

"International Opportunities for Engagement"

Invasive Species Roundtable

U.S. Department of State

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- recap a relevant point or two from previous speakers

The Diplomatic Landscape

- I would like to take this opportunity to discuss our needs, challenges, and opportunities for international engagement on the invasive species issue. While my discussion will largely be diplomatic in scope, let me underscore the fact that diplomatic agendas must be complimented by strong technical support programs if we are going to meet our objectives in a timely and effective manner.
- This problem is not totally new for State. For several years we have been working on invasive species issues alongside our USG colleagues in relevant international fora, such as the Committee on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. And, we have been addressing the invasive species issue through regional and bi-lateral arrangements.
- These efforts to have been largely reactionary and piecemeal. This past year, in part as a response to the Executive Order, we decided that a much more proactive, strategic approach is warranted.
- Our first objective was to assess the "diplomatic landscape." That is - to determine what other countries considered this issue a priority and how they were addressing their own problems.
- In December we asked our Embassies overseas to survey their host countries to determine each foreign country's priorities and policies on invasive alien species. We found that:
 1. A very small number of countries do consider this issue a high priority, have coordinated policies in place specifically aimed at addressing the problem, and dedicate substantial resources to a variety of efforts to prevent and control the invasion of alien species.
 - Some of these countries include Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and Norway.
 - Other countries, such as Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Eritrea, Ireland, Spain are moving to recognize the issue. Bolivia is, for example, preparing a supreme

decree to create a "National Service for Agricultural Sanitation" under which invasive species will be a top priority. Eritrea has recently drafted a regulation on invasive species as part of its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.

- Countries in the Caribbean region and others consider it a high priority, but are hampered by a lack of resources to address the issue adequately.
2. Many high-level government officials are largely unaware of the threats that invasive alien species pose to the environment, economy, and human health.
 - Our reports suggest this is typically the case in countries such as Gabon, Honduras, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Qatar ("gutter"), Saudi Arabia.

"The official in the Philippine's bureau overseeing protected areas and wildlife said this was the first time she had heard about the invasive species issue since our inquiry into the Brown Tree Snake in 1997."

3. While many other government officials are aware that invasive alien species pose a problem, they place it as a low priority.
 - These include representatives of Bulgaria, Italy, Netherlands, El Salvador, Singapore, Uruguay.
 - Brazil is a prime example: Senior Environment Ministry officials clearly recognizes the significant threat by invasive species -across environmental, economic, and human health sectors. However, thus far, the government has not dedicated resources to the issue, nor considered it a high priority.
 - In Colombia and Costa Rica, the government has largely been leaving the work up to the NGOs.
4. Coordination is a major issue. In most governments, the invasive alien species issue is under the jurisdiction of multiple ministries. The ministries have different priorities, goals, and objectives in addressing the problem and lack a structure for coordination and cooperation. In some cases, jurisdiction also lies with regional governments.
 - Belgium, Brazil, Hungary, Senegal, are among the countries challenged by "decentralization"
 - Mexico has 11 agencies that have jurisdictions over elements of the invasive species issue.

5. Neighboring countries may be unaware of each other's policies and practices on the prevention and management of invasive alien species. In some cases, neighboring countries have different priorities and invasions occur across political boundaries, potentially creating an atmosphere for regional friction.
 - This could be particularly true of clusters of some Small Island States. It is also true of continental countries such as Chile and Paraguay which share long borders - which are not recognized by wandering animals or dispersing seeds.
6. A diversity of countries explicitly requested US guidance and assistance in addressing the issue.
 - These included Cameroon, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Denmark, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mexico, Peru, Switzerland.
 - Belize noted that no USG program has a bigger, more profitable impact for Belize than USDA's APHIS.

The International Landscape

- The International Working Group of the Invasive Species Council has already identified more than fifty international agreements that could be potentially useful in addressing invasive species.
 - Some are global, while others are regional or bilateral.
 - Some are broadly based - others are issue specific
 - Some are legally binding. Some are voluntary, cooperative.
- Some of the legally binding agreements include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation.
- There are also numerous Codes of Conduct, a common "soft law" tool, that seek to prevent and control the spread of invasives.
- The IUCN- World Conservation Union recently released "IUCN Guidelines for the Prevention of Biodiversity Loss Caused by Alien Invasive Species," for example.
- Relevant codes have also been developed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), for example.
- We need to assess whether the pathways and means by which we move invasive species are or can be adequately covered by these agreements.

- We also need to assess whether we need better enforcement, harmonization, and amendments to existing agreements. And, whether we need new agreements.
- These are the kinds of questions that we hope the Invasive Species Council will address from the perspective of U.S. interests.
- On a broader scale, it is the Global Invasive Species Program (GISP) that is the leader in assessing the science and policy aspects of this problem. GISP is a partnership of SCOPE (Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment), UNEP (United Nations Environment Program), IUCN - World Conservation Union, and CABI (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau International).
- Through GISP, invasive species experts are developing a comprehensive approach to raise awareness of the problems and address the threats posed by invasive species globally.
- Hopefully, the implementation phase of this effort will cut across a wide variety of sectors, engaging governments, industries, international institutions, and others. Working closely with GISP would be a central part of our efforts.
- GISP'S, Chair, Dr. Hal Mooney of Stanford University is with us today and will address how, through GISP, the scientific and policy making communities can set priorities and implement projects in a more timely and effective manner.

