

Using the *International Agenda*: a global overview

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Introduction

Following a two year consultation process involving contributions from over 300 individuals and organisations, the *International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation* (IABGC) was launched at The World Botanic Gardens Congress held in Asheville, North Carolina in 2000. Today the International Agenda is now available in all the main languages of the world and freely available as a download from BGC website.

The *International Agenda* provides botanic gardens with a common global framework for the development policies and action in support of conservation (Wyse Jackson and Sutherland, 2000). Within the framework of the International Agenda, individual botanic gardens can review existing and plan new activities which contribute to conservation whilst maintaining their own uniqueness and the diversity amongst the c.2500 botanic gardens around the world today. A contribution to conservation includes activities directly conserving threatened plants as well as activities such as environmental education and sustainable development.

The *International Agenda* defines the global mission of botanic gardens worldwide in conservation as follows:

- Stem the loss of plant species and their genetic diversity worldwide.
- Focus on preventing further degradation of the world's natural environment.
- Raise public understanding of the value of plant diversity and the threats it faces.
- Implement practical action for the benefit and improvement of the world's natural environment.
- Promote and ensure the sustainable use of the world's natural resources for present and future generations.

International Agenda Registration of Commitment

In 2002, BGC launched a process whereby institutions and organisations could register their commitment to work to achieve the objectives and targets of the *International Agenda*. Today, 480 institutions and organisations from 85 countries have registered their commitment to conservation through the *International Agenda*. The commitments can either be formal, e.g. governing body resolution, or informal. An institution registering its commitment is under no legal obligations; the process is a public statement of commitment towards conservation.

The number of registrations in each country (Figure 1) is greater in countries where the national network has strongly supported it, such as in Poland, and where BGC has had national programmes of work such as in Argentina. Naturally countries which have many botanic gardens, e.g. USA, are also likely to have a higher number of registrations than countries with few botanic gardens e.g. Africa countries.

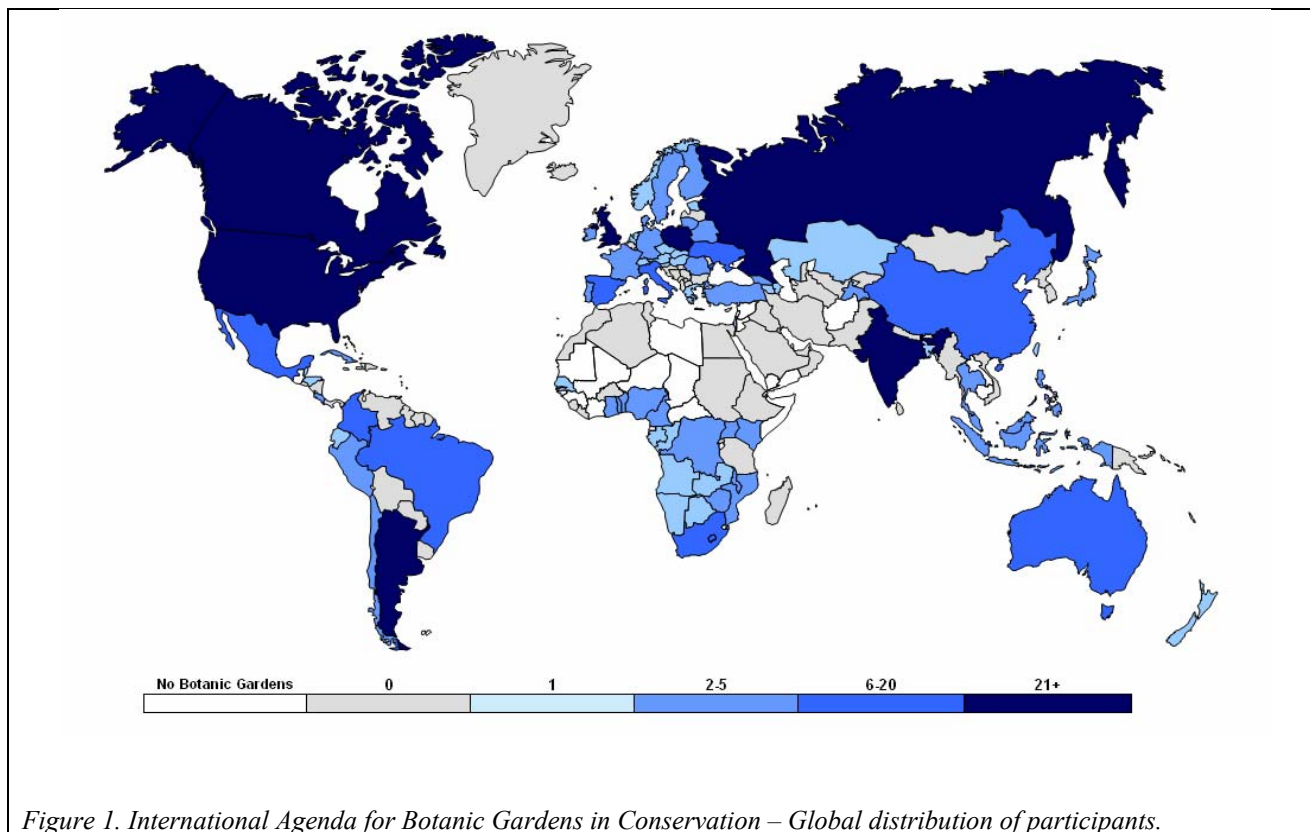


Figure 1. *International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation* – Global distribution of participants.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has also recognised the *International Agenda* as representing the botanic garden community's response and contribution to the achievement of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* (GSPC).

