshwater and marine systems

The European Strategy on IAS (2004) promotes development of National Invasive Species Strategies and Action Plans (NISSAPs -Section 3.3) which should be related to NBSAPs. GISP can assist with development of such strategies from experience of NISSAP development elsewhere. GISP supports this as a vital component of both national and regional preparedness (including coordination of IAS efforts) – and policy development – in line with the GISP Global Strategy [Element 8] and also for International Cooperation [Element 10].

Capacity Building for IAS management: Europe has a long history and experience of IAS detection and management which would be useful for developing countries through Capacity Building. GISP can assist with linkages and ideas for areas of capacity and information that need

to be addressed. Europe has experience of managing IAS in countries with many bordering states – this would be especially helpful in Asia, Meso-America, South America and Africa.

Development partnerships EU-GISP: The EC provides a large amount of development support, especially to the developing world (e.g. to ACP countries). Little of this, however, is related to IAS issues. The geographic, strategic and capacity linkages between GISP and the EU are all good reasons why this should increase – both for the benefit of the biodiversity and development of Asia, Oceania, Africa and Central & South America AND for the prevention of introduction and impacts of invasive species coming into Europe.

Policy issues on IAS where GISP-Europe interactions may be useful include:

1. Adding to the European strategy and consequent policies on some aspects of responsibility for export of species that could become invasive in recipient countries (outside of Europe)
 - The European Strategy on IAS is comprehensive for the management of IAS that may enter (or are established in) Europe,
 - Most European countries are signatories to the CBD. The main objective of the CBD is “the conservation of biological diversity”. Article 3 of CBD puts national biodiversity as the main reason for conservation but asks states to ensure that they “do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the(ir) limits of national jurisdiction”,
 - The European strategy could consider possibilities for preventing **(unintentional) export** of IAS from the continent or external territories (CBD Guiding Principle #4).

A number of pathways for such unintentional exports are quite well-known yet most are often not seen as a risk for the recipient countries. For example:

Trade (NB not in IAS but in other commodities) The concept of “hitch-hiker” species which accompany movement of goods and services is well-established and is a frequent pathway for introduction of IAS during international trade across the airways and oceans of the world. An example is the Indian House Crow (*Corvus splendens*) which travelled to Africa on grainships trading with East Africa and now invades coastal cities and towns from Cairo to CapeTown – with drastic effects on local bird diversity, chicken farming, human health and hygiene.

Development assistance Europe provides outstanding development assistance to many countries and institutions around the world. Sometimes, however, this may lead to the unintentional introduction of invasive species – either because they were not known to be potential invaders at the time, or because they were concealed in other support. A current example is spiny invasive tree/shrub, *Prosopis juliflora* (or “mesquite”) which originates from sub-tropical America and which has invaded and obliterated pastoralist lands in at least six countries of the Horn of Africa after being introduced as a shade tree and erosion management agroforestry species – during development assistance programmes.

Emergency and disaster relief No-one would deny that international relief from natural disasters and national emergencies is required and often dependent on developed countries and regions. However, such relief is usually needed urgently and sometimes adequate precautions are not taken to exclude the possibility of introduction of IAS with that relief. An

example is the spread of the seriously invasive weed *Parthenium hysterophorus* which has invaded several countries in Eastern Africa destroying livestock and wild herbivore pasture, reducing essential crop yields and causing human diseases and suffering – which was inadvertently introduced as seed contamination of food grains during famine relief.

Military movements Military movements (whether for defense, peace-keeping or civil emergency assistance) can involve large numbers of people, equipment, stores and vehicles. These are rarely considered as possible vectors for IAS introductions – either in outgoing or returning movements. Such movements are rarely subject to normal government controls and can introduce: soil, plants, insects, other invertebrates, vertebrates and disease organisms – unless care is taken to prevent contamination and “hitch hiking”. Classic examples are the Brown Tree Snake, *Boiga irregularis*, moved from the western Pacific rim to other islands in the central Pacific Ocean and even to mainland USA on military aircraft and the introduction of the American Cockroach (*Periplaneta americana*) to Australia and later to Africa through troop movements. Of more recent relevance to Europe was the accidental introduction of the Western Corn Rootworm, *Diabrotica virgifera virgifera*, to Eastern Europe which has been attributed to supplies for military activities during the early 1990s.

Interaction with EU external territories Many External Territories are located within the tropics or far from mainland Europe and are both receivers of IAS and sources of IAS. Interactions with these islands and small countries should bear this in mind to prevent further spread to other countries and back to continental Europe or between the Overseas Territories.

GISP suggests that, in the interests of stemming global problems of IAS, the European group develops a policy on accidental export of species that could become invasive – and that a set of actions can then be developed - somewhere in Section 5 of the European Strategy for IAS. This could be a model for other regions and countries and GISP would assist with follow-up and global spread

In addition, GISP is actively working with countries and other interested international organizations on developing guidance for the following international pathways:

- Animals that are not plant pests, pet/aquarium trade and aquaculture (with the CBD),
- Civil aviation (with ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation of UN),
- Biofouling (with UNEP Regional Seas Programme).

GISP thus encourages the European Region and countries to assist with these endeavours.

2. Capacity building for global prevention of IAS impacts

The number of regions or countries that have effective and predictive IAS management systems in government biosecurity agencies is very limited. The majority of countries worldwide need capacity building in many areas such as IAS... detection, identification, risk assessment, quarantine, prevention, eradication, control, management, restoration, information availability, policy integration and legal instruments.

GISP has experience of training in areas of IAS prevention, management, etc., and policy and legislation development. GISP has learned that the highly technical and information-rich procedures of the best biosecurity agencies are often not effective models for building capacity in developing countries. Europe has a great range of countries with varying capacities in this area and is aware of the issues. GISP believes that Europe could greatly assist the developing world in

this area. This fits with GISP's Global Strategy (Elements 1, 2, 3, 10) and will assist the global target of reduced risk of IAS impacts worldwide.

3. Global awareness of IAS

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed our belief that IAS are among the top few causes of ecosystem decline globally. Many technical groups and MEAs recognise the same – as well as all those who came to this IAS Conference in Madrid. Yet global awareness is limited and patchy compared to awareness and publicity of most other causes of ecosystem decline. Europe has many and varied IAS awareness strategies and tools which could be of great use to the rest of the world – to raise that all-important awareness of the wide range of stakeholder groups concerned with IAS.

GISP requests that as Europe discusses IAS policies at local, national and regional levels, it does not forget the global level and the hope of GISP to reduce the risk of IAS to biodiversity and development worldwide.

Acknowledgments

The Global Invasive Species Programme wishes to acknowledge with thanks the European Commission and the Fundacion Biodiversidad for organising this important conference and for assisting GISP to attend and present. We also acknowledge the presence and support of the Ministerio de Medio Ambiente of the Gobierno de Aspana and the Ministrstvo za Okoloje in Prostor of the Republika Slovenija – as well as the excellent exchanges with all concerned at this meeting.