

**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**Distr.
GENERALUNEP/CBD/WG8J/4/6
25 October 2005

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**AD HOC OPEN-ENDED INTER-SESSIONAL
WORKING GROUP ON ARTICLE 8(j) AND
RELATED PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**Fourth meeting
Granada, 23-27 January 2006
Item 7.2 of the provisional agenda***PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS FOR INDIGENOUS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE
WORK OF THE CONVENTION: THE ROLE OF THE THEMATIC FOCAL POINT UNDER
THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM***Note by the Executive Secretary***I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Conference of the Parties, at its fifth meeting, adopted the programme of work on the implementation of Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Task 8 of the programme of work cited the need to identify a focal point within the clearing-house mechanism to liaise with indigenous and local communities. As a result of this decision, the Executive Secretary appointed the Head of the clearing-house mechanism, as the focal point for this purpose.

2. At its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties requested that the Executive Secretary establish a technical expert group to develop the roles and responsibilities of the thematic focal point within the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on issues related to Article 8(j) and related provisions, in accordance with task 8 of the programme of work adopted by the Conference of the Parties in its decision V/16.

3. The Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Traditional Knowledge and the clearing-house mechanism met in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, from 24 to 26 February 2003. Recommendations arising from the meeting, including those related to the identification of the roles and responsibility of the thematic focal point within the clearing-house mechanism on issues related to article 8(j) and related provisions of the convention on biological diversity, are found in document UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/TK-CHM/1/3. ^{1/}

^{1/} See: Report of the ad hoc technical expert group on traditional knowledge and the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/TK-CHM/1/3).

4. Further guidance pertaining to the role of the thematic focal point under the clearing-house mechanism, was provided by the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Decision VII/16 G, requested the Executive Secretary to further develop the role of the thematic focal point on Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention under the clearing-house mechanism with a view to: (a) assisting national focal points, as appropriate and subject to available resources, to more effectively disseminate and make accessible Convention-related information to indigenous and local communities with particular emphasis on providing information in appropriate and accessible languages of indigenous and local communities; (b) assisting indigenous and local communities, as appropriate and subject to available resources, in the use of information and communication technologies through the organization of capacity-building and training workshops at the local, national, and sub-regional levels; (c) compiling information on existing networks, experts, tools, and resources relevant to meeting the needs of indigenous and local communities.

5. Issues related to the thematic focal point were discussed by the Advisory Group on Article 8j and Related Provisions which met in Montreal, from 11 to 14 July 2005. Committee members emphasized the need for other participatory mechanisms including the development of information sharing-tools such as a Traditional Knowledge Information Web Portal aimed to promote awareness and enhance access by indigenous and local communities to information on issues relating to Article 8(j) and related provisions of the Convention.

6. Section II of this document, examines considerations relevant to the development of the thematic focal point for indigenous and local communities to facilitate greater participation in the work of the Convention, especially in relation to its programme areas and cross-cutting issues. Section III examines recent progress in the development of tools to facilitate communications and also discusses issues related to improved access to new information technologies, the raising of capacities and the use of web-based systems to stimulate dialogue, facilitate joint work and encourage the exchange of information. Finally, section IV attempts to draw some conclusions and proposes recommendations for further action.

II. ISSUES RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS THROUGH THE THEMATIC FOCAL POINT WITHIN THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

7. The development of communication and participatory tools related to the activities of the thematic focal point faced three primary issues: the heterogeneity of the user population; the need to adhere to a participatory design approach in the development of these tools; and, the lack of capacity of many potential user communities.

8. With regard to the issue of heterogeneity of the user population and their diverse languages, the Secretariat designed communication mechanisms where any community could communicate, in their language of choice, with other communities using the same common language. However, this does not resolve the problem that the user interface of the website is in English, and that many communities may not have the level of English necessary for accessing these communication tools. These communities or their representatives and organizations, particularly those working internationally on Convention related issues, may have a working knowledge of at least one of the United Nations official languages and if the website and user interface were made available in the six official languages, its usefulness would be greatly increased. Clearly, lack of funding for translation of the website and user interface into the six languages of the United Nations remains an obstacle in ensuring the full and effective use of the tools developed.

