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CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Fourteenth meeting
Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 17-29 November 2018
Agenda items 8, 10, 17 and 26

REPORT ON THE GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE FORUM: "REMOVING THE TAXONOMIC IMPEDIMENT FOR ALL CITIZENS"

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In pursuance of decisions IV/1,V/9, VI/8, VII/9, VIII/3, IX/22, X/39, XI/29 and XIII/23 of the Conference of the Parties, the Global Taxonomy Initiative Forum was organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity, the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the International Barcode of Life, the Nature & Science Foundation of Egypt, and the World Federation for Culture Collections with the financial support of Japan through the Japan Biodiversity Fund.

2. The invitation to the Forum was sent to Parties and observers via notification 2018-090,[1] and a web page was created to disseminate up-to-date information, including a provisional agenda and other information).[2]

3. The Forum was held on 16 November 2018 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, under the theme "Removing the taxonomic impediment for all citizens". It had 67 participants from Parties and observers. The agenda adopted by the Forum and the list of participants to the Forum can be found in annexes I and II, respectively, below. The Forum was composed of a symposium and a round-table discussion. The symposium was live streamed.[3] All discussions were conducted in English.

II. OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL TAXONOMY INITIATIVE FORUM

ITEM 1. SYMPOSIUM

4. Mr. Alexander Shestakov of the Secretariat opened the Symposium at 9:30 a.m. on 16 November 2018 at the CEPA Fair venue of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

5. The Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, delivered a keynote speech on removing the taxonomic impediment, highlighting the success of participatory capacity development in taxonomy in Costa Rica with emphasis on the importance of evidence-based biodiversity management, the application of new technologies and international collaboration.

6. Mr. Daniel H. Janzen of the University of Pennsylvania, United States of America, made a presentation on the BioAlfa project and other practices in Costa Rica designed to enable and empower citizens in recording and monitoring biodiversity (attaining bio-literacy) and sharing biodiversity data for purposes of policymaking and implementation. The presentation was delivered remotely via the Internet.

7. Mr. Hendrik Seger of Belgium, on behalf of the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities (CETAF), made a presentation on the collaborative work done under CETAF to enhance taxonomic

[1] https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2018/ntf-2018-090-gti-en.pdf

[2] https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2018/parallel-meetings/The-Global-Taxonomy-Initiative-Forum

[3] Accessible at https://www.cbd.int/webcast/gti-live

research and to support taxonomic capacity development in scientific programmes. CETAF benefited from generous financial support from the European Union.

8. Mr. Tim Hirsch of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) presented on the growth of data on the GBIF platform, freely accessible, together with various shared tools for taxonomic knowledge and species occurrence data (http://gbif.org/).

9. Mr. Filliberto Polisco Jr. of the ASEAN Center for Biodiversity presented on the Global Taxonomy Initiative in South-East Asia, which provided training for young taxonomists with the help of taxonomic experts from within the region and Japan. With generous financial support from the Government of Japan, the Initiative had produced many field guides.

10. Ms. Jemilat Ibrahim from Nigeria, Ms. Mouna Rifi from Tunisia and Ms. Tatsiana Lipinskaya from Belarus co-presented on the GTI-DNA-tech training on rapid identification of priority species held in 10 developing countries in 2018.[4] The 10 projects were undertaken by the "trained trainers" of previous GTI capacity-building activities and were financially supported by the Japan Biodiversity Fund. The presentation was made on behalf of the trained trainers of all 10 projects.

11. Mr. Samy Zalat of Egypt presented on a comprehensive plan for taxonomic capacity development to be implemented in the North African region to identify, monitor and map species occurrences, in particular, invasive alien species, in support of the Global Taxonomy Initiative.

12. Mr. Mehrdad Hajibabaei of the University of Guelph, Canada, presented on the rapid growth of DNA barcoding applications in biodiversity research, regulatory and management practices and high-throughput DNA sequencing technologies to be applied by scientists to bulk DNA samples in the field. He also highlighted the importance of the global platform for sharing DNA barcoding data in order to enhance international collaboration and the efficacy of the technology.

