



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE  
MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
Montreal, Canada, 10 July 2018

### REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ON ITS MEETING OF 10 JULY 2018

#### I. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

##### A. Award for national clearing-house mechanisms

1. Establish the award jury based on the composition and members recommended by the Informal Advisory Committee.
2. Convene a two-day meeting before the end of September to allow the jury to complete its deliberations.

##### B. Bioland subcommittee

3. Establish the subcommittee on Bioland as recommended by the Informal Advisory Committee, and develop its work programme and terms of reference.
4. Consider scheduling the first meeting of the Bioland subcommittee virtually in the first week of September.

##### C. Meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism

5. Consider scheduling the next meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, as a two-day meeting, on the margins of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties during November 2018, subject to the availability of resources.
6. Continue to convene teleconferences as necessary for supporting the Secretariat in the development of the clearing-house mechanism and the implementation of the web strategy, and preparing for the next meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism.

#### II. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

##### INTRODUCTION

##### A. General information

1. The meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Montreal, Canada, on 10 July 2018, on the margins of the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation. The meeting documents are available online at <http://www.cbd.int/meetings/chmiac-2018-01>. The list of participants is available in the annex to the present report.

## **B. Background**

2. In decision [X/15](#), the Conference of the Parties adopted the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020. In decision [XI/2](#) B, paragraph 11, it welcomed the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 ([UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31](#)) and agreed to keep the work programme under review. More recently, in decisions [XII/2](#) B and [XIII/23](#), the Conference of the Parties made several requests concerning the clearing-house mechanism.

3. At its previous meeting, held in Montreal on 7 and 8 December 2017, the Informal Advisory Committee reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism. For the report on that meeting, including recommendations to the Executive Secretary, see [CBD/CHM/IAC/2017/1/5](#).

## **C. Expected outcome**

4. The main purpose of the meeting was to review the progress made to date on the clearing-house mechanism pursuant to decision XIII/23 and the recommendations made by the Committee at its previous meeting, and to provide the Executive Secretary with further advice on the clearing-house mechanism and other subjects related to technical and scientific cooperation, as appropriate.

### **ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

5. The meeting was opened at 1:30 p.m. on 10 July 2018 by Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, on behalf of the Executive Secretary. In her opening statement, she introduced herself as the new Director of the Division of Implementation Support and the Officer-in-Charge of the Clearing-house Mechanism Unit.

6. The Chair of the meeting, Mr. Han de Koeijer (Belgium), then gave participants the opportunity to introduce themselves.

### **ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS**

#### **2.1. Adoption of the agenda**

7. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda ([CBD/CHM/IAC/2018/1/1](#)) prepared by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the Chair.

#### **2.2. Organization of work**

8. The Committee adopted the proposed organization of work, as contained in annex I to the annotated provisional agenda ([CBD/CHM/IAC/2018/1/1/Add.1](#)).

### **ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

9. The Committee was invited to discuss the following key issues and raise additional relevant issues at the end of the discussion on this agenda item:

- (a) Award for national clearing-house mechanisms;
- (b) Bioland subcommittee;
- (c) Update on the web strategy;
- (d) Update on the online reporting tool;
- (e) Update on interoperability;
- (f) Update on support to national clearing-house mechanisms.

#### **3.1. Award for national clearing-house mechanisms**

10. In decision XII/2 B, paragraph 15, the Conference of the Parties had requested the Executive Secretary to propose, in collaboration with the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, a process to grant, at the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Conference of the

Parties, subject to the availability of resources, an award to the Parties that had made the most significant progress in the establishment or further development of their national clearing-house mechanisms.

11. As requested, the first set of awards had been granted at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Since then, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Committee, had started the preparatory process for granting awards at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

12. Ms. Sandra Meehan (CBD Secretariat) provided an update regarding the next steps in the preparatory process for granting awards at the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Notification [2018-010](#) had been issued on 15 January 2018. The Secretariat had written to each Party prior to the end of June to remind them of the awards process and to encourage submission of the questionnaire. Draft guidance had been created for the jury. Additionally, links to the winners of the first set of awards had been created on the CBD website. She also requested that the Committee consider recommending the publication of the award criteria on the CBD website, which would enable translation into additional languages.

13. The Chair asked for the approval of the other Committee members on the composition of the jury. Recommended jury members included Sheila Vergara (ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity), John Tayleur (UNEP-WCMC) and Eva Duer (UNEP-DELIC). The Committee also deemed it important for the jury to incorporate a peer perspective. In that regard, Committee members agreed to integrate into the recommendation, the inclusion of a Party to the Convention and, if possible, for that Party to also be a previous award winner. The previous award winners, Mexico and Belgium, which were members of the Informal Advisory Committee, confirmed their availability.

