Convention on Biological Diversity

**Informal Advisory Group on Technical and
Scientific Cooperation**
Third meeting
Montreal, Canada, 19–21 February 2024

Report of the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation on its third meeting

Introduction

1.   The third meeting of the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation, was attended by 29 of its 32 members, of whom 19 attended in person and 10, including one ex officio member, attended remotely.

Item 1
Opening of the meeting

2.   The Acting Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, David Cooper, welcomed the participants and thanked the members of the Informal Advisory Group for their dedicated support and guidance. He underlined the need to establish a robust and fully functional network of regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres that would assist Parties, upon request, to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Convention and its Protocols in general. He also emphasized the need for an inclusive approach to capacity-building, development and knowledge management. He then invited the Co-Chairs, Motohiro Hasegawa and Paulette Bynoe, to preside over the meeting.

3.   Mr. Hasegawa opened the meeting and thanked members for their continued contribution to the work of the Informal Advisory Group. He introduced two new members, Isimemen Osemwegie, from the Women's Caucus, and Edwin Tambara, from the African Wildlife Foundation, who replaced members who had resigned.

Item 2
Organizational matters

(a)   Adoption of the agenda

4.   The Informal Advisory Group considered and adopted the provisional agenda, as contained in document CBD/TSC/IAG/2024/1/1.

(b)   Organization of work

5.   The Informal Advisory Group reviewed the proposed organization of work, as contained in the annex to document CBD/TSC/IAG/2024/1/1/Add.1, and decided to move consideration of agenda item 4 (b) before that of item 4 (a), in the morning session of 19 February 2024. With that amendment, the proposed organization of work was approved.

Item 3
Update on the work of the subcommittees of the Informal Advisory Group

6.   Mr. Hasegawa invited the co-leads of the three subcommittees of the Informal Advisory Group to provide updates on the work of the subcommittees since the first meeting of the Group, in June 2023.

7.   Aria St. Louis thus provided an update on the work conducted by the Subcommittee on Capacity-building and Development. The Subcommittee had conducted a discussion forum to develop indicators for capacity-building and development and methods for monitoring and measuring the implementation of Target 20 of the Framework. A new set of binary indicators had been considered by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and submitted to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice for consideration at its twenty-fifth meeting, in October 2023. As a follow-up, the Subcommittee would focus on completing activities in the rolling workplan, including by providing advice on modalities for promoting capacity-building and development for indigenous peoples and local communities, and on improving and advancing the implementation of the long-term strategic framework.

8.   Han de Koeijer informed the Informal Advisory Group that the Subcommittee on Technical and Scientific Cooperation and Technology Transfer had provided advice on the assessment framework for the first stage of the process for selecting regional and/or subregional support centres. The Secretariat had used the assessment framework to assess the 42 expressions of interest that it had received and to prepare a longlist of 26 entities. The Subcommittee had also provided advice on the questionnaire and the assessment framework for the second stage of the selection process.

9.   Grégoire Dubois informed the Informal Advisory Group that the Subcommittee on Knowledge Management had held several online meetings to further discuss and review the draft knowledge management strategy. Informal discussions had also been conducted with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services knowledge and data task force and the High Ambition Coalition. A revised and streamlined version of the draft strategy had been made available to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention at its twelfth meeting, in November 2023. He also reported that the Subcommittee had underlined the need to promote the exchange of information on best practices and to capitalize on the work of the initiatives outlined in the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) compendium of guidance on key global databases related to biodiversity-related conventions and other initiatives and to collate information on existing knowledge products and knowledge management tools and practices.

Item 4
Operationalization of the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism

10.   At its fifteenth meeting, in is decision 15/8, the Conference of the Parties established a mechanism comprising a network of regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres to be coordinated by a global coordination entity. It also requested the Executive Secretary, in consultation with its Bureau, to implement and support a process for selecting entities and organizations to host the support centres and decided that the Subsidiary Body on Implementation would develop modalities for operationalizing the entity, for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth meeting.

(a)   Review of the shortlist of entities and organizations interested in hosting a regional or subregional technical and scientific cooperation centre

11.   Following the guidance provided by the Informal Advisory Group, and using the assessment matrix, the Secretariat had conducted a thorough assessment of the detailed information submitted by the 26 entities and organizations that had been invited to take part in the second stage of the

selection process. A representative of the Secretariat presented a report containing a shortlist of entities and organizations by region or subregion.

12. Group members with a potential conflict of interest recused themselves from the discussion on the shortlisted candidates.

13. In accordance with subparagraph 32 (b) (iv) of decision 15/8, the Informal Advisory Group considered the report prepared by the Secretariat and provided advice on how to determine the most suitable entities to host the regional and/or subregional support centres and the number of centres required.

14. Group members discussed the process for determining the most suitable entities and analysed the highest ranking institutions in each region and the number of countries that they could cover, as well as geographical coverage, including gaps and overlaps. The Group agreed that, with a minimum of 15 subregional support centres, the second of the three scenarios put forward by the Secretariat provided the optimal coverage, and the final assessment of the Group is provided in the annex to the present report, for consideration by the Parties and the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties.

