

**SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATIONALISATION OF THE
COMMONWEALTH KNOWLEDGE NETWORK (CKN) AND CLEARING-
HOUSE MECHANISM (CHM)
ZOMBA, MALAWI, 26-30 NOVEMBER 2001**

THE ZOMBA STATEMENT

In the twenty-first century, advances in information and communication technologies have the potential to build new and strengthen existing knowledge networks to promote and facilitate wealth creation and the conservation of life on this planet. The Commonwealth Science Council (CSC) recognizes the role these networks can play in the sharing and exchanging of information and knowledge for socio-economic development throughout the Southern African region.

Within this region there is vast wealth of knowledge, both in the public and private domains (within research institutes and universities, and also held by individuals, communities and private companies). The full potential of this knowledge, however, remains unrealised.

Acting as a knowledge broker, the CKN/CHM can make full use of these knowledge resources, and develop new programmes to assist the region in matching solutions to problems. It can also act as a repository of knowledge to facilitate the development of joint initiatives and programmes by bridging existing knowledge and information gaps which impede development and wealth creation in this region. This initiative is a fundamental requirement for the elimination of poverty, conservation of biological diversity and environmental protection.

The Southern Africa Regional Training Workshop on the CKN/CHM,

Acknowledging the vital contribution of indigenous knowledge systems, modern science and technology in the conservation of resources and the enhancement of society's developmental processes,

Realising that CKN/CHM can provide solutions to development problems in the Southern Africa region in various science, technology and related fields that influence development of nations,

Recognising the need to conserve and sustainably use biological biodiversity,

Noting that building and managing the CKN/CHM can act as an effective conduit for flow of knowledge information and communication,

Recognising the tremendous potential that CKN/CHM have to solve development problems among the Southern Africa countries in the best spirit of networking,

Recommends as follows:

Commonwealth member countries in the Southern Africa region should nominate national focal points (NFPs) for the CKN and CHM and establish national and regional CKN and CHM nodes and committees to report to their respective main national implementing bodies;

Commonwealth member countries in the Southern Africa region should set up a joint Southern Africa Technical Committee for the CKN and CHM (hereinafter referred to as – STCCC) and should establish an electronic discussion group to support its work;

Commonwealth member countries in the Southern Africa region should encourage the establishment of electronic discussion groups for each respective committee to share and exchange information;

Commonwealth member countries in the Southern Africa region should establish national and regional websites for CKN and CHM;

Member countries should provide resources for both national and regional CKN and CHM activities;

CSC should assist member countries to seek funding from other international donors such as Global Environment Facility (GEF), World Bank etc, for the establishment of CKN and CHM NFPs and capacity building activities and projects;

CKN and CHM NFPs should consider developing their respective information dissemination mechanisms to make publicly available information on biodiversity and from other related conventions and on science and technology issues;

National and regional CKN/CHM NFP websites should use categories of information and structure agreed upon during the CKN/CHM Malawi Workshop;

CKN/CHM NFPs should develop information exchange standards and metadata between national institutions and the CKN/CHM. NFPs should consider the additional benefits of developing these standards and metadata at a regional level;

National CKN/CHMs should endeavour to make biodiversity information openly accessible. Access policy development should take into account intellectual property rights, indigenous knowledge and the risk of damage to biodiversity resulting from unrestricted access to information;

CKN/CHM NFPs will need the capacity to gather, filter and authenticate information for dissemination, and to set information exchange protocols to promote more effective exchange of information within, between and among countries;

CKN/CHM NFPs should consider wherever possible disseminating information in all national languages. Regional CHMs should endeavour to use all official regional languages for disseminating, recognizing that translation must retain the original meaning of the information;

CKN/CHM NFPs should plan to disseminate information by web, non-web (i.e., email, file transfer protocol, etc.) and traditional (i.e., paper, fax, etc.) means to ensure equitable access to information by all countries and stakeholders;

Given the benefits of information disseminated by web-based systems, the CKN/CHM should consider, where necessary, establishing web sites early in the establishment of national Internet Infrastructure;

CKN and CHM should share functions and resources where this brings complementarity and economies of scale;

CKN/CHM NFPs, as a first step in implementation, should undertake an assessment of the financial, institutional, human, technical and infrastructure capacities needed to administer CKN/CHM functions;

CKN/CHM NFPs as a second step in implementation should use their assessments to develop a needs driven plan for establishing or enhancing their respective functions.

CKN and CHM NFPs should monitor and review the implementation of the Zomba CKN/CHM recommendations and should report on progress made to date through the regional CKN/CHM focal point, and to the regional member of the CSC executive committee through the national CSC member

Zomba, Malawi
30 November 2001