9. The need for translation of materials into local languages has been emphasized repeatedly throughout meetings of the Conference of the Parties.^{2/} Given its international nature, the Secretariat

^{2/} See decision IV/10, section B., paragraph 4, decision V/16, paragraph 12, paragraph 4 of the Akwé: Kon Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines, decision VI/19, paragraph 12

circulates official documentation and conducts open-ended meetings in the six official languages of the United Nations. With regard to other materials, priority is given to the six United Nations languages, as appropriate for the client base and depending on the availability of funds. The responsibilities for further translations into other languages, rests with national governments and non-governmental organization and indigenous peoples organizations.

10. In adherence to the tenets of participatory design, the development of communication and participatory tools adhered to the advice of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Traditional Knowledge and the clearing-house mechanism (refer UNEP/CBD/AHTEG/TK-CHM/1/3 - annex) and the Advisory Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions. It likewise sought the advice of the informal advisory committee of the clearing-house mechanism and other user groups.

11. Lastly, the issue of capacity, particularly within the context of effective participation in the Convention process, is an issue that has been given due attention by the Conference of the Parties in all of its meetings. This issue remained at the forefront during the design and implementation of communication and participatory mechanisms, especially those that are web-based.

12. Some solutions to the issue of capacity included: (a) design of tools that are intuitive and easy to use; (b) development of web-based modules that can be quickly modified or enhanced to better meet the needs of its user community with little overhead or technical administrative costs; (c) design of communication tools that can accommodate all alphabets and languages; (d) use of non-electronic or alternative information dissemination and communication tools (fax, CD-ROM, paper, etc.).

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS THROUGH THE THEMATIC FOCAL POINT WITHIN THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

13. Given the above, it was necessary for the Secretariat to develop two parallel participatory mechanisms in an effort to ensure full and equitable participation by local and indigenous communities. The first mechanism developed makes use of web-based systems, and incorporated many communication and interactive components in an effort to facilitate dialogue, exchange of ideas and dissemination of knowledge and information among communities. The second mechanism relies on alternative communication tools, including fax, hard-copy, regular mail and other traditional means of communication and information exchange.

14. Electronic participatory mechanisms were integrated through an Internet-based portal located on the Convention's website at: <http://www.biodiv.org/portals/tk/default.shtml> . An Internet-base portal is commonly referred to as a specialized web-site that provides a variety of services including Web searching, news, calendaring, discussion groups, interactive information exchange mechanisms, etc., developed for an audience in support of its goals and objectives. Parties, organizations and indigenous and local communities were notified of the activation of the Portal on 16 December 2005.

15. The traditional knowledge information web-portal offers nine different components, including:



- a. A calendaring system where users are able to plan, organize and discuss virtual or face-to-face meetings;
- b. A number of discussion forums where it is possible to initiate new discussions, reply to existing comments and communicate on issues of relevancy to the community;
- c. Background material where users may submit to the Secretariat for posting documents, reports, articles, etc.;
- d. A section related to the programme of work on Article 8(j): Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices where users may comment on activities, request information and communicate with Programme Officers;
- e. A subscription service to the various information dissemination services offered by the Secretariat, and to other services offered by indigenous and local communities;
- f. A section on relevant websites, networks and other resources where users are able to submit new entries and links;
- g. A really simple syndication service (RSS, an XML (eXtended Markup Language) format designed for sharing web content such as information on new CBD notifications, final reports, upcoming meetings and latest news. Using this service, websites are able to harvest automatically needed information from the CBD website;
- h. An electronic information centre where users are able to more easily locate information related to Article 8(j): Traditional Knowledge, Innovations and Practices.



Syndication

- [RSS](#) Latest News
- [RSS](#) Articles
- [RSS](#) Resources

Calendar

November 2005

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Archives

[July 2005](#)

Submissions

To submit an item please contact Sofia Gutierrez at sofia.gutierrez@biodiv.org.

Figure I Traditional Knowledge Portal

The screenshot shows the Traditional Knowledge Information Web Portal. At the top, there is a banner for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with the text 'CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY' and the CBD logo. Below the banner, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Home | Traditional Knowledge Web Portal' and a 'Printer-friendly version' icon. The main content area is divided into several sections: a 'Welcome' message, a search bar, and a 'Post an entry' button. The right sidebar contains a 'Syndication' section with RSS links for 'Latest News', 'Articles', and 'Resources'. Below that is a 'Calendar' section for November 2005, followed by 'Archives' (July 2005) and 'Submissions' information.

