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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

First meeting

Montreal, Canada, 28-30 October 2015

REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE ON ITS FIRST MEETING

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. At its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (COP-MOP) considered progress made and experience gained during the pilot phase of the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Clearing-House and adopted decision NP-1/2. In paragraph 7 of the decision, COP-MOP requested the Executive Secretary to implement the ABS Clearing-House, in line with available resources, and in accordance with the modalities of operation (decision NP-1/2, annex) and feedback received, in particular that of Parties.

2. The COP-MOP established an informal advisory committee (IAC) to assist the Executive Secretary with the implementation of the ABS Clearing-House and to provide technical guidance with respect to the resolution of technical and practical issues arising from the ongoing development of the ABS Clearing-House. The IAC would be composed of 15 experts, primarily from Parties, selected on the basis of nominations from Parties (decision NP-1/2, para. 2).

3. The COP-MOP also decided that the IAC would hold at least one meeting in the coming intersessional period, as well as informal online discussions, as needed, and address technical issues related to feedback received, including issues related to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué, and report on the outcomes of its work to the second meeting of COP-MOP (decision NP-1/2, para. 3).

4. The first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House was held in Montreal, Canada, from 28 to 30 October 2015. A joint session was conducted on 30 October with the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide advice on issues of common interest.

B. Attendance

5. By notification 2014-127 of 4 November 2014 and a reminder notification dated 3 December 2014, Parties to the Nagoya Protocol were invited to nominate an expert for the IAC. Given the small number of nominations received by the original deadline of 15 December 2014, the deadline for nominations was extended to 30 January 2015 through notification 2014-140 of 17 December 2014. On the basis of the nominations received from Parties to the Protocol, participants were selected taking into account regional balance, relevant experience and engagement in the ABS Clearing-House in accordance

with decision NP-1/2, paragraph 2. The composition of the IAC was announced by notification 2015-03-23.

6. The meeting of the IAC to the ABS Clearing-House was attended by experts nominated by Belarus, Benin, Denmark, the European Union, Hungary, Mexico, Peru, South Africa and Switzerland. The experts from India, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Madagascar, who had been selected and invited, were unable to attend the meeting.

7. The joint session held on 30 October 2015 was attended by additional experts from the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism nominated by Belgium, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, France, Jamaica, Mexico and Morocco.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

8. The meeting was opened at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, 28 October 2015, by Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Mr. Dias welcomed the participants and thanked them for their participation. He informed participants that 68 Parties had ratified or acceded to the Protocol and expressed confidence that that number would rise to 100 by the second meeting of COP-MOP, in December 2016. In that regard, he invited participants to assist in promoting ratification to achieve that goal. He noted that, as the implementation of the Protocol advanced, there was a greater understanding as to how the ABS Clearing-House could contribute to enhancing legal certainty and transparency on procedures for access and benefit-sharing, and for monitoring the utilization of genetic resources along the value chain. He also emphasized that the Secretariat had taken into account ongoing feedback from Parties and users, and that progress made during the year had aimed at improving the functionality and user friendliness of the system, while also better integrating the system with the overall clearing-house mechanism of the Convention. He confirmed that the Secretariat would continue working to ensure that the ABS Clearing-House created the clarity, transparency and legal certainty that all Parties were seeking. Mr. Dias expressed his gratitude to the European Union and the Japan Biodiversity Fund for their continued support to the ABS Clearing-House. He also highlighted the importance of the joint meeting of the IAC to the ABS Clearing-House and to the CBD clearing-house mechanism as providing an opportunity for common dialogue on matters of common interest. He affirmed the key role played by the IAC in advancing the development of the ABS Clearing-House and invited participation through contributions, feedback, and guidance to resolve issues arising from the ongoing development of the ABS Clearing-House.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

9. Mr. Christopher Lyal (nominated by Denmark) was elected Chair of the meeting.

10. On the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/1) prepared by the Secretariat, the Informal Advisory Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters.
3. Report on progress in the implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.
4. Collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations for the exchange of relevant data.
5. Priorities for future implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.
6. Other matters.
7. Adoption of the report.
8. Closure of the meeting.

11. The meeting agreed on the organization of its work as proposed in annex II to the annotated provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/1/Add.1).

