

Executive Summary

This document meets Mauritian obligations under article 6a of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by setting out a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) that reflects and aims to meet the measures of the CBD. This document has been divided into two parts. Part I deals with Mauritius only and part II with Rodrigues so as to reflect the semi-autonomous nature of Rodrigues' governance and the distinct biogeography of the island.

The Biodiversity Country Study¹ is summarised and updated in chapters 2-4 and 6 for Mauritius and Rodrigues respectively. Biodiversity issues are addressed and reviewed under the headings of: forest and terrestrial biodiversity; freshwater, coastal and marine biodiversity; and agricultural biodiversity, biotechnology and biosafety.

Habitat loss is identified as the major historical cause of terrestrial biodiversity loss, through initial deforestation and the latter conversion to wide scale and intensive agricultural use. The landscape has been altered significantly with only small and fragmented areas of primary and secondary habitat remaining. These remaining areas are now under severe pressure from Invasive Alien Species.

Near shore and lagoon environments have been subject to overfishing whilst some touristic activities have impacted significantly on the coastal zone. Freshwater ecosystems meanwhile are very poorly understood and have been subject to significant degradation due to deforestation, pollution and the demand for water from agricultural activities.

Most agricultural biodiversity is introduced, though some significant local varieties and breeds have been developed through time. Knowledge of these local varieties is however limited, with traits and characteristics not properly catalogued and described. Local agrobiodiversity is in decline due to the introduction of modern commercial varieties/breeds. Biotechnology is well developed for a country the size of Mauritius and there is considerable ongoing investment, it is however important that this be properly balanced by the appropriate biosafety provisions and notably the balanced education of the public and their inclusion in decision-making processes.

Sadly the Republic of Mauritius is today typified by highly degraded ecosystems, but despite this excellent conservation initiatives have been undertaken in recent years that provide hope for further success in the future.

The action plans for Mauritius and Rodrigues (chapters 5 and 7 respectively) set out prioritised activities, with structured goals and targets, as determined by extensive stakeholder consultation and input. They share common working principles centred on in-situ conservation and ecosystem approaches. Activities are based on the development of representative and viable protected area networks, the control of invasive alien species, the management of key components of biodiversity, the enhanced identification (particularly of freshwater ecosystems) and monitoring of biodiversity and mechanisms to enable sustainable use through ecotourism development and sound management of natural resources. Emphasis is also placed on

¹ The full Biodiversity Country Study can be accessed through the Government's National Parks and Conservation Service.

the sound application of modern biotechnology through the balanced implementation of the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Enabling activities (such as the development of an overarching Biodiversity Policy and a Clearing House Mechanism, the rapid assessment of freshwater biodiversity; and a valuation of the function and services of biodiversity) are identified for attention during the first two years of the plan such that prerequisite capacity needs are addressed and the foundations laid for the balanced implementation of the broader plans over the ensuing 10 years.

Finally, empowered stakeholder partnership and implementation is recognised as fundamental to the successful implementation of the NBSAP and the mainstreaming of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For this reason the action plans are to be steered and coordinated by representative and equitable stakeholder committees. The plans are intended to be of 10 years duration (2006 –2015) and have an inbuilt independent review mechanism to enable adaptive utilisation of effort and resources in order to optimise attainment of the plan's strategic objectives.

THE REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

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