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CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM
REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

Second Meeting
Gödöllő, Hungary
27 to 29 October 1997

REPORT OF THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with Decision III/4 of the Conference of the Parties, the Clearing-House Mechanism Regional Workshop for Central and Eastern Europe, hosted by the Government of Hungary, was held in Gödöllő, Hungary, from 27 to 29 October 1997.
2. Delegates from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine attended, as well as a representative from the Global Environment Facility. A full list of participants is attached as Annex I.

Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting

3. The meeting was opened at 10:00 on 27 October 1997 by the representative of the Secretariat, Mr. Marc Auer, Programme Officer, Clearing-House Mechanism, on behalf of Mr. Calestous Juma, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Mr. Auer welcomed

the participants and read a statement by the Executive Secretary, who was unable to attend the meeting. In his statement, the Executive Secretary expressed his gratitude to the Government of Hungary for hosting the meeting and to the Government of the Netherlands for its additional financial support. He stressed that the meeting would lay the foundation for further cooperation and synergy among those who are developing their national biodiversity information and cooperation capacities. Mr. Juma recalled the importance of the first regional workshop of the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) in the development of the CHM pilot-phase. He said the workshop will provide recommendations to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in May 1998.

4. Mr. Ervin Balázs welcomed the participants on behalf of the Government of Hungary. In his opening remarks he stressed the importance of implementing the provisions and decisions of the Convention, in areas such as agro-biodiversity, biosafety and the development of its protocol. He emphasized the importance of the Clearing-House Mechanism to implement the Convention and wished the meeting every success. He also underscored the generous support of the Government of the Netherlands.

Agenda Item 2: Election of the Chairperson

5. Mr. Ervin Balázs (Hungary) was elected Chairperson and Ms. Gordana Beltram (Slovenia) was elected Rapporteur of the meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

6. The provisional agenda as contained in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/2/1 was adopted with amendments. The provisional organization of work, contained in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/2/1/Add.1, was also adopted with the request by the participants to have one working group. The agenda is attached as Annex II and the list of documents for the workshop is attached as Annex III.

Agenda Item 4: Introduction and background

7. The Secretariat made a presentation on the state of the art of the CHM introducing document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/2/2. This background document was prepared by the Secretariat for the purpose of facilitating the Regional Workshops on the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity, recalling the recommendations and decisions related to the Clearing-House Mechanism. To further assist the regional workshops, the document restates the terms of reference of the Meeting, as formulated by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. These define national and regional scientific and technical information needs, priorities identified, modalities to deliver information and evaluation of national capacities for the

implementation of the Convention. The regional workshops should also review experience in scientific and technical cooperation in support of the objectives of the Convention, in order to identify ways for the Clearing-House Mechanism to facilitate such cooperation.

8. The representative of the Secretariat stressed the latest developments of the CHM pilot phase as of June 1997, with respect to the guidance provided by the Convention's bodies, partners and target group, concept and current status, regional workshops and prospects and expectations.

9. Ms. Beatriz Torres (SCBD) made a presentation on the CHM Technology Evaluation.

10. Mr. Stefan Karpis (Slovakia) made a presentation on the results of the CHM Experts' Meeting: "Building the Clearing House," Bonn, Germany, 25-29 June 1997.

11. The Secretariat presented the results of the First Regional Workshop of the Clearing-House Mechanism for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 13-15 October 1997.

Agenda Item 5: Preliminary exchange of views

12. The delegations of Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine made interventions.

Agenda Item 6: Presentation of country experiences

13. The representatives of the following countries made presentations about the state of their national Clearing-House Mechanism activities as well as about the implementation of the Convention: Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

Agenda Item 7: Presentation of the Global Environment Facility: Support for the national implementation of the CHM

14. Mr. John Hough (UNDP) stressed the importance of the enabling activities of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in financing projects for the implementation of the Convention and the development of the CHM. He explained the process of accessing GEF funding. He also noted the importance of nominating the CHM National Focal Points.