ITEM 3. REPORT ON PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

A. Informal Advisory Committee to the ABS Clearing-House

12. The Secretariat presented the progress made in the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House¹ with respect to the following issues:

1. *Central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House*

13. The Secretariat presented an overview of the development and progress made in the implementation of the central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House. The presentation focused on the major recent changes and improvements to the back-end server infrastructure followed by a demonstration of the main sections of the ABS Clearing-House highlighting its main functionalities.

2. *Common formats for submitting information to the ABS Clearing-House*

14. The Secretariat first introduced the ABS measures common format and presented the new functionalities for displaying an ABS measures matrix providing an overview of the key ABS elements of the national ABS legal framework in the country profile. The presentation described the suggested approach for displaying regional and multilateral measures in the ABS Clearing-House.

15. The Secretariat then presented the new common formats on: (a) model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines, and best practices and/or standards; and (b) community protocols, and customary laws and procedures (see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/INF/1).

16. Finally, the Secretariat introduced the common formats on: (a) capacity-building and development initiatives (activity/project/programme); and (b) capacity-building and development resources, which would be further discussed in the joint session of the IAC to the clearing-house mechanism and the IAC to the ABS Clearing-House (see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/INF/1).

17. The Chair invited the IAC to consider and provide comments on the existing common formats, in particular the common formats for submitting information on permits or their equivalent constituting an internationally recognized certificate of compliance (IRCC) and the information for the checkpoint communiqué (CPC).

3. *Provision of timely technical assistance and receiving feedback*

18. The Secretariat reported on the activities carried out during the first phase of the outreach and engagement campaign, which included webinars, trainings, technical assistance and surveys to collect feedback from Parties. The Secretariat also highlighted the work done to improve the online help tools available, such as the frequently asked questions, the automated guided tours and the implementation of a training website, and presented the proposed priorities for the second phase of the outreach and engagement campaign.

4. *Operationalization of the ABS Clearing-House in the six official languages of the United Nations*

19. The Secretariat presented the progress made on the operationalization of the ABS Clearing-House in the six official languages of the United Nations. The Secretariat highlighted the fact that, once the ABS Clearing-House was translated into all official languages, the cost and complexity of making certain types

¹ For more information, see section II of the note by the Executive Secretary on progress and priorities for future implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/2).

of changes to the website would increase significantly. Taking that into account, the Secretariat proposed a stepwise approach to the translation of the different components of the website.

5. *Exchange of information with other databases or systems*

20. The Secretariat presented the Application Programming Interface (API) of the ABS Clearing-House and explained the importance of making full use of the possibilities and opportunities that interoperability could offer. It was noted that, in order to achieve that goal, it was necessary to: (a) improve API documentation and provide examples of how it could be used; (b) provide developer and technical support; and (c) develop awareness-raising materials with a view to assisting Parties and other Governments and organizations in understanding how to interact with the API service and its benefits.

21. A discussion followed the presentation of progress made on each of the issues, and the outcomes of the discussions are summarized under item 5 below (see paras. 34-80).

B. Joint session of the informal advisory committees to the CBD clearing-house mechanism and the ABS Clearing-House

22. During the joint session held on 30 October 2015, the informal advisory committees to the CBD clearing-house mechanism and to the ABS Clearing-House considered issues of common interest. The experts welcomed the initiative and noted that it was an important step towards enhancing integration and coherence among all CBD websites and platforms.

23. The joint session started with presentations by the Secretariat on progress made on the CBD clearing-house mechanism and the ABS Clearing-House, with a view to briefing each of the informal advisory committees on their respective ongoing work.

24. During the joint session, the informal advisory committees were invited to consider issues as described below.

1. *Online reporting tool for submitting information on progress towards national targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets*

25. The Secretariat reported on the progress made on the online reporting tool and initial feedback received from users, and explained the relation between the online reporting tool, which was currently voluntary in nature, and national reporting under the Convention.

2. *Common formats for capacity-building resources and initiatives (activity/project/programme)*

26. The Secretariat first provided an overview of all common formats made available through the CBD clearing-house mechanism, in particular the new common format for submitting information through the virtual library. The Secretariat then presented the common formats developed for capacity-building resources and initiatives (see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/INF/1), noting the areas of the common formats that were cross-cutting for both clearing-houses.

