

The Pew Tokyo Whale Symposium
A Change in Climate for Whales: is there a common way forward

**Session 2 - Conflict Management and Biodiversity: Interactions between
Governments, NGOs and the Private Sector**

Wednesday 30th January 2008
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Introduction

Mr Chairman and participants,

The main purpose of my talk is to outline the experience of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment or the MA, the lessons learnt from the experience and consider how they might be relevant to the current challenges that face the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The two key lessons that I will concentrate on from the MA are:

- Effective participatory techniques that bridge divides
- Promoting scientific based policy making

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

Mr Chairman,

Before I consider these lessons I think it will be useful to briefly outline the MA.

The MA is the first global effort to examine the state of Earth's ecosystems and the services these systems provide. It was modelled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change IPCC. Called for by UN Secretary General in 2000 and authorized by governments through 4 global conventions (ie CBD), it involved 1360 experts from 95 countries, was managed by 80-person independent board and peer reviewed by 850 experts and governments. The Assessment was published in 2005. Its conclusions received worldwide attention in the press, including the front cover of Time.

The Assessment was presented in four major parts:-

- The State and Trends Report – which looked at changes in ecosystems and the services they provide over the last 50 years;
- The Scenarios Report – which considers 4 different scenarios for these services for the next 50 years;
- The Multi-Scale Assessments Report – which consists of 33 assessments that have been carried out at the local, national and regional levels, with a view to

- ground-truthing the global assessments and providing a multiscale dimension to the MA; and
- The Responses Report – which considered the options we have to respond to these changes in ecosystems and their service.

The MA provides authoritative information and clarifies where there is broad consensus within the scientific community and where issues remain unresolved. It also serves as a benchmark for determining future ecosystem trends.

The MA delivered 4 main findings.

First, over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history. This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth.

Second, the changes that have been made to ecosystems have contributed to substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development. Since 1960, while population doubled and economic activity increased 6-fold, food production increased 2 ½ times, food price has declined, water use doubled, wood harvest for pulp tripled, hydropower doubled. But these gains have been achieved at growing costs that, unless addressed, will substantially diminish the benefits that future generations obtain from ecosystems. The problems highlighted by the MA were: the dire state of many of the world's fish stocks; the intense vulnerability of the 2 billion people living in dry regions to the loss of ecosystem services, including water supply; and the growing threat to ecosystems from climate change and nutrient pollution.

Third, the degradation of ecosystem services could grow significantly worse during the first half of this century and is a barrier to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Fourth, the challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems while meeting increasing demands for their services can be partially met under some scenarios that the MA considered, but these involve significant changes in policies, institutions and practices, that are not currently under way.

The MA highlighted the state of the world's fisheries as one of the most pressing issues facing the global community. There is a wealth of data about the state of the world's fisheries in the MA, painting a despairing picture of a resource that is being overused, in decline and in many cases on the verge of collapse. The MA found that catches from oceans increased steadily over the last century, reaching a peak in the mid-1980s, then beginning to decline. A number of economically important fisheries, such as the Atlantic cod off Newfoundland, have collapsed. Fleets now fish greater and greater distances from shore and in deeper and deeper waters as coastal fisheries have been depleted. As fishing expanded across the open ocean, the proportion of depleted stocks rose from 4% in 1950 to 25% in 2000, while the "undeveloped" stocks plummeted from 65% to 0. As much as 90% of these fish—sharks, tuna, marlin, and swordfish—have been removed by industrial fishing. Over fishing of these large species has changed the composition of the

oceans, modified interactions among species, and resulted in the targeting of previously less desirable species that feed lower in the food web. The main drivers of the overexploitation of fisheries are: subsidies, lack of regulation

Lessons of the MA

The MA was a remarkable endeavor, that I had the privilege to Co-chair with my dear friend, Dr Bob Watson – who has also been chair of the IPCC. As I said before it involved 1360 experts from 95 countries, was managed by 80-person independent board and peer reviewed by 850 experts and governments.

Engaging all this expertise largely for free and without the obvious kudos of the IPCC was a significant achievement. Keeping them organised, focused, positive and moving forward was also a gargantuan task. Supporting and linking this expertise scattered round the globe was a technical and administrative challenge of Herculean proportions. Finding common ground amongst such a diverse group of experts was perhaps the most significant achievement.

All this was only really possible because the MA developed effective participatory techniques that allowed everybody to feel engaged connected and that their views would count.

Obviously, modern telecommunications played a crucial role in developing the necessary level of participation of experts from far and wide. An enormous number of meetings also played an important role. However, in my view the most critical or important factors were the following:

- The enabling environment
- Support for developing country participation
- Including all views no matter how different or opposing
- Openness or willingness to listen
- An active steering committee
- A commitment to find common ground
- A willingness to disagree harmoniously

Each one of these factors played a critical role. For example, the enabling environment refers to the decisions of the target audience for the MA, governments and the global conventions, requesting the MA before it commenced. This ensured that the results of the MA would be taken into account by policy makers and meant that scientists felt as though their efforts would make a difference. Financial support for developing country participation is obviously critical to ensure that this often neglected perspective was properly taken into account.

Effective participation of all stakeholders is a basic and fundamental tenet of modern governance. In today's world, no governance structure can function effectively without it. The structure, purpose and design of this Symposium reflects this basic idea. International treaty systems either embodied these ideals or risk becoming obsolete.

Chairman Slade's notes have rightly emphasised this as well. If the International Whaling Commission and its Convention are to find a sustainable solution to the impasse then this regime and its governments need to recognise that wide spread participation will be essential.

The other point that I wanted to highlight was linking the science to the policy. In other words making sure that the not only did the policy makers have access the best available science but that they were required to take it into account when making policy. In my view this is what is meant by scientific based policy making. The dual feature – access and taking into account was a major goal of the MA. This dual feature explains why some assessments such as the IPCC are successful and many others are not.

In my view the following factors played a critical role in ensuring policy makers had access to the best science and took that science into account:-

- The enabling environment
- Robust data
- Peer reviewing
- The ecosystem approach
- Neutrality, impartiality and outcomes that are policy relevance not prescriptive
- Communicating results effectively
- An open, transparent and modern receiving environment or policy making fora

Although I obviously believe that science based policy making is critical, science is not the only basis for policy making. We often equate science with facts and certainty. But science is not absolute or certain. The desired level of safety or of use depends on wide range of social, economic and ethical factors as well as science, including how we understand the atheistic value of creatures, religious views about nature and our responsibility towards it, public trust in administration and government, development opportunities and costs and our responsibilities to future generations. These considerations play out differently in different countries and different contexts. Moreover, needs change as technology develops, experience is gained and awareness is raised. Consequently, there is no static minimum or standard to be developed in this or any other complex issues we face. Rather, what is required is a constant evaluation of these needs as the regime. This is why one needs many of the features of a modern MEA that Chairman has laid out previously, such as the ecosystem approach, the precautionary principle, review mechanisms, compliance procedures, open dialogue.

Mr Chairman and participants, I would like to thank you for your attention.