15. Group members emphasized that, in addition to considering geographical coverage, other factors, such as the type of organization (e.g. national, regional, global, intergovernmental or non-governmental) and the willingness to service additional countries and to enter into collaborative arrangements, should be taken into consideration. They also recommended that entities that submitted an expression of interest be invited to contribute to the implementation of the mechanism, for example, by co-hosting a regional or subregional support centre, partnering with the centres on specific activities or working through the global coordination entity to support Parties.

(b)   Proposed modalities for the operationalization of the global coordination entity

16. The Secretariat had prepared a document with draft elements of modalities for the operationalization of the global coordination entity. The document had been elaborated in line with the core functions specified in paragraph 27 of decision 15/8 and taking the experience of other multilateral environmental agreements with similar mechanisms, including the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and of the Bio-Bridge Initiative into consideration.

17. The Group members reviewed the document prepared by the Secretariat and provided comments on all sections. A suggestion was made to restructure the document and to further elaborate on the options for hosting the global entity, on its governance and on the modalities for monitoring and review.

18. With regard to the proposed operational procedures, the Informal Advisory Group cautioned against waiting until the listed "fit-for-purpose" operational modalities and procedures were elaborated and approved by the Conference of the Parties before operationalizing the global coordination entity. It was suggested that, instead, and in order to accelerate implementation, the listed modalities be developed as soon as possible by the Secretariat, with input from the Group.

19. Concerning the organizational structure, the Informal Advisory Group considered that the global coordination entity should work with a small team of professional and administrative staff. The Group also emphasized the need to secure core funding for covering the basic operating costs (e.g. staffing, office space, equipment and travel) of the entity. In this regard, it recommended that a minimum supplementary budget, to be paid through assessed contributions, be included in the Secretariat's budget proposal to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth meeting.

20. The Informal Advisory Group considered two possible options for operationalizing the global coordination entity, taking into account the key steps to be taken, a preliminary estimate of the time and effort required, and the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Under the first option, an international organization with a global mandate would be identified and selected to host the entity. Under the second option, the Secretariat would host the entity.

21.   The Informal Advisory Group considered the results of a comparative analysis of the two options and made the following observations and suggestions:

(a)   The document to be submitted to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation should include criteria to be considered in selecting the global entity, instead of listing the advantages and disadvantages of each option;

(b)   A more precise timeline for the operationalization of the global entity vis-à-vis the timeline for the implementation of the Framework should be included in the document;

(c)   Preliminary estimated costing should, if possible, be included, to enhance the analysis;

(d)   The initial term of the agreement for hosting the global entity should extend to 2030.

22.   Some Group members suggested the consideration of a third hybrid option, under which an external organization would be selected to serve as the global coordination entity, with support from the Secretariat. Alternatively, the Secretariat would serve as the entity, with support from another organization or group of organizations with special comparative advantages or strong capacity in such areas as resource mobilization. Other members, however, observed that, either way, the Secretariat would still have a role to play in supporting the entity. Even if it was selected to serve as the entity, it would still have to work with partner organizations. In that regard, the hybrid elements were already implicitly contained in the two options presented. It was therefore concluded that there was no need to list a third hybrid option.

23.   Some Group members expressed concern about the proposed timeline to operationalize the global coordination entity, which could result in the regional and/or subregional support centres initiating operations without oversight. A representative of the Secretariat reminded the Informal Advisory Group that, in its decision 15/8, the Conference of the Parties had decided, in the interim, to strengthen and scale up the Bio-Bridge Initiative during the current biennium in order to further support and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. As a result, the Group suggested that, in the draft recommendation, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation request that the Bio-Bridge Initiative provide support to the support centres until the entity was established and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism was fully operational.

24.   Lastly, some of the members emphasized the need to develop safeguards in the event that a regional and/or subregional centre or the global coordination entity was discontinued, owing to poor performance.

Item 5
Monitoring of progress against the long-term strategic framework for capacity-building and development and the mechanism to strengthen technical and scientific cooperation

25.   A representative of the Secretariat provided an update on the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators and invited the members of the Informal Advisory Group to provide feedback on the binary indicator questions for Target 20, as contained in recommendation 25/1 of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice on the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The members agreed to provide further feedback on the binary indicator questions, the proposed glossary of key terms and the complementary indicators for Target 20, through an online discussion forum led by the Subcommittee on Capacity-building and Development, and to submit the outcomes of their discussion to the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for consideration.