3. *Preliminary draft web strategy*

27. The Secretariat provided an overview of the preliminary draft web strategy document (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/INF/2), highlighting the strategic vision, the current situation and the way forward, deliverables and an implementation road map. The Secretariat emphasized the importance of adapting the web strategy to the needs of Parties and users and explained the process envisioned for improving the draft web strategy with a view to having it finalized for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting, to be held in Montreal, Canada, from 2 to 6 May 2016.

4. *Additional joint issues*

28. The Chair introduced additional issues of common interest. In particular, the Chair invited the experts to consider: (a) ways to ensure coherence and the best use of the controlled vocabulary common to the CBD clearing-house mechanism, the ABS Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(b) evaluating the need for CBD web development projects, including the ABS Clearing-House, to support legacy versions of the most widely used Internet browsers in addition to the versions currently supported (Internet Explorer 9 and above, FireFox and Chrome).

29. The presentations by the Secretariat and considerations introduced by the Chair were followed by discussions. The main points raised are summarized under agenda item 5 below (see paras. 34-80).

ITEM 4. COLLABORATION WITH RELEVANT INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF RELEVANT DATA

30. Presentations were made regarding recent developments in the information systems of relevant instruments and organizations, as well as progress made in the collaboration for the exchange of relevant data and linkages between these systems and the ABS Clearing-House.

31. Mr. Kent Nnadozie, Senior Treaty Officer of the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), delivered a presentation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of ITPGRFA. The IAC advised the Secretariat to continue exploring means of collaboration for the exchange of data and linkages as experience was gained in the operation of the Global Information System and the ABS Clearing-House with a view to supporting the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and ITPGRFA in a mutually supportive manner. The possibility of including information regarding the membership of Parties and other Governments to ITPGRFA in the country profile was discussed and the experts agreed to revisit this issue at a later stage.

32. Mr. Olivier de Munck from the Secretariat then presented an overview of the United Nations Information Platform on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA) and provided a tour of its website (<http://www.informe.org>). The experts welcomed the initiative of making available information on multilateral environmental agreements in a single website. However, experts noted inconsistencies and errors in the available information and emphasized the importance of ensuring the accuracy of all the information made available through the InforMEA website.

33. The final presentation was made by Mr. Christopher Lyal on the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms and the World Federation for Culture Collections. The IAC advised the Secretariat to continue exploring means of enhancing collaboration to facilitate the exchange of information as further experience was acquired in monitoring the utilization of genetic resources through the ABS Clearing-House.

ITEM 5. PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

A. Informal Advisory Committee to the ABS Clearing-House

34. In the light of the presentations by the Secretariat on progress made on the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing House under agenda item 3, experts provided guidance to the Secretariat with respect to future priorities.

35. The Chair informed the experts that the Secretariat would take the report into consideration when making further changes to the ABS Clearing-House.

36. The following summarizes the technical guidance provided by the IAC with respect to the resolution of technical and practical issues as well as advice on priorities for future collaboration and implementation of the ABS Clearing-House.

1. Central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House

37. The experts emphasized the importance of having a user-friendly ABS Clearing-House and advised the Secretariat, when further developing the web pages of the ABS Clearing-House, to consider the following:

- (a) In relation to the general layout and design:
 - (i) Improving the overall website by making it more intuitive and user-friendly;
 - (ii) Improving the responsive design on small screen sizes, such as tablets and mobile phones;
 - (iii) Evaluating the need to support legacy browsers and the potential associated costs;
 - (iv) Improving the visibility of clickable links and buttons and providing consistent visual cues throughout the ABS Clearing-House;
 - (v) Including a map for visualizing country information made available through the ABS Clearing-House;
 - (vi) Improving the keyword search function in the search filters;
 - (vii) Improving the spacing in the display of information on the ABS Clearing-House and in the design of the forms for submission of information;
- (b) In relation to the ABS Clearing-House home page (absch.cbd.int):
 - (i) Improving the home page including the display of the record overview, and clearly distinguishing between national records and reference records;
 - (ii) Improving the visibility and accessibility of country profile information;
- (c) In relation to the “Find Information” page (absch.cbd.int/find):
 - (i) More clearly defining the “national records” and “reference records” categories and their different status in the ABS Clearing-House;
 - (ii) Improving the visibility and visual design of the page for finding information;
 - (iii) Providing a single harmonized way of finding information;
- (d) In relation to the Country profile search page (absch.cbd.int/search/countries):
 - (i) Distinguishing between Parties, Non-Parties and countries that have ratified but are not yet Parties;
 - (ii) Including the dates of signature, ratification and entry into force on the country profile search page;
 - (iii) Providing the option to download reports of ABS Clearing-House records;
 - (iv) Providing a link from the ABS Clearing-House country profile to the CBD country profile and vice versa;
- (e) In relation to the “National Records” search page (absch.cbd.int/search/national-records):
 - (i) Improving the protection of email contact details in the ABS Clearing-House and, thus, reducing the risk of spam;
 - (ii) Removing contact details of authorized users involved in the creation and publication of records in the ABS Clearing-House;
- (f) In relation to the “Reference Records” search page (absch.cbd.int/search/reference-records),
 - (i) Sorting, by default, reference records according to most recent entry;
 - (ii) Clearly identifying records coming from databases maintained by the Secretariat, such as meetings, notifications, press releases, statements and news;
 - (iii) Exploring ways of dealing with outdated records.

