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OPTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS TO FACILITATE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNDER THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. Pursuant to paragraph 8 of decision 14/24 B of the Conference of the Parties, the Executive Secretary prepared, for the consideration of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice at its twenty-third meeting, draft proposals to strengthen technical and scientific cooperation in support of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. In its recommendation 23/6, the Subsidiary Body took note of the proposals and requested the Executive Secretary to further develop them, taking into account the submissions made by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, and to submit the updated proposals for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting and the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework at its third meeting. In doing so, the Executive Secretary was also requested to provide information on the advantages and disadvantages of the three options for institutional arrangements suggested in the proposals, and the costs associated with those options.

2. This document presents the above information requested to assist Parties in their consideration of the three proposed options for institutional mechanisms to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation (TSC). Section I provides an overview of the proposed institutional mechanisms and illustrates the core objectives and activities to be implemented to promote TSC, irrespective of the option chosen. Section II provides information related to the option of establishing a global technical and scientific cooperation support centre. Section III provides information related to the option of establishing regional and/or subregional technical and scientific cooperation support centres. Finally, section IV provides information related to the option of continuing TSC facilitation and support through initiatives and programmes implemented and/or coordinated by the Secretariat of the Convention, in collaboration with relevant partner organizations and initiatives. Sections II to IV highlight key experiences and lessons learned from the mechanisms and initiatives examined, main advantages and disadvantages of each option, and estimated costs for each option. The estimates were based on current costs of similar mechanisms and initiatives, and also took into account the projected scale and scope of the activities under each of the options, as described in document CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2, section V. Alternative scenarios are also presented where relevant.

3. The content of this document is based on an analysis and review of similar mechanisms and initiatives under the biodiversity-related conventions, the Rio conventions, their financial mechanisms, and other United Nations initiatives and programmes. The analysis included a literature review,[1] interviews, and the examination of available budgets. Where available, reports to convention bodies and documents submitted to boards or other governance structures were also examined.

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* CBD/SBI/3/1.

[1] The annex to the present document lists the key available sources that were reviewed as part of the literature review.

I. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED MECHANISMS

4. The three options for institutional mechanisms to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation in support of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework are further elaborated in section V of document CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2. In summary, they are:

(a) *Option A: A global technical and scientific cooperation support centre:* Technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer would be promoted and facilitated by an autonomous global technical and scientific cooperation support centre that would be separate from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Working in collaboration with a network of institutional partners and providers of technical assistance, the global support centre would have a mandate to mobilize resources and provide a central "one-stop shop" for Parties and relevant institutions to: submit requests for assistance, offer opportunities for technical and scientific cooperation and support, and have access to matchmaking services to develop projects with relevant partners.

(b) *Option B: Regional and/or sub-regional technical and scientific cooperation support centres:* Technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer would be promoted and facilitated through autonomously operated regional and/or sub-regional centres designated by the Conference of the Parties. These centres would provide services similar to those described above, at the regional and sub-regional levels.

(c) *Option C: Initiatives and programmes implemented/coordinated by the Secretariat:* Technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer would continue to be promoted and facilitated through programmes coordinated by the Secretariat of the Convention, in collaboration with relevant partners and initiatives, including the Bio-Bridge Initiative, the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative and others.

5. Regardless of the institutional mechanism ultimately selected, the core objectives and activities to be implemented to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation under any of the options would include the following:

(a) Human and institutional capacity-building in relation to science, technology and innovation;[2]

(b) Technology horizon scanning, assessment, monitoring, and judgement on the appropriate technologies;

(c) Tools and mechanisms to promote and facilitate the development, transfer and use of appropriate technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies, subject to prior informed consent of indigenous people and local communities, as applicable;[3]

(d) Joint research, cooperation and collaboration in the use of scientific advances and good practices in research, including as a modality for sharing the benefits arising from research and development on genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as applicable;[4]

(e) The development, implementation and scaling up of appropriate and responsible innovative solutions;[5]

(f) The exchange of relevant technical and scientific data, information and knowledge, including, but not limited to, results of technical, scientific and socioeconomic research, specialized

[2] This is pursuant to Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

[3] This is pursuant to Article 18, paragraph 4, of the Convention.

[4] This is pursuant to Article 12 of the Convention.