26.   The representative of the Secretariat also presented draft elements of possible indicators for monitoring progress with the long-term strategic framework for capacity-building and development and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism, in accordance with decision 15/8, with a view to informing the periodic review, update and enhancement of the framework and the mechanism. The possible indicators included the following:

    (a)   Number of national organizations implementing elements of the long-term strategic framework;

    (b)   Number of countries integrating capacity-building and development into their revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans;

    (c)   Number of countries that have developed a national capacity development plan;[1]

    (d)   Number of thematic capacity development action plans to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;[2]

    (e)   Number of long-term capacity-building and development initiatives established to support the implementation of the Framework;

    (f)   Number of countries receiving support from regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres;

    (g)   Number of tools and technical resources exchanged across regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres;

    (h)   Amount of funds mobilized through the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism;

    (i)   Number of technical and scientific cooperation opportunities made available and utilized by Parties;

    (j)   Number of successful matchmaking efforts;

    (k)   Number of technologies transferred across countries;

    (l)   Number of expert exchange programmes implemented;

    (m)   Number of joint research programmes implemented;

    (n)   Number of joint technological development ventures implemented;

    (o)   Number of regional or subregional expert networks established.

27.   Group members welcomed the draft elements and provided comments and suggestions on the proposed indicators and the process to monitor progress and impact. It was noted that the process to monitor achievements against Target 20 overlapped with the monitoring of the implementation of the long-term strategic framework and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism. The process to monitor achievements against Target 20 was ongoing and would require collaboration on different monitoring procedures.

28.   Some members expressed concern about the potential reporting burden that the "dual monitoring system" might create for Parties. They also noted the confusion arising from mixing output indicators with result-based indicators. A representative of the Secretariat reminded the Informal Advisory Group that the complementary indicators for Target 20 were optional and that Parties might choose the indicators that they wished to report on. In addition, members were informed that Parties might wish to continue to develop the draft elements listed in paragraph 26 above.

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[1] See www.cbd.int/cb/plans for examples of existing national capacity development plans or strategies.
[2] Examples of thematic capacity development action plans include the Capacity-building Action Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (decision CP-10/4, annex) and the draft capacity-building and development action plan for the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (CBD/NP/CB-IAC/2023/1/2, annex).

29.   Some members highlighted the importance of having a clear understanding of what those indicators meant, what was being measured by the indicators and how they would be measured. They also emphasized the importance of defining the expected results and carrying out quantitative analyses and capacity self-assessments to measure progress.

30.   Group members recognized the usefulness of the draft elements, in particular the indicators measuring the level of uptake and success, but suggested that more work was needed to define uptake and success and how those could be measured.

Item 6
Review of the updated draft knowledge management strategy and draft indicative workplan for implementing the strategy up to 2030

31.   A representative of the Secretariat made a presentation on progress made with regard to the knowledge management strategy to support the implementation of the Framework. The strategy and a draft indicative workplan for implementing it up to 2030 had been published on the website of the Secretariat for peer review.[3] The Informal Advisory Group was invited to provide general feedback on the strategy.

32.   Group members thanked the Secretariat and stressed the need to clarify and cross-reference the linkages and possible synergies among the knowledge management strategy, the programme of work of the clearing-house mechanism and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism. They said that it would be useful for the knowledge management strategy to include the potential role that the regional and/or subregional support centres could play in its implementation. They also noted that the role of other relevant actors should be described under additional component actions, such as component actions E (2), F (3) and G (1).

33.   Members further commented that the role of women, girls and youth should be covered in the strategy, including specific measures to respect, preserve and maintain traditional knowledge and promote gender-responsive approaches. In addition, they mentioned the importance of including innovative technology, such as artificial intelligence and large language models, that could further help in biodiversity knowledge management.

34.   The Secretariat took note of all comments, made some clarifications and requested the members to send their respective written comments through the peer review mechanism, using the template provided in notification No. 2024-010, no later than 29 February 2024.

Item 7
Review of the draft programme of work of the clearing-house mechanism for 2024–2030

35.   The Informal Advisory Group reviewed the draft programme of work of the clearing-house mechanism, which had been revised by the Secretariat on the basis of input provided by the Group members on the original draft[4] at the first meeting.

36.   Group members suggested that the programme of work clearly indicate priorities and include a timeline and responsibilities for its operationalization. Some members also suggested that references to indigenous peoples and local communities and women and youth groups be included when referring to stakeholders. It was also proposed to include references to gender, mainstreaming the regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres and the monitoring framework. Members requested that the key strategic components, as listed in section II of the draft programme of work, be further reflected and elaborated in the goals and strategic action section.

37.   Members discussed the need for resource mobilization and the financial support to strengthen the national clearing-house mechanisms and ensure their sustainability.

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[3] See notification No. 2024-010.
[4] CBD/TSC/IAG/2023/1/5.

38.   Some members recommended that the chart in figure I of the document be detailed or further developed to represent the national clearing-house mechanism and to help to establish the correlation between global and national processes. With regard to the table in the annex, members advised that each strategic action under each goal should clearly indicate the actors responsible.

39.   In addition, the Informal Advisory Group pointed out that the language of the goals should be modified to recognize that many of the proposed activities, as mentioned in the goals, were already under way.

40.   The Secretariat took note of all the comments, provided clarification on many points, requested that participants share additional feedback by email and agreed to modify and update the draft programme of work to reflect the consensus reached by the Informal Advisory Group.