38. With respect to the availability of some contact details under the ABS Clearing-House, the IAC members were invited to investigate possible conflicts with data protection legislation in some countries, and it was suggested that the IAC revert to that issue at its next meeting.

39. In the light of the above discussions and suggestions, it was agreed that mock-ups of the improvements relating to the home page, finding information and country profiles would be made available on the discussion forum by 30 November 2015. Experts would then be invited to provide feedback by 15 January 2016.

2. *Common formats for submitting information to the ABS Clearing-House*

40. The experts discussed the common formats proposed for facilitating the submission of information to the ABS Clearing House.

41. In that context, the experts noted the need to further review the list of thematic areas to ensure that it would be user-friendly and would collect useful information. They advised revising the thematic areas as follows:

- (a) Providing further guidance on the meaning of the terminology used in the thematic areas;
- (b) Modifying the “domestic species” thematic area, under “type of organism”, to read “domesticated and cultivated species”;
- (c) Reorganizing the “area of access to genetic resource” grouping according to three main categories: in situ; ex-situ; and soil and/or water samples;
- (d) Modifying the subheading “users of genetic resources” to read “uses of genetic resources”;
- (e) Making the “botanical and horticultural sectors”, under “users of genetic resources” two different thematic areas and modifying the term to read “botanicals”;
- (f) Considering the inclusion of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) under “relevant international agreements, instruments and organizations” and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) as one of the thematic areas;

42. The IAC agreed to provide further guidance on a revised mock-up version of the thematic area list, to be prepared by the Secretariat, through the online discussion forum.

- (a) *Legislative, administrative or policy measures on access and benefit-sharing*

43. The experts advised revising the format as follows:

- (a) Using questions to better clarify whether the measures cover access, benefit-sharing and/or compliance according to Articles 15 to 18 of the Protocol in the section on elements of the measures with a view to facilitating searches and the identification of relevant records;
- (b) Providing options for filling in the different sub-elements included under “scope” according to whether the measures cover access, benefit-sharing or compliance;
- (c) Including an option in the description of the scope of the measure for selecting all types of genetic resources and all areas of access to genetic resources.

44. The IAC agreed that regional or multilateral measures would only be registered once in the ABS Clearing-House and that each of the countries identified through the submission form as being covered by the regional or multilateral measure would have the measure displayed as part of their legal framework in their country profile.

45. It was recommended that in the case of measures at the level of the European Union, the European Commission would register the measure on behalf of all its Member States and would upload the translation of the measure in all the official languages of the European Union. For other regional

measures, it was recommended that one country should agree to register the measure on behalf of the regional organization or the group of countries that share the same measure.

46. The IAC also advised the Secretariat to provide guidance and feedback on submissions regarding regional or multilateral measures when further developing the ABS Clearing-House.

47. The IAC agreed to provide further guidance on a revised mock-up version of the common format and on the elements of the measure (matrix) to be prepared by the Secretariat, through the online discussion forum. The IAC will also consider the possibility of adding new search filters in accordance with the agreed common format.

(b) *Model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines, and best practices and/or standards*

48. The experts advised revising the format as follows:

(a) Providing the option to clearly identify whether model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices and/or standards are sectoral or cross-sectoral, and whether they address the transfer/exchange of genetic resources;

(b) Allowing the possibility for publishing authorities to indicate codes of conduct, guidelines, and best practices and/or standards (Article 20) submitted as reference records that have been endorsed by national/domestic authorities and reflecting the endorsement on the display of the record. The functionality should include the option to remove the indication of such endorsement.

