

## The MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative

### 1<sup>st</sup> Steering Committee Meeting

22-24 June 2010, Glion, Switzerland

#### Summary of the Meeting

#### I Executive Summary

The MEA IKM initiative seeks to develop harmonized (interoperable) MEA information systems in support of knowledge management activities among MEAs for the benefit of Parties and the environment community at large. It was launched during the DELC MEA KM Meeting in Chexbres, Switzerland, 22-24 September 2009, when nine MEAs and partners discussed how to promote greater cooperation on information and knowledge management (IKM) issues. Participants recommended the development of a pilot project aiming to exchange data among the MEAs on 1) calendars/events, 2) COP decisions, 3) national contacts, and 4) official documents. It also recommended the establishment of a Steering Committee and a Working Group composed of MEA representatives to guide the implementation of the MEA IKM project.

The 1<sup>st</sup> MEA IKM Steering Committee Meeting judged the project to be a success. As shown during a live demonstration of the project, decisions and resolutions of participating MEAs<sup>1</sup> related to *finance* and *alien species* could be displayed in seconds on a joint MEA portal called "InforMEA". This presentation demonstrated how MEA COP decisions and resolutions can be harvested dynamically according to agreed terminology or simple keywords.

Participating MEAs worked towards reaching agreement on data exchange formats and protocols, joint MEA terminology, design and functionality of InforMEA, and consensus on the information exchange architecture. Also, possible solutions to the issue of building sustained technical capacity at MEA Secretariats currently lacking the technical infrastructure and know-how were discussed at length. Final recommendations made at the meeting touched on moving the MEA IKM project "InforMEA" forward and embarking on potential future projects, such as on-line reporting systems and an MEA-wide virtual university. Participants also recommended a draft text on terms of reference for the MEA IKM Steering Committee (See recommendations in Annex II and the TORs of the MEA IKM SC in Annex III).

The meeting was addressed by four Executive Heads of MEAs<sup>2</sup> who expressed their support for this MEA-led collaborative effort. The meeting was further attended by 10 of the 12 participating MEAs<sup>3</sup> and five of the seven observers involved in related IKM projects<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Initially Basel Convention, Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention and the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO-WHC),

<sup>2</sup> Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention, Ms. Katharina Kummer; Secretary General of CITES, Mr. John Scanlon; Executive Secretary of the Montreal Protocol, Mr. Marcos Gonzales; and Executive Secretary of the Stockholm Convention and co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention, Mr. Donald Cooper

<sup>3</sup> Basel Convention, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), CITES, CMS, Montreal Protocol, Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention, Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and UNESCO-WHC; regrets came from the International Plant Treaty (ITPGR-FA) and the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention)

<sup>4</sup> Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), Environmental Management Group (EMG), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and World Conservation Monitoring Centre

## II Detailed Report

Co-chairs: Bradnee Chambers (UNEP) and Marcos Silva (CITES)

### Day I (22 June 2010) - Common Ground

#### □ Opening

The meeting was opened by co-Chair Mr. Bradnee Chambers (Senior Legal Officer and Chief, UNEP). In his opening remarks Mr. Chambers welcomed the members of the IKM Steering Committee and thanked them for their participation. He also expressed his appreciation to the heads of conventions for their support to the Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) project. He stated that such collaboration based on IKM would increase coherence among the MEAs within the context of International Environmental Law. He concluded by referring to UNEP's mandate which lends supports the efforts under the IKM project.

Co-Chair Mr. Marcos Silva (Senior Capacity Building Officer CITES) underlined the importance of collaboration among the MEAs and thanked the members of the Steering Committee for interest in the project. He stressed the value of the IKM project in developing networks and a platform for sharing of expertise and knowledge. He concluded by highlighting the need to enhance technical capacity at the Secretariats to ensure equitable participation in IKM projects.

Following the above comments, Mr. Chambers invited participants to introduce themselves.

#### **Address by the Secretary General of CITES, Mr. John Scanlon**

Mr. John Scanlon first thanked UNEP for its support of knowledge management and emphasized the importance of this project in light of current discussions on how to increase MEA effectiveness. He also spoke on the possible contribution of IKM to discussions on International Environmental Governance. The current project was a clear example of an MEA driven process to enhance coherence and effectiveness by collaborating in well defined and mutually agreed to areas. He emphasized that MEA Secretariat driven processes should be referred to as cooperation or collaboration, while broader Party driven integration is more appropriately termed synergies. Finally, he thanked the individuals involved for their role in assisting and coordinating the implementation of this project, and said the approach taken by these individuals in advancing this project was a good reason for its early success.

During his elaboration on International Environmental Governance issues, Mr. Scanlon summarized current efforts to increase coherence among the different sectors of the UN dealing with the environment. He explained that discussions amongst governments related to this topic focused on two tracks: one approach that considers broader forms, such as re-structuring of the international entities dealing with environmental issues, and another approach that promotes enhanced environmental governance through small and incremental steps. It is within the context of the incremental steps approach that Mr. Scanlon saw great opportunities offered by a collaborative MEA IKM initiative, and he emphasised the need to take a step by step approach and to demonstrate the value of the effort to parties.