Item 8
Review of the new user interface design and functionality of the Bioland tool and update on the national clearing-house mechanism portals

41.   A representative of the Secretariat provided an update on the development of the national clearing-house mechanism portals and invited the Informal Advisory Group to review and provide feedback on the proposed new user interface and information architecture of the Bioland tool (Bioland 2.0)

42.   The representative of the Secretariat showcased the new features of Bioland 2.0, which included a standardized information architecture, discussion forums, multiple content types on the home page, interoperability with the central portal of the clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House, and a mega menu structure for easy content discovery and findability.

43.   The Group members congratulated the Secretariat on progress made with the further development of Bioland 2.0 and welcomed the new design and features. They sought clarification about the content migration process from the existing version of Bioland to Bioland 2.0. They also enquired about the retirement policy for Hermes and Ajax and the possibility to use Bioland 2.0 for Biosafety Clearing-House national nodes. The representative of the Secretariat reported that the process of phasing out Hermes and Ajax and discussions on the use of Bioland 2.0 for national Biosafety Clearing-House nodes were ongoing.

44.   Some members asked the Secretariat to provide guidance on the content migration strategy for Parties that had already developed a different information architecture for their national clearing-house mechanism portals.

45.   The Secretariat agreed to conduct a case-by-case analysis for Parties to ensure the best possible alignment of their existing national portals with Bioland 2.0. The representative of the Secretariat also clarified the approach for content migration from Bioland 1.0 to 2.0 for all existing portals and said that the Secretariat would develop training material and tutorials and conduct online or in-person training for national clearing-house mechanism national focal points in preparation for the Bioland 2.0 roll-out.

Item 9
Update on key initiatives and partnerships supporting the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

46.   Members of the Informal Advisory Group heard updates on recent developments from representatives of the following five initiatives supporting the effective implementation of the Framework, which were followed by a short question-and-answer session:

(a)   The national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAP) Accelerator Partnership, which was presented by a representative of the interim Global Coordination Unit of the Partnership. The presenter described the in-country engagement work of the initiative through its facilitators and matchmaking service and highlighted its work on outreach and advocacy. The phase 1 cohort of 24 in-country facilitators, whose mission would be to support and fast-track NBSAP implementation at the national level, was being recruited;

(b)   The National Monitoring Initiative and the Global Knowledge Support Service for Biodiversity, which were presented by a representative of UNEP-WCMC. The Initiative was aimed at assessing national capacity for biodiversity monitoring and supporting it through capacity-building and peer-to-peer exchange at the national and regional levels, while the Service was aimed at supporting countries by improving access to knowledge;

(c)   The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which was presented by a representative of the Secretariat of the Coalition. During the presentation, the 30x30 solutions toolkit and the matchmaking platform were discussed. The matchmaking platform connected the Coalition members requesting financial and technical assistance with organizations and countries offering support for development and implementation of Target 3 of the Framework;

(d)   The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Early Action Support Initiative, which was presented by a representative of the United Nations Development Programme. The presenter provided an update on the expected timeline for Parties to submit their national targets and updated NBSAPs and highlighted the challenges encountered by Parties in that regard. GEF would provide funds to 138 participating countries to facilitate timely submission;

(e)   The Conservation and Sustainability Consortium of Academic Institutions initiative, which was presented by a representative of the Consortium. The initiative was led by the University of Oxford, with the participation of the universities of Durham, Leeds, Newcastle and York. The presenter highlighted the need for collaboration, through partnerships and networks, to create a cohesive knowledge exchange landscape and emphasized the importance of working with academics across disciplines to inform policies and practice.

47.   A representative of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility also provided an update on the Biodiversity Information for Development programme and the Data4Nature programme. He said that the Facility had secured additional funding to implement a second phase of those initiatives.

48.   Group members emphasized the need to ensure coordination and complementarity among the initiatives and partnerships supporting the implementation of the Framework to avoid duplication of efforts, in particular in terms of matchmaking facilities and information platforms. They discussed the challenges of navigating through the various initiatives and emphasized the need for a single entry point to them. They also highlighted the role of the Secretariat in addressing those challenges.

49.   Group members noted the importance of incorporating key considerations, in particular gender responsiveness and youth engagement, when designing national actions for implementation.

50.   A representative of the Secretariat said that the data and results of the surveys undertaken by the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership on capacity needs assessments and stakeholder mapping would be shared with the Informal Advisory Group. The representatives of the five initiatives agreed to share additional information on their planned activities with the Group members and to identify opportunities for further collaboration.

Item 10
Other matters

51.   Group members raised the issue of the linkages between the selection process of the regional and/or subregional technical and scientific support centres and other relevant processes, such as the development of thematic capacity-building plans and the clearing-house mechanisms of the Protocols. The capacity-building plan being developed for the Nagoya Protocol was mentioned

explicitly, and members recommended that, at future meetings, an item on updates on the clearing-house mechanisms of the Protocols be included in the agenda.

