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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
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Item 22.1 of the provisional agenda*

**REPORT ON PROGRESS OF THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS TO ASSESS THE NEED
FOR, MODALITIES OF, AND OPTIONS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL MECHANISM OF
SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE ON BIODIVERSITY***Note by the Executive Secretary***I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At its first meeting held from 5 to 9 September 2005 in Montreal, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention took note of the outcome of the International Conference "Biodiversity: Science and Governance", held in Paris in January 2005, and, in its recommendation 1/2 on 'Review of processes,' invited the Executive Secretary to report on progress to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting;

2. The Paris Conference was organized by the Government of France, under the auspices of President Jacques Chirac, at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 24 to 28 January 2005. The purpose of the Conference was to assess the current knowledge in, and needs for, research and scientific expertise in biodiversity, as well as examine public and private approaches to biodiversity conservation and management, and the interactions between science and governance, as part of the ongoing global effort to reduce significantly the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 and ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

3. The Conference was attended by over 1700 participants from more than 100 countries, representing Governments, academia, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector. It produced two documents:

(a) the Paris Declaration on Biodiversity, an appeal by scientists on biodiversity, which noted, *inter alia*, that: (i) biodiversity is a natural heritage and a vital resource for all mankind; (ii) biodiversity is being destroyed irreversibly by human activities; and (iii) a major effort is needed to discover, understand, conserve and sustainably use biodiversity; and

* UNEP/CBD/COP/8/1.

(b) A Conference Statement, which recalls Governments' commitments to the 2010 biodiversity target and recommends, in response to the call for action made by President Chirac, the launch of an international multi-stakeholder consultative process guided by a balanced steering committee to assess the need for an international mechanism which would provide a critical assessment of the scientific information and policy options required for decision-making, building on existing bodies, and ongoing initiatives.

4. Two meetings were organized to prepare for the first meeting of the International Steering Committee (ISC): the first meeting was held in September 2005 in Paris, France and the second meeting took place in December 2005, in Oaxaca, Mexico during the First Open Science Conference of DIVERSITAS. A side event was also organised in November 2005 in the margins of the eleventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) held in Montreal, Canada. These preparatory meetings discussed the goals, expected outputs, participation and organisation of the first meeting of the ISC that would be established to oversee the consultative process on the need for, and modalities of, an International Mechanism of Scientific Expertise on Biodiversity.

5. This note is a factual report on the above-mentioned preparatory meetings (Section II) and the first meeting of the ISC held in February 2006 (Section III).

II. INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING: PREPARATORY MEETINGS

A. The Paris Preparatory Meeting of the Interim Steering Committee

6. On 28 June 2005, the Government of France convened a meeting of an interim steering committee to prepare the first meeting of the ISC.

7. The agenda of the meeting consisted of: (i) lessons learnt from selected ongoing assessments; (ii) characteristics of the international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity; (iii) the Consultative process to assess the need for, and feasibility of, an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity; and (iv) ways and means for implementing the consultative process

(a) Lessons learnt from selected ongoing assessments

8. Lessons learnt were drawn from the following ongoing assessments: (i) the International Ozone Assessments, (ii) assessments by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), (iii) the Global Biodiversity Assessment (GBA); (iv) the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), and (v) the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD); (vi) the Global Environment Outlook; and (vii) assessments carried out by SBSTTA and its ad hoc technical expert groups, and assessments reported in the CBD Global Biodiversity Outlook. Lessons learnt were drawn as a basis for the discussions on the needs for, feasibility of, and options for, a possible mechanism that could be established to provide assessments on the status and trends of biodiversity goods and services for the CBD and other biodiversity-related conventions.

(b) The consultative process to assess the need for, and feasibility of, IMOSEB

9. It was agreed that it was important to assess the need for, and feasibility of IMOSEB and this should be done through a consultative process. There was also general agreement such a consultative process should be open, transparent, independent, not rushed, and inclusive of all biodiversity-related conventions and the civil society so as to ensure broad ownership of the mechanism. It was therefore agreed that the consultation should be guided by a large multi-stakeholder and multi-regional ISC. Members should be nominated based on their expertise and should include scientists from the natural, social and economic sciences; members of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment; the conventions' secretariats; relevant UN agencies and programmes; representatives of Governments from all UN regions; NGOs; IGOs and representatives of the business and other economic sectors, and indigenous and local communities.