Mr. Scanlon sketched out three important needs the initiative could address in assisting countries to further enhance implementation of MEAs to which they are a party. First, the IKM project can assist with making different data management systems speak to one another by adhering to harmonized data standards (referred to as interoperability). Second, it could assist in providing the most effective data harvesting systems to more effectively and intuitively present and use of the collected data to end users, such as desk officers dealing with multiple conventions. A final possibility raised by Mr. Scanlon is the sharing of joint information and technology services by the MEAs.

Mr. Scanlon stressed that joint resources and services among the Secretariats would require agreement by different MEA COPs and went beyond this project. However, due to its overarching mandate across the field of environment, UNEP could play a role by offering broader information and technology support to MEAs. Mr. Scanlon concluded his address by expressing CITES' strong support to the IKM project.

#### □ **Address by Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention, Ms. Kummer Peiry**

Ms. Katharina Kummer spoke on behalf of the Basel, Rotterdam and the Stockholm Conventions. She expressed her support for and interest in the IKM project. She referred to efforts to build synergies among the three chemicals and waste conventions as an example of a party-driven process. She also expressed the hope that the experience of the three Secretariats in developing such synergies could be of use to other MEAs that may undergo such a process. Ms Kummer then highlighted the importance investing in Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) given the long-term benefits derived from these investments. She also acknowledged DELC's important coordination and facilitation role in the IKM project, factors which undoubtedly contributed greatly to the success of the project.

She mentioned that certain elements of the synergies process could be of interest to the group and to other MEA secretariats, including the establishment of joint KM services and the joint chemicals and waste clearing-house headed by Mr. Osmany Pereira. She further highlighted the *Safe Planet* Campaign and joint use of regional offices. Both of these initiatives are in cooperation with FAO. She informed that the decisions from the simultaneous extraordinary meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions held in Bali in February 2010 were currently being implemented. Ms Kummer concluded by stating that the synergies process undertaken by the three chemicals and wastes conventions may be understood as a demonstration of how the United Nations objective of "Delivering as One" may be enhanced with regard chemicals management.

#### □ **Updates on developments in the MEA IKM Initiative**

Following the addresses by the Heads of Conventions, Mr. Chambers requested Ms. Eva Duer (Legal Officer, UNEP) to present briefly the development of the MEA IKM Initiative and the main goals for the 1<sup>st</sup> MEA IKM Steering Committee Meeting. Ms. Duer outlined the rationale and short history of the initiative, its objectives and projects, and its current membership. She explained that the IKM initiative was developing a proof of concept project on MEA data interoperability to demonstrate how knowledge tools needed by the Parties could be developed in a sustainable and timely manner. She concluded that there were many lessons learned from the project to be shared in the course of the meeting, during which participants could also discuss the future direction of the project (Presentation 1<sup>5</sup>).

---

<sup>5</sup> Presentations are accessible at [www.cbd.int/kmmea](http://www.cbd.int/kmmea)

□ **Presentations and updates from represented MEAs**

Mr. Chambers requested that participants speak on updates related to KM in their respective secretariats

**UNFCCC:** Mr. Erik Sokolovsky (Knowledge Management Officer) gave a short introduction to the UNFCCC Secretariat and how it supports the implementation of the Rio Convention and the Kyoto protocol. He informed that over the last year, KM efforts have focused on better information and knowledge management at the Secretariat. “Knowledge work” was defined as “work done in collaborative teams” that requires judgment and interpretation and distinguished from other process related work. A main challenge was that international standards for KM do not exist. In absence of an ISO standard, the UNFCCC built their KM activities on a KM standard developed by Standards Australia. The two main partners to KM are information technologies and Human Resources. With regard to other KM activities, UNFCCC also focuses on education and public awareness programmes. He proceeded to give an overview of the different data sets including the GHG emissions database (Presentation 2<sup>6</sup>)

**CITES:** Mr. Silva spoke on the CITES E-permitting Toolkit which was adopted by consensus at COP 15 of CITES. He explained that the process to gain agreement from Parties on the formats, protocols and standards as recommended in the Toolkit resembled the mechanisms adopted by the IKM Working Group to implement its proof of concept project. Mr. Silva also described projects at CITES that could be of interest to the Steering Committee, including the development of a web-based CITES virtual college, use of taxonomic serial numbers to assist custom officials to identify specimens of CITES-listed species, and the ability to visualize CITES trade data on the CITES website. He concluded by emphasizing his belief that technical capacity at the Secretariats is absolutely essential for the sustainability of any IKM or data project using MEA data.

**World Heritage Convention, WHC (UNESCO):** Mr. Alonzo Addison (Special Advisor to the Director) summarized the interest expressed by other cultural Conventions to learn from WHC and its experience in sharing information. He also discussed current projects at WHC, including a WHC Google skin, Nokia data feeds with WWF, partnerships with Expedia Trip Advisor, and projects with the MDG Achievement Fund (Spain, UNDP). He stated that the WHC online decision search mechanism is becoming comprehensive as several thousand older decisions are scanned and added to the database.