[5] For the purposes of the present document, "innovation" is described as a process that encompasses design, experimentation, application and scaling up of new ideas and solutions, resulting in transformative and more impactful change. Innovative solutions could cover scientific, technical, governance, finance or societal innovation.

knowledge, including policy-relevant information, indigenous and traditional knowledge, and best practices.[6]

6. A review of relevant technical and scientific cooperation programmes in other settings (as illustrated in sections II.A, III.A and IV.A below) demonstrates the value in combining direct project support with capacity development, knowledge sharing, networking, and communication activities. This combined approach would leverage global networks and expertise while responding to the specific needs and priorities of local communities and national governments.

7. Another common finding from the review is the importance of securing adequate financial resources. In this regard, close consultation and cooperation with the Global Environment Facility as the financial mechanism of the Convention is key.

II. OPTION A: GLOBAL TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION SUPPORT CENTRE

A. Overview of existing mechanisms analysed

Climate Technology Centre and Network[7]

8. The Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) is the operational arm of the Technology Mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is mandated to promote technology cooperation and enhance the development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies for low carbon and climate resilient development at the request of developing country Parties. It is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

9. CTCN provides support predominately in the form of technical assistance with a maximum value of $250,000 per project. Under CTCN, direct funding is not provided, rather support is provided by third part "Network Members" contracted by CTCN with the agreement of the recipient country. CTCN receives proposals on a rolling basis through national designated entities who serve as focal points to CTCN. Funding decisions are made by the Director of CTCN, based on defined eligibility and prioritization criteria.

10. In addition to technical assistance, CTCN provides a platform for knowledge-sharing and exchange, networking and engagement. CTCN is operated by more than a dozen dedicated staff, with additional support provided by UNEP and UNIDO staff with broader mandates.

United Nations Technology Facilitation Mechanism[8]

11. The United Nations Technology Facilitation Mechanism (UNTFM) was established in 2015 through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; its mandate is to facilitate collaboration and partnerships for technology through (a) the United Nations Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (IATT); (b) the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum); and (c) an online platform, "2030 Connect".

12. The Inter-agency Task Team, comprising 43 United Nations agencies, is responsible for decision-making and implementation of activities under UNTFM. UNTFM is supported by the "10-member group" of representatives from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community.

13. UNTFM supports TSC primarily through convening regional and thematic workshops. A recently launched programme will also provide countries with support in developing science, technology and innovation roadmaps for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The roadmap support project will

[6] This is pursuant to Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

[7] Documents consulted for CTCN include Joint Annual Reports of the Technology Executive Committee and the Climate Technology Centre and Network, CTCN Progress Reports, Annual Work Plans and Budgets presented to the CTCN Advisory Board, UNFCCC Technology Decisions, and Least Developed Countries Experiences with the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism.

[8] Documents consulted for UNTFM include UNGA resolution 68/210, co-moderator reports from the four Structured Dialogues, the summary report on the Structured Dialogues, and reports of the meetings of IATT and STI Forum.

be piloted in Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya and Serbia, with other countries supported as resources become available.

14. UNTFM is supported by a small team within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Significant additional support is provided by staff in other United Nations agencies that are members of the Inter-agency Task Team.

United Nations Technology Innovation Labs[9]

15. The United Nations Technology Innovation Labs (UNTIL) were established under the United Nations Office of Information and Communication Technology (OICT), with a mandate to provide a start-up environment and a platform for collaborative problem-solving utilizing emerging technologies to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. The primary mechanism for delivery within UNTIL is through a series of thematic labs, each of which addresses a different topic relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals. To date, four labs have been established.

17. In addition to the labs, UNTIL supports technology challenges and hackathons, seminars and workshops, and the publication of reports on key technology issues. UNTIL also operates focus groups, such as the Open Source and Intellectual Property Advisory Group tasked with establishing a legal framework for engagement and partnerships.

18. UNTIL is operated by a few core staff, with significant additional support provided by OICT staff with broader mandates.

B. Lessons learned

19. Global centres that have clear reporting lines to United Nations bodies and convention processes allow for close alignment with global processes, including with regard to the achievement of global frameworks and reporting against global targets. CTCN, for example, presents regular reports to the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies and the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, and alignment with nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national adaptation plans (NAPs) are a requirement for funding.

20. Global centres have greater potential to be sustainable in the long run, compared to regional centres or secretariat-led programmes. This sustainability potential may be related to the high level of investment in establishing such mechanisms, as well as to their greater capacity to mobilize resources from a larger and more diverse pool of donors.