10. A small Interim Executive Committee was established, with DIVERSITAS serving as the interim secretariat, to:

- (i) develop a concept note intended to stimulate the consultative process and that could be published in some form in a scientific peer-reviewed journal;
- (ii) suggest the final composition of the multi-stakeholder ISC, ensuring appropriate geographic, stakeholder, gender and thematic expertise; and suggest a list of potential chairs for the ISC;
- (iii) finalize the terms of reference for the consultative process; and develop a strategy and schedule for the consultative process; and
- (iv) assist with fundraising for the consultative process.

11. The concept note contained the following issues to be discussed during the consultation process:

- (i) Is there a need for a new international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity?
- (ii) What would be its value-added; and relationship with ongoing or recent assessments and biodiversity-related conventions?
- (iii) Who would be its audiences and stakeholders for its providing up-to-date, best quality scientific information to the environmental conventions?
- (iv) What would be its goal, scope, governance structure and management structure?
- (v) What principles and procedures would guide it?
- (vi) What would be its estimated budget and funding mechanisms?
- (vii) When would it be needed and what would be its timetable?
- (viii) What type of communications and outreach strategy would be needed?
- (ix) What would be its general characteristics?
- (e) *Ways and means for supporting the consultative process*

12. The budgets of some of the assessments mentioned above were presented and the need to raise funds for the new mechanism was discussed.

B. The Oaxaca Preparatory Meeting of the Interim Steering Committee

13. Scientists who participated in the DIVERSITAS First Open Science Conference on “Integrating biodiversity science for human well-being”, held in Oaxaca, from 10 to 12 November 2005 adopted the Oaxaca Declaration on Biodiversity.

14. In agreement with the recommendations of the Paris Conference, they urged national Governments and UN bodies to establish a properly resourced international scientific panel that should include an intergovernmental component and would aim at providing, on a regular basis, validated and independent scientific information relating to biodiversity to Governments, international conventions, non-governmental organizations, policy makers and the wider public.

C. Reports and side event on the consultation on the need for, feasibility of, and option of, an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity

15. In the opening plenary of the *tenth meeting of SBSTTA* in Bangkok, Thailand (7 to 10 February 2005), the representative of France reported on the Paris International Conference on “Biodiversity: Science and Governance” and referred to the launching of an open international consultation process for the assessment of the need for international biodiversity assessment mechanism.

16. Similarly, in the opening plenary of the *first meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of the Implementation*, held in Montreal from 5 to 9 September 2005, the representative of France reminded the meeting that the Paris Conference had called for an international mechanism that would link scientists, Governments, civil society and international institutions. He informed the meeting that in that context an interim steering committee had been formed, which had met in Paris in June 2005. The international mechanism would help raise the awareness of biodiversity issues, including by making available scientific expertise that would be perceived by public opinion and political leaders as providing both an independent evaluation and systematic warnings of the biodiversity crisis.

17. The Interim Steering Committee organised a side event in the margins of the *eleventh meeting of SBSTTA* held in Montreal from 28 November to 2 December 2005. The event was an opportunity to inform participants about progress made since the Paris International Conference, including the work of the Interim Steering Committee, the preparation for the first meeting of the ISC and the consultation on the international biodiversity assessment mechanism. Key issues to be addressed during the consultative process were discussed. Amongst them, the main themes to be addressed by the international mechanism: biodiversity at different levels of biological and spatial organization; biodiversity and global change; biodiversity and ecosystem services; biodiversity and productivity; biodiversity for human health and wellbeing; assessments, threats and response at genetic, species and ecosystem levels.

D. Electronic forum in preparation for the first meeting of the International Steering Committee

18. The Secretariat of the Interim Steering Committee launched an electronic forum from 23 January to 6 February 2006 to help members of the ISC prepare for their first meeting and gather information that would serve as a basis for the discussions. The e-forum covered the following themes and questions:

- (a) Consultative process towards an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity (Who needs to be consulted? How? Calendar of the consultation);
- (b) Definition of user needs (Stakeholders views) (What are the needs? what kind of knowledge is needed? By whom? At which frequency?);
- (c) Capacity in terms of expertise (What can scientists provide? scope, gaps, accuracy, uncertainty, interdisciplinarity, methods, etc.?)
- (d) How could an international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity look like: the vision? (Draft a concept note).

III. FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

24. The first meeting of the ISC of the Consultative Process towards a possible international mechanism of scientific expertise on biodiversity (IMoSEB) was held in Paris on 21 and 22 February 2006 at the French National Museum of Natural History. The first meeting of the Executive Committee took place just after the meeting of the ISC.

Meeting of the International Steering Committee

25. The meeting was attended by 74 of the 90 members identified by the Interim Committee. Participants included scientists, and representatives of Governments¹ from all the UN regions, intergovernmental organisations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and research institutions.

26. The purpose of the meeting was to launch the consultative process by:

- (a) appointing the co-chairs of the ISC and the executive committee members;

¹ Austria, Canada, China, Costa-Rica, France, Gabon, Germany, India, Italy, Jamaica, Madagascar, Morocco, Madagascar, Namibia, New-Zealand, Poland, Senegal, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, UK, USA

(b) agreeing on a programme of work of the ISC; the rules of procedure of the consultative process and its agenda; and

(c) drafting a concept note on the proposed mechanism building on a draft prepared; plans schemes or methods for the mechanism.

27. The meeting agreed to split into four working groups and convey plenary meetings as needed. The four working groups considered the following topics:

(a) Characteristics of the consultation;

(b) Definition of user needs;

(c) Scientific approach; and

(d) Vision for an IMoSEB.

28. The meeting elected Alfred Oteng-Yeboah (Ghana) and Michel Loreau (Canada) as co-chairs of the International Steering Committee, and Ivar Baste, Martha Chouchena-Rojas, Christine Dawson, Horst Korn, Keping Ma, Georgina Mace, Martha Mapangou, Charles Perrings, Peter Raven, José Sarukhan, Robert Watson, and Jacques Weber as members of the Committee.

29. The meeting agreed that:

(a) There is a need to develop better information on biodiversity change for decision-makers at multiples scales;

(b) The information should be policy-relevant, accessible, useful and timely; there was a need to make clear the connections between decisions at different scales;

(c) The consultative process should start with an evaluation of the effectiveness of existing models and mechanisms in the transfer of both scientific and non-scientific information to decision-makers;

(d) The consultation should explore the effectiveness of alternative mechanisms, and take the form of iterative consultation with stakeholders, particularly on the functions to be performed by any new mechanism;

(e) Improved flow of information was necessary but not sufficient for success, and that other factors, such as support to capacity building, reform of biodiversity governance and development of incentives, needed to be considered.

Meeting of the Executive Committee

30. The Executive Committee appointed by the ISC held its first meeting the afternoon of the 22nd, with representatives of the French Ministry of Research and Foreign Affairs, UNESCO and indigenous communities attending *ex-officio*. The purpose of the meeting was to (i) define the terms of reference of the Executive Committee, and (ii) develop a plan of action.

31. Regarding the terms of reference, it was agreed that members of the Executive Committee would:

(a) be appointed to the Steering Committee by the co-chairs, bearing in mind that they should represent all categories of stakeholders;

(b) be appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience, and would act on their personal capacity, and not in any institutional capacity;

(c) remain in the Committee until the end of the consultation; and

(d) carry out the following duties:

(i) contribute to the design of the features of a successful consultative process;

- (ii) advise on the design of an open and inclusive consultation for a possible mechanism;
- (iii) oversee the implementation of the consultation and ensure that key objectives are met;
- (iv) support the delivery of conclusions of the consultation to the next stage.

(e) In all areas of its work, seek to operate in an open and transparent manner, and to respond to comments and views from the Steering Committee.

32. With regard to plan of action, the Executive committee considered the recommendations made by the ISC and drafted an 18-month plan of action that includes:

- (a) the preparation of a set of studies to be completed by October 2006, including:
 - (i) a new concept note, building on the input of the ISC and others;
 - (ii) compilation of information on decision-making landscape affecting biodiversity;
 - (iii) analysis of case studies to highlight successes and failures in the conservation of biodiversity at different scales;
 - (iv) analysis of existing models delivering scientific expertise and the use of scientific expertise in decision-making;
- (b) a wide international consultation, taking into account the results of the above-mentioned studies, between January and -April 2007.
- (c) A final meeting of the ISC to consider the results of the consultation, and make a set of final recommendations on possible follow-up as appropriate (June 2007).

33. The Executive Secretariat of the Consultative process, currently funded by the Government of France, was requested to carry out the tasks listed in paragraph 32 above.