14. The Committee decided on the composition of the jury. A meeting of jury members for review of award submissions would be held, likely in September 2018.

15. The subsection entitled “Award for national clearing-house mechanisms” in section I above contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

### **3.2. Bioland subcommittee**

16. At the previous meeting of the Committee, it had been recommended that a subcommittee be created to advise the Committee on the development of the Bioland national clearing-house mechanism tool. To date, nominations had been received from Charles Shulman (Canada), Sheila Vergara (ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity), Slavisa Popovic (Serbia), Han de Koeijer (Belgium), H.M.H.E Herath (Sri Lanka), and Jerry Harrison (UNEP-WCMC) (on a limited basis).

17. The Committee recommended that the membership of the subcommittee be accepted, with the understanding that other interested Committee members were welcome to join the group.

18. The subsection entitled “Bioland subcommittee” in section I above contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

### **3.3. Update on the web strategy**

19. In decision [XIII/23](#), paragraphs 15 (i), (j) and (k), the Conference of the Parties had requested the Executive Secretary:

(a) To implement the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols, in line with the Framework for a Communications Strategy which was adopted in decision [XIII/22](#);

(b) To update the web strategy with priority actions to be taken before 2018 based on decisions emanating from the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the second meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing and the eighth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, in particular with actions mentioned in the short-term action plan for capacity-building;

(c) To further develop the clearing-house mechanism, in line with the web strategy and with the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#).

20. Mr. Frederic Vogel (CBD Secretariat) informed the Committee that the updated web strategy, following the draft shared at the previous Committee meeting, had been posted as an information document for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (CBD/SBI/2/INF/16). He also read out a statement summarizing the progress of the Secretariat in implementing the strategy. A vendor had been selected for the development of the new website. A preview of the new website would be available by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and migration of existing web content was expected to be complete by the fifteenth meeting, on the basis of availability of resources.

21. The Chair informed the Secretariat of his disappointment at the lateness of the posting of the document and, for that reason, the Committee members were unable give feedback on its content.

### 3.4. Update on the online reporting tool

22. In [decision XIII/27](#), paragraph 2(b), the Conference of the Parties had requested the Executive Secretary to further develop the voluntary online reporting tool with a view to fully aligning it with the reporting templates for the sixth national report by 31 March 2017 at the latest. The online reporting tool had been aligned as requested and was available at <https://chm.cbd.int>. Parties were encouraged to use it to submit information related to the sixth national report.

23. Mr. Frederic Vogel (CBD Secretariat) gave a briefing on the current status of the tool and its evolution. Capability had been added to allow the sharing of draft versions of reports between users at the Party level by anyone with a CBD account. It was now possible to generate portable document format (pdf) versions of national reports from the online system. Additionally, improvements had been made to the translated language versions, and a testing version of the tool for demonstrations was available.

24. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch (CBD Secretariat) indicated that training on the use of the online reporting tool had been included as a part of recent clearing-house mechanism capacity-building workshops. In collaboration with the NBSAP Forum, webinars had been given in multiple languages and were archived on YouTube.<sup>1</sup>

25. A brief discussion followed focusing on technical details of integrating the back-ends of the reporting systems among the Convention and its Protocols. Work was progressing towards that end.

### 3.5. Update on interoperability

26. In decision XII/2 B, paragraphs 18(b) and 18(c), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to continue developing the following interoperability services of the central clearing-house mechanism:

(a) Interoperability with national clearing-house mechanisms, among which is the existing portal toolkit used by many national and regional clearing-house mechanisms, where applicable;

(b) Interoperability with [InforMEA](#) to allow relevant information on the Convention on Biological Diversity to be globally searchable on the InforMEA website.

27. Ms. Kata Koppel and Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch (CBD Secretariat) gave a brief update on the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee for the [MEA Information and Knowledge Management initiative](#), held in June 2018. Several items of interest relating to interoperability were discussed at the meeting, including the continued work on the Law and Environmental Ontology (LEO) and the potential implementation of a system for automatic tagging of information to increase findability.