21. Governance structures of global centres can be complex, as is the case of the Inter-agency Task Team within UNTFM. In particular, in order for institutional arrangements involving more than one host agency to be successful, clear roles and responsibilities must be assigned, sufficient resources must be allocated within each agency, and core staff should be assigned solely to the running of the mechanism.

22. The review and assessment of the experience of global centres have shown that focusing solely on thematic issues has resulted in inequality between countries in accessing resources, as well as low stakeholder engagement among in-country partners. As a result of this lesson, there has been an increased focus on country and regional engagement. For example, CTCN has shifted from a thematic focus to a regional focus, and UNTIL has expanded into new countries. Global centres could therefore promote strong stakeholder engagement and client orientation by integrating either a regional approach or the devolution of some functions to hub countries.

23. Many global centres serve multiple functions, including direct support to countries, capacity development, knowledge sharing, and networking and partnership building. When conducted on an ad hoc basis, these activities can be disjointed. However, there are significant benefits to adopting a programmatic approach that seeks to assist requesting Parties or institutions to design a long-term plan involving several steps associated with milestones. In doing so, emphasis should be placed on project management skills and

[9] Documents consulted for UNTIL include the UNTIL 2019 Annual Report, and Lab Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes.

on the analysis of national planning strategies and associated targets to ensure that projects can meet national needs.

C. Advantages

24. The main advantages of a global support centre would include the following:

(a) *Alignment with global processes:* A global centre, with a mandate aligned to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, would help foster maximum consistency and coherence in the implementation and monitoring of, and reporting on, the goals and targets established under the framework. Furthermore, standardized reporting requirements to convention bodies against globally agreed targets would flag discrepancies in alignment that could be quickly addressed;

(b) *Transparency and accountability:* A global centre with a clear mandate tied to convention processes and reporting mechanisms would facilitate greater transparency and accountability. Placing it within a United Nations agency would also foster adherence to United Nations principles and values, including a human rights-based approach, among others;

(c) *Access to resources:* A global centre would have substantial capacity to mobilize and access resources from diverse sources. For example, United Nations agencies have experience in convening donor round tables, and have direct lines of access that can be utilized in the case of funding shortfalls or sustainability risks;

(d) *Efficiency:* While the costs of establishing a global centre are relatively high, there are a number of efficiencies and economies of scale that can be realized in the long run, for example, through centralized administrative and financial services, supportive monitoring and evaluation systems, joint resource mobilization, and communication and outreach channels. As a result, the cost effectiveness of a global centre would be quite high;

(e) *Strategic approach:* A global centre with centralized functions, including knowledge mobilization and sharing, would allow for the implementation of a strategic approach that enables long-term planning and engagement. This would also facilitate results-based management and allow for flexibility and adaptability in programming;

(f) *Access to strong and diverse technical capacity:* A global centre would allow for the mobilization of expertise globally on a broad range of thematic areas that could be accessed and utilized across multiple regions and countries. Having access to such a broad range of expertise is key to addressing complex biodiversity issues.

D. Disadvantages

25. The main disadvantages of a global support centre include the following:

(a) *Discrepancies in geographic coverage:* While global centres are typically established with mandates to achieve geographic balance, there are often discrepancies in the level of services provided to different countries and regions;

(b) *Need for a network of partners:* For a global centre, it is more challenging to provide targeted support that responds adequately to the needs and priorities of stakeholders under different circumstances. A global centre would therefore require establishing and maintaining a network of institutional partners in order to provide region- or country-specific advice and support and to overcome language barriers. However, managing such a network can be a complex and demanding task;

(c) *Long start-up time:* The process of establishing, resourcing and staffing a global centre would take a long time. For example, the process would require consideration and approval of the structure, hosting arrangements and modus operandi by the Conference of the Parties; negotiations and approval by the host agency(ies); and engagement of staff to carry out core operations.

E. Cost estimates

26. The cost of administering global centres for technical and scientific cooperation may vary. The 2019 financial statement from CTCN shows staff and personnel costs accounting for 34 per cent of total expenditures of $6.6 million,[10] with annual budgets from CTCN ranging from $7 million to $10 million. A 2007 review of the GEF Small Grants Programme, which was administered as a global programme by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), noted that management costs paid to UNDP amounted to about 28 per cent of the total budget.