In order to help measure the achievements of the objectives of the *International Agenda* and as a contribution to the GSPC, a series of 20 targets were developed for botanic gardens at the 2nd World Botanic Gardens Congress, held in Barcelona, Spain in April 2004. Further details on these 20 botanic garden targets can be found at www.bgci.org/worldwide/bg_targets

Self-assessment of the implementation of the *International Agenda*

With 211 potential activities listed in the *International Agenda*, no single institution is expected to be able to or should wish to implement it in its entirety. Each botanic garden will have its own mission and focus, therefore only sections of the *International Agenda* will be relevant to it work. However, by assessing what an institution is currently doing with respect to the *International Agenda* it will be able to identify opportunities to improve its current contributions towards conservation.

Dr David Galbraith developed an IABGC self-assessment tool when The Royal Botanic Garden, Hamilton, Canada decided to review its activities (Galbraith, 2003). The spreadsheet tool goes through each of IABGC activities and asks the assessor to judge whether it is engaged in a particular recommendation ("Doing"), might do so in the future ("Considering") or is not doing it now nor contemplating such action in the future ("Not Doing").

David Galbraith's tool has subsequently been used by The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to review the work of its network of National Botanic Gardens.

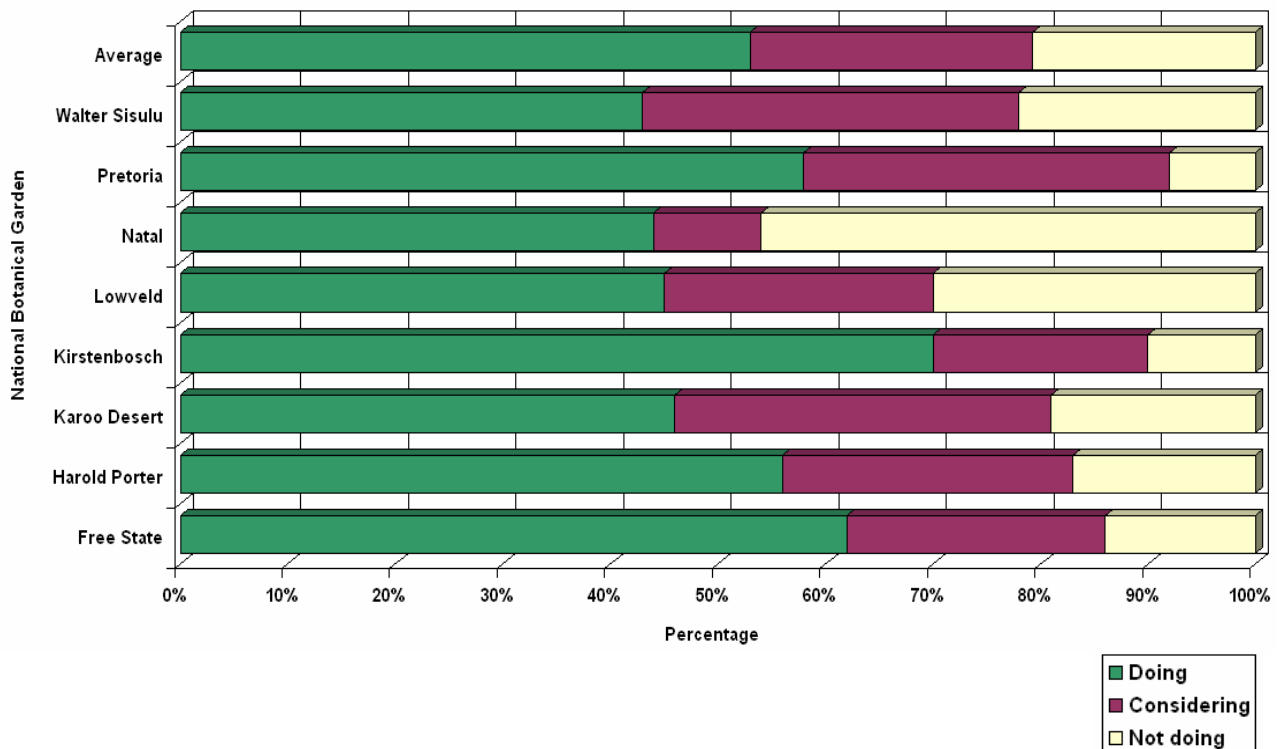


Table 1. *International Agenda Implementation across South Africa's National Botanical Gardens South African National Biodiversity Institute*

The assessment carried out by SANBI (Table 1) illustrates two important points about the *International Agenda*. Firstly, no single institution will implement the entire *International Agenda*. Secondly, even within a network of botanic gardens under the same national institution there can be great differences in each individual botanic gardens focus and therefore how it will implement the *International Agenda*. A detailed discussion on the SANBI *International Agenda* assessment was presented by Willis (2006).

Following on from the success of the self-assessment tool by The Royal Botanic Garden, Hamilton, Canada and the botanic gardens of South African National Biodiversity Institute, BGCI is currently developing an online version of the tool. This tool will allow gardens to self-assess their activities against the *International Agenda*, section by section, and to periodically revisit the tool and reassess themselves over time. Not only will this tool provide valuable information to the garden for planning and monitoring their activities, but will also allow BGCI to provide a more comprehensive overview of the implementation of this important global initiative.

References

- Galbraith, D., 2003. *IABGC Analysis Worksheet for Individual Institutions*. Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Canada [unpublished]
- Willis, C., 2006. SANBI: institutional response to implementing the *International Agenda*. *BGjournal* **3(1)**: 11-13.
- Wyse Jackson, P.S. and Sutherland, L.A., 2000. *International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation*. Botanic Gardens Conservation International, London, U.K.