**CMS/AEWA:** Mr. Florian Keil (Information Officer) described the general lack of resources, technical staff and budget for information management and technology at the CMS, AEWA and at the other CMS Agreement Secretariats. He thanked UNEP-DELC for coordinating the KM initiative amongst MEAs and for ensuring that those MEAs currently lacking the technical capacity would not be left behind and be able to participate in IKM related projects in the future. He mentioned CMS and AEWA’s participation in the previous UNEP DELC Knowledge Management Project for Biodiversity related MEAs in 2006-2008 and the importance of continuity in terms of building on the lessons learned from this project in the framework of the current IKM initiative. He also stated that UNEP-WCMC is developing an on-line reporting tool for CMS and AEWA, which would allow the Secretariats to easily update their reporting templates when reporting formats change. He concluded by announcing the recent launch of the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool during the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of AEWA Celebration in The Hague, 14-15 June 2010. The portal. developed through a UNEP GEF funded

---

<sup>6</sup> Presentations are accessible at [www.cbd.int/kmmea](http://www.cbd.int/kmmea)

project was an example of true interoperability as it brought together information from several leading databases on both AEWA species and the critical sites they use<sup>7</sup>.

**CBD:** Mr. Olivier de Munck (Programme Officer, Clearing-House Mechanism) stated that CBD current priorities are activities related to the International Year of Biodiversity and the preparation of COP10 in Nagoya, Japan. While these priorities are delaying CBD's full participation in the IKM project, he reiterated his MEA's support for this initiative.

**Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions:** Mr. Osmany Pereira (Coordinator of Joint Services of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions) described the further developments of the synergies process and provided an overview of the work on the joint Clearing House mechanism, as well as of the Safe Planet Campaign previously mentioned by Ms. Kummer. He further explained that through the chemicals review committee, the conventions are working on a common format for country profiles and that the second version of the online reporting system of the Stockholm Convention was completed and used for the October 2010 reporting deadline.

**UNCCD:** Mr. Marcos Montoiro (Programme Officer – Support to Knowledge Management) informed the meeting that UNCCD had received a clear mandate from its COP to focus on KM in the context of traditional knowledge, best practices and success stories on combating desertification, land degradation and drought as one of the priorities for the work of the Committee on Science and Technology. UNCCD is working with UNEP-WCMC on an online reporting system which seeks to collect information on performance indicators, best practices, adaptation techniques and financial flows. He further emphasized that UNCCD is supportive of efforts to seek potential synergies with other RIO Conventions. He concluded by referring to a glossary developed to support a web portal which will integrate the above mentioned elements.

□ **Round of introductions of first-time attending Observers and updates by IUCN on Ecolex**

**IUCN/TEMATEA:** Ms. Constanza Martinez (Acting Head, Global Policy Unit) described the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of TEMATEA. At the present time, TEMATEA consists of seven issue based modules. She stated that concerns were expressed with regard to the long-term sustainability of TEMATEA. IUCN, therefore, welcomes input on this issue from experts representing the MEAs attending the SC Meeting. She concluded by reiterating IUCN's commitment to improving the issue based approach as exemplified by TEMATEA.

**IUCN/ECOLEX:** Ms. Françoise Burhenne, (Senior Counsel, IUCN Environmental Law Centre) briefed the meeting on developments of Ecolex. The partners to Ecolex: FAO, IUCN and UNEP, contribute different core elements (legislation, treaties, court decisions, law and policy literature) to the database. Highlights over the past year were the addition of some 1500 bilateral treaties and 15.000 entries on national legislation to the respective Ecolex data sets. She also updated the meeting on discussions which took place during the Ecolex Steering Committee Meeting, which was held back-to-back with the IKM meeting. IKM participants were pleased to learn that the Ecolex SC discussed ways to establish close collaboration with and participation in the IKM project. The technical information structure of Ecolex is being revised and this project presents an opportunity to both initiatives to more closely link their efforts, also with regard to the DELC project on the Analytical Index. Ms

---

<sup>7</sup> For more information see: [www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool/](http://www.wingsoverwetlands.org/csntool/)

Burhenne concluded by describing the action taken by the CBD Secretariat to increase awareness of Ecolex through its website and by explaining efforts to optimize Google searches on Ecolex.

Co-chair Marcos Silva reiterated the importance of Ecolex as key partner for the IKM initiative.

**CIEL:** Mr. Dan Magraw, (President and CEO) described work accomplished by Center on International Environmental Law (CIEL) on the DELC Analytical Index. He said that based on his experience as a government official, professor and head of an NGO, he strongly supports this effort and commends the Working Group for undertaking it. He also discussed CIEL's work on environmental law issues, particularly with regards to human rights.

**EMG:** Following the above presentation, Ms. Julie Nevsky, (Administrative Assistant), provided a brief update to issues under the direction of the Environmental Management Group that may be of interest to the IKM Steering Committee, including its efforts to promote a climate neutral UN.

**WCMC:** Mr. Jerry Harrison (Head of Development) described WCMC's work on the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool, which was previously described by Mr. Keil (CMS). He also updated the Steering Committee on WCMC's efforts towards an online reporting tool for CMS and AEWA. He further informed the meeting that WCMC is working closely with the CBD secretariat on the development of biodiversity indicators.