27. Tables 1 and 2 below present estimated costs for a global TSC support centre. The estimates are based on costs of similar mechanisms and initiatives and take into account the projected scale and scope of this option as described in section V of document CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2.

Table 1. Global TSC support centre: unlimited implementation scenario

Cost category	Description	Costs per year	Costs for 5 years
Staff and consultants	1 – P5 (Centre coordinator) 4 – P4 (Regional managers – Africa, Asia- Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean) 2 – P3 (to support cross-cutting areas such as resource mobilization, communication and partnerships) 2 – G6 (Programme/administrative assistants)	$1,603,353	$8,016,767
Direct project support	Small grants and/or technical assistance (serving at least 25 new countries per year)	$3,750,000	$18,750,000
Meetings, workshops and training costs	Regional meetings, technical workshops, webinars and online training (including travel of participants)	$420,000	$2,100,000
Travel	Attendance at relevant meetings, convening of governing bodies, monitoring and evaluation of direct country support	$75,000	$375,000
Contractual services	IT and website design, printing	$50,000	$250,000
Operating expenses	Office costs (assuming cost sharing with host), supplies	$20,000	$100,000
Programme support costs (13%)		$769,386	$3,846,929
TOTAL		**$6,687,739**	**$33,438,694**

[10] CTCN 2019 Financial Statement, available here.

Table 2. Global TSC support centre: limited implementation scenario

Cost category	Description	Costs per year	Costs for 5 years
Staff and consultants	1 – P5 (Centre Coordinator) 2 – P4 (Regional managers – each covering 2 regions) 2 – G6 (Programme/administrative assistants)	$798,153	$3,990,767
Direct project support	Small grants and/or technical assistance (serving at least 15 new countries per year)	$2,250,000	$11,250,000
Meetings, workshops and training costs	Regional meetings, technical workshops, webinars and online training (including travel of participants)	$210,000	$1,050,000
Travel	Attendance at relevant meetings, convening of governing bodies, monitoring and evaluation of direct country support	$40,000	$200,000
Contractual services	IT and website design, printing	$30,000	$150,000
Operating expenses	Office costs (assuming cost sharing with host), supplies	$20,000	$100,000
Programme support costs (13%)		$435,260	$2,176,299
TOTAL		**$3,783,413**	**$18,917,064**

Box 1. Budget assumptions for tables 1 and 2:

- The host agency will provide significant administrative and financial support.
- The host agency will operate a cost-sharing model for operating expenses.
- Direct support to countries will include small grants and technical assistance (including information, advice and other support; see CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2), with an average yearly value of $150,000 per project country.
- Staff costs are calculated on the pro forma rate based on the average amount for three duty stations: Montreal (CBD Secretariat), Nairobi (UNEP headquarters), and Copenhagen (CTCN headquarters). These duty stations were chosen solely for the purpose of preparing the cost estimates, and without prejudice to the Parties' deliberations and the possible location of the mechanism.
- Costs for programme/administrative assistants are calculated at G6 step V level.

III. OPTION B: REGIONAL AND/OR SUBREGIONAL TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION SUPPORT CENTRES

A. Overview of existing mechanisms analysed

GEF-supported regional climate technology network and finance centres[11]

28. In response to the Poznan Strategic Framework under UNFCCC, GEF supported the establishment of four regional centres designed to strengthen technical and scientific cooperation and accelerate the financing and uptake of climate technologies (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean). Each centre was hosted by a different regional partner, for example, the African centre was hosted by the African Development Bank, while the Asia-Pacific centre was a joint initiative of the Asian Development Bank and UNEP.

29. The regional centres provided both network and knowledge exchange services, as well as bankable projects resulting in the development and transfer of climate technologies. The structure and operational modalities of each regional centre differed depending on the host organization. In one case, two host agencies were selected (Asian Development Bank and UNEP), although this is not considered to be a best practice.

Stockholm Convention regional and subregional centres[12]

30. In 2008, Stockholm Convention regional and subregional centres (SCRCs) were established with a mandate to provide technical assistance and promote the transfer of technology. There are currently 16 such SCRCs that operate under the authority of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention, as per their agreed workplans. Selected project proposals, based on the approved workplans, are funded for implementation on a competitive basis under the Small Grant Programme of the convention.