49. The experts also raised the possibility of employing a similar mechanism for indicating model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines, and best practices and/or standards that might in future be adopted by COP-MOP; they agreed to revisit the issue at a later stage.

50. In the context of those discussions, the experts advised revising the ABS measures format as follows:

(a) Providing the option to clearly identify whether a model contractual clause is included in an ABS measure under the elements of the measure;

(b) Distinguishing guidelines that are submitted under national records (as part of the legal framework) from guidelines that are submitted under reference records, by qualifying the former as national or domestic guidelines.

51. Finally, the experts advised revising the search function to allow searches for model contractual clauses (Article 19) to retrieve both national and reference records.

(c) *Community protocols, and customary laws and procedures*

52. The experts noted that community protocols and customary laws and procedures could be made available under either national records or reference records; thus, they advised revising the search function to allow searches for community protocols and customary laws and procedures to retrieve both national and reference records.

53. They also advised revising the format to allow the possibility for publishing authorities to indicate whether the community protocols and customary laws and procedures submitted as reference records have been endorsed by national/domestic authorities, and reflecting the endorsement in the display of the record. The functionality should include the option to remove the indication of such endorsement.

(d) *Online tool for submission of the interim national report for the Nagoya Protocol*

54. The experts advised revising the text added in questions 61 and 62 of the interim national report to better reflect paragraph 8 of decision NP 1/7 on resource mobilization for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol adopted at the first meeting of COP-MOP.

55. It was agreed that the IAC will provide further guidance on technical aspects related to the online implementation of the interim national report, through the online discussion forum.

(e) *Permit or its equivalent constituting an internationally recognized certificate of compliance*

56. The experts advised revising the format as follows:

- (a) Improving the introductory text, in particular, regarding issues of confidentiality;
- (b) Improving the way that the list of existing contacts is displayed in order to facilitate their selection when creating new records;
- (c) Modifying the “subject-matter” subheading, to read “subject-matter or genetic resources”;
- (d) Modifying question 15 of the offline common format, “subject-matter or genetic resources covered by the permit or its equivalent”, to accurately reflect the online version (two different sections);
- (e) Increasing the visibility of the fact that information submitted to the ABS Clearing-House will be made public and therefore should not contain confidential information, including when uploading a copy of the permit or its equivalent.

57. During the discussions, the experts noted that the issue of using the internationally recognized certificate of compliance to cover traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources might deserve further consideration by COP-MOP.

(f) *Information for the checkpoint communiqué*

58. The experts advised revising the format as follows:

- (a) Clarifying the language in question 14, “person or entity utilizing the genetic resource at the checkpoint”;
- (b) Adding the option to include the date of access to the genetic resource as a voluntary field.

59. In the context of those discussions, the experts advised to review the country profile with a view to providing more clarity regarding the terminology used to describe the concept of “checkpoint communiqué sent” and “checkpoint communiqué received”.

60. The experts discussed different issues related to the checkpoint communiqué, including the possibility of including more options for providing information on the “source of the genetic resource” in the common format. However, it was also decided to avoid recommending too many changes at that point and to revisit both the “checkpoint communiqué” and the “internationally recognized certificate of compliance” common formats at a later stage once Parties had had more experience with their use.

(g) *Further guidance on revised common formats through the online forum*

61. Further to discussions and suggestions made to the thematic areas under common formats and to the common format on legislative, administrative or policy measures, it was agreed that revised mock-up versions of these formats would be made available on the discussion forum by 30 November 2015. Experts would then be invited to provide feedback by 15 January 2016.

62. With respect to the common formats on the interim national report, the IAC was invited to provide further comments by 15 January 2016.

