

CLEARING HOUSE MECHANISM

Background

The CHM is established under Article 18 to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. By implication, this cooperation is for the purpose of enhancing the implementation of the Convention.

The paper prepared for item C2 and the meeting on international cooperation (Monday lunchtime) sets out issues relating to cooperation. These include recognition that cooperation can occur at many levels, and in many forms. The paper also sets out some barriers to cooperation and possible ways to overcome these barriers.

The CHM has traditionally been seen as an information sharing mechanism, focused on the use of internet tools. In broadening its focus to more directly address the issue of S&T cooperation, it would therefore be appropriate to begin by focusing on cooperation related to the sharing of information and expertise, and using the CHM as the platform for the initiation and implementation of cooperative initiatives.

What is the CHM?

The CHM should be a network of capacity and mechanisms for promoting and facilitating scientific and technical cooperation. That network would include:

- Secretariat CHM staff and mechanisms
- CHM focal points (and other focal points under the CBD, such as SBSTTA focal points)
- International bodies which chose to be “thematic focal points” and take a primary role for particular issues
- Other institutions and people outside the CHM who are able to contribute to particular projects or work areas

Scientific and Technical Cooperation

There are five broad needs that the CHM might help to fill:

1. enhancing the access to information which already exists in a readily accessible form (e.g. data bases, publications).
2. facilitating the creation of new information, either through the use of information technology to combine data in new ways, or through the collection of new data (inventory or research).
3. facilitating the provision of or providing professional advice, in which the advisor takes their own experience and knowledge, and applies it to a new situation.
4. facilitating cooperative initiatives.
5. facilitating or providing scientific and technical capacity building, including training.

These three broad needs will lead to quite different mechanisms within the CHM.

For (1), the focus will be on the development of mechanisms for providing information about information holdings (bibliographies, databases of collections, etc) or on providing links into electronic data bases.

For (2), the focus will be on:

- providing information to parties on how to use information technology systems in biodiversity work;
- connecting a party that needs new information with another party that has the information management infrastructure and expertise;
- connecting parties which have a shared interest in a scientific question, so that they can jointly pursue it.

For (3), the focus will be on connecting parties which have a need with experts that can help them.

Where the focus is on providing access to existing hard information, automated responses are appropriate. These might include search engines, bibliographies, etc.

Where the focus is on connecting people, however, it will be necessary to have a person who processes requests or suggests opportunities.

For (4) the focus will be on:

- fostering communication about specific issues among countries;
- facilitating the creation of working groups etc through communication;
- actively participating in cooperative initiatives.