Agenda Item 8: Discussion of information content, information structure
and capacity building

15. Discussion of agenda item 8 was conducted on October 28. Taking into consideration the results of the First Regional Workshop of the CHM and the CHM Experts' Meeting, the following recommendations were discussed:

General recommendations

16. The Clearing-House Mechanism must be designed to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation and contribute to the implementation of all three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

17. Information systems are an important component of the Clearing-House Mechanism. In addition, the CHM should provide other services which facilitate the implementation of the Convention.

18. The implementation of the Clearing-House at the national level requires the strengthening of national capacities.

19. The Clearing-House should be needs-driven, and based on an assessment of needs by potential user groups.

20. The main benefits of the Clearing-House are to:

- Provide data for decision making;
- Support faster access to existing knowledge;
- Promote technical and scientific communication;
- Avoid duplication of efforts;
- Allow additional comparisons among existing data;
- Generate new information;
- Support a more effective and efficient implementation of the Convention.

21. The implementation of the Clearing-House Mechanism will require, *inter alia*, human resources and continuous training, access to metadata and databases, information technology, and institutional strengthening.

22. Potential users of the Clearing-House Mechanism include national governments, universities and other research and training institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and the media.

23. Data used for the Clearing-House Mechanism needs to be organized, standardized and made available, in order to integrate, interpret and summarize them according to needs.

24. Ownership of all information made available through the Clearing-House Mechanism shall remain with the provider of the information.

Restrictions to access may exist according to terms and conditions agreed upon with the provider.

25. Benefits should be shared with the providers of the information, especially information related to the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of local and indigenous communities.

26. Data quality and updating is an essential component of information management, and shall be the responsibility of the provider of the information at all levels.

27. Information exchange should take advantage of the latest information technology including, *inter alia*, the use of the Internet, CD-ROMs and diskettes.

28. While the maintenance of the CHM at the national level is a national responsibility, additional financial resources need to be made available to support the development of the CHM, through bilateral and multilateral funding institutions and other international donors. The GEF should maintain a range of funding options that are flexible and meet national and in accordance with Decision III/4 of the Conference of the Parties and SBSTTA recommendations III/6.

Content

29. Contents of the Clearing-House should include information, as well as, technical and scientific cooperation required by the Convention on Biological Diversity and Parties, and also among different users at the national level, and this should be a two-way mechanism.

30. The national CHM should make available in English:

- a. Information on Country Studies, National Strategies and Reports, including, *inter alia*, case studies and practices, to the COP. This information, besides complying with COP mandates, has the function of being highly informative at national levels.
- b. Opportunities for international, regional and multilateral cooperation.
- c. National information on other international and regional treaties related to biological diversity of which the country is member. This information is useful at national level, because it identifies points of contact among different conventions and facilitates synergy between different commitments the country's has. The importance of establishing links among different conventions is recognized. Moreover, each party shall identify existing national focal points in each convention and shall identify the ratification procedures.

d. Case studies referring to activities related to the implementation of the Convention.

31. In order to promote scientific and technical cooperation at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, common needs and priorities from other parties should be clearly identified. Examples at the regional and sub-regional levels include shared ecosystems, migratory species and invasive species. Also information about markets, biological collections, maps and satellite images, clean technologies, training opportunities and funding sources.

32. The content of the Clearing-House at the national level may include, but not necessarily be limited to the following aspects, depending on national priorities and capacities:

a) The convention provisions and decisions in the national 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.

b) National Legislation, i.e.:

- Biodiversity conservation, including threatened and protected species and their habitats
- Sustainable use
- Access to genetic resources
- Biodiversity-related sectoral legislation
- Incentive measures
- Access to transfer of technology
- Biosafety
- Patents
- Intellectual property rights

c) Biodiversity Information and Practices

Spatial and temporal information on the components of biological diversity, including:

