



**CONVENTION ON
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CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM
REGIONAL WORKSHOPS
Fourth Meeting
Nairobi, 5 to 7 March 1998

**Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Clearing-House Mechanism
Regional Workshop for Africa**

Introduction

1. In accordance with decision III/4 of the Conference of the Parties, the Clearing-House Mechanism Regional Workshop for Africa, was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 5 to 7 March 1998.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as a representatives of UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Observers from the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), IUCN/BCIS, WWF, ACTS, KIPO, and representatives from the Kenya Permanent Mission to UNEP, National Environment Secretariat, Ministry of Water Resources of Kenya, The Kenya Forestry Research Institute, and Kenyatta University were present. A full list of participants is attached as Annex I.

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Agenda Item 1: Opening of the Meeting

3. On behalf of Mr. Calestous Juma, Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr. Març Auer, Programme Officer of the Clearing-House Mechanism, opened the meeting on March 5, 1998. In his speech read to the participants, the Executive Secretary welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude to UNEP and UNON for the support provided in the organization of the meeting. He underscored the importance of the meeting in the development of the CHM pilot phase and the provision of recommendations to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Bratislava, Slovakia in May 1998.

Agenda Item 2: Election of the Chairperson

4. The meeting elected Mr. James Chuma (Malawi) as Chairperson, Ms. Idiatou Camara (Guinea) as Vice-Chair and Mr. Koffi Dantsey (Togo) and Ms. Margaret Mukahanana (Zimbabwe) as rapporteurs.

Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda and Organization of Work

5. The provisional agenda as contained in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/4/1 and the organization of work contained in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/4/1/Add.1 were adopted with amendments.

Agenda Item 4: Introduction and Background

6. The Secretariat introduced document UNEP/CBD/CHM/RW/4/2. In his presentation, Mr. Auer recalled the recommendations and decisions made by the Conference of the Parties, related to the Clearing-House Mechanism. The document background recalls the state of the art of the CHM and restates the terms of reference of the Meeting, as formulated in decision III/4 of the Conference of the Parties, namely, to attain a clear definition of country and regional level scientific and technical information needs, priorities identified, modalities to deliver information and evaluation of national capacities for the implementation of the Convention. The regional workshop should also review experiences in scientific and technical co-operation in support of the objectives of the Convention, in order to identify ways by which the Clearing-House Mechanism can best facilitate such co-operation.
7. The representative of the Secretariat underscored the latest developments of the CHM pilot phase, regional workshops and prospects and expectations.
8. Mr. Samy Gaiji from the Secretariat made a presentation on internet connectivity.

Agenda Item 5: Preliminary exchange of views

9. The delegations of Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe made interventions.
10. Many delegations lacked knowledge and clarity about the CHM and recommended that efforts should be made to provide support on a country by country basis in the establishment of the CHM and its operationalization.
11. Delegations also recommended that there should be a linkage between the development of the National Strategies and Action Plans and the CHM development as these are mutually related.

Agenda Item 6: Presentation of thematic experiences

12. Mr. Feargal Duff (UNEP) gave a presentation on the Biodiversity Data Management and Networking Project and explained how this project could support the evolving CHM. Mr. Mick Wilson (UNEP) gave a presentation on the UnepNet and on The Mercury Satellite System of UNEP. Mr. Abdulrahman Issa (IUCN) presented the Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS).

Agenda Item 7: Presentation on regional experiences

13. Mr. Zipangani Vokhiwa as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Biodiversity Focal Point and Mr. Nabil Ibrahim Hassan from the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD) presented their regional experiences.

Agenda Item 8: Country presentations

14. Representatives from Egypt, The Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, and Mauritania presented their national experiences in the development of the Clearing-House Mechanism.

Agenda Item 9: Presentation of the Global Environment Facility

15. Ms. Cyriaque Sendashonga, speaking on behalf of the GEF, recalled the COP decisions in relationship to the CHM and the instructions given by the COP to the financial mechanism in this respect. She urged countries to designate their national CHM Focal Points, presented the

CHM module under the framework of GEF support to Enabling Activities and explained the steps needed to access GEF funding. She noted that the GEF had already provided funding for the CHM module for those countries which have fulfilled the requirements. She also stated that the CHM module under the Enabling Activities was by no means the only modality of GEF support to countries for activities related to biodiversity information and data management.

Agenda Items 10, 11 and 12: Presentation on Information Content, Information Structure and Capacity Building

16. Ms. Beatriz Torres of the CBD Secretariat made the introduction to information content, information structure and capacity building.

Agenda Item 13: Presentation of results and recommendations on agenda items 10, 11 and 12

Information Content

17. After listening to several country presentations on the CHM that have already implemented their own information systems, the African delegates made the following recommendations:

- Concerning the information dissemination by the CHM it is recommended that reflection is being made on the IPRs and the equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of genetic resources.
- It's recommended that each delegation member organize an information meeting at the national level to brief their national biodiversity committees.
- The cost, duration and objectives of the national programmes should be conceptualized with respect of the national specificities.