**UNEP CSS:** Mr. John Kamea (Adviser, Corporate Services Section), Mr. Silva (presenter) and Mr. Pereira gave an overview of the outcomes of the UNEP Knowledge Management Retreat, which was held in Kenya from in May. The retreat had as its main objective the development of a UNEP KM Strategy (Presentation 3). Mr. Silva highlighted discussions during the retreat which focused on how the MEA IKM initiative could contribute to the UNEP KM Steering Group. Mr. John Scanlon stated that the MEA IKM Initiative should continue to develop parallel to the UNEP KM Strategy. He stated that he wished the UNEP KM strategy much success but also cautioned that the IKM initiative should focus on its core objectives.

□ **Address by Executive Secretary of the Montreal Protocol, Mr. Marco Gonzales**

Mr. Marco Gonzales addressed the meeting at the end of the first day. He expressed his support for and interest in the IKM initiative. He supported the use of the incremental approach in the IKM project, even if some "bright minds around the table" were attracted to fixing the big picture. He also emphasized the value in sharing best practices and the importance of communicating the results of the IKM project among MEAs in a timely manner. He stated that MEA Secretariats have very similar responsibilities, especially the organization of meetings. Preparation of documents in support of such meetings is another function shared by MEA secretariats. Mr. Gonzales invited the meeting to consider the establishment of a one - stop website that pools meetings, decisions and official documents as a valuable first incremental step to the IKM initiative. He concluded by describing the success of the Montreal Protocol in organizing paperless meetings and by offering to share this experience with other MEAs.

Mr. Silva requested participants to review the draft Terms of References which would guide the work of the MEA Information and Knowledge Management Steering Committee, for discussion during the next day. Mr. Chambers concluded by thanking the Executive Heads of the MEAs for their contributions to the meeting and their expressions of support.

## Day II (23 June 2010) - MEA IKM Interoperability Project

Day II was opened by the co-chairs Mr. Chambers and Mr. Silva inviting comments on discussions made during the previous day and then proceeding with the remaining agenda of Day I.

### □ Introduction of possibilities of a shared portal/Content Management system /Code base

Discussion on this topic was opened by Mr. Silva who proposed that, subject to the availability of external funding, IKM partners should be able to collaborate on certain activities such as: establishing a joint database on mutually agreed to subjects, using a content management system, sharing a server and other hardware, maintaining a shared code base, etc. Central to this proposal was the unresolved issue of technical capacity at the secretariat level.

Mr. de Munck requested a clarification on the definition of core data and source code for applications. Mr. Pereira provided a useful definition of the three core terms – a shared portal is what is currently being developed as part of the proof of concept, a content management system is the means to simplify the publication of web content to websites, and a code base is the programming code supporting most applications in the system.

Mr. Addison proposed to limit discussion to the sharing of data in the six categories agreed by the Working Group. He stressed, however, the value of sharing experiences and resources for the development of a content management system, as is currently being done for the DELC analytical index. Indeed, it doesn't make sense that each MEA is developing or has developed its own CMS when it would have been much more efficient to collaborate in the development of a joint CMS, particularly to assist those conventions lacking technical capacity. This point was reiterated by Mr. Keil who emphasized the need for all MEAs to be able to participate equitably in the project.

Mr. Silva noted that that some MEAs have been mandated by their COPs to enhance cooperation<sup>8</sup>. He further stated that the MEAs should find a way to accommodate collaboration within the context of existing decisions and resolutions as this would strengthen the support for the IKM project. He also raised the possibility of leveraging external funding to further support the IKM project. Reiterating comments made by Mr. Scanlon, Mr. Silva noted the possible role of UNEP-DELC in the provision of much needed technical support.

Mr. de Munck emphasized the importance of sustainability particularly with regard to the development of new IKM projects. It would be a mistake for secretariats to establish new systems without sufficient resources to maintain them. Ms. Duer cautioned against discussing institutional solutions ahead of established functional needs identified by the group, which UNEP would definitely consider facilitating in any possible way.

Mr. Bankobeza warned that having a shared portal does not negate the need by MEAs to respond to their specific audience requirements. Mr. Pereira noted that similar discussions are taking place in UNEP, especially within the context to develop a UNEP-wide KM strategy. He stressed the need to develop common and agreed to formats, standards and protocols to allow for data and information exchange. The issue of a shared portal is secondary to this need. He described the work required to

---

<sup>8</sup> Goal 3 of CITES Resolution 14.2 on the CITES Strategic Vision being a case in point: *Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by ensuring that cites and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive. Another example is decision 8/COP9 of the UNCCD on the Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies.*

reach agreement on such formats, protocols and standards among the members of the IKM WG, and noted that often institutional considerations impacted on the technological solution.

Mr. Montoiro indicated that there is a need to identify the information that will be shared through the portal. He informed that for instance the UNCCD Secretariat received a specific mandate by the Conference of the Parties regarding the roster of experts. The COP requested the Secretariat to explore the possibilities of developing a common web-based search tool that will enable the rosters of experts of the three Rio conventions to be searched<sup>9</sup>

Co-chair Mr. Silva concluded these discussions indicating that a draft paragraph on formats, standards and protocols, sustained funding and capacity of the have-nots will be drafted as part of the recommendations for consideration of the group on Day III.