Preliminary International Objectives

- Based on this landscape, our immediate, preliminary objectives for U.S. international efforts on this problem must be to:
 - raise the international visibility of the issue as a new, multi-sector ecological, economic, and human health threat;
 - communicate its global, regional, and national security implications;
 - galvanize bilateral and multilateral cooperative efforts to understand and share information regarding invasive alien pathways and introductions, and to manage those pathways and introductions;
 - encourage other governments to make this problem a priority and to develop coordinated national and regional approaches to it;
 - use current international agreements to raise awareness of the problem and promote cost-effective, practical solutions;
 - further highlight the importance of the issue for intergovernmental organizations, such as IMO, FAO, and UNEP;

- promote practical cooperation as a first step in dealing with the issue, rather than premature entry into new legal arrangements.

Early Opportunities

- Let me briefly outline some of the areas in which the USG is already working and in which the next steps are apparent. These experiences are our case studies - and they have helped us formulate a wide variety of tools. These are the resources we will have to move forward in other international fora.

Convention on Biological Diversity

- In theory, the Convention on Biological Diversity offers the greatest opportunity to address invasive species from a broad environmental perspective.
- Many of the government officials we surveyed pointed to the CBD as the sole or primarily forum in which they planned to negotiate legally binding agreements on invasive species.
- The issue of invasive species was taken up by the CBD's scientific body - the SBSTTA - at its meeting in February and again just a couple of weeks ago at the meeting of the 5th Conference of the Parties.
- The major focus of these discussions was development of a series of guiding principles of the prevention and control of invasive species.
- While we think that truly guiding principles could provide a useful tool in raising awareness of the issue and pointing countries in a constructive direction, the USG has many points of concern with document currently under consideration within the CBD.
- We feel many of the points are overly prescriptive, impractical, and have the potential to cause friction among countries, rather than forge international cooperation. Thus far, we have succeeded in keeping the guiding principles from being adopted in their current form.
- Invasive species will be a primary focus of the CBD's work at its next scientific meeting and the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties - COP6.
- There CBD consider issue such as: standard terminology, criteria for assessing risks, a process for looking at the socio-economic implications of the problem, and developing a system for reporting invasion.
- For COP6, the CBD Secretariat has been requested to consider whether further development of the guiding principles, development of a new legal instrument, or other options are needed to fully implement an effective work program on invasives.

- The US needs to work very closely with other governments and GISP both within and outside the CBD forum in order to ensure that outcomes truly reflect the complexity of the issue and lead to solutions that all countries can and will implement effectively.
- The US's non-Party status within the CBD will be a major handicap. This is something that we may need to bring to actively bring to Congress' attention.

International Maritime Organization (Ballast Water)

- In 1990, the International Maritime Organization recognized the aquatic nuisance species threat and began a process in the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee to address the introduction of invasive species through ship's ballast water.
- Currently, unilateral mandatory requirements for preventing introductions of invasive species from ballast water are in place for some ports of the US, throughout Chile, and in the port of Haifa in Israel.
- As countries, such as Australia, the US, and Brazil move closer to requiring mandatory ballast water management for ships entering all their ports, it is of paramount importance to develop internationally agreed upon approaches to ballast water management.
- Thus, the USG has taken a lead role at the IMO in an on-going, multilateral, negotiation to develop a legally binding agreement to reduce the threat of invasive species introduced through ballast water. We've been working hard to ensure that the management options are practical, economical and ecologically sound.
- These efforts have led to the development and updating, most recently in 1997, of an IMO resolution on "Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water to Minimize the Transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens."
- On-going negotiations focus on defining and accepting a new concept for international ballast water management and drafting a Convention and Annex.
- The US is optimistic that new ballast water treatment technologies and a standard by which to evaluate these technologies are achievable through ongoing international cooperation.
- Other opportunities presented by the continuing international dialog at the IMO include increasing international awareness of the invasive species issue and identifying new problems such as other pathways of invasive introduction through ships' hulls and anchor chains.
- These new issues can also be appropriately addressed through the intergovernmental process at the IMO.

Cooperative Governments Initiative on Invasive Species

- A recent decision (5L.8.7) of the Conference of the Parties of the CBD "strongly encourages Parties (governments) to develop mechanisms for transboundary cooperation and regional and multilateral cooperation in order to deal with the issue, including the exchange the best practices."
- Over the last six months, we have been discussing with other countries (e.g., Norway, South Africa, Brazil, Japan, and New Zealand) the idea of jointly developing a cooperative program among governments.
- Modeled after the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), the invasives initiative would provide an open-ended, voluntary framework through which governments could raise awareness of the issue, exchange information, and develop bi- and multi-lateral programs to address the problem.
- Funds permitting, we hope to have the first meeting of this program in Cape Town, South Africa at the end of September - as a follow on to a meeting of the Global Invasive Species Program (which Hal will discuss). The founding Partners would develop a "Call to Action" and initiate a "Framework for Action."