16. In all, the portal is intended to be a collaborative tool for use by indigenous and local communities where users are able to interact and foster dialogue regardless of temporal and spatial constraints.

17. However, effective use of the portal depends on adequate capacity, human and financial, at the community level and acculturation to new information and web-based technologies by those unfamiliar

with their use and application. This should be achieved through community level technical workshops and hands-on training.

18. With regard to alternative means of participation through the thematic focal point, the Secretariat developed a number of less-technology intensive applications for use by traditional and local communities. These applications include:

(a) A fax-server to disseminate postings, information and other news to users without access to new information and web-based technologies;

(b) Text-based email services for users with access to the Internet, but lacking new equipment and bandwidth;

(c) A mailing list of communities and users who may benefit from receipt of hard-copy documents and publications;

(d) Creation of CD-ROMs able to archive the information content available on the portal.

19. It should be recognized, however, that these services do not offer the level of interactivity and access to resources as those available through a web portal. For example, it is difficult if not impossible, for users without access to web-based technologies to retrieve resources located on other websites and networks.

IV. CONCLUSION

20. The development of mechanisms to promote the participation of indigenous and local communities in matters related to the objectives of Article 8(j) and related provisions through the thematic focal point relied on new web-based and alternative technologies.

21. These mechanisms are for use by indigenous and local communities to share information, exchange knowledge and resources, and act as a virtual meeting point for its members and stakeholders.

22. Composed of discussion forums, fax, email and resources such as an information centre, directories of other websites and networks and other resources, these mechanisms were developed to increase participation of indigenous and local communities in the processes of the Convention, activities related to the programme areas and cross-cutting issues and other initiatives pertaining to biodiversity.

23. The use and effectiveness of these participatory mechanisms are dependent on the enhancement of capacities at the community level and acculturation to the technology. Achieving these factors, in turn, are dependent on sustainable human and financial support.

24. While web-based systems remain one of the most effective mechanisms promoting inter and intra-community interaction and dialogue, many communities lack access to new information technologies. To redress this situation, a number of alternative communication and information exchange mechanisms have been created by the Secretariat to assist users and communities in participating in the Convention process.

25. However sophisticated these alternative systems may be, they do not offer the interactivity and access to information as available through web-based systems. Unless there is a concerted increased attempt to address this issue, many communities will continue to remain disfranchised from the Convention process, and from issues directly affecting their livelihoods.

V. DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS WITH REGARD TO THE ROLE OF THE THEMATIC FOCAL POINT UNDER THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM AND THE USE OF PARTICIPATORY MECHANISMS

The Ad Hoc Open-Ended Inter-Sessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions may wish to recommend that the Conference of the Parties, at its eighth meeting, adopt the following decisions:

Recalling, decision VI/19, paragraph 12(c), which requests the Executive Secretary to make available all publications in the areas of biological diversity communication, education and public awareness that have been produced by the Secretariat, in the six official United Nations languages, subject to availability of funding, and promote to translation of those publications in the languages of indigenous and local communities.

Recalling decision VII/16 G requesting the Executive Secretary to further develop the role of the thematic focal point on Article 8(j) and related provisions, under the clearing house mechanism.

1. *Notes* with appreciation the launching of the traditional knowledge information portal and related initiatives, by the Secretariat;

2. *Decides* to increase the core budget for the translation of documents, into the six official languages of the United Nations, so as to include the notifications and other information resources for indigenous and local communities, as appropriate,

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to:

(a) Convene, subject to the availability of financial resources, regional and sub-regional workshops on new information and web-based technologies to assist local and indigenous communities in their use and to facilitate the establishment of communication networks;

(b) Monitor the use of the Convention website and in particular, the Traditional Knowledge Information Portal, and to consult with indigenous and local communities that are participating in the work of the convention, through the Advisory Group to Article 8(j), to identify any gaps or shortcomings and to report to the next meeting of the Working Group.