#### □ **Introduction to the working group and process**

During his opening of Day III, Mr. Silva acknowledged the significant support offered by the Chemicals and Waste conventions during the development and implementation of the Proof of Concept project. Mr. Pereira thanked working group members for their contributions and noted the support of UNEP in making available much needed technical expertise to complete the development of the Application Programming Interface (API), the interface that allows different software systems to interact thereby making data exchange possible. This support came at a critical moment in the project. Mr. Pereira also described the support offered to CITES, CMS and AEWA in tagging and structuring their data in M-Files (hosted on a server maintained by the Chemicals and Waste Conventions) as a temporary solution to allow a selection of CITES, CMS and AEWA decisions to be incorporated in the proof of concept project. .

#### **A) The Goal – a designed vision**

On conclusion of the above discussion, Mr. Addison described the evolution and development of the IKM portal “InforMEA” (Presentation 3). Initially, the MEAs and DELC decided to develop two separate portals, one hosting the IKM interoperability project and the second hosting the DELC Analytical Index. However, given the commonalities between the two projects, particularly with regard to the technical specifications and their controlled vocabularies, it was decided to develop a single portal encompassing both projects. During this discussion, Mr. Addison discussed some of the branding and design challenges that arose during development.

The meeting discussed the presentation of the IKM/Analytical Index portal, including the relationship between the hosting organization and MEAs. Discussions also touched on copyright and the contribution of each MEA. Mr. Addison further explained the proposed concept of the search mechanism and the display of results for consideration of the group.

The co-Chairs invited questions from the floor. Ms. Burhenne posed the first question and requested clarification on the relationship between Ecolex and TEMATEA, both of which are supported by UNEP, and the new IKM portal. She emphasized that the portal should not appear to be on environmental law generally, as the proposed title suggested. Rather, its first tier is bound to be the joint products of the MEAs, while relevant information resources on environmental law generally, such as ECOLEX, could constitute an appropriate second tier.

---

<sup>9</sup> Decision 21/COP.9 (document ICCD/COP(9)/18/Add.1)



Mr. Silva reiterated the objective of the IKM project, namely, the enhancement of technical capacity at the MEAs secretariats to develop much needed knowledge tools for Parties. This entails agreement on common formats, standards and protocols to facilitate data exchange. The portal then simply harvests existing data and adds value to that data by presenting it intuitively and according to an agreed terminology. The Analytical Index was included as part of the project because it made sense to link information on agreements with information on decisions and resolutions.

Mr. Pereira underlined that all the data was already in existence and the portal just extracted the same data and presented it in a format that was useful to specific audience. Sharing of information would allow each member to extract data from each respective participating MEA and present it in a way that was suitable for their needs.

Mr. Addison further clarified that the portal presentation was created to guide such discussions. Mr. Chambers emphasized that UNEP/DELIC had no vested interest on the branding aspect and that it was up to the IKM SC to decide this issue. Mr. Chambers further proposed to remove the term “Environmental Law” from the title and to refer instead to Multilateral Environmental Agreements. He also proposed that the portal would display general information such as news and events at the entry page, and that the search and result facilities may be placed on a second page.

Mr. de Munck expressed his support for the branding of the project with the name “InforMEA” and suggested that a separate page could host the logos of the participating members. He also agreed that the Portal would attract traffic from users if it aggregated news and events from the MEAs on the entry page, as previously proposed.

The group overall endorsed the concept and the design of the portal and the first round of feed back was concluded with reference to a corresponding recommendation on day III.

## **B What lies beneath?**

### **□ Proof of Concept: on-line demo of Interoperability**

Mr. Silva invited Mr. Pereira to give a live presentation of the interoperability proof of concept project, namely the portal InforMEA and its search mechanisms.

Mr. Pereira introduced the decisions and resolutions search and retrieval mechanism that was developed using the data repositories of the Chemicals and Waste conventions (M-Files) and which hosted data from CITES, CMS and AEW. However, it should be noted that for the purpose of the demonstration, these repositories acted like separate servers. He informed that Mr. Addison worked with a web design firm contracted by UNEP-DELIC to develop the graphical user interface, branding and coding.

In demonstrating the potential of such a collaborative approach in the development of knowledge tools, Mr Pereira chose to search the system using specific terms from the controlled vocabulary. He also searched the system using a free text search, i.e. keywords.

The system harvested data from participating MEAs and displayed the relevant decisions and resolutions from CITES, CMS, WHC, POPs, PIC and Basel. That is, when searching the system with the

term “sustainable use”, Mr. Pereira was able to retrieve all relevant decisions in full-text pertaining to that topic.

During the demonstration, he described how metadata was organized in the M-files system and how the search mechanism used it to extract the results. After having demonstrated a search by keyword he demonstrated a search using terms from the Controlled Vocabulary.

Mr. Pereira concluded his demonstration by emphasizing that this proof of concept makes possible many different applications and tools. He described how it would be possible to retrieve relevant decisions, official documents and meetings from CBD, CMS, CITES and POPs targeting the effect of Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) on the fertility of Sea Lions.

He concluded his demonstration by presenting a new application he developed over the weekend based on the data available through the proof of concept project. Mr. Pereira clicked on a specific POP decision and retrieved quickly all related decisions and resolutions from other MEAs. This application was of particular interest as it clearly demonstrated the great value of adhering to common information formats, protocols and standards by the MEAs. Such collaboration allows Secretariats to develop knowledge tools as needed in a cost-effective and timely manner.