- Described genes and genomes
- Species, populations and communities
- Ecosystems and habitats
- Monitoring activities
- In-situ conservation (Protected Areas, Priority Areas)
- Ex-situ conservation (plants, animals, micro-organisms)
- Sustainable use of biological resources
- Incentive measures
- Endemic and indicator species
- Introduced, including invasive species
- LMOs

d) Information on local and indigenous communities' knowledge, innovations and practices.

e) Technological Information

- Technology (available, required)
- f) Threats
 - g) Directory of
 - Researchers
 - Research institutes and universities
 - Scientific collections
 - Other experts
 - h) Values of biodiversity and incentives for its conservation and sustainable use
 - i) Markets and trade of goods and services related to biodiversity
 - j) Environmental impact assessment and management
 - k) Services including, training, surveys, technological expertise or other areas of expertise

Structure

33. The need for a clear structure shall be identified to promote scientific, technical and technological cooperation within the CHM. Further, it is proposed that a common structure based on agreed elements be used by the CHM-National Focal Points (NFPs) and the Secretariat of the Convention. This would create a CHM-identity among the national CHMs. The CHM National Focal Points should be linked with the National Focal Point of the Convention. These CHM National Focal Points should also serve as Focal Points for regional and other similar initiatives related to the activities of the CHM.

34. On a general scale distinct "roles" can be identified emphasizing the tasks of information structuring (content) of:

- (a) the Secretariat;
- (b) the CHM National Focal Points;
- (c) the CHM Regional Focal Points;
- (d) the CHM Thematic Focal Points.

35. The Secretariat should be responsible for summarizing and facilitating information at the global level, while the NFPs should focus on information at the national level. The identification of information through the CHM is presented as follows:

Secretariat	National Focal Points
<p><u>Basic elements</u></p> <p>(see also the Secretariat's Internet homepage: http://www.biodiv.org)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COP • SBSTTA • List of National Focal Points • Thematic Focal Points • Top issues • GEF and additional financial resources • Related conventions 	<p><u>Basic common elements</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National CBD implementation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • article structure and related implementation of provisions • thematic areas and • National Report, National Strategy • Services (e.g., collections, research, projects, bibliography, thematic areas, national institutions, national financial mechanisms) • Regional Focal Point News • News • Secretariat "site map"

36. National Focal Points of the CHM should facilitate access to information, conduct surveys of information needs and information providers at the national and local levels, produce directories that promote better communication, avoid duplication of efforts and promote scientific and technical cooperation.

37. National Advisory Committees could be established to assist the National Focal Points in establishing needs and priorities, as well as to monitor the impact of the Clearing-House Mechanism on the implementation of the Convention at the national level. The following options can be taken into account when establishing the CHM National Focal Point:

- (a) A single organization with an Advisory Committee;
- (b) A Commission or a Steering Committee;
- (c) A Network of Organizations.

38. The role of the Clearing-House Mechanism may be transactional between information providers and users.

39. In order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences in the development of the CHM it is proposed to establish a CHM-NFP e-mail listserver including the currently 169 NFPs, moderated by the Secretariat.

40. The following recommendations could guarantee access to information for non-web-connected NFPs:

- (a) Establish facilitator roles for non-web-connected NFPs by those NFPs who have access to 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 explores with the GEF modalities to enable non-web-connected NFPs to submit their information to the facilitating NFP.

- (b) Explore ways and means to present CBD-related requests submitted via various "traditional" media, e.g. mail, telephone, fax.
- (c) Present the "CHM" on a CD-ROM.
- (d) Provide a list of CBD-related CD-ROMs which are relevant to the different articles and thematic areas identified by the Convention.

41. To improve synergy with regard to information exchange with other CBD-related conventions and other information management initiatives, the avoidance of duplication of efforts is recommended.

Capacity Building

42. In order to promote and facilitate cooperation between Parties, for implementing the Convention, capacity building in areas concerning its three objectives is needed. The Convention provides guidance on how to promote and facilitate the development of human resources and institutional enhancement, taking into account the needs of Central and Eastern European countries, too.