South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP)

- The Pacific Island countries are particularly vulnerable to the effects of invasive species. More species extinctions are due to invasives than any cause other than habitat loss.
- Recognizing the one country can't do it alone, the 26 countries and territories of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) came together in Fiji last September to develop a *Regional Invasive Species Strategy for the Pacific Islands Region* - which addresses invasives on land and in freshwater systems.
- State funded the workshop that developed the draft strategy document.
- The U.S. will take its next step to address this issue through SPREP this week. SPREP will meet June 14-16 in Auckland to discuss its Action Plan for 2001-2004. The U.S. plans to show its support for SPREP's new invasive species strategy, demonstration projects, and other relevant initiatives focussing on invasives.
- On October 9-14 SPREP will host a ministerial meeting in Guam. The U.S. will take this opportunity to highlight the US initiatives on invasive species - especially the work of the Invasive Species Council.
- The efforts of countries to work across national lines indicates the magnitude of the threat - and indicates that policy makers are willing to work across cross borders if it means restricting invasives. Hopefully our work with SPREP can serve as a model for work in other regions.

US and Canada in the Great Lakes Region

- In 1955, the United States and Canada entered into a treaty known as the Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries, which established the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission.
- The primary mission of the Commission has been to control sea lampreys, an alien invasive species that has devastated fisheries and fish populations throughout the Great Lakes region in the 1950s.
- Working through the Commission, the United States and Canada have had some success in controlling sea lampreys, largely through the use of a powerful chemical lampricide. In Lake Superior alone, lamprey populations have dropped to less than 10 percent of their historical average.
- The lampricide is expensive, though, and effective only in the short term. We are now developing and improving non-chemical lamprey control techniques.
- In the coming years, the United States and Canada hope to phase down the use of chemicals to control sea lampreys in favor of these other approaches, such as the building of barriers to prevent the lampreys from leaving their shallow spawning areas and the sterilization of males.

On the ballast water issue in the Great Lakes Region, the United States and Canada work cooperatively through the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1972.

- This agreement provides a framework for cooperative and coordinated national programs to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the waters of the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem.
- The International Joint Commissions, established by the Governments, is tasked with monitoring progress under the Agreement. Among other things, the IJC reviews progress and advises Governments on Great Lakes water quality matters.
- Although, both Canada and the US address invasive species issues in the Great Lakes Region through unilateral mandates, they cooperate and coordinate their programs so as to be consistent.
- In 1990, the IJC and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission pointed out the need for ballast water controls and urged stronger measures against further species introductions.
- They recommended to Governments that mid-ocean exchange of ballast water for all ocean-going vessels or an environmentally acceptable alternative be required.
- The U. S. and Canada responded with such regulations and guidelines, respectively.

- Such cooperative bilateral arrangements can present an alternative to a negotiated binding agreement.
- Opportunities exist for the U.S. to explore such cooperative arrangements with other countries and regions with which they share waters.

Challenges Ahead

- We will encounter many challenges as we move forward to address invasive species in the diplomatic arena:

Increasing Trade and New Markets

- Countries, including the U.S., are pressing to open new markets for trade, as well as increase the trade volume through existing markets. As the international trade relationships change, new pathways for species exchange will open and grow.
- Some countries may see the establishment and spread of invasive species as a "necessary and acceptable" trade off (so to speak).
 - For example, our embassy official in Taiwan noted that the Taiwanese government official was "quick to point out that a formal international mechanism for avoiding or managing the movement of potentially invasive non-native species could easily conflict with WTO or other market-opening measures." And that "they seem to view the invasives problem as the almost inevitable by-product of action international trade"

Other environmental threats

- Climate change and deforestation are the two greatest drivers of environmental change globally. Both could facilitate and compound the impacts of invasive species. Climate change in particular, adds an increasing element of uncertainty to a problem already fraught with uncertainties.

Technological "Advancements"

- Advances in technology could increase the rate and means by which organisms move around the world.
- Technologies might also be developed to help us address invasive problems - such as the sterilization of ballast water.
- We need to ensure that our diplomatic agendas are prepared to deal with the "good and the bad" of what technology has to offer.

Lessons Learned/Conclusions

- We need to be flexible -
 - to have a strategic approach and to be opportunistic

- to use existing international structures and agreements, and to consider their evolution
- promote and facilitate voluntary cooperation
- to see our potential partners not just as other governments, but also as industries, NGOs and international organizations

- We need to be creative -
 - to raise awareness of this issue across a wide variety of sectors
 - to convince countries - developed and developing - that this issue has direct implications for their future development
 - to find answers to many scientific and technical unknowns
 - to balance international policy objectives that have the potential to play out in direct opposition

- We need to recognize that -
 - this issue is inextricably coupled to our social and economic agendas - increasing trade, eliminating poverty, etc.

 - the problems posed by invasive species are on par with our climate change and deforestation concerns

 - and we must afford invasive species the same level of urgency and resources

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