Biodiversity Information for Development
A shared statement from Africa recalling the commitments made by participants in the 'Africa Rising' conference on 19-22 May 2015

6 September 2019

Data is the currency of the information age, and biodiversity data must provide the foundation for evidence-based decision-making in the conservation, sustainable use, and management of natural resources. Critical data deficits might impair decision-making. In order to achieve sustainable development, we require relevant and reliable biodiversity information, tailored products and services for policymakers, researchers, natural resource users and managers in appropriate forms. We can only achieve this through national, regional and international cooperation and collaboration that can spur coordinated actions to pool resources, share expertise and best practices, and enhance capacity.

We, the participants of the BID Africa regional meeting, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon from 3 to 6 September 2019, agree that the BID programme has, to date, made significant achievements in the region in:

- Making 354 valuable biodiversity datasets available—which contain 960,000 occurrence records comprising nearly 29,000 taxa, 40 percent of which were recorded for the first time in at least one African country
- Greatly increasing the proportion of data relating to African biodiversity that is shared from African institutions
- Stimulating data mobilization leading to the long-term persistence of datasets and better data management at national and regional level
- Mobilizing a new and diverse community of 67 biodiversity data publishers through capacity enhancement actions and shared experience between regional, national and local levels
- Strengthening a community of practice in biodiversity informatics through the creation of a regional mentor network that supported the training of more than 1,300 experts through BID-funded workshops
- Providing a baseline for addressing research needs and decision-making, increasing visibility and awareness of locally acquired data and helping support biodiversity assessment, conservation and the sustainable development goals
- Demonstrating the potential value of the BID approach with initial examples of the use of such data through policy-relevant research and conservation policy application
- Increasing formal GBIF participation through the membership of nine new participant countries in Africa, bringing Africa's representation in GBIF to the same level as Europe, and initiating discussions around the formation of new nodes within several other countries

However, there is still an urgent need to:

- Step up data mobilization from Africa to overcome the remaining massive under-representation of accessible biodiversity data from the continent
- Leverage capacity in the region that has been supported in the first phase of the BID programme to sustain knowledge transfer, by targeted training, mentoring, sharing best practices, workshops and seminars, and supporting and encouraging new expert networks

- Increase awareness of the benefits of open-access data among a broader range of stakeholders, by engaging natural history collections, biodiversity monitoring networks, civil society, educators, private sector and government through national and regional networks, institutions, and local champions

- Expand the user base within the research community through integrating biodiversity informatics—including the use of data and tools from the GBIF network—into teaching and training at all levels, building on successful examples in the region and providing easily reusable, multilingual and accessible training materials

- Transmit relevant evidence-based information to policy and decision makers at all scales, through biodiversity fora, integration with information platforms and initiatives, and biodiversity planning and reporting processes, including those for multilateral environmental agreements

- Ensure sustainability through increased GBIF membership, establishment of and support for new nodes, increased regional coordination, facilitated access to IT infrastructure, fundraising capacity, and institutionalizing data mobilization into ongoing projects and activities

We hereby declare our commitment to supporting existing and future activities that address these needs and ensure that biodiversity information contributes fully to the conservation, management and sustainable use of biodiversity, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Africa.

• For more information, contact bid@gbif.org •

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