



CBD



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**Report on the International Expert Meeting on  
"Building the Clearing-House"  
25-29 June 1997, Bonn, Germany**

**SUBMITTED BY THE GERMAN FEDERAL AGENCY FOR  
NATURE CONSERVATION**

(Cover letter from Germany)

**International Expert Meeting on  
"Building the Clearing-House"  
25-29 June 1997, Bonn, Germany**

1. From 25 to 29 June 1997 40 experts from 18 countries met at the University of Bonn, Germany, for the international Expert Meeting "Building the Clearing House". The Convention Secretariat was represented as well as the EU, FAO, UNESCO, the Secretariates of the UN-Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Bonn Convention as well as a number of NGO, e.g. IUCN and the German NGO-Working Group on Biological Diversity.
2. The workshop was hosted by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with support from the Commission of the European Union.
3. The objective of the meeting was to elaborate concrete recommendations for the functioning of a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The list of participants is annexed.
4. The expert meeting recognizes that the objectives on the Convention on Biological Diversity require more than facilitating access to existing data and information, but also needs, inter alia, the active collection of new data and information.
5. Priority should be given to information management including, inter alia, the use of Internet and development of WWW pages.
6. Capacity building efforts should identify the needs and priorities of Contracting Parties and may require infrastructure development, training and data-base development.
7. The recommendations of the meeting are also supposed to assist the four regional workshops for the establishment of the CHM which will be organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Further the recommendations are to be presented to the 3rd meeting of SBSTTA, September 1997 in Montreal.

**COP guidance**

8. The first meeting of the COP decided to implement the establishment of a CHM to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. (see: decision I/3)
9. The COP at its second meeting decided to launch the establishment of the CHM through a pilot-phase extended until December 1998. (see: decision II/3 and decision III/4)
10. The Secretariat of the CBD was charged with acting as the focal point for the pilot-phase (decision II/3).

11. The COP requested the GEF to support activities related to capacity building for the implementation of the CHM in developing countries including training and country-driven pilot-projects focused on priority areas which would enable developing countries to begin implementing the pilot phase of the CHM (decision III/4).
12. The COP decided that the CHM should gradually build up its functions in response to a clearly identified demand based on experience gained and available resources, and that the CHM should be a decentralised mechanism using resources such as print and electronic media including the internet (decision II/3).
13. The COP also decided that the Secretariat should encourage the development of a network of active partners and support partners in developing specific training for the effective participation of users in the CHM network (decision II/3).
14. The COP requested governments and other relevant institutions to facilitate regional workshops with a view to identifying needs for scientific and technical information and modalities to deliver such information (dec. III/4).
15. The COP agreed that the clearing-house mechanism shall be assisted in its functioning by an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, which will guide and integrate the development of the pilot phase activities and endeavour to ensure that all Parties can participate in the pilot phase of the CHM.

### **Guiding principles**

16. It was recognised that the CHM is still in the pilot-phase reflecting an ongoing process of development of its structure and content. The CHM is to be built up step-by-step, based on the lessons learned and the experiences gained by the NFPs. The process of the development of the CHM should be open, dynamic, flexible, intuitive, and practical.

### **Working Group 1 - CHM structure**

#### **The need to develop a clear and common structure**

17. The need for a clear structure was identified to facilitate navigation and identification of the required information within the CHM.
18. Further, it was recommended that a common structure based on agreed binding elements be used by the CHM-National Focal Points (NFPs) and the Secretariat of the Convention. This would have value to create a CHM-identity among the national CHMs.

**Recommendations on a clear and common structure**

19. On a general scale two distinct "roles" were identified emphasizing the tasks of information structuring (content) of:

- (i) the Secretariat and
- (ii) the NFPs.

20. The Secretariat should be responsible for summarizing information on the global level. The NFPs should focus on organizing information at the national level.

21. An overall binding element for the Secretariat as well as the NFPs is the CHM-logo. This logo helps to create a "CHM-identity".

22. Specifically, it is necessary for the NFPs to agree that, along with the national native language(s), English should be used to present core information. In addition, the use of a common style of title (introductory page to the CHM homepage) is recommended.

23. The minimum common binding elements identified as main descriptors to facilitate identification of information through the CHM are presented as follows:

Secretariat	National Focal Points
<p><u>Basic elements</u> (see also Secretariats homepage; <a href="http://www.biodiv.org">http://www.biodiv.org</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COP</li> <li>• SBSTTA</li> <li>• List of National Focal Points</li> <li>• Secretariat</li> <li>• CHM</li> <li>• Thematical focal points</li> <li>• Top issues</li> <li>• GEF and additional financial resources</li> <li>• Related conventions</li> </ul>	<p><u>Basic common elements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National CBD implementation process  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>article structure, thematical areas</li> <li>National Report, National Strategy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Services  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e.g. collections, research, projects, bibliography, thematical areas, national institutions, national financial mechanisms</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Regional Focal Point</li> <li>• News</li> <li>• Secretariat site map</li> </ul>

