



The Precautionary Principle Project

sustainable development, biodiversity conservation
and natural resource management
www.pprinciple.net

Precaution, Risk, Biodiversity & Livelihoods: Implementing the Precautionary Principle in Conservation and Natural Resource Management

*International Workshop of the Precautionary Principle Project
White Oak Conservation Center, Jacksonville, Florida, USA
21 – 23 July 2005*

Workshop Summary Report

BACKGROUND

This workshop at the White Oak Conference Centre was the final workshop in an extensive dialogue and consultation process carried out by The Precautionary Principle Project. This has included regional workshops for East/Southern Africa (June 2004), South/South-East Asia (June 2004), and Latin America (March 2005), as well as an open-access e-conference (July 2005) and a range of discussion meetings at international meetings.

The aim of these various discussion and consultation processes, as well as extensive research and analysis, were to inform the development of Guidelines for Best-Practice for Applying the Precautionary Principle in Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management. A draft of these Guidelines was first developed in April/May 2005, and reviewed by the project Advisory Group and the IUCN Policy Group. They were then re-drafted and were the subject of an online e-conference, which drew a wide range of comments. They were re-drafted again and circulated to the participants of the White Oak meeting.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the White Oak meeting were to:

- draw on the insights and expertise of workshop participants to review Guidance for Best Practice in applying the precautionary principle
- propose recommendations to PPP Steering Committee to be considered alongside previous project inputs
- identify options for the way forward in disseminating the Guidelines.

PARTICIPATION

Efforts were made to ensure a wide range of regions, disciplines, sectors and perspectives were represented at the meeting. Participants were selected by the PPP Steering Committee. Efforts were made to ensure in particular that there was good representation from the South. In this respect it should be noted that six participants were unexpectedly unable to attend in the final days/weeks, partly due to visa problems, of which five were from Southern countries. Participants were drawn from around 15 countries and included expertise in the areas of law, economics, conservation biology, conservation planning and management, fisheries, forest management, wildlife use and trade, wetlands, the precautionary principle in policy and regulation, and animal welfare. All IUCN Commissions were invited to attend, and an individual nominated by each participated.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Format and procedure

The workshop was highly discussion-oriented, with presentations limited to the first morning. The majority of the second day and part of the third day was spent in three breakout groups, coordinated by the facilitator. Each group was allotted certain sections of the Guidelines for development. The groups reported back to plenary several times before plenary discussion of the final text. Finally it was decided that major points had been satisfactorily addressed, and the text could go to a drafting sub-group for final development. This group consisted of: Victoria Lichtschein, Ben Boer, Elizabeth Bennett, Taghi Farvar, Wazha Tema, and Hilary Masundire, with the Precautionary Principle Project Steering Committee and project staff.

Key issues

While discussion covered a very wide range of issues, some key topics were:

- The implications of using the terms “scientific uncertainty” or simply “uncertainty”. While it was recognised that formulations of the PP typically use “scientific uncertainty”, it was generally thought that uncertainty in NRM can stem from a range of sources, such as movements of prices or human cultural factors, and that the use of the PP should not be restricted to those situations where the relevant uncertainty can be characterised as “scientific”.
- The relationship between the PP and local livelihoods: how this relationship could be positive or negative in different situations;

- Which parties should bear the responsibility of providing evidence to inform decision-making, what presumption should guide decision-making in the case of uncertainty, how the costs of gaining information should be allocated, and whether it was possible to come up with a rule that would work in all situations;
- If and how socio-economic concerns should be addressed in applying the PP;
- Whether to be prescriptive about what decisions are made, or focus on process of how decisions are made: whether the PP should be seen as playing a role in actually resolving the decision, or whether it functions to highlight and draw attention to uncertainty;
- Whether the PP is about influencing the objectives of NRM, for instance at national level (whether they be e.g. sustainable use, strict protection etc) or whether it should be seen as a tool for achieving those objectives, whatever they happen to be;
- Incorporation of traditional and indigenous knowledge into conservation decision-making;
- Participation in decision-making;
- The PP and adaptive management: whether adaptive management was broadly relevant/applicable to all responses to threats, or just to the management of “ongoing” threat, such as for instance, fisheries.
- What audience the Guidelines should target.