31. The SCRC system is well integrated into the operation of the Conference of the Parties, with regular reviews and reports prepared and submitted based on a performance evaluation methodology. The Small Grant Programme supports activities with a budget of usually $50,000 or less. All activities, which include workshops and training, awareness raising, technical assistance, and resource mobilization, are implemented by the SCRSs themselves and in collaboration with relevant partners.

32. The projects implemented by SCRCs are funded both by bilateral donors and through the financial mechanism of the convention. The regular administrative and other operational costs of SCRCs are, however, borne by the host institutions/countries.

Basel Convention regional and subregional centres[13]

33. Based on a similar model as the Stockholm Convention, the Basel Convention is supported by 14 regional and subregional centres (BCRCs), six of which also serve as SCRCs. The centres have a mandate to deliver training and technology transfer regarding the management of hazardous and other wastes, and the reduction of their generation. They have access to the same Small Grant Programme as the SCRCs.

34. Each centre is hosted by an intergovernmental or national organization through a framework agreement. The Basel Convention centres are funded through voluntary sources, bilateral funding mobilized by each individual centre, and a fee for service model.

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[11] Documents consulted include GEF project documents and budgets for the four regional centres (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean) reports of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties to UNFCCC, and the terminal evaluation for the Asia-Pacific centre.

[12] Documents consulted for the Stockholm Convention regional centres (SCRCs) include workplans and activity reports for the centres, performance evaluation reports, procurement capacity assessments, and Stockholm Convention COP decisions on regional centres.

[13] Documents consulted for the Basel Convention regional centres (BCRCs) include business plans and activity reports for the centres, performance evaluation reports, procurement capacity assessments, and Basel Convention COP decisions on regional centres.

B. Lessons learned

35. Regional centres are typically operated as a series of independent entities without consolidated programming and coordinated fundraising. As a consequence, it is often a challenge to ensure equitable funding for the operations of the various regional centres. The Stockholm and Basel conventions overcame this challenge, to a certain extent, by complementing regional and subregional centres with centrally administered small grant programmes.

36. Regional and subregional centres tend to rely upon a single donor or a very limited pool of donors. This may be attributable to their limited resource mobilization capacity, restricted access to some donors, the potential misalignment with donor funding priorities, as well as limited visibility of some regional and subregional centres.

37. As explained in paragraph 21 above, it has been demonstrated that hosting arrangements with multiple agencies present operational challenges. An approach involving several regional centres, each one with its own hosting arrangements, multiplies these challenges.

38. In the above examples of regional and subregional centres, the operational costs, including staffing costs, are covered by the host institutions and/or governments as in-kind contributions.

39. In order to monitor, in a consistent and comparable manner, the performance of the regional and subregional centres, both in terms of the level of service and impact across the various regions, it is critical to develop a common performance assessment process and allocate to each centre sufficient resources for monitoring and evaluation. Such decentralized monitoring and evaluation should be supported by global coordination, as well as clear reporting lines and standards to convention bodies. The Stockholm Convention approach of evaluation processes approved by its Conference of the Parties is one good example of this.

C. Advantages

40. The main advantages of regional support centres include the following:

(a) *Targeted support and stakeholder engagement:* The closer proximity of the regional centres to the respective countries allows them to respond to their needs and circumstances in a more targeted manner, more effectively engage in-country partners and stakeholders, and capitalize on existing regional networks and programmes;

(b) *Promotion of regional cooperation:* In many cases, regional and subregional centres operate within territories with similar ecosystems, environmental characteristics, socioeconomic circumstances and similar languages. This provides greater opportunities for cooperation, mutual learning and knowledge sharing than those provided by global centres and secretariat-led programmes;

(c) *Coherence with regional strategies, plans and programmes:* Regional and subregional centres have greater flexibility in aligning their activities with the strategies, plans and programmes of relevant regional bodies, which can contribute to global commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

D. Disadvantages

41. The main disadvantages of regional support centres include the following:

(a) *Inequitable access to resources and expertise:* Regional and subregional centres are likely to have limited capacity and opportunities to mobilize and access financial and technical resources and expertise from diverse sources. This might increase the risk of unequal access to services across regions and subregions. For example, a review of the GEF-supported regional climate technology network and finance centres clearly demonstrated this limitation, with some centres experiencing significant delays in implementation;

(b) *High cost:* Maintaining a programme team in each regional and subregional centre can be expensive. The overall cost of running all the regional and subregional centres would be high;