The meeting was unanimous in expressing its satisfaction with the results of the proof of concept project. The co-chairs also expressed their deep appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Pereira to show possible uses of harmonized but distributed datasets proving that this approach would be sustainable in the long-run and cost-effective as regards maintenance and updating.

## □ (2) Proof of Concept: Accounts of challenges and lessons learned

### **I Information Architecture**

Following the above demonstration, Mr. de Munck described three information exchange architectures (Presentation 4) which were discussed by Working Group during the development of the proof of concept project: 1) The distributed model where a central portal queries the distributed MEA databases which host their implementation of the Search API (as was done for the Proof of Concept Presentation); 2) The Centralized model where a central repository would harvest all data from MEAs in advance, resulting in faster response times and in a more robust system, and 3) a Hybrid system where real-time queries are made to MEAs that have solid technical capacity, and where those MEAs lacking such capacity could host their data on a central repository.

### **II Information Exchange Formats**

Mr. de Munck presented the format on COP decisions and resolutions as developed by the Working Group (Presentation 5)

### **III Interim solution for MEAs with less capacity**

Mr. Kelly Kabiru (Associate Programme Officer, UNEP) provided an overview of the human and physical resources required to prepare, process and tag decision data for the Basel Convention (Presentation 6). The importance of correctly tagging decisions and resolutions to the controlled vocabulary was stressed by many of the participants.

### **IV Controlled Vocabulary**

Mr. Addison presented the development of the Controlled Vocabulary (Presentation 7). He acknowledged efforts by CITES (Mr. Silva), POPs (Ms. Verdi), other working group members and DELC in the development of the controlled vocabulary. He also described the difficulties encountered to group terms in a manner that was logical and tiered. He noted that much work on the vocabulary needed to be done, and the present list of terms was developed for the proof of concept project.

Mr. Silva mentioned that software exists to assist with the development of controlled vocabularies and that the Steering Committee may wish to consider investment in such software should other MEAs join the project. He referred to existing Controlled Vocabularies, ie, AGROVOC, and expressed regret that ENVOC was no longer supported by UNEP.

Mr. Pereira explained that the Controlled Vocabulary in the POPs was based on a flat file system with very few terms based on items found in COP agendas. Ms. Martinez reiterated the need for the project to focus on the concrete needs of government officials and other potential end users during the future development of the vocabulary. Mr. Keil expressed the need for a long term strategy involving substantive staff to tag decisions and resolutions at each MEA Secretariat and that support should be given particularly to those MEAs lacking the required technical infrastructure and human resources to undertake such a tagging exercise.

Mr. Sokolovsky stated that from UNFCCC's perspective, users prefer keyword searches as opposed to using a controlled vocabulary and that the investment necessary to establish a system of mapped terms could instead be in efforts such as getting establishing the data repositories. Mr. Addison supported this view with the proposal to stop tagging decisions by hand with terms from controlled vocabulary and to simply use the terms to index decisions automatically. Mr. Pereira further explained that this process is usually referred to as "Auto-tagging" where an electronic indexing system take stags from a controlled vocabulary and matches it to documents automatically. Mr. Silva stated that an informed target audience would prefer to use a controlled vocabulary derived from COP agendas and warned that automated systems often generated irrelevant results (usually called noise).

Mr. Chambers proposed that a breakout group discuss the issue of controlled vocabularies and draft a recommendation for review during Day III. The breakout group consisted of Mr. Addison, Mr. de Munck, Mr. Pereira, Mr. Silva, Mr. Sokolovsky, Mr. Wood, Mr. Chambers and Ms. Duer. Mr. Chambers further proposed that the controlled vocabulary be shared with UNCCD and UNFCCC for their consideration and views before concluding the discussions on this issue.

## **V IKM Toolkit and Guidelines**

Mr. Silva and Mr. Wood (Stockholm) presented their work on the development of an IKM toolkit to inform MEA secretariats and partners of the different elements of the pilot project (Presentation 8).

### **□ DELC Analytical Index integration**

Following the conclusion of the above presentation, Ms. Duer spoke on the rationale, concept and development of the Analytical Index and why the decision had been taken to integrate its front end with InforMEA (Presentation 9). During the Q&A session that followed Ms. Burhenne and Ms. Moauro sought further clarification about the relationship between the Analytical Index and Ecolex and other similar tools. It was emphasized that while Ecolex covers Environmental Law Material

comprehensively, the Analytical Index provides a higher level of analysis of a selected number of agreements, decisions and cases.

Mr. Chambers closed the day's discussion with an outlook of the main items for Day III.