13. Following the presentations by the experts, the panel discussion highlighted the following:

(a) Technological advancements in molecular biology and bioinformatics is accelerating taxonomic research in many parts of the world;

(b) Taxonomic experts should not work in isolation; facilitating international collaboration enhancing interdisciplinary research on biodiversity is the way to support taxonomic institutes in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(c) A capacity gap exists which needs to be overcome globally, and training in the application of DNA technologies and DNA barcoding is cost-effective and a good entry point for Parties with limited or no taxonomic capacity, especially developing countries;

(d) Application of DNA barcoding supports not only taxonomy but also regulatory, health and the broader economy and biodiversity monitoring in the field. It also enhances citizen science, which significantly contributes to improved public awareness of biodiversity, including strengthening the bio-literacy among citizens;

(e) The Global Taxonomy Initiative needs to continue its work with a more up-to-date programme of work (or the equivalent) to fully support the implementation of the Convention and other international agreements relevant to biodiversity.

ITEM 2. ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION

14. Participants suggested a plenary discussion instead of a thematic break-out group discussion on the matters revealed during the symposium.

15. Participants made the following suggestions:

(a) To enable broad communities to identify, monitor and record biodiversity in collaboration with taxonomic experts, for example application of DNA barcoding and sharing information on the public domain (e.g. BOLD systems) which contribute to improve biodiversity literacy – "bio-literacy", referring to the practice of BioAlfa in Costa Rica;

[4] See http://www.cbd.int/gti/

(b) To engage retired individuals, as well as indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth in citizen science projects, in view of the high potential of senior citizens contributing to citizen science;

(c) To create incentives for biodiversity data sharing from taxonomic knowledge holders, for example by ensuring citation of their contributions on the occasion of data use;

(d) To continue and increase opportunities for capacity-building in new technologies related to taxonomy, such as DNA barcoding, in addition to the traditional taxonomic training;

(e) To include existing taxonomic capacity and progress on improving taxonomic capacity in national reports, and, based on national circumstances, the national biodiversity strategies and action plans should include the necessary training action plans;

(f) To consider using up-to-date and harmonized taxonomic views for species monitoring, taking into account the difficulty to collate information on invasive alien species, endangered species and other trade-related issues around the world;

(g) To develop a user-friendly interface for non-academic users to contribute to the sharing and use of biodiversity information.

16. After some discussion on the issues raised by participants, participants suggested unanimously that the Global Taxonomy Initiative should continue the activities related to: (a) building taxonomic capacity; (b) facilitating international collaboration; (c) enhancing taxonomic research, with emphasis on understudied biomes; (d) applying new technologies (such as DNA technologies and bioinformatics); (v) supporting and enhancing citizen science; and (e) encouraging the broader community to use taxonomic knowledge in biodiversity management and related businesses.

17. Participants further expressed that the Forum should produce a synthesis of shared views of taxonomic knowledge from holders and users:

(a) To provide inputs to the process for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

(b) To produce a declaration on the Global Taxonomy Initiative at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Beijing, in 2020;

(c) To revisit the Programme of Work (decision VI/8, annex) and update the capacity-building Strategy for the Global Taxonomy Initiative (decision XI/29, annex), taking into account the needs of taxonomic knowledge at all levels and sectors, as well as advanced technologies in taxonomic researches and their applications.

Annex I

Agenda of the Global Taxonomy Initiative Forum (as amended by participants)

Item 1. Symposium

1.1 Opening

1.2 Keynote speech, "Removing the taxonomic impediment for all citizens"

1.3 BioAlfa — Costa Rica, to become the world's first taxonomically bio-literate country by its citizens

1.4 CETAF natural history collections — a collaborative project

1.5 Informatics in support of the post-2020 framework for biodiversity

1.6 A good practice approach to taxonomic capacity-building in South-East Asia

1.7 The GTI-DNA-tech training workshops 2018 — immediate outcomes and sustainable plans developed by the trained trainers

1.8 Taxonomic capacity development in Egypt and North Africa

1.9 BIOSCAN: A large-scale DNA-based biodiversity analysis in support of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework

1.10 Panel discussion

Item 2. Round-table discussion on removing the taxonomic impediment for all citizens

Annex II

Participants list

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