3. *Provision of timely technical assistance and receiving feedback*

63. The priorities proposed by the Secretariat for the second phase of the outreach and engagement campaign during the presentation were as follows:

- (a) To encourage the designation of publishing authorities;

(b) To encourage the submission of national information by providing technical support and raising awareness of the ABS Clearing-House, in accordance with Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Nagoya Protocol;

(c) To provide timely technical assistance and follow-up, on demand;

(d) Provide technical support and follow-up for the registration of competent national authorities and ABS measures, as a priority, as well as for the submission of information on the permit or its equivalent constituting an internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the interim national report;

(e) To further develop capacity-building materials and resources for registering information in the ABS Clearing-House, including by developing an e-learning module;

(f) To engage with partners, organizations and representatives of indigenous and local communities for registering reference records, such as Virtual Library resources, capacity-building initiatives, and resources, with a view to making the ABS Clearing-House the central hub of knowledge for access and benefit-sharing;

(g) To promote the training website and engage with capacity-building providers for increasing awareness and capacity about the ABS Clearing-House;

(h) To seek feedback from potential users of the ABS Clearing-House, including indigenous and local communities as well as other relevant stakeholders, on the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House;

(i) To provide technical assistance for the use of the application programming interface (API) to facilitate interoperability.

64. During the discussion, the IAC recalled that Parties to the Protocol had an obligation to share the national information identified under Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Protocol through the ABS Clearing-House and emphasized the need for Parties to make it available through the ABS Clearing-House as soon as possible.

65. The IAC agreed to provide further feedback, as necessary, on the online help tools presented, on implementation of the training website, and on needs for capacity-building materials or guidance for the ABS Clearing-House on the online discussion forum. It was also agreed that the IAC would provide guidance on the priorities proposed by the Secretariat, as necessary, on the online discussion forum.

4. *Operationalization of the ABS Clearing-House in the six official languages of the United Nations*

66. The Secretariat proposed a stepwise approach for advancing the translation of the website, starting with those components for which more experience and feedback had been gathered and stability could be better ensured in terms of their content, design and functioning. In that regard, the Secretariat suggested proceeding with the translation of the different ABS Clearing-House components in the following order:

- (a) Common formats for national records:
 - (i) Competent National Authority;
 - (ii) Legislative, administrative or policy measures on access and benefit-sharing;
 - (iii) Interim national report;
 - (iv) Checkpoint;
 - (v) Information on permits or its equivalent constituting an internationally recognized certificate of compliance;
 - (vi) Information for the checkpoint communiqué;
 - (vii) National website or database;

- (b) Web pages:
 - (i) Home page;
 - (ii) Find information section;
 - (iii) Country profile section;
 - (iv) Submit information section;
 - (v) Help section;
- (c) Common formats for reference records:
 - (i) Model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices (Articles 19 and 20);
 - (ii) Community protocols and procedures and customary laws;
 - (iii) Virtual library and capacity-building resources;
 - (iv) Capacity-building and development initiatives (activity/project/programme).

67. The IAC agreed to provide further feedback through the online IAC discussion forum on the priorities for translation proposed by the Secretariat, as necessary, by 30 November 2015.

5. *Exchange of information with other databases or systems*

68. The IAC acknowledged the advantages and potential of API and the need for some general awareness raising and technical support to facilitate and promote the use of API.

B. Joint session of the informal advisory committees to the CBD clearing-house mechanism and to the ABS Clearing-House

69. The following summarizes the technical guidance provided by experts during the joint session of the informal advisory committees to the CBD clearing-house mechanism and to the ABS Clearing-House, held on 30 October 2015, on issues of common interest.

1. *Online reporting tool for submitting information on progress towards national targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets*

70. Following the presentation made by the Secretariat during the joint session, the experts noted the progress made on the online reporting tool for submitting information on progress towards national targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including Target 16. With a view to finalizing the online reporting tool as soon as possible, the experts provided the Secretariat with the following guidance:

- (a) Review the feedback received from the Informal Advisory Committee to the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention (see UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/3) and other Parties and set implementation priorities by mid-November with a view to making the online reporting tool available for official submissions by the end of the year;
- (b) Investigate ways to present the submitted information in an effective and attractive way, taking into consideration the expectations and requirements of all users;
- (c) Clarify the modalities for online submissions to the central clearing-house mechanism, in particular with respect to the role of the CHM National Focal Point, and in line with existing modalities for the Biosafety Clearing-House and the ABS Clearing-House;
- (d) Provide alternate procedures for submission by Parties having limited access to the Internet.