## Day III (24 June 2010) - The Way Ahead

### □ Areas of common interest other than interoperability

#### I Online National Reporting to MEAs

Day III began with a presentation by Mr. Keil on his convention's efforts to develop a flexible online-reporting tool for the submission of national reports to MEAs (Presentation 10). He began his presentation with a request to the Steering Committee to establish a Working Group on this issue. He stated that online national reporting had relevance to all MEAs and fit the criteria for inclusion as a possible project under the IKM project. He stated that many MEAs had developed their own custom made online reporting tool often in isolation from the experiences and know-how of other MEAs in this area and that he saw the creation of a working group on online national reporting under the IKM initiative as a possible forum to increase cooperation and exchange in this area amongst MEAs. He explained that AEWA was mandated to develop online reporting but lacked a corresponding budget. He also described the background to online reporting, and mentioned that work on such a mechanism dated to a previous UNEP funded KM project, where an on-line reporting tool was commissioned from UNEP-WCMC in early 2008. The work on the online reporting tool for CMS and AEWA was revived in the past months by UNEP-WCMC, but still needed to be customized so that the CMS and AEWA Secretariats would feel comfortable presenting the new online reporting tool to the respective Parties. It also required an analytical mechanism to allow for the evaluation of report data. He concluded by sharing a presentation developed by UNEP-WCMC on the '*Online Question Generator*'.

Mr. Chambers clarified that the previous UNEP project was not linked to the current MEA IKM initiative. Mr. Addison had been requested by UNEP to assess critically the "online question generator" in May 2010. He stated that his main concern was that the tool was being developed without consideration or linkages to other CMS/AEWA databases. He strongly advocated for the IKM SC to review work accomplished to date and to guide future developments. Mr. Harrison supported the suggestion that MEAs collaborate on this topic, particularly as many MEAs lack flexible generator type online-reporting tools. Mr. Chambers expressed concern that large investments by DELC were made to develop an on-line reporting system for AEWA/CMS which to date remains uncompleted. Mr. Keil clarified that the entry part of this tool is nearing completion while the analytical element was always foreseen to be completed in a later phase, mainly through a follow up project to the first UNEP-DELC KM project implemented by UNEP-WCMC.

Mr. Addison explained that on completion of the data entry component of the tool, the data would necessarily be collected into a database. It was also his understanding that the "analytical mechanism" being developed to retrieve the data and analyze it requires additional funding. However, he emphasized the importance of including the significant costs of developing the questionnaire in the "online question generator", and training users (including setting up a user helpdesk) in the overall budget for the tool before considering the costs of next phases.

Mr. Pereira also referred to project management challenges associated with online-reporting tools. The Stockholm Convention was in the process of developing a similar tool under time constraints. He stated that reporting formats and associated questionnaires changed every reporting cycle which clearly added complexity to the task. He too expressed his interest in participating in the working group and possibly joining forces to develop a more flexible online reporting tool jointly.

Mr. de Munck highlighted three points: 1) the political component – a strategy that ensures coherent evolution of reporting formats and questionnaires over time which would make meaningful analysis possible; 2) the technical component of structuring the data into a format suitable for a database; and 3) the substantive component, which is the data extraction for analytical processes. The heaviest investment would be on the last component, provided that the other two elements have been successfully established.

Mr. Addison shared the experience of the WHC, where the first report was submitted on-line in 1992. He considers the format of the question to be of critical importance as it may allow for using information in the database. Formats with long narratives are difficult to analyze and this should be avoided wherever possible. The meeting noted that the formats of questions in national reports are often decided by the COPs.

Mr. Sokolovsky informed that UNFCCC had started a project on online reporting two years ago. It was relatively late in the project before the importance of involving users in the development of the system was recognized. Mr. Montoiro informed that the UNCCD on-line reporting tool<sup>10</sup> is strongly linked to capacity-building strategies. The system under development intends to assist countries to develop tools to generate required data. This included help desk functions for users experiencing problems accessing or using the system.

Mr. Chambers concluded these discussions proposing that a recommendation towards the establishment of a working group on online reporting be considered by the IKM Steering Committee later that day.

## **II MEA “University”**

Mr. Silva then presented with the CITES Virtual College and proposed its evolution to an MEA-wide Virtual University as a possible project for consideration by the MEA IKM Steering Committee (Presentation 10). Mr. de Munck proposed joining forces with experts such as UNU and UNITAR. Mr. Silva replied that due to the time pressure the initial plan was to move existing training content into a web environment. Mr. Montoiro informed that the UNCCD developed an e-learning course on desertification with the assistance of the Earth Council and confirmed the willingness to contribute to this initiative. Mr. Chambers offered to assist in linking UNU to this project. Mr. Keil supported the idea of bringing the MEA University into the discussions of the Steering Committee as it may prevent the development of similar tools in isolation among other MEAs. Ms Burhenne supported the project idea and encouraged linkages with the environmental law programme of IUCN and Ecolex. The session was closed proposing an additional recommendation by the group.

### **□ Strategy towards sustained funding**

Mr. Chambers provided an overview of DELC’s support to this process over the last year and the prioritization of this project within DELC for the coming year. He also mentioned the support voiced

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.unccd.int/prais/>

by the Heads of MEAs and stated that he considers discussions related to MEA synergies as creating a favorable environment for the project. He concluded that much has been achieved during the proof of concept phase and that the next priority will be to make the project sustainable.

Mr. Kamea stated that he will take the outcomes from this meeting to the members of the UNEP KM Committee for discussion and alignment in areas of mutual support. With regard to funding, he mentioned that there may be possibilities for funding from UNEP in support of the project.