(c) *Low sustainability:* Regional and subregional centres are typically operated as independent entities and often have limited capacity to mobilize resources from a diverse pool of funding sources to sustain their activities. Centres hosted by national institutions within least developed countries and small island developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to uncertainty in resource flows;

(d) *Multiplicity of reports:* Because each regional centre would need to prepare and submit its own reports, the Conference of the Parties might find it cumbersome to review multiple reports and to monitor the performance of the regional centres in a consistent and comparable manner;

(e) *Decentralized monitoring and evaluation:* Assessment of the performance of multiple regional centres would require more time and resources for gathering the impact data;

(f) *Need for an additional mechanism for global coordination:* In addition to the teams operating at the regional centres, according to best practices, an additional global coordination mechanism is necessary to promote knowledge exchange and ensure consistency in standards of service, monitoring and evaluation, and adherence to principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. The Stockholm Convention has addressed this issue by requiring regular evaluations and mutually agreed workplans for each centre. However, this either requires the establishment of a small team or puts additional burden on the staff of the secretariat.

E. Cost estimates

42. The costs of setting up regional centres are very high – GEF funding for the four regional climate technology network and finance centres, for example, totalled $51.8 million, plus more than $304 million in co-funding, with the centres running for between 2.5 to 4 years. These costs are a reflection of the need to have multiple teams in place to operate the centres.

43. While some functions can be shared centrally, at a minimum, each regional centre requires a programme manager, a resource mobilization and partnership specialist, administrative and financial assistants, and consultants or staff with specialized technical expertise. Furthermore, global coordination and support costs vary widely – for example, FAO provided a one-time support to assess and strengthen four SCRCs and four BCRSs at a cost of only $50,000. However, convention expenditures for coordination of, and support for, the SCRCs and BCRSs and cooperation between regional centres in 2016-2017 were budgeted at over $1.1 million.

44. Table 3 presents a possible cost estimate for this option based on costs of similar mechanisms and initiatives, taking into account the projected scope and mandate presented in section V of document CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2.[14]

Table 3. Five regional TSC support centres

Cost category	Description	Costs per year	Costs for 5 years
Staff and consultants	5 – P4 equivalent/ NO-D (Regional centre managers) 10 – P3 equivalent/ NO-C (to support cross-cutting areas such as resource mobilization, communication and partnerships) 5 – P2 equivalent/ NO-B (Finance/project managers) 5 – G6 equivalent (Programme/administrative assistants)	$1,499,959	$7,499,794

[14] A broad range of costing options could be considered.

Direct project support	Small grants and/or technical assistance (at least 5 countries per centre per year)	$3,750,000	$18,750,000
Meetings, workshops and training costs	Regional meetings, technical workshops, and online training (including travel of participants)	$200,000	$1,000,000
Travel	Relevant meetings, governing bodies, monitoring and evaluation of direct country support	$75,000	$375,000
Contractual services	IT and website design, printing for 5 centres plus global support	$50,000	$250,000
Operating expenses	Office costs for 5 centres (assuming cost sharing with host), supplies	$100,000	$500,000
Programme support costs (13%)		$737,745	$3,688,723
TOTAL		**$6,412,704**	**$32,063,518**

Box 2. Budget assumptions for table 3:

- The host agencies will provide significant administrative and financial support.
- The host agencies will operate a cost-sharing model for operating expenses.
- Direct support to countries will include small grants and technical assistance (including information, advice and other support; see CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2).

IV. OPTION C: INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED AND/OR COORDINATED BY THE SECRETARIAT

A. Overview of existing mechanisms analysed

Bio-Bridge Initiative[15]

45. The Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI) was established at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in order to support enhanced technical and scientific cooperation. The BBI offers a matchmaking service linking Parties with specific needs to the providers of technical support. Additionally, the BBI serves as a knowledge sharing platform on good practices and lessons learned and provides seed funding to catalyse scientific and technical cooperation.

46. The seed funding available through BBI finances investments of up to $20,000 per project. To date, BBI has supported 23 such projects,[16] over two rounds plus a pilot phase. Following a third call for proposals issued in June 2020,[17] 99 proposals were received, highlighting an ever-increasing demand for this type of cooperation activities. Of these, BBI supports 15 new projects that are currently being launched.[18]

47. The BBI selection process is administered by the Secretariat of the Convention and undertaken by an external Project Review Panel, based on the criteria set out in notification 2020-042. The Panel is comprised of the Chairs of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and of

[15] Documents consulted for BBI include the Bio-Bridge Action Plan, the Bio-Bridge Initiative Operations Guide, and final project reports from selected projects.