52.   Group members requested an update on the status of the clearing-house mechanism awards and expressed support for the presentation of the awards during the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. A representative of the Secretariat said that, to date, there were no resources available for organizing an award ceremony, but that the Secretariat would continue to explore possibilities to mobilize the needed resources to that end. Concerns were expressed about timing and, therefore, the urgency of getting the process started.

Item 11
Conclusion and recommendations

53.   The Co-Chairs, with the support of the Secretariat, prepared the following general conclusions and recommendations on the basis of the discussions held under the various agenda items:

(a)   Global coordination entity of the technical and scientific mechanism:

(i)   The Informal Advisory Group reached consensus to present two options (i.e. the Secretariat working with partners, or an international organization with a global mandate, while being of the view that the Secretariat would be well placed to host the global coordination entity;

(ii)   The Informal Advisory Group also reached consensus that the global coordination entity should work with a lean and agile team and recommended that the Secretariat include in the budget proposal prepared for the Conference of the Parties a supplementary budget to be paid through assessed contributions to cover its estimated basic operating costs;

(iii)   The Informal Advisory Group recommended that the Bio-Bridge Initiative provide support to the regional and/or subregional support centres until such time as the global coordination entity was established and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism was fully operational;

(iv)   The Informal Advisory Group suggested that the fit-for-purpose modalities of the global coordination entity be developed by the Secretariat with input from the Group, in advance of the establishment of the entity;

(b)   Regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres of the mechanism:

(i)   According to the assessment carried out by the Secretariat, all the entities and organizations that had participated in the second stage of the selection process had demonstrated the capacity to host a regional and/or subregional centre;

(ii)   According to the assessment and the geographical coverage analysis, the Informal Advisory Group agreed to present three scenarios for the selection of organizations for consideration by the Parties and the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties. Of the three scenarios, the Group recommended that 15 subregional support centres be established to ensure optimal geographical coverage with minimal overlaps;

(iii)   The Informal Advisory Group agreed that other factors, such as the type of organization (e.g. national, regional, global, intergovernmental and non-governmental) and the willingness to service additional countries and to enter into collaborative arrangements, be taken into consideration;

(c)   Monitoring and review:

(i)   The Informal Advisory Group agreed to provide further feedback on the binary indicator questions, the proposed glossary of key terms and the complementary

indicators for Target 20, through an online discussion forum led by the Subcommittee on Capacity-building and Development, and to submit the outcomes of the discussion to the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for consideration;

(ii) The members of the Informal Advisory Group agreed to further elaborate on the indicators for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the long-term strategic framework and the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism proposed in paragraph 26 above and to submit them to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation for consideration at its fourth meeting. It was also agreed that the Subcommittee on Capacity-building and Development would lead that task through the online discussion forum;

(d) Knowledge management and the clearing-house mechanism:

(i) The members of the Informal Advisory Group agreed to provide their input on the draft knowledge management strategy through the peer review process;

(ii) The members of the Informal Advisory Group requested the Secretariat to further revise and update the draft programme of work of the clearing-house mechanism. They also agreed to further review the features, information architecture and design of Bioland 2.0 and to provide input on the content migration process as the new version was rolled out;

(e) Key initiatives and partnerships:

Group members emphasized the need to ensure coordination and complementarity among the initiatives and partnerships supporting the implementation of the Framework to avoid duplication of efforts. They also noted the importance of incorporating key considerations, in particular gender responsiveness, indigenous peoples and local communities, and women and youth engagement, when designing national actions for implementation.

Item 12
Adoption of the report

54.   The Informal Advisory Group considered and adopted the report of the meeting, with amendments.

Item 13
Closure of the meeting

55.   The meeting was closed at 5.45 p.m. on 21 February 2024.

Annex

Assessment by the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation of entities and organizations under consideration to host the regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres[*]

I.   Background

1.   In decision 15/8, the Conference of the Parties established a mechanism comprising a network of regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres to be coordinated by a global coordination entity. The overall goal of the mechanism is to promote and facilitate cooperation among Parties and relevant organizations to enable them to effectively utilize science, technology and innovation to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.[1]

2.   In the same decision, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Bureau and with the support of the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation, to implement a process for selecting entities and organizations to host the regional and /or subregional support centres. The Informal Advisory Group was requested to consider the top shortlisted candidates and to provide advice on the most suitable entities and organizations, as well as the overall number of centres required.

3.   This report describes the process undertaken to assess the entities and organizations that expressed interest in hosting a regional or subregional support centre and presents the results of the assessment and the advice of the Informal Advisory Group.

II.   Selection process

4.   During the first meeting of the Informal Advisory Group on Technical and Scientific Cooperation that took place on 14 to 16 June 2023, the Group recommended that the process to identify entities interested in hosting regional and/or subregional support centres be split into two stages.