“The Road from White Oak”

The final session of the workshop, after it had been agreed that the draft text would go to a drafting sub-group, focussed on options and suggestions for how the Guidelines could be taken forward for maximum impact. Suggestions included:

Within IUCN

- Seek IUCN endorsement of the Guidelines.
- Develop resolution for adoption at the next IUCN WCC. Start this process by supporting the establishment of the WG called for in the PP Resolution from Bangkok. Unclear as to whether this should be initiated by writing to the Director-General, through Commission Chairs, or through Council.
- The two Commission Chairs present suggested they should raise this at the September meeting of Commission Chairs.
- Commission representatives indicated the importance of raising this issue with the Chairs of SSC, CEC, WCPA and CEL, and undertook to do so.
- Work with regional offices to disseminate and publicise Guidelines.
- See IUCN not just as end in itself, but as means to secure wide publicity and dissemination.

MEAS

- Distribute document informally at relevant meetings of CBD (AHTEG, Sustainable Use, Protected Areas groups and others) and other MEAs.
- Bring to the attention of the Biodiversity Liaison Group
- Difficult to bring up precaution in multi-lateral debates, given some national sensitivities. Means that document should clearly spell out alternative options with associated conditions on how to apply the PP.
- Ramsar: project should apply to hold side-event at Ramsar COP-9. Even if is difficult to bring up PP in main debate at international conventions, can still be explored in side-events.

FAO

- While FAO have been working on this for a long time, this document adds something new. Best way to reach FAO audience would be to present these guidelines at FAO meetings. Possible role for IUCN here.

Biosafety

- Would be useful in the context of GEF capacity-building to implement the Cartagena Protocol, and could inform the development of National Biosafety Frameworks.

International Academy of Environmental Law

- Will be having meeting in Sydney, including a brainstorm on big questions on environmental law, of which PP is one. Recommendation to go to research body that they take up this issue.

World Bank

- Looking at mainstreaming biodiversity in production landscapes. These guidelines could be really useful if made accessible.

India

- Document needed now as critical decisions being made, and India has accepted PP in law. Need to make available to lawyers, campaigners, policy-makers working at a national level. PP needs to have roots in the South, not just North.

World Business Council for Sustainable Development

- Could have big impact here.

Finalising, presentation and dissemination of Guidelines:

- Misinterpretation is bigger problem than ignorance with PP, so care needs to be taken in the finalisation.
- Guidelines should be proactive.
- Guidelines would only be useful to World Bank if illustrated with real, not hypothetical scenarios.
- Need a proactive strategy to sell the Guidelines, not just emails.
- Need funding for communications and outreach, and good monitoring and evaluation: need to know if people are reading them, understanding them, finding them useful.
- Guidance needs to be clear, visually attractive, using pictures, cartoons, etc.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The meeting secured three achievements. First, it led to a significant re-working of the Guidelines, which substantially improved them. Second, it led to an excellent set of recommendations for taking the Guidelines forward in their dissemination/outreach phase. Third, it built a constituency with “ownership” of the Guidelines to take them forward and work for their support and implementation. It therefore more than achieved its objectives.

The meeting was positive and constructive. By the end of the meeting there was clearly broad support for the content of the Guidelines and widely shared enthusiasm for taking them forward. In the opening sessions of the meeting it appeared there were some tensions and divergent opinions, but through dialogue it appeared that many of these were resolved and a solid basis of mutual understanding established.

The range of viewpoints and expertise represented in the room was a crucial ingredient in the achievements of the meeting: often those from different countries (e.g. North vs South), different sectors (e.g. NGO vs government), different backgrounds (e.g. science vs community development vs law), resource sectors (e.g. fisheries vs wildlife) had very different approaches to a problem or question.