28. Mr. Rafalovitch specifically highlighted the development of the DaRT (Data and Reporting Tool), which was designed to act as a common work space for Parties to collect and save information used for reporting to multiple multilateral environmental agreements. It was based on the lessons learned from the

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://youtu.be/KpWR6Bx4T1w>

Target Crosslinking Tool project, and the hope was to integrate Bioland documents into the system. Another tool discussed at the meeting was Akoma Ntoso, which was used to facilitate automated linking of relevant decisions of many United Nations bodies. A pilot project was being developed at the InforMEA level to test Akoma Ntoso across multiple multilateral environmental agreements, including the CBD Decision Tracking project.

29. Mr. Frederic Vogel (CBD Secretariat) informed the Committee that the Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS) Clearing-house was working with the European Union's "Declare" system to use an application programming interface (API) to transfer documents between the European Union system and the ABS Clearing-house.

30. The Committee noted the continuing work on interoperability, and it was recommended that an item be added to the agenda for the next meeting to provide more in-depth information about those new projects.

### **3.6. Update on support to national clearing-house mechanisms**

31. In decision XIII/23, paragraph 12, the Conference of the Parties had encouraged Parties to continue their efforts to establish, sustain and further develop effective national clearing-house mechanisms in support of the implementation of their national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

32. Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch (CBD Secretariat) provided an update on the support provided by the Secretariat for countries wishing to establish or improve their national clearing-houses. One-on-one support was provided, and two capacity-building workshops had been given in 2018, one in Bangkok and the other in Cairo. During the workshops, Parties had given feedback on the Bioland tool and that information had been collected and was being utilized for the further development of Bioland to the extent possible. There were no more plans for in-person workshops during the current biennium due to lack of funds. However, there were plans for video-based training, as well as work towards e-learning and possible webinars using the NBSAP Forum. Interoperability with InforMEA and the DART tool was also planned.

33. Canada was in the process of moving its national clearing-house mechanism to the Bioland tool. Content had been migrated to Bioland and final adjustments were being made to the site prior to its launch, in collaboration with the Secretariat and a consultant.

34. The Committee discussed the need for the Bioland subcommittee to meet soon so that the Committee could be supported and advised on some of the questions relating to implementation. It was decided that the subcommittee would begin as soon as possible, and a virtual meeting was proposed for early September. The Chair reiterated the importance of following up with countries following capacity-building workshops to ensure that knowledge gained during the workshops was not lost due to lack of use.

35. Further discussion regarding the integration of ABS Clearing-house and Biosafety Clearing-house information into Bioland and similar tools was also held. The Biosafety Clearing-house had a tool for national clearing-house mechanisms called "Hermes" and discussions about its future as a tool and possible use of Bioland for national BCH and ABS-CH information are occurring.

### **3.7 Additional issues**

36. Under this sub-item, the Committee was invited to raise and discuss any relevant issues not covered under the preceding sub-items. Canada, supported by the Chair, raised an issue relating to the note by the Executive Secretary issued for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation covering capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer ([CBD/SBI/2/9](#)). There was concern about the proposed informal advisory committee on technical and scientific cooperation and possible overlap with the mandate and functions of the existing Information Advisory Committee to the Clearing-house Mechanism.

37. Mr. Erie Tamale (CBD Secretariat) explained that the idea behind the proposed informal advisory committee was to facilitate implementation of Article 18 of the Convention. There were multiple programmes that could help facilitate, including the clearing-house mechanism, the Bio Bridge Initiative, the Coalition of Scientific Partners, and other strands of work aiming to improve capacity-building and technical and scientific cooperation. The proposed informal advisory committee would give advice to the

Executive Secretary on how best to promote technical and scientific cooperation. The idea was to promote a more integrated approach among those multiple current and future programmes supporting implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

38. Discussion ensued among Committee members, especially with regard to the potential for non-renewal of the mandate of the current Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism and a lack of clarity on the mandate of the new group and the timing of its potential implementation. The Committee decided to include this as an agenda item at its next meeting.

#### **ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS**

39. Under this item, the Committee was invited to consider any other matter, such as matters related to the operations of the Committee.

40. It was envisaged that there would be a two-day meeting on the margins of the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. There might be a Skype-based meeting of the Committee in October to discuss items not discussed during the current meeting due to the limited time available. That meeting might be held in conjunction with meetings of the award jury and the Bioland subcommittee.

41. The subsection entitled “Meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism” in section I above contains the recommendation to the Executive Secretary arising from this item.

#### **ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

42. Committee members agreed that the discussions of the previous items would form the basis for preparing recommendations to the Executive Secretary. These recommendations are contained in section I.

#### **ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

43. The meeting was closed at 2.45 p.m.

## Annex

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