18. The four types of focal points recommended are:

- Secretariat Focal Point
- National Focal Points
- Regional and sub-regional Focal Points
- Thematic Focal Points

19. The African group recommends that steps be taken to facilitate the networking of different counterparts of exchange centres, (national, sub-regional, regional and specialised). This network must work in close cooperation with national committees charged with the implementation of the Convention.

20. Focal points should make available metadata, whenever possible. The contents of the CHM at the Secretariat's Focal Point could include the following information:
 - **Convention on Biological Diversity**
 - Full text document of the CBD
 - Protocols of the Convention
 - Ratification status
 - COP (meetings, documents)
 - SBSTTA (structure, members, meetings; documents)
 - Intersessional activities (calendar of events and documents)
 - Other Conventions and International Agreements

 - **National Focal Points**
 - Directory with links
 - Services
 - Training

 - **International Themes (Thematic Focal Points)**
 - Scientific
 - Technical
 - Technological
 - Socio-economic
 - Cross-sectoral approaches

 - **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
Incentive measures

- Help Desk

21. The African group invites the Secretariat to assist national counterparts to obtain information on genetic resources originated from (or originating from) their respective countries which are preserved ex-situ in northern countries.

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

- Country Profile
- International Activities
- 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
- National Strategy, Action Plans, Activities, and Evaluations
- National Legislation, i.e.
 - Biodiversity conservation
 - Sustainable use
 - Access to genetic resources
 - Access to transfer of technology
 - Patents
 - Biosafety
 - Environmental legislation
 - Incentive measures
- International Agreements
- Scientific Information, including roster of experts and institutions both at the national and international levels, i.a.
 - 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
 - Incentive measures

- 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
23. The contents could also be structured using other approaches (e.g. pressure/state/response).
24. Thematic Focal Points could provide information on special topics, including the following priority issues of the CBD:
- Coastal and Marine Biodiversity
 - Terrestrial Biodiversity
 - Biosafety and biotechnology
 - Access to Genetic Resources
 - Intellectual Property Rights
 - Technology Transfer and Development
 - Threatened Species
 - Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge
 - Agricultural Biodiversity
 - Inland Waters, including wetlands

Information Structure

- National Level
25. All countries shall designate their CHM National Focal Points.
26. The CHM Focal Points once established shall be made operational as soon as possible.
27. A gradual process is recommended in the development of the above mentioned focal points. Priority should be given to develop the National Focal Point to the CHM, acknowledging that it will be necessary at a later stage to develop Sub-Regional and Regional Focal Points to the CHM.
28. It was deemed necessary that the CHM National Focal Point needs to have access to the Internet and e-mail, to CD-ROM, and other messaging fax facilities.

29. The following alternatives can be taken into account to support the operation of the CHM National Focal Point:
 - (i) An Advisory Committee;
 - (ii) A Commission or a Steering Committee;
 - (iii) A Network of Organizations.

30. Each National Focal Point shall identify and designate Thematic Focal Points as appropriate and put in place the necessary co-ordinating mechanisms to facilitate the flow of information at the national level.

31. The CHM Focal Point should be closely linked to the CBD Focal Point and the Focal Points to the other biodiversity related and Rio-conventions in the country to facilitate co-ordination.

32. Links shall be created between the National Focal Points and the CBD Secretariat Focal Point.

33. The CHM National Focal Point shall provide the linkage between the information provider and decision-making levels.

34. It may be desirable that the CHM National Focal Point be in the same institution designated as the CBD Focal Point. It was noted that the multiplicity of Focal Points may create coordination problems for some countries.

35. The CHM Focal Point could be individualised or institutionalised as appropriate.

36. Ownership of all information made available through the CHM shall remain with the provider of information that appears most of the time as the most suitable institution to maintain and update the information. Some countries mention that restrictions to access may exist according to terms and conditions agreed upon with the provider.

37. There is a need for the Financial Mechanism of the Convention to support efforts to develop both National, Sub-regional and Regional CHM Focal Points. Existing regional institutions, as potential candidates to undertake the role as Regional CHM Focal Points, shall be explored to minimize the costs of creating a new Regional CHM Focal Point.

