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REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR ARABIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM, CAIRO, 5-9 MARCH 2018

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 2 (a) of decision [X/15](#) on the clearing-house mechanism (CHM), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity encouraged Parties to continue to take the necessary steps to establish, strengthen, and ensure the sustainability of, national clearing-house mechanisms, in order for them to provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), and thus achieve CHM goal 2 as defined in the annex to that decision.
2. In decision [XI/2](#), paragraph 11, the Conference of the Parties welcomed the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 \(UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31\)](#), which contains recommended activities to achieve this goal. In paragraph 11 (b) of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties agreed to strengthen communication with, and build the capacity of, national focal points for the clearing-house mechanism.
3. Additionally, in decision [XII/2](#) B, paragraph 15, the Conference of the Parties strongly encouraged Parties to accelerate the establishment and development of their national clearing-house mechanisms where they had not done so, and, in paragraph 16 of the same decision, invited Parties and partners to provide support to developing country Parties that were developing their national clearing-house mechanisms.
4. Furthermore, in decision [XIII/23](#), paragraph 12, the Conference of the Parties encouraged Parties to continue their efforts to establish, sustain and further develop effective national clearing-house mechanisms in support of the implementation of their NBSAPs.
5. Pursuant to these decisions, the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with the generous support of the Governments of Egypt and Japan, organized a subregional workshop for Arabic-speaking countries on the clearing-house mechanism. The workshop was held in Cairo from 5 to 9 March 2018 as announced in notification 2018-011 issued on 18 January 2018.¹ This workshop was intended for developing countries, but other countries in the region were invited to attend provided that they covered their own costs.
6. The overall objective of the workshop was to build capacity and provide guidance on how to establish and sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms, in line with decision X/15 and in support of the NBSAPs.
7. Governments were invited to nominate one representative to participate in this workshop. The nominee had to meet the following criteria:
 - (a) Involvement in the planning and development of the national clearing-house mechanism in his/her country, as expected from the CHM national focal point;
 - (b) Familiarity with the NBSAP;

¹ [Ref. No. SCBD/IMS/ET/SM/87118](#).

(c) Ability to present the current situation of the national clearing-house mechanism as well as any existing plan to develop it;

(d) Occupying a position enabling him/her to apply the knowledge and capacity gained during the workshop for the further development of the national clearing-house mechanism.

8. The workshop was attended by representatives of eight countries: Egypt; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Oman; Saudi Arabia; State of Palestine; and Yemen. Additional information is provided in the list of participants (annex I) and the feedback synthesis (annex II).

9. The workshop documentation, including presentations and other information provided by participating countries, is available online at <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CHMWS-2018-02>.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

Item 1. Opening of the workshop

10. The workshop was opened by Mr. Khalid Allam from the Ministry of Environment, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, who welcomed the participants to Egypt. He expressed appreciation to the government of Japan for providing resources toward the workshop. He mentioned Egypt's desire to enhance capacity to develop their national clearing-house mechanism. He stressed the importance of hosting the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and how Egypt was ready to welcome the world. The opening statement of the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Ms. Cristiana Paşca Palmer, was delivered by Ms. Sandra Meehan of the CBD Secretariat.² The Executive Secretary first thanked the Governments of Egypt and Japan for hosting the workshop and making all necessary arrangements. Then a moment of silence was held in honour of Secretariat staff member Olivier de Munck, programme officer for the clearing-house mechanism, who had passed away on 21 February 2018.

11. After the statements, participants were invited to present themselves through a tour de table.

Item 2. Objectives and programme of the workshop

12. The session started with an introductory presentation by Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch from the Secretariat on the objectives and programme of the workshop.³ The overall objective was to strengthen the capacity of participating countries to establish and sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms in support of the NBSAPs.

13. Participants presented their learning objectives. Those objectives were to gain a deeper understanding of the clearing-house mechanism, its supporting role and its potential benefits for the country, to be aware of the experiences of other participating countries, and to acquire practical knowledge of the Bioland tool which could facilitate the establishment of a national clearing-house mechanism.

14. The learning objectives of the Secretariat of the Convention were also presented. Those objectives were to learn about the situation in the region, such as the experiences and challenges of participating countries, and to gain a better understand of their needs for further developing their national clearing-house mechanism. Another objective of the Secretariat was to collect feedback on the Bioland tool.

15. In terms of increased capacity after the workshop, each participating country should be able to adopt a sound approach to further develop its national clearing-house mechanism, based on a strategic vision and a realistic road map for its implementation. They would also know what kind of support could be expected from the Secretariat of the Convention to achieve that goal.

