

Jutta Stadler: “The Ecosystem Approach of the CBD and its Applicability to River Basin Management – a Brief Introduction”

Abstract

The ecosystem approach of the Convention on biological diversity (CBD) is the primary framework for action under the CBD. It is described as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. Thus the application of the ecosystem approach will help to reach a balance of the three objectives of the Convention: conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

In this context the term ‘ecosystem’ does not specify any particular spatial unit but can refer to any functional unit at any scale. Therefore, the scale of analysis and action should be determined by the issue being addressed.

The ecosystem approach is designed as an overall methodological framework for supporting decisions in policy-making, planning, and management. As a result of a long negotiation process 12 principles were agreed upon serving as guidance for its implementation. At this stage the applicability of the principles is tested and the relation between the ecosystem approach of the CBD and other existing approaches is analysed in order to gain experience and to further elaborate the concept.

There are some examples of applying the ecosystem approach of the CBD in the field of River Basin Management (e.g. the River Basin Initiative initiated by CBD and the Ramsar Convention, the IUCN Water and Nature Initiative or the WWF Living Waters Programme) and studies on the Ecosystem approach in comparison to related approaches like Integrated River Basin Management or Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Currently the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation is conducting a study on the consideration of the ecosystem approach in the European Water Framework Directive.

Conclusion: The ecosystem approach of the Convention on biological diversity is a very general but globally accepted and supported concept. Its fundamental request for balancing ecological, economic and social aspects is key for any river basin management. The application of the ecosystem approach as specified in the 12 Principles and their adaptation to the given circumstances may serve as a valuable basis for freshwater ecosystem management.

Curriculum Vitae

Ms. Jutta Stadler is employed as a scientific officer in the Biodiversity Unit of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation. The working unit gives advice to

the German Federal Ministry of the Environment on all scientific aspects of Biodiversity but mainly in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Ms. Stadler supports the Ministry in international negotiations of the CBD and other fora. Besides this, one of her main responsibilities is the organization of workshops on different topics of the CBD for international or European Experts. One of her fields of expertise is the further development and promotion of the Ecosystem Approach.

Ms. Stadler is a biologist by training, she studied at the Universities of Tübingen and Hamburg in Germany as well as at Antioch University, Ohio (U.S.A.).

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