A.   First stage of the selection process

5.   During the first stage, the Secretariat, with support from the Informal Advisory Group, developed a simple expression of interest form and an assessment framework for evaluating the applications based on the criteria listed in paragraph 4 of annex II to decision 15/8 focusing on technical aspects.[2]

6.   The Secretariat issued notification 2023-080 on 27 July 2023 inviting entities and organizations interested in hosting a regional and/or subregional support centre to complete the expression of interest form online by 30 September 2023.

7.   The Secretariat organized an informational webinar on 31 August 2023 to explain the criteria and the process for the selection of entities and organizations to host the regional and/or subregional support centres and to provide an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions and seek clarifications on the process. Approximately 140 participants attended the webinar. A background document and Frequently Asked Questions document were also prepared and posted on the website of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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[*] The present annex is being issued without formal editing.
[1] A full description of the mechanism is provided in paragraphs 25 to 27 of and annex II to decision 15/8.
[2] These included the criteria in subparagraphs 4 (b), (c), (f), (g), (h) and (i) of annex II to decision 15/8.

8.   The Secretariat received a total of 42 submissions (11 from the Americas, 12 from Africa, seven from Asia, 11 from Europe and one from Oceania). The Secretariat evaluated the expressions of interest using the assessment framework referred to above. Each criterion was assigned a specific weighted score and was assessed on a range from zero to the assigned maximum score under the following four assessment categories: does not meet, partially meets, meets or exceeds. The maximum total score was 100 points.

9.   The Informal Advisory Group recommended that entities and organizations that scored 51 points and above be longlisted. Accordingly, the Secretariat issued notification 2023-126 announcing the 26 entities and organizations that would be invited to participate in the second stage of the selection process.

B.   Second stage of the selection process

10.   For the second stage, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Informal Advisory Group, developed a questionnaire and an assessment matrix based on the remaining criteria in decision 15/8, annex II, para. 4, focusing on institutional capacity to provide technical advice and support to Parties, demonstrated ability to manage complex projects and programmes, capacity mobilize and manage financial resources, and active engagement and capacity to work with networks of collaborators.[3] In addition to the above criteria, points were awarded based on the willingness of entities to dedicate technical and administrative staff, and the availability of infrastructure and facilities to support the operations of the centres.

11.   In early December 2023, the 26 longlisted entities and organizations were invited to complete the questionnaire, specifying the regions and/or subregions where they are based,[4] and to provide the supporting documentation by 15 January 2024. All the 26 entities submitted the requested detailed information in advance of the deadline.

12.   As in the first stage, the applicants were awarded points depending on how well they met the selection criteria. Each criterion was assigned a specific weighted score and the maximum total score for all the criteria was 100 points. Each criterion was assessed with scores ranging from zero to the maximum score for that particular criterion. The criterion on resource mobilization was reassessed because the information received during the first stage of the process was insufficient.

13.   The Secretariat conducted a thorough assessment of the detailed information submitted and allocated scores to each of the 26 entities. An average score was calculated for each entity or organization based on the combined scores from both stages of the process. A ranked shortlist of the entities and organizations per region or subregion was then prepared.

III.   Results of the assessment

14.   A summary of the results of the assessment with a ranked shortlist of entities from highest to lowest scores for all 26 entities per region is presented in enclosure I. An analysis of the geographical coverage, including the gaps and overlaps, is presented in enclosure II.

15.   The top three shortlisted candidates per region, based on the assessment, are as follows:

(a)   For Africa, the entity that received the highest score is the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), followed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS);

(b)   For the Americas, the entity that received the highest score is the Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute (Humboldt Institute), followed by the Caribbean

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[3] These included the criteria in subparagraphs 4 (a), (c), (d), (e) and (f) of annex II to decision 15/8.
[4] Following the guidance provided by the Informal Advisory Group at its second meeting, the geographical regions and subregions as defined by the Statistics Division of the United Nations were used (see https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/).

Community (CARICOM) and the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD);

(c)   In Asia, the entity that received the highest score is the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), followed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Asia Regional Office and the IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN ROWA);

(d)   In Europe, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission received the highest score, followed by the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN Med) and IUCN's Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (IUCN ECARO);

(e)   For Oceania, there is only one candidate, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

16.   The Informal Advisory Group considers all the above shortlisted entities and organizations as suitable to host a regional and/or subregional centre. Several organizations beyond this selection are also considered suitable.