### **General recommendations**

24. In order to achieve the broad participation of different contributors to the CBD implementation process in building the CHM and to create more awareness it is strongly recommended that the National Focal Points organise a national Advisory Group/ Steering Committee (Belgium NFP)/ Working Group (German NFP)/ Steering Group. This group would be multisectoral and interdisciplinary, representing a "Network of networks".
25. In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences on the development of the CHM it is proposed to establish a CHM-NFP e-mail group including the 169 NFPs, moderated by the Secretariat.
26. The following recommendations are identified as possible options to guarantee access to information for non-webconnected NFPs:
- (i) Establish parenting roles for non-webconnected NFPs by those NFPs who have access to the Internet and additional space on their server for this kind of bilateral collaboration. This also would help to create CHM identity among the parties. It is recommended that the Secretariat explore with the GEF modalities (tool-kit) to enable non-webconnected NFPs to submit their information to the parenting NFP.
  - (ii) Explore ways and means to present CBD-related questions submitted via various "traditional" media, e.g., e-mail, telephone, fax, letter, to the Secretariat, NFPs or the relevant institutions.
  - (iii) Present the "CHM" on a CD-ROM (example FAO).
  - (iv) Provide a list of CBD-related CD-ROMs which are relevant to the different articles and thematic areas identified by the Convention.
27. Improve the synergy in regard to information exchange with other CBD-related conventions (e.g., CMS, CITES, Ramsar, MAB).
28. Improve synergy between CHM and other information management initiatives (e.g. UNDP-SNDP, UNEPnet, OECD, G7) to reduce duplication of efforts.
29. Limit use of graphics within the introductory pages of the CHM to reduce uploading time and costs for users of the CHM.
30. Explore ways and means on the national and as well on Secretariat's level as to how mass media (e.g., press, radio, TV) may be used by the CHM to disseminate information on the CBD to a broad public.
31. Explore ways and means to present summarized information on innovative developments concerning the CHM to the wider public.

32. Explore the feasibility of use of formats or standards to submit harmonized (meta) information either to be used, for the compilation of the "Global Biodiversity Outlook" or to facilitate searches in a "meta-database".

### **Working Group 2 - CHM Information Content**

33. All focal points should adhere to the structure and to the requirements of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

34. In the medium term work-program, the activities of the CHM should be balanced along the lines of the COP decisions including: (a) the decision II/3, on the exchange and dissemination of experiences and lessons learned by Parties on the implementation of the Convention; and (b) the decision III/4 on the facilitation and promotion of access to research, technologies, cooperation, benefit sharing, and public awareness, as well as to promote/facilitate linkages between different stakeholders.

35. The four types of focal points recommended are:

- Secretariat Focal Point
- National Focal Points
- Regional Focal Points
- Thematic Focal Points

36. Focal points should present metadata, whenever possible.

37. The contents of the CHM at the Secretariat's Focal Point could include the following information:

- Convention on Biological Diversity
  - Full document
  - Protocols of the Convention
  - Ratification status
  - COP (meetings, documents)
  - SBSTTA (structure, members, meetings, documents)
  - Intersessional activities (calendar of events)
  - Other Conventions and International Agreements
  
- National Focal Points
  - Directory with links
  - Services
  - Training

- International Themes (Thematic Focal Points)
  - Scientific
  - Technical
  - Technological
  - Socio-economic
- Financial Resources
  - List of developed country parties /donors
  - Financial mechanisms: policy, strategy, programme priorities and eligibility criteria
  - Enabling activities
  - Other funding sources
- Enabling Activities
  - Guidelines (standards, information technology...)
  - Scientific and Technical Education and Training
  - Technology Transfer
  - International programmes
  - Global Biodiversity Outlook

- Help Desk

38. The contents of the CHM at the National Focal Points could include the following information:

- Country Profile
- International Activities and Resolutions
  - Translation of COP and SBSTTA documents and resolutions to the language of the country
  - Interpretation (national and non-technical language) of all resolutions and opportunities (eg. enabling activities)
- National Strategy, Action Plans, Activities, and Evaluations
- National Legislation
  - Access to genetic resources
  - Access to transfer of technology
  - Patents
  - Biosafety
  - Environmental legislation



## Incentive measures

- International Agreements
- Scientific Information
  - Components of biological diversity, including:
    - Described genes and genomes
    - Species and communities
    - Ecosystems and habitats
    - Data monitoring activities
    - In-situ conservation
    - Ex-situ conservation (plants, animals, micro-organisms)
    - Sustainable use of biological resources
- Technological Information
  - Technology (available, required)
  - Indigenous/traditional knowledge, technology, and innovation
- Research Results
  - Technical, scientific, socio-economic
- Services
  - Training, surveying, specialized and/or technological expertise
- Help Desk

The contents could be structured in other ways (e.g. pressure/state/response).