² The statement is available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/speech/2018/sp-2018-03-05-chm-en.pdf>.

³ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/d75f/b96a/a024c314f34aef912d2ea6c9/chm-ws-2018-02-item-02-workshop-objectives-en.pdf>

Item 3. Work programme of the clearing-house mechanism

16. This agenda item consisted of two presentations by the CBD Secretariat. The first one provided general background on the clearing-house mechanism.⁴ It referred to paragraph 22 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which envisioned a biodiversity knowledge network with national clearing-house mechanisms linked to the central clearing-house mechanism of the CBD Secretariat. It described the supporting role of the clearing-house mechanism as an information exchange platform contributing to planning, implementation and reporting. It stressed that the strategic vision of the national clearing-house mechanism should be defined at the level of the NBSAPs.

17. The second presentation⁵ described the proposed work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31). Special attention was devoted to CHM goal 2 (decision X/15, annex) which stated that national clearing-house mechanisms should provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the NBSAPs. Details were provided on the activities which should be carried out in order to meet the objectives under this goal. The presentation was followed by a brief discussion to answer any questions.

Item 4. National and regional experiences

18. Under this item, participating countries were given the opportunity to share their experiences on the development and status of their national clearing-house mechanisms and/or related initiatives. The suggested format for the national presentations included three areas: an overview of the current situation; the strategic vision for the future; and the type of cooperation or support that would be beneficial. The following participants made a presentation:

- (a) Ms. Leina Alawadhi (Kuwait);
- (b) Mr. Mohammed Mahasseneh (State of Palestine);
- (c) Mr. Raed Bani Hini (Jordan);
- (d) Ms. Zeina Hassnane (Lebanon);
- (e) Ms. Afrah Abo Ghanem (Yemen);
- (f) Mr. Faisal S. Shuraim (Saudi Arabia);
- (g) Mr. Ahmed AlShukaili (Oman);
- (h) Mr. Mahmoud Fawzy (Egypt).

19. After each presentation, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. The national presentations are available online at <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CHMWS-2018-02>.

Item 5. Guidance for national clearing-house mechanisms

20. The guidance presented for developing national clearing-house mechanisms followed a step-by-step road map highlighting the major actions that should be undertaken to establish and further develop a national clearing-house mechanism, as summarized in the table below.⁶

⁴ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/db40/bc9b/b0fe1fdb2762f4966fa1ecf9/chm-ws-2018-02-item-03-chm-background-en.pdf>

⁵ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/4477/4982/f62d6eea2bf5bb124bc76b9f/chm-ws-2018-02-item-03-chm-work-programme-en.pdf>

⁶ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/2d12/10a5/acc199fca28ccf310535ac23/chm-ws-2018-02-item-05-guidance-en.pdf>

<i>Level</i>	<i>Situation</i>	<i>Action</i>
0	No CHM national focal point	Encourage Party to nominate CHM national focal point
1	CHM national focal point not equipped	Find solutions to provide basic infrastructure and communication facilities
2	No national CHM website	Get tools and support to establish web presence
3	National CHM web presence	Enhance web content Improve user experience Create feedback loop
4	Good national CHM website	Expand information services Establish interoperability mechanisms Support other national CHMs

21. In terms of substantive content, the guidance covered the following topics of particular relevance to the development of effective national clearing-house mechanisms:

(a) *National coordination*: to understand the benefits of coordinating activities related to the development of a national clearing-house mechanism with a view to ensuring effectiveness and sustainability;

(b) *Strategic management of web content*: to understand the impact of content management on the effectiveness of a website, and to provide general guidelines on how to strategically plan and manage web content;

(c) *Information services*: to describe the typical information services that a national clearing-house mechanism can provide to support the NBSAP implementation process;

(d) *Technical aspects*: to give a general overview of existing technology relevant to the establishment or further development of national clearing-house mechanisms.

22. In order to enable participants to gain a stronger appreciation of the global resources and services available to a national CHM focal point, the participants undertook a guided exercise, based on the draft version of World Conservation Monitoring Centre's Global Biodiversity Databases compilation.

23. Mr. Han de Koeijer, Chair of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-house Mechanism, presented on the role of the CHM on Biological Diversity and on the process to set up a CHM.

24. Ms. Sandra Meehan presented on the translation process at the Secretariat and the CHM Award process that would take place at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Item 6. Training session

25. The main purpose of this session was to train participants on the use of the new Bioland tool to assist Parties in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms. This tool is a basic generic national clearing-house mechanism that can be made available online to interested Parties for them to easily share key information related to their NBSAP and its implementation. The demonstration version of this tool is available at <https://demo.chm-cbd.net>.

26. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch, Programme Officer at the Secretariat, started the training session by making a presentation providing some background on the Bioland tool.⁷ He explained that, prior to the training session, eight basic national CHM training websites had been pre-configured, one for each

⁷ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/dfid/18e9/cc132138a0695ef476df1578/chm-ws-2018-02-item-06-bioland-en.pdf>

participating country. During the hands-on training session, participants were shown how to access the tool through their user account and how to populate their national CHM training websites in their national languages, as indicated in the table below.

<i>Country</i>	<i>National CHM training site</i>	<i>Site languages</i>
Egypt	https://test-eg.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Jordan	https://test-jo.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Kuwait	https://test-kw.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Lebanon	https://test-lb.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Oman	https://test-om.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Saudi Arabia	https://test-sa.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
State of Palestine	https://test-ps.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic
Yemen	https://test-ye.chm-cbd.net	English, Arabic

27. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch also presented the latest version of the CBD online reporting tool. He indicated the existence of two systems: the official system, available at <https://chm.cbd.int>, in which only nationally approved information could be entered, and the test system, available at <https://chm-training.cbd.int/>, which could be used for learning purposes. He explained the distinction between the two user roles: the national publishing authority was responsible for approving what was officially published, and the national authorized user could prepare drafts for review and approval by the national publishing authority. He also referred to CBD notification 2016-038,⁸ issued on 21 March 2016, indicating that CBD national focal points could directly assign those roles to their national users through the online system.

28. Participants were invited to comment and provide feedback on the tools made available by the CBD Secretariat. The overall immediate reaction was positive, and participants indicated that they might provide further feedback as they became more familiar with the new tools.

29. At the end of the session, participants presented their developed Bioland-based test websites and exchanged lessons learned.

Item 7. Strategic vision and road map for national clearing-house mechanisms

30. Under this item, participants were requested to apply the guidance received thus far to prepare a strategic vision and road map for the development of their national clearing-house mechanism. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch and Ms. Sandra Meehan provided guidance and assistance as needed.

31. Each country then made a presentation about its strategic vision and road map for developing its national clearing-house mechanism. The result of the work was captured in the country information forms, which are also available on the workshop page. Participants were encouraged to maintain the information up to date after the workshop by providing revised versions whenever applicable.

Item 8. Pending matters

32. Under this item, participants were invited to raise any pending matter for further discussion or ask questions on any matter that would require clarification. A tour de table was made but no pending matter was raised. That gave the participants extra time to further familiarize themselves with the Bioland tool.

⁸ [Ref. No. SCBD/SAM/TSI/RH/LC/VA/85519.](#)

Item 9. Synthesis and report of the workshop

33. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch briefly recapped what had been done during the workshop. He indicated that participants should not hesitate to contact him or his colleague, Ms. Sandra Meehan, for further guidance after the workshop. He encouraged participants to remain in contact with each other for further collaboration or exchange of experiences.

34. Prior to the closure of the workshop, participants were requested to complete a feedback form. The compiled feedback (Annex II

35. **FEEDBACK SYNTHESIS**) would be taken into account to improve the planning and organization of subsequent workshops.

Item 10. Closure of the workshop

36. Mr. Khalid Allam from the Ministry of Environment, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, thanked the participants for their hard work and collaboration. He also thanked Mr. Han de Koeijer, Chair of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-house Mechanism, the Government of Japan for their generous financial support for the workshop and the Secretariat for the guidance provided. He then wished everyone a safe trip home and hoped to welcome everyone again at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in November. The CBD Secretariat and the participants thanked the Japan Biodiversity Fund for financing the workshop.