Finally, the White Oak venue was outstanding in its comfort, level of support for running a meeting, and individuality. This made an important contribution to the mood and congeniality of the meeting, as well as enabling it to run smoothly.

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Objectives of the Workshop

- draw on the insights and expertise of workshop participants to review Guidance for Best Practice in applying the precautionary principle
- propose recommendations to PPP Steering Committee to be considered alongside previous project inputs
- identify options for the way forward.

Agenda

Workshop facilitator: Hasan Moinuddin

All sessions will be held in the Big Game Room.

Thursday July 21st

Session 1 (09.00-10.30)

Chair: Jon Hutton (Director, ResourceAfrica; Africa Programme Director, Fauna & Flora International; Chair, Precautionary Principle Project Steering Committee)

Welcome Jon Hutton

Welcome to White Oak John Lukas (White Oak Director)

Introduction of Participants

Participant "Hopes and Fears" for the workshop

The Road to White Oak: Background on the Precautionary Principle Project Barney Dickson (Precautionary Principle Project, Manager)

The Precautionary Principle in Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management: An Introduction to the Issues Rosie Cooney (Precautionary Principle Project, Coordinator)

Introduction to the Workshop Barney Dickson

Morning tea (10.50-11.10)

Session 2 (11.10-12.30)

Chair: Tomme Young (IUCN Environmental Law Centre, Precautionary Principle Project Steering Committee)

Perspectives from regional workshops

- Workshop for East/Southern Africa (Wazha Tema (Deputy Minister, Department of Tourism, Botswana, and Precautionary Principle Project Advisory Group)
- Workshop for South/South-east Asia (Nanki Kaur (The Energy and Resources Institute, India) with input from Paul Teng (Head of Natural Sciences and Science Education, National Institute of Education, Singapore)
- Workshop for Latin America (Victoria Lichtschein, CITES Management Authority, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Environmental Policy, Argentina)

Lunch and White Oak Conservation Center Tour (12.30-14.00)

Lunch 12.30-14.00, bus pick-up outside Big Game Hall at 13.00

Session 3 (14.30-16.00)

Chair: Joel Tickner (Project Director, Lowell Centre for Sustainable Production, University of Massachusetts and Precautionary Principle Project Advisory Group)

Precaution in practice: discussing scenarios and identifying issues (1)

Afternoon tea (16.00-16.30)

Session 4 (16.30-18.00)

Chair: Joel Tickner

Precaution in practice: discussing scenarios and identifying issues (2)

Introduction to the draft Guidance for Best-Practice Rosie Cooney

Introduction to discussion of Guidance for Best-Practice Hasan Moinuddin

Friday July 22nd

Session 1 (09.00-10.30)

Chair: Nyasha Chishakwe (IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa, Precautionary Principle Steering Committee)

Facilitator: Hasan Moinuddin

Plenary discussion: Issues relating to the draft Best Practice Guidance

Identification of themes for breakout groups

Morning tea (10.30-11.00)

Session 2 (11.00-12.30)

Breakout groups

Lunch (12.30-14.00)

Session 3 (14.00-15.30)

Chair: Markus Burgener (TRAFFIC East/Southern Africa; Precautionary Principle Steering Committee)

Facilitator: Hasan Moinuddin

Report back to plenary from working groups and discussion

Afternoon tea (15.30-16.00)

Session 4 (16.00-17.30)

Chair: Markus Burgener

Plenary report back and discussion (continued)

Saturday July 23rd

Chair: Jon Hutton

Facilitator: Hasan Moinuddin

Session 1 (09.00-10.30)

Plenary discussion of the guidelines (1)

Breakout groups

Morning tea (10.30-11.00)

Session 2 (11.00-12.30)

Report back from drafting groups

Discussion of the guidelines (2)

Lunch (12.30-14.00)

Session 3 (14.00-15.30)

Finalising the text

Session 4 (16.00-17.30)

Finalising the text

Facilitator's summing-up

The Road from White Oak: what next?

Closing remarks

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