39. Thematic Focal Points could provide information on special topics, including the following priority items to the CBD:

- Coastal and Marine Biodiversity
- Terrestrial Biodiversity
- Biosafety
- Access to Genetic Resources
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Technology Transfer and Development
- Threatened Species
- Traditional Knowledge
- Agricultural Biodiversity
- Inland Waters

40. One element of contents of all focal points should be a directory of meta-databases which are of global interest and relevant to the CBD.

### Working Group 3 - CHM-Training Start-up Kit

#### 41. Objectives

- (i) Facilitate the development of a national CHM in contracting parties and others (start-up CHM kit)
- (ii) Review existing CHMs ('Good Practice')
- (iii) Harmonisation/interoperability among parties' CHMs

#### 42. Implementation

- (i) The Secretariat, perhaps with the aid of the informal advisory committee, should promote the CHM to CBD Parties, with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging the development of national CHMs.
- (ii) A user needs assessment for the Start-up Kit should be conducted. A user needs analysis could include one or more of the following:

- inventory of existing sites
- questionnaire
- structured interviews
- workshops

(iii) We recommend development of a prototype, to be developed by Dec 1997 and tested during 1998 at regional CHM workshops and expert meetings, and to be made available to Parties who may wish to test it.

(iv) Within any country, we recommend that development be supervised by a steering group, with the authority of executive management, and implemented by a working group with appropriate expertise.

#### 43. Content of Kit

- World Wide Web authoring tools, either public domain or commercial products, to produce one or more standard 'front end' pages
- common material (link to official Convention site, etc.)
- format for national reports
- tutorial

CHM structure (as recommended above)  
recommended options:  
for those Parties with full internet www capabilities

for those Parties with minimal internet and other electronic media capabilities (email, newsgroup, bulletin board)  
for those Parties with no external communication capabilities  
case examples  
sources of help

#### 44. Infrastructure

- Parties may require additional support in the nature of:
  - computer equipment (including Web-server)
  - internet connectivity (incl. Firewall for security)

#### 45. Training

- Training can be provided in country or the form of 'Train the trainers'. The objective is to raise the level of expertise not only for those delegated to implement the national CHM but also their colleagues.
- Training could be provided by an organisation(s) that meets specified criteria, such as:
  - www expertise
  - understanding CHM issues
  - training experience in closely related areas
  - ability to provide support services (incl. distance learning)

46. Each training course is envisaged to be in the order of one week

#### 47. Updating

The Secretariat would:

- be responsible for mechanisms to support those Parties without full Internet access.
- ensure that Parties receive updated information on CD-ROM or diskettes, either periodically (e.g. quarterly) or as required.
- ensure that such Parties could also disseminate appropriate information. Support would be provided for:
  - publishing (paper, CD-ROM etc)
  - distribution
    - external www host (CBD-CHM)
    - email, newsgroups, bulletin boards
    - external publisher (perhaps supported via funding mechanism)
- ensure that the tool-kit is kept up to date.

#### 48. Harmonisation/Interoperability

Use of the CHM will be facilitated if priority is given to ease of use, through intuitive interfaces and relatively flat structures (i.e. minimal number of layers of information).

#### 49. Consistency and compatibility would also be promoted through:

- exchange of experience
  - listservers
  - workshops
- sharing of locally developed software
- encouraging evolution of standards
- developing the capacity to browse multiple sites

#### 50. Growth

- step by step growth strategy (for Parties with internet access) by prioritisation of contents, e.g.:
  - Convention information (custodian: Secretariat)
  - National Reports (Format in Start-Up Kit)
  - other information

#### Sustainability

51. Significant effort should be made on initial promotion (nationally and internationally) to raise awareness and encourage national focal points to plan development of their CHMs.

52. It is also important to encourage and monitor feedback from users of the CHM to ensure that it meets their needs. This will prove very useful in helping set priorities. Some kind of question and answer facility could also prove useful.

53. Follow-up on user feedback is very important. This will also involve keeping in contact with the Secretariat to ensure that the CHM is developing in line with current decisions of the Conference of Parties and other players.

#### 54. Action Plan

- Phase I (to be completed by October 97)

The Secretariat, with the assistance of the informal advisory group, to determine user needs. This may be expedited through the regional workshops already scheduled (COP III decision). Only marginal costs for this activity are envisaged.

- Phase II (to be completed by December 97)

Develop prototype of Start-Up Kit

- Phase III (to be completed by June 98)

Implementation of Start-Up Kit (build on existing infrastructure)

55. Costs/Funding

	US\$
computing infrastructure (Internet connectivity and www server)	\$14,000 per country
development of tutorial package (incl. WWW shell)	\$20,000 + provision for updating
training	\$12,000 per country (for in country) \$20,000 per workshop (for training of the trainers)

(Note: a choice of training method would need to be made, or maybe a combination used, depending on circumstances)

Source: GEF / UNDP

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