17.   Based on the above results, a total of 13 support centres could be established (3 in Africa, 3 in Asia, 3 in the Americas, 3 in Europe and 1 in Oceania). However, considering the analysis of the geographical coverage of those 13 centres presented in enclosure II, this scenario would result in several countries not being covered (five in Africa, two in the Americas, 14 in Asia and eight in Europe).[5]

18.   To address this limitation, two additional scenarios could be considered. In the second scenario, 15 centres could be established (4 in Africa, 3 in the Americas, 4 in Asia, 3 in Europe and 1 in Oceania), resulting in a more optimal coverage with fewer gaps (one in Africa, two in the Americas, six in Asia and eight in Europe) and less overlaps, as follows:

(a)   For Africa, the centres under this scenario would include: COMIFAC, SANBI, OSS and the Ecological Monitoring Centre (CSE);

(b)   For the Americas, the number would remain the same as in the previous scenario, with three centres being proposed: the Humboldt Institute, CARICOM and CCAD;

(c)   In Asia, this scenario would include the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, IUCN Asia Regional Office, IUCN ROWA and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC). The Informal Advisory Group recommends that CAREC be considered as a possible fourth centre, despite receiving half a point less in the total average score than the next highest-scoring centre (the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development or ICIMOD), because CAREC would cover five extra countries in Central Asia, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, while ICIMOD would cover only two extra countries (Afghanistan and Iran (Islamic Republic of));

(d)   In Europe, the number of centres under this scenario would remain the same, i.e., JRC, IUCN Med, and IUCN ECARO;[6]

(e)   Lastly, for Oceania, this scenario would include the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

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[5] **Africa:** Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Togo.
Americas: Canada and United States of America.
Asia: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
Europe: Andorra, Belarus, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Ukraine and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
[6] The IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO) has indicated that they could only provide service to countries in Eastern Europe.

19.   In the third scenario, 19 centres could be established (5 in Africa, 5 in Asia, 4 in Europe, 4 in the Americas and 1 in Oceania) as follows:

        (a)   For Africa, this scenario would include COMIFAC, SANBI, OSS, CSE and the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD);

        (b)   For the Americas, the centres would include: the Humboldt Institute, CARICOM, CCAD and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT);

        (c)   In Asia, this scenario would include the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, IUCN Asia Regional Office, IUCN ROWA, CAREC and ICIMOD;

        (d)   In Europe, this scenario would include JRC, IUCN Med, IUCN ECARO and the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences;

        (e)   Lastly, for Oceania, this scenario would include the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

20.   This third scenario would result in near complete coverage, with only two countries in the Americas, four in Asia and seven countries in Europe not being covered.[7] However, there would be significant overlaps in coverage by different centres especially in Europe and Latin America (see enclosure II).

IV.   Advice on the most suitable entities and organizations and the number of centres required

21.   Based on the above analysis, the Informal Advisory Group is of view that the second scenario with a minimum of 15 support centres, described in paragraph 18 above, would provide the most optimal coverage with minimal overlaps.

22.   In addition to the scores and geographical coverage, the Informal Advisory Group recommends that the following factors be considered in determining the most suitable entities and organizations and the number of support centres:

        (a)   Type of organization (intergovernmental or regional economic integration organization, international organization with a regional office(s), non-governmental organization or national organization but supporting other countries in the region or subregion). The type of organization may affect different functions that the support centres are expected to carry out, such as ability to manage and disburse international funds;

        (b)   Flexibility or willingness of entities to cover additional countries beyond the official geographical scope of their work, as is in the case of intergovernmental organizations;

        (c)   Potential risk of dominance of the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism by one organization. Ideally, a diversity of organizations will form part of the network of support centres;

        (d)   Entities mandated to work in specific ecoregions, often straddling more than one continental region, which can generate overlaps with other regionally based entities being considered to host support centres;

        (e)   The potential and willingness of entities to enter into partnerships and/or collaborative arrangements to co-host the regional or subregional centre in delivering support to Parties.

23.   The Informal Advisory Group considers that most of the entities that submitted an expression of interest possess valuable experience, expertise and skills that would be an asset to the technical and scientific cooperation mechanism. Some of them have very specialized expertise that may be

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[7] **Americas**: Canada and United States.
Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Georgia.
Europe: Andorra, Belarus, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino and Ukraine.

required across different regions or subregions. The Group recommends that entities, especially those that participated in the second stage, be invited and encouraged to contribute to the implementation of the mechanism, for example, by co-hosting a regional or subregional support centre with a selected entity; partnering with a regional or subregional support centre and/or working through the global coordination entity to provide specialized technical support to Parties in multiple regions.

Enclosure I
Summary of the assessment results

Region	Stage 1	Stage 2	Average	Countries covered
Africa				
Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)	78	92	85	11
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)	78	83	80.5	16
Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)	69.5	89	79.25	29
Ecological Monitoring Centre (CSE)	68.5	89	78.75	16
Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD)	69.5	81.5	75.5	24
Americas				
Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute	84	86.5	85.25	32
Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM)	63	80.5	71.75	16
Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD)	61.5	82	71.75	9
International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)	62	81	71.5	10
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Commission (OESC)	62	75.5	68.75	15
International Barcode of Life Consortium (iBOL)	51.5	73	62.25	2
Future Earth Canada	51.5	68.5	60	2
Asia				
ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity	83.5	94.5	89	11
IUCN Asia Regional Office	74.5	93	83.75	21
IUCN Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA)	63	84.5	73.75	11
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	60	82.5	71.25	11
Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)	66	75.5	70.75	5
Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIES)	52	83.5	67.75	13
Europe				
European Commission – Joint Research Centre (JRC)	76.5	85.5	81	35
IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation	78	80.5	79.25	11
IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)	68.5	84.5	76.5	10
Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (RBINS)	60.5	82	71.25	32
Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna International Secretariat (CAFF)	72.5	67.5	70	6
Leibniz Research Network Biodiversity	62	67.5	64.75	43

