

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

INVOLVING POLITICIANS IN THE NBSAP

A BRIEF NOTE¹

It is essential to seek the involvement of politicians (members of parliament, state legislators, members of panchayat and municipal bodies and of political parties) in the NBSAP process.

How the NBSAP would benefit

1) Access to inputs from a broad spectrum of stakeholders through their elected representatives: The NBSAP should attempt to capitalise on the already existing rapport which politicians enjoy with groups of stakeholders, communities and individuals.

In most cases, the possibility of associating a particular person with a particular geographical area provides the NBSAP with the opportunity of a systematic nation-wide outreach.

However, this might be a mammoth task, and one could **prioritize** one's initial intensive outreach by using the following criteria:

- a) politicians already known to be active or interested in aspects of biodiversity, including ministers (**current and former**) dealing with relevant subjects and members of relevant committees.
- b) politicians who are immediately or easily accessible to those who are already actively working on the NBSAP.
- c) politicians whose constituencies or areas of influence coincide with ecologically sensitive or threatened areas (geographical and thematic) and identified sub-state sites of the NBSAP.
- d) panchayat leaders from the sub-state and ecoregional sites of the NBSAP.
- e) leaders of political parties.

2) The advantage of creating an all-party ownership/support for the NBSAP report and beyond: If one were to succeed in creating an awareness of the NBSAP and its related issues amongst politicians from all parties, it would be a move towards eliciting **some agreement or common meeting points**, if not on all issues, then on as many scores as possible. A 'minimum consensus' could be evolved in the eventuality of discordant notes. Enthusing members of all parties would also be a move towards ensuring continuity in terms of government policy with regard to the NBSAP and its implementation.

3) Interaction with government departments: Involving politicians in the NBSAP would be beneficial from the point of view of facilitating a holistic interaction with government departments. This would be beneficial for inter-sectoral collaboration.

Suggested first steps

1. Distributing literature, generating responses: Brief literature **relevant to NBSAP, and perhaps** a questionnaire, could be circulated to all Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) of states, and ministers at the state and central levels. This would be done by the relevant agencies of the present NBSAP process, **e.g. by the substate nodal agencies and LACs for MLAs and MPs of their area, by the state nodal agencies and SSC members for MPs and MLAs from their states, and so on.** Executing agencies could also consider making relevant MPs and MLAs members of their committees or working groups. Whether a questionnaire would evoke responses or not should be judged by the relevant executing agency, and its objectives should clearly be to elicit participation in the NBSAP process, as also gauge the views of the politicians on various biodiversity aspects.

¹ This note was prepared by V. Shruti Devi, Member TPCG, with inputs from other TPCG members.

Using the above [pointers for](#) prioritization, this literature could be handed over in person to an initial short-list of politicians.

This would be in the form of a networking exercise, and at an initial stage, the stated purpose would be to inform and to ask, not to lobby. This is one task that could be assigned to selected volunteers [or volunteer agencies](#).

Similar procedures could be adopted at the panchayat levels, but it is hoped that the interaction is likely to be greater, including active and frequent participation in local and community-level meetings.

2. Presentations at appropriate forums: An attempt could be made, to put views across to members of relevant committees (such as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Environment and S&T) by appearing before such committees on relevant occasions.

If possible, meetings with groups of short-listed politicians could be held at the central and state levels. [Such meetings could deal with \(1\) the NBSAP process and how to elicit greater response from the constituencies of the politicians; and \(2\) various issues being taken up for action planning under the NBSAP process. In particular, issues of citizens' empowerment regarding biodiversity, inter-sectoral planning integrating biodiversity, and political governance structures related to natural resources, could be important and critical topics for discussion.](#)

3. Leveraging resources: From the point of view of leveraging further funds, members of parliament could be requested to make a part of their local area development scheme funds available to [agencies](#) working on the NBSAP in their respective constituencies. [Such potential funding could also be identified by the executing agencies, as a source of implementation financing of the actual actions, once the plans are ready for implementation.](#)