Mr. Chambers underlined that it would be beneficial to promote COP decisions recognizing the work of this Steering Committee, as it would make the funding efforts much easier. Mr. de Munck agreed that specific decisions or resolutions in support of the initiative could increase opportunities for funding. He also proposed the establishment of a trust fund for all MEAs on IKM administered by UNEP. Mr. Sokolovsky noted that some countries have historically supported projects related to ICTs and that it may be an opportune moment to introduce and explain the project to these Parties.

Mr. Addison raised the possibility of contacting the United Nations Foundation to explore possibilities of funding. He added that information package summarizing the benefits and achievements of the project would assist in raising awareness of the project and perhaps also increase opportunities for funding. Mr. Sokolovsky added that the IKM Toolkit could also serve as an information package. Mr. Wood agreed with this suggestion and reminded participants of the difficulty in raising awareness on topics that are technical and little understood.

Mr. Addison referred to Item 3.3.1 of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) which aims to accelerate: “support for the development of a search engine on critical environmental information and relevant material ... “. Mr. Kamea clarified that this funding is channeled through UN country teams as part of the UNDAF process. Mr. Silva proposed any remaining funds from the budget used in the development of the proof of concept project be used to seed new projects.

Mr. Chambers concluded discussion by proposing the development of a fund raising strategy to guide individual and joint fund raising efforts. He suggested that prioritizing activities and projects may assist in developing a fund raising strategy. There was consensus in the meeting that continued development of the InforMEA portal be given priority.

#### □ **Hosting and longer term plan for the Pilot Project “InforMEA”**

Mr. Olivier de Munck noted that with regard to the long term planning of the project, it would be useful to draft a strategic vision which would include explanatory text on the agreed categories of information, the analytical index and other knowledge tools developed and made available through the portal. The meeting agreed that the strategic vision should focus on benefits to Parties and the environmental community.

While Mr. Pereira offered that the Stockholm Convention continued to host InforMEA, he cautioned that, as the system increases in complexity and size, the cost of migrating away from M-Files may increase. Mr. Kabiru then provided an overview of the hosting options available, within the UNEP ICT infrastructure and with commercial providers. He explained that UNEP will host partnerships under different domain names, such as [www.informe.org](http://www.informe.org).

Discussions focused on the advantages and disadvantages of hosting with commercial providers. Mr. Addison underlined the competitiveness of commercial options while Mr. Keil noted some of the

issues associated with hosting of data outside of the UN ICT infrastructure. Mr. Silva closed the session by referring further technical discussions to the Working Group.

□ **Review of Recommendations of the 1<sup>st</sup> Steering Committee Meeting and of the Draft TORs of the Steering Committee**

In this session of the meeting, participants reviewed the draft recommendations and Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee. Final drafts of the documents will be circulated to the Steering Committee for presentation to their respective Heads of Conventions.

□ **Address by Executive Secretary of the Stockholm Convention and co-Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention, Mr. Donald Cooper**

The co-Chairs welcomed Mr. Donald Cooper and invited him to address the meeting.

Mr. Donald Cooper described the MEA IKM initiative and the InforMEA portal as key tools available to MEAs that will assist Parties in more effectively meeting their obligations. He stressed that the ability to better manage and use more efficiently information hosted by different Secretariats will generate many benefits, particularly with regard to the development of knowledge tools needed by Parties. He also spoke on the importance of Knowledge Management (KM) beyond the use of technology. Mr. Cooper noted that knowledge management offers the means to safeguard and share expertise and better coordinate efforts in the UN.

Mr. Cooper also stressed that individuals remain the best source of expertise. Their knowledge and experience are more important than the many physical and monetary resources held by an organization. He stressed that a priority for investment should be in ensuring that the knowledge held by staff is not lost to the organization.

He expressed his gratitude to UNEP Executive Director, Mr. Achim Steiner, for articulating a new vision for UNEP and for his support to Mr. Kante and his team in coordinating and assisting the MEA IKM project. He emphasized the constructive approach of UNEP which engaged MEAs in an inclusive manner from the start of this initiative. He reiterated that the beneficiaries of the project will be Parties and stakeholders. He agreed that there are many challenges in securing the requisite funding to sustain the project, but stated that such challenges could be overcome. He offered the example of synergies in the Chemicals and Wastes Conventions as a possible successful guide for the future implementation of the project. He concluded his address by inviting participants to think beyond limitations, indeed, to think BIG. He stressed that this did not mean ignoring realities, but that such realities should not prevent innovative thinking. He appealed to the group to use the current momentum to its maximum, and to concentrate on strategic projects. On behalf of the Chemicals and Wastes Conventions, he expressed full support for the project and wished it the best of success.

After the concluding remarks of the co-chairs, the group took the opportunity to wish Mr. Cooper the best of possible birthdays.

\*\*\*

Annex I	–	Participants List, Agenda, Steering Committee Membership
Annex II	–	Recommendations of the 1 <sup>st</sup> MEA IKM Steering Committee Meeting
Annex III	–	Terms of Reference of the MEA IKM Steering Committee
Annex IV	–	Membership of the MEA IKM Steering Committee as at June 2010
Presentations	–	1-10 will be available together with the report on <a href="http://www.cbd.int/mea/ikm">www.cbd.int/mea/ikm</a>