37. The workshop closed at 12.30 p.m. on 9 March 2018.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant and contact	Organization and address
Egypt	
1. Mr. Khalid Allam Director, Biodiversity Central Department Tel.: +20 1001288508 Email: khaledallam4@hotmail.com	Ministry of Environment - Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency Cairo, Egypt
2. Mr. Mahmoud Fawzy Environmental Researcher Tel.: +20 1003459538 Email: worldmody@hotmail.com	Ministry of Environment - Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency Cairo, Egypt
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Participant and contact	Organization and address
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10. Mr. Faisal S. Shuraim Vice-Executive Secretary Tel.: +966 535933282 Email: fshuraim@swa.gov.sa	National Committee for Biodiversity Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
State of Palestine	
11. Mr. Mohammed Mahasseneh CBD National Focal Point Director of Biodiversity & Protected Areas Tel.: + 970-2-2403595/4 Email: Mahassneh2000@yahoo.com	Environment Quality Authority Ramallah, State of Palestine
Yemen	
12. Ms. Afrah Abo Ghanem National Coordinator for CHM in Yemen Tel.: +967 711 856 566 Email: afrahghanem@yahoo.com	Environment Protection Authority Sana'a, Yemen
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity	
13. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch Website Officer, Clearing-House Mechanism Tel.: +1 514 287 7048 Email: alexandre.rafalovitch@cbd.int	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 413 Saint Jacques Street, Suite 800 Montreal QC H2Y 1N9, Canada
14. Ms. Sandra Meehan Programme Assistant, Clearing-House Mechanism Tel.: +1 514 287 7008 Email: sandra.meehan@cbd.int	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 413 Saint Jacques Street, Suite 800 Montreal QC H2Y 1N9, Canada
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15. Mr. Han de Koeijer CHM national focal point Department of Invertebrates Tel.: +32 2 627 42 67 Email: hdekoeijer@naturalsciences.be ; cbd-chm@naturalsciences.be	Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences Vautierstraat 29 B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Annex II

FEEDBACK SYNTHESIS

<i>What were your expectations before attending this workshop?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enhance use of PTK and CHM - How we can deal with CHM website - How to use the website of the CHM - Building capacity and obtaining needed guidance on how to develop and sustain our national CHM - To deliver the meaning and manners of implementing a CHM - To be able to use website and create it - To be useful for understanding the CHM and its process - I expect to train well on the CHM – mainly on Bioland and how to use it effectively - Help to create a new national CHM by using Bioland tool

<i>Please evaluate the extent to which the workshop has met your expectations</i>				
1 Poor	2 Average	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent
			XXXXX	XXX
			X	

<i>Please evaluate each agenda item</i>						
No.	Agenda item	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
2.	Objectives and programme				XXXXX XXX	XX
3.	Work programme of the CHM			XX	XXXXX XX	XX
4.	National and regional experiences			XX	XXXXX XXX	
5.	Guidance for National CHM			X	XXXXX	XXXX
6.	Training session			XX	XXXXX X	XX
7.	Strategic vision and road map for national CHM			XXXXX	XXX	XX
8.	Pending matters			X	XXXXX XX	XX
9.	Synthesis and report of the workshop			X	XXXXX X	XX

<i>What do you think was missing in terms of content or substance?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nothing - More training about how to establish the CHM - All items were covered by the trainers - More practical exercises were needed - Detailed information of data - More concentrated training

<i>What did you particularly like during this workshop?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country presentations - Time management

- CBD team assistance
- Everything was good
- Presentations were excellent
- Positive participation between the audience and the trainers
- The effective guidance
- The training sessions
- The management by the CHM team – the content was precise
- The delivery of the ideas
- Exploring the Bioland tool and making the road map for the national CHM
- Experience exchange between Parties; hospitality; cooperation and kindness
- Everything in the workshop – the presentations and the training

What did you particularly dislike during this workshop?

- We had hoped to make more activity on the Bioland tool.
- Nothing – we needed a field trip☺
- Nothing! Appreciate your effort.
- The lack of activities

Please evaluate the extent to which the workshop has helped you understand the role of the CHM, particularly in the context of the Strategic Plan and the NBSAP process.

1 Poor	2 Average	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent
		xx	xxxxx	x
			xx	

Please indicate at least one thing that has enhanced your ability to develop your national CHM.

- Knowledge about Bioland
- More time and more training
- We need expert nomination as consultants to help us establish our CHM
- Increase my practise with the CHM site
- The importance of CHM in monitoring biodiversity in my country and the world. Most important was the ability to link all of national biodiversity documents/research/events
- Website design
- Getting used to know more new websites
- The existing of programs like Bioland makes it easy to start the process of CHM
- Bioland website of CHM
- All data, documents, photos uploaded on the CHM
- I learned how to use the Bioland tool

Please evaluate the facilitation of the workshop sessions.

1 Poor	2 Average	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent
			xxxxx	xxxx
			x	

Please evaluate the organization of the workshop (logistics, administration, etc.).

1 Poor	2 Average	3 Good	4 Very good	5 Excellent
			xxx	xxxxx
				x

Please provide below any other comments or suggestions for improvements.

- We need another workshop about CHM with more participants and before COP 14.

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this questionnaire?

- More time for training on the CHM
 - Lack of selected points and more writing
 - No, I hope to join other training sessions soon
-