2. *Common formats for capacity-building resources and initiatives (activity/project/programme)*

67. Following the presentation made by the Secretariat, the experts welcomed the draft common formats and advised proceeding with the implementation of the common formats on capacity-building resources and initiatives discussed by the IAC on Capacity-building for the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CB-IAC/2015/1/3), as follows:

- (a) Including the possibility of selecting ex situ collections as a main target group(s)/beneficiaries;
- (b) Providing the facility to relate the capacity-building resource or initiative to one or more Aichi Targets;
- (c) Adding a word limit to the field for describing “summary, abstract, or table of contents” in the common format for submitting capacity-building resources;
- (d) Removing “ABS” from the title of the common format on capacity-building initiatives considering that the common format would apply to capacity-building initiatives beyond those related to ABS;
- (e) Modifying the options included under question 7 of the common format on capacity-building initiatives to read “agencies/organization” in order to be more consistent with the question “agency(ies) or organization(s) implementing and/or executing the initiative”; and providing the possibility of entering free text to include information on “collaborating partners”.

71. The experts suggested that the approach for submitting and displaying regional initiatives could be similar to that agreed for regional/multilateral measures. In accordance with guidance provided by the IAC on Capacity-building for the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CB-IAC/2015/1/3, para. 48), the experts noted that the organizations or agencies involved in the project could play a leading role in submitting information on capacity-building initiatives, particularly regarding those projects that are global or regional in their scope, while recognizing that Governments would also play a role in registering national projects in the ABS Clearing-House.

72. The experts expressed the need to consider means for avoiding duplication in the submission of information.

73. It was recognized that there was a need to further consider which filters would be more useful for searching information submitted through the common formats and how the information could be displayed, and participants agreed that those aspects could be better considered once the common formats were reflected online.

74. Experts noted that it would be useful to allow for the sharing of information on capacity-building opportunities through the CBD clearing-house mechanism and the ABS Clearing-House.

3. *Preliminary draft web strategy*

75. Following the presentation of the Secretariat on the preliminary draft web strategy, the experts welcomed the document prepared by the Secretariat and advised that it be revised as follows:

- (a) Provide further information on matters related to interoperability and its application programming interface (API);
- (b) Take into account the specificities of the Nagoya Protocol and the ABS Clearing-House in terms of users and user needs;
- (c) Identify the core controlled vocabularies needed to allow a global search engine to retrieve all common or relevant information from the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols;
- (d) Provide estimates of the time and/or funding needed to implement each potential deliverable;
- (e) Include the relevant elements of the communication strategy, including social media aspects;
- (f) Outline a policy for clarifying which web browsers are supported.

76. In that regard, the members of the IAC noted that it was already providing the Executive Secretary with guidance to ensure that the ABS Clearing-House and its functionalities supported the implementation of the Protocol and adapted to the needs of Parties and different user groups. It was further noted that the web strategy should take into account the guidance already provided for the development of the ABS Clearing-House and its current functionalities.

77. The experts agreed to provide further guidance on the draft preliminary website strategy by 31 December 2015 through a joint online forum to be set up by the Secretariat.

4. *Additional joint issues*

78. The experts considered additional issues of common interest.

79. The experts considered ways to ensure coherence and best use of the controlled vocabulary used across the CBD clearing-house mechanism, the ABS Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House. After some discussions, the experts agreed to consider the issue at a later stage.

80. The experts also expressed concern regarding the fact that the information technology infrastructure currently employed by the ABS Clearing-House, which would eventually host the CBD website and other platforms, would require additional development to support legacy versions of the most widely used Internet browsers. They advised the Secretariat to (a) provide an estimate of the development costs to support legacy browser versions and (b) collect information on the extent of the problem based on feedback from users and analytics of the external use of the ABS Clearing-House, including the number of visitors and browsers used, to allow the IACs to provide guidance on the way forward.

ITEM 6. OTHER MATTERS

81. The Chair invited the experts to raise any other relevant issues that were not addressed during the previous discussions. No additional issues were raised by the experts.

ITEM 7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

82. The Chair introduced the draft report of the meeting, which was adopted as orally amended.

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

83. The Chair made some closing remarks expressing his appreciation for the constructive and insightful contributions and the work done by the Secretariat in the ABS Clearing-House and in preparation for the meeting. He thanked the IAC for the advice and guidance that had been delivered and noted the productive efforts that had been made over the preceding three days. He thanked the European Union and the Japan Biodiversity Fund for their financial contribution to the Secretariat, which had enabled the progress made in the ABS Clearing-House.

84. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed at 6 p.m. on Friday, 30 October 2015.