38. In order to ensure the development, management and sustainability of the operations of the National, Sub-regional and Regional CHM Focal Points, adequate financial assistance should be provided by the financial mechanism of the Convention as well as by bilateral and multilateral means according to the needs of each country.
39. Financial and technical support should be provided by the financial mechanism of the Convention to identify, document and develop data sets of existing indigenous knowledge systems in line with the COP decisions on IPRs including patenting.
40. Technical assistance could be granted by the Secretariat and UNEP to support the operationalisation of the of the CHM National Focal Point.
41. The establishment of the CHM at the national level could benefit from UNEP/GEF Biodiversity Data Management Project (BDM) and any other countries wishing to participate should receive financial support from the financial mechanism.
42. Several examples of national biodiversity information management approaches were presented as potential options.
- Regional Level
43. Regional, Sub-Regional and Thematic Regional Focal points were deemed necessary.
44. It is recommended to the Conference of the Parties at its next meeting to establish criteria and guidelines for the designation of regional Thematic Focal Points and the role of such regional Thematic Focal Points.
45. Activities of the CHM Regional Focal Points include training and joint research. The Regional Focal Point should also deal with commonalities in the region.
- Global Level
46. The organization of the CBD information in the CHM could use a common format where the orderly sequence of the Articles of the text of the Convention could be followed and may include also thematical and institutional approach; alternatively the sequence of the three objectives of the Convention could be considered.
47. To improve synergy with regard to information exchange with other CBD-related conventions (e.g. CMS, CITES, Ramsar, Convention on Desertification, Climate Change, WTO), between CHM and other information management initiatives (e.g. MAB-UNESCO, UNDP-SNDP, UNEPnet, OECD, G7), the avoidance of duplication of efforts is recommended.

Capacity Building

48. It is recommended that financial and technical means are strengthened to facilitate the CHM activities in developing countries. It includes training for information technics to benefit from the latest communication tools.
49. The group proposes that the Parties present at the meeting work in close collaboration with regional and sub-regional organisations in order to be involved in the establishment of the exchange centre mechanism.
50. Enabling Contracting Parties to participate in the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism is of utmost importance. The following objectives may guide the further development of the CHM:
 - (i) Development of National Focal Points to the CHM (start-up CHM kit).
 - (ii) Review of existing CHMs ('Good Practice').
 - (iii) Harmonisation/interoperability among Focal Points.
51. The Secretariat, advised by the informal advisory committee, could promote the CHM to CBD Parties, with a view to raising awareness and encouraging the development of national CHMs.

Assessment

52. 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
 - technical questionnaire
 - structured interviews
 - workshops

Development of a Tool-Kit

53. The development of a prototype has been recommended to be developed by December 1997, to be tested during 1998 at regional CHM workshops and expert meetings, and to be made available to Parties who may wish to test it. Within any country the development may be supervised by a steering group and implemented by a working group with appropriate expertise.
54. The content of such a tool-kit could comprise of the following:
 - World Wide Web authoring tools, including public domain or commercial products to produce one or more
 - standard 'front end' pages

- common material (link to official Convention site, etc.)
 - standard format for national reports
 - tutorial
54. Parties may require additional support in the nature of computer equipment (including Web-server) and internet connectivity.

Training

55. Adequate training on current information management, including software and hardware should be considered.
56. Also a choice of training methods would need to be made, or even a combination of methods, depending on the circumstances and needs.
57. In addition to the basic training second-level advanced training is needed, including on the application of database-web and GIS-web interconnectivity.
58. Training could be provided by an organization(s) that meets specified criteria, such as:
- In country training on the Internet should be provided, understanding
CBD and CHM issues training experience in closely related areas ability to provide
support services.
59. Training can be provided in country or in the form of 'Training of 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.
60. Training could be provided by an organisation(s) that meets specified criteria, such as:
- www expertise
 - understanding CBD and CHM issues
 - training experience in closely related areas
 - ability to provide support services (including distance learning).
61. It is proposed that the Secretariat facilitate modalities to support those Parties without full Internet access, preparing and disseminating updated information on CD-ROM or diskettes to them, either periodically (e.g. quarterly) or as required, and facilitating that those Parties to disseminate appropriate information. Support would be needed for:
- publishing (paper, CD-ROM, etc)
 - distribution
 - external www host (CBD-CHM)
 - email, newsgroups, bulletin boards
 - external publisher

62. The Secretariat would keep the tool-kit up to date.
63. The 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).
64. Consistency and compatibility would also be promoted through:
- exchange of experience (through e.g. listservers or workshops)
 - sharing of locally developed software
 - encouraging evolution of standards
 - developing the capacity to browse multiple sites.
65. Training is also needed on issues related to IPRs and patents.
- Public Awareness:
66. Significant efforts should be made on initial promotion (nationally and internationally) to raise awareness to encourage national focal points to plan the development of their CHMs.
67. 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 setting priorities. Some kind of question and answer forum could also prove useful.
68. Follow-up on user feedback is very important. This will also involve maintaining contact with the Secretariat to ensure the CHM is developing in line with current decisions of the Conference of Parties and other players.

Agenda item 15: Finalization of the report and recommendations

69. The Draft Final Report was finalized with the amendments proposed by the participants.

Agenda item 16: Adoption of the report

70. The draft final report was considered and adopted by the delegates and adopted on March 7, 1998. The chairperson acknowledged the contributions of the delegates and thanked the Vice-chair and rapporteurs for their excellent work.

Agenda item 17: Other matters

71. Delegates requested the GEF representative to provide the Technical Evaluation Forms before the delegates' departure from Nairobi.

Agenda item 18: Closure of the meeting

72. The Chair closed the meeting at 4.00 pm on 7 March 1998 and stressed the importance of implementing the recommendations of the report.