Region	Stage 1	Stage 2	Average	Countries covered
National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Institute of Genetics and Cytology (NASB)	51	74.5	62.75	10
Oceania				
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP)	83.5	89.5	86.5	13

Enclosure II
Analysis of geographical coverage

Africa	Regional coverage	Overlaps* between institutions	Regional gaps
Scenario 1			
• **COMIFAC** (Yaoundé, Cameroon) • **OSS** (Tunis, Tunisia) • **SANBI** (Pretoria, South Africa)	Angola, Comoros, Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Seychelles	Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo
Scenario 2			
• **COMIFAC** (Yaoundé, Cameroon) • **OSS** (Tunis, Tunisia) • **SANBI** (Pretoria, South Africa) + **CSE** (Dakar, Senegal)	Same as above + Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo	Same as above + Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal	South Sudan
Scenario 3			
• **COMIFAC** (Yaoundé, Cameroon) • **OSS** (Tunis, Tunisia) • **SANBI** (Pretoria, South Africa) • **CSE** (Dakar, Senegal) + **RCMRD** (Nairobi, Kenya)	Same as above + South Sudan	Same as above + Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe	None
		*Note: Additional overlaps with IUCN Med in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia	

Americas	Regional coverage	Overlaps between institutions	Regional gaps
Scenario 1			
• **Humboldt** (Bogotá, Colombia) • **CARICOM** (Georgetown, Guyana) • **CCAD** (San Salvador, El Salvador)	Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago	Canada, United States of America
Scenario 2			
• **Humboldt** (Bogotá, Colombia) • **CARICOM** (Georgetown, Guyana) • **CCAD** (San Salvador, El Salvador)	*Same as above*	*Same as above*	*Same as above*
Scenario 3			
• **Humboldt** (Bogotá, Colombia) • **CARICOM** (Georgetown, Guyana) • **CCAD** (San Salvador, El Salvador) + **CIAT** (Palmira, Colombia)	*Same as above*	*Same as above* + Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru	*Same as above*

Asia	Regional coverage	Overlaps* between institutions	Regional gaps
Scenario 1			
• **ACB** (Los Baños, Philippines) • **IUCN Asia** (Bangkok, Thailand) • **IUCN ROWA** (Amman, Jordan)	Cambodia, China, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar,	Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam	Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus,* Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel,* Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Türkiye,* Uzbekistan

	Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, Yemen		
Scenario 2			
• **ACB** (Los Baños, Philippines) • **IUCN Asia** (Bangkok, Thailand) • **IUCN ROWA** (Amman, Jordan) **+ CAREC** (Almaty, Kazakhstan)	*Same as above* + Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	*Same as above*	Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus,* Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel,* Türkiye*
Scenario 3			
• **ACB** (Los Baños, Philippines) • **IUCN Asia** (Bangkok, Thailand) • **IUCN ROWA** (Amman, Jordan) • **CAREC** (Almaty, Kazakhstan) **+ ICIMOD** (Kathmandu, Nepal)	*Same as above* + Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of)	*Same as above* + China, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus,* Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Georgia, Israel,* Türkiye*
	*Note: IUCN Asia also covers Australia and New Zealand (part of the Oceania region)	***Note:** Additional overlaps with IUCN Med in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic	***Note:** Cyprus and Türkiye covered by JRC Cyprus and Israel covered by IUCN Med

Europe	Regional coverage*	Overlaps* between institutions	Gaps
Scenario 1			
• **JRC** (Ispra, Italy) • **IUCN MED** (Malaga, Spain) • **IUCN ECARO** (Belgrade, Serbia)	Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain	Andorra, Belarus, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Scenario 2			
• **JRC** (Ispra, Italy)	*Same as above*	*Same as above*	*Same as above*

Europe	Regional coverage*	Overlaps* between institutions	Gaps
• **IUCN MED** (Málaga, Spain) • **IUCN ECARO** (Belgrade, Serbia)			
Scenario 3			
• **JRC** (Ispra, Italy) • **IUCN MED** (Málaga, Spain) • **IUCN ECARO** (Belgrade, Serbia) **+ RBINS** (Brussels, Belgium)	*Same as above* + United Kingdom	*Same as above* + Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland	Andorra, Belarus, Monaco, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Ukraine
	*Note: JRC also covers Cyprus and Türkiye (part of the Asia region) IUCN Med also covers Cyprus and Israel (part of the Asia region)	***Note:** Additional overlaps with IUCN Med in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia (part of the Africa region), as well as Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic (part of the Asia region)	

Oceania	Regional coverage	Overlaps* between institutions	Regional gaps
Scenarios 1, 2 and 3			
SPREP	Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	n/a	Australia,* New Zealand*
			*Note: Australia and New Zealand covered by IUCN Asia

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