WORKSHOP ON FINANCING
   FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Havana, Cuba, 16-17 July 2001
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

### THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY AS A FUNDING CATALYST

Summary Outcome of the GEF/UNEP Information Sharing and Data Exchange Workshop

Note by the Global Environment Facility

This Summary Outcome reports on the proceedings and conclusions of an Information Sharing and Data Exchange Workshop, which was organized collaboratively by GEF Secretariat and UNEP, in Paris on March 15th and 16th, 2001.

**Objectives**

1.      To discuss strategies/benefits/issues and modalities/mechanisms for information sharing and data exchange that could improve access to information on global environment investment and project activities, which are being funded and implemented by different donor organizations, in order that such information can be utilized to:

- support decision-making and operational effectiveness;
- encourage exchange of knowledge and experience among involved organizations and agencies;
- identify opportunities for coordination and cooperation among donors in projects and financing; and
- guide policy and strategic planning of investment in the global environment.

**Participants**

2.      The workshop was attended by representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency, Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, Department for International Development - United Kingdom, European Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization, Finnish Aid, French Global Environment Facility, United Nations Environment

---

\*        CBD-GEF/WS-Financing/1.

Programme, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the GEF Secretariat.

**Definitions**

3.      The following proposed definitions of information sharing and data-exchange were introduced, as the basis for guiding the workshop discussions:

-   **Data Exchange:**  Basic sharing of raw data on an organization's environmental investment portfolios/projects/activities.

-   **Information/Knowledge Sharing:**  Interactive sharing of functional and practical information/experiences that can mutually and directly benefit the operations of the different organizations/agencies.

-   **Financing-sharing:**  Sharing of information to enable the identification of available funding/financing sources for environmental investments.

**Main Discussion Points, Issues and Concerns**

4.      Each organization made presentations of their respective strategies, framework and systems for information management and information dissemination/sharing.  The Workshop discussions of these presentations and subsequent discussions provided an opportunity for the participants to discuss common issues/concerns/ideas pertaining to (i) possible strategies, benefits and issues of information-sharing and data-exchange; (ii) possible modalities and mechanisms for information-sharing and data-exchange; and (iii) practical next steps and possible collaboration efforts.  The following paragraphs highlight the main points, issues and concerns discussed.

a)  *Benefits of Information-Sharing*
    -   must impart individual and collective benefits to participating agencies and development community-at-large
        -   benefits and visibility are maximized if participating agencies contribute as coherent group
    -   improve transparency and coherence in monitoring project pipeline, portfolio and progress/status
    -   encourage and facilitate collaboration and sharing of experiences, lessons learnt, best practices
    -   increase coordination, particularly at country-level, in support of priority setting and avoidance of duplicative efforts; therefore improving cost-effectiveness in the use of resources
    -   enable evaluation of projects, project proposals and project portfolios against broader parameters of existing investments, projects and activities
    -   support analytical and reporting requirements
    -   enhance organizational visibility
    -   allow agencies with little or no information management capacity/resources to maintain and disseminate data pertaining to its environment investments
    -   facilitate coordination of funding

b)  *Information-Sharing stakeholders*
    -   agencies and organizations which should be involved in further discussion and development of information-sharing

- major bilateral and multilateral donors
- other agencies funding development and environment activities
- secretariats of the multilateral environmental agreements

c) *Potential users of shared information*
- international development agencies and organizations, the Conventions, UN Agencies, development banks
- bilateral and multilateral donors
- national governments, particularly focal points for overseas development assistance and national strategies for sustainable development in recipient countries
- civil society (NGOs, media, public, beneficiaries of projects)

d) *Definitions of global environment investments/projects/activities*
- information-sharing to cover only environment projects and activities
- agencies may have differing definitions of "environment investments, projects and activities"
    - agencies could maintain their respective existing definitions but a matrix could be established that will cross-map and common-categorise the different definitions
- "sharing" should be defined as differentiated from "reporting"

e) *Agree on common data definitions/standards/classification or coding systems*
- identify a common set of currently readily available core basic data, that is typically already being maintained by most development agencies
- define focal areas, sectors, etc to facilitate accuracy, completeness and consistency of analysis and reporting
- need to be aware that an agency's individual definition can be geared to serve its direct or immediate objective and purpose
- consider the use of DAC's sector coding and policy marker system; including the mapping of OECD sector codes to environmental thematic sectors, if appropriate
- use existing mechanisms for data harmonisation (look-up tables and thesauruses), where possible and new ones developed only where needed
- recognize the paramount importance of data quality issues
- adopt metadata standards facilitate data-sharing

f) *Recognition of ownership of shared information*
- recognise ownership of and credit for any data shared
- respect confidentiality concerns
- resolve issues of dual or multiple ownership of data
- assure and enhance appropriate organizational visibility for and reference to the participating agencies
- acknowledge data contributions of participating agencies to the Conventions

g) *Global Host or Global Locator?*
- should information-sharing be managed through a database maintained by a global host or accessible through a global locator/portal
- the establishment of mechanisms for continuing maintenance and updating of any system is considered crucial to successful information-sharing
- is shared ownership of the information-sharing system/process and of the data/information therein essential?

*h)* *Opportunity to rationalize and streamline Convention reporting requirements*
- determine the benefits and synergies to be gained from common data standards and more realistic reporting requirements among the Conventions, taking into account current reporting requirements
- the reporting of such data on a consistent comprehensive basis would facilitate more informed planning and decision-making

*i)* *Database/website Assistance to developing countries' environment focal point*
- provision of assistance to developing countries' focal points for environment related development in terms of implementing and maintaining their databases and websites on their respective country's environment programmes/projects

*j)* *Costs of Information-Sharing*
- important to ensure little or no any additional costs in support of sharing information
- build on each agency's existing information management systems/processes so that no incremental development and maintenance is necessary; therefore, requiring no retrofit of existing databases to provide data not currently being maintained
- avoid duplication, where possible, of effort by, for example, encouraging harmonization of reporting requirements amongst the MEAs

**Conclusions**

5.       The Workshop concluded that information sharing was an important operational initiative, which could result in a wide range of potential benefits for all participating agencies and organizations.  In arriving at this conclusion, the Workshop discussions focused on the principles and strategies of information sharing and data-exchange, rather than specific tools or technologies.  The Workshop decided that:

- data-sharing should focus on environment projects and not on all development projects in general;
- the initial emphasis should be on data-sharing; information/knowledge-sharing or financing-sharing can be considered later; and
- possible collaboration and synergies should be pursued with similar efforts and activities being carried out by other organizations in defining standards for reporting on environment projects and investments.

**Next Steps**

6.       As the next steps to further pursue this information-sharing and data-exchange initiative, the Workshop agreed that the GEF Secretariat should:

- determine what efforts and activities are being carried out in this area and, in particular, to initiate and establish dialogue with the relevant OECD/DAC working groups on environment and on statistics to identify possible synergies and collaboration;

- coordinate closely with the secretariats of the Conventions (in particular, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification) to understand their information and reporting requirements so that the Conventions can be proactive with the Parties in guiding, defining and harmonizing reporting requirements; and

- take the lead in encouraging increased dialogue and in enhancing coordination on information sharing between donors and other development agencies and organizations; including preparing a discussion paper to provide the basis for further dialogue and action.

-----