43. In addition, the CHM in compliance with Article 18 (3), should not only enhance capacity in data management, but also assist Parties to prioritize country-driven actions including research, education and training.

44. Financial support by the Financial Mechanism of the Convention is required in order to implement both the human resource development and the institutional strengthening.

45. Cooperation in capacity building shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Human Resource Development

- I. Information Technologies and Management for promoting and facilitating cooperation in:
 - a) Biodiversity data and information management including data-search capabilities;
 - b) Information exchange capabilities;
 - c) New communication technologies;
 - d) Tool-kit development and test phase, and training for using the tool kit;
 - e) Non-electronic communication technologies;

- f) Information on policy and management issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

II. Other capacity building needs for promoting and facilitating cooperation in:

- a) Developing national strategies, plans and programs for the three objectives of the Convention;
- b) Improving existing capacity by sharing experiences of country-driven projects and case studies on conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits;
- c) Developing joint research programs and training in policy research, and joint ventures for the developing of technologies according to Article 18;
- d) Enhancing NFPs capacity to facilitate the identification of needs, weaknesses and strengths of users and providers.

B. Institutional Strengthening

I. Information Technologies and Management

- a) Internet connectivity: hardware and software
- b) Compatibility and harmonization of formats and standards, including compatibility of software
- c) Internet support to other countries without Internet capabilities
- d) Development of an Internet home page
- e) Adequate computer and server capabilities.

II. Relationships

- a) Technical and scientific cooperation within regions and sub-regions
- b) Accessibility of information outside the country and repatriation of information
- c) Sharing of experiences
- d) International encouragement and support for the development of the national Clearing-House Mechanism
- e) Learning and feedback experience
- f) Contact with the Secretariat to ensure the CHM is developing in line with current decisions of the COP
- g) Building of a biodiversity network with other CHM Focal Points
- h) Information centers

III. Other institutional strengthening needed

- a) Permanent base to operate from
- b) Publishing capacity
- c) Organizational structure including specialized staff and financial resources (e.g. meeting facilitator)

Agenda Item 9: Formulation of regional priorities

46. In accordance with Decisions II/3 and III/4 of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention, the following priority actions for the Central and Eastern European region are proposed:

- a) Urge Contracting Parties of the region to nominate their Clearing-House Mechanism National Focal Points by the end of 1997.
- b) Contracting Parties in the region should make every effort to make their Clearing-House Mechanism National Focal Points operational before the end of the pilot phase of the CHM.
- c) CHM Regional Focal Point(s) should be nominated and established before the end of the pilot phase. This issue could be discussed as an agenda item of the next Regional Preparatory Meeting before the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
- d) According to regional needs, Thematic Focal Points could be designated.
- e) The preparation and submission of a Regional Pilot Project to the Financial Mechanism of the Convention should be considered a priority by Central and Eastern European Contracting Parties.

47. The participants recognized the importance of the following common regional concerns which could be considered in the implementation of the CHM:

- a) East-East communication should be strengthened.
- b) Facilities to make existing information available in electronic ways using standardized formats.
- c) Sharing examples of good practices and experiences (e.g. drafting of legislation, forest issues, application of clean technologies, environmental standards, etc).
- d) EMERALD, corresponding to Natura 2000 network, could be commonly applied in CEE countries.

Agenda Item 10: Adoption of the report

48. On 29 October 1997, the participants considered the draft final report. Amendments were considered and agreed. The draft final report was adopted.

Agenda Item 11: Other matters

49. No other matters were considered.

Agenda Item 12: Closure of the meeting

50. The Chairperson closed the meeting at 4 p.m. on 29 October 1997. The delegates expressed their gratitude to the Government of Hungary, particularly the Ministry of Environment and Regional Planning, to Professor Ervin Balázs and his supporting staff and to the Secretariat, for its organizational work and efforts to ensure a successful regional meeting. The participants also thanked the Government of the Netherlands for its generous financial support.

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