[16] https://www.cbd.int/biobridge/projects/completed.

[17] https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2020/ntf-2020-042-bbi-en.pdf.

[18] https://www.cbd.int/biobridge/projects/selected.

the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, the Chair of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, the Co-Chairs of the Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity, a representative from the Government of the Republic of Korea and a representative from the Global Environment Facility.

Ramsar Convention Small Grants Fund[19]

48. The Ramsar Small Grants Fund for Wetland Conservation and Wise Use (Ramsar SGF) was established by the Conference of the Contracting Parties in 1990 at its fourth meeting. Through resolution XIII.2, Contracting Parties mandated the phase-out of the Ramsar SGF, with the last call for proposals issued in 2019.

49. The Ramsar SGF did not specifically target technical and scientific cooperation, rather it provided small grants (maximum of 35,000 CHF as per the last call for proposals), in order to:

(a) Support activities that were clearly aligned with the convention's Strategic Plan;

(b) Provide emergency assistance to maintain the ecological status of Ramsar sites; or

(c) Prepare non-Parties for accession to the convention.

50. Due to limited resources, Parties were invited to conduct a preselection process for applications and submit only one proposal per year. The decision on which proposals to fund was taken jointly by the Chairperson of the convention's Standing Committee, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee's Subgroup on Finance, and the Secretary General of the convention.

Japan Biodiversity Fund[20]

51. The Japan Biodiversity Fund (JBF) was established by the Government of Japan, as the Presidency of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to support Parties for the translation of the new Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 into national priorities as soon as possible.

52. With a total budget of $59.1 million, originally planned for a period of five years and subsequently extended to ten years, the JBF has played a unique and essential role, given that almost all capacity-building activities through the Secretariat have been supported by the JBF. Its focus is on capacity-building for:

(a) Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(b) Revision of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) in accordance with the Strategic Plan; and

(c) Strengthening the capacities of Parties to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity in general.

53. In addition to its core capacity-building activities and its own management, the JBF also provides technical support for the NBSAP implementation.

54. Decisions on funding are made by the global coordinator in consultation with the Executive Secretary and the unit heads. The JBF team consists of an average of seven (7) people directed by a global coordinator, a senior programme officer (only for the first 6 years), two programme management officers, a liaison officer (for a period of three years), one junior programme officer (only the last 6 years) and two or three administrative assistants (none in the last two years).

[19] Documents consulted for Ramsar SGF include Ramsar SGF Operational Guidelines, the Critical Evaluation of the Ramsar SGF and its Future Operations, and relevant Standing Committee decisions on financial and budgetary matters.

[20] Documents consulted for JBF include the Interim Final Evaluation Report, and the Aichi Targets Newsletter.

CITES Tree Species Programme[21]

55. The CITES Tree Species Programme provides direct financial assistance to Parties in three regions: Africa, Asia, and Central and Latin America and the Caribbean. The mandate of the programme is to support conservation and management measures to ensure that the trade in products from CITES-listed tree species is sustainable, legal and traceable. Eligible actions include (a) sustainable management of rare tree species and their products; (b) legal, traceable, and fair trade in products from CITES-listed tree species; (c) improved and strengthened forest governance, policies for forest management, and enforcement capacity and ensure long-term benefit; and (d) rural development, sustainable economic growth at country level, a healthy private sector, and long-term poverty alleviation.

56. The CITES Tree Species Programme is supported through an advisory committee with representatives from recipient countries, donors, the scientific community and the secretariat, as well as a programme coordinator and regional coordinators who prepare regional roadmaps and support countries in accessing resources.

57. In addition to funding, the Tree Species Programme coordinates regional meetings to support the preparation of project proposals and facilitates partnerships for implementation of the convention.

B. Lessons learned

58. It is important for secretariat-led programmes to have a clear mandate and operational structure, including clear responsibilities and decision-making and reporting arrangements in order to be effective. The placement of the programmes within the organizational structure of the secretariat is also a key consideration.

59. It is also important to ensure that secretariat-led programmes are sufficiently and consistently staffed. Experience shows that initiatives are more effective when managed by a dedicated team with an appropriate level of autonomy and delegated decision-making authority.

60. Delays in operationalization and the delivery of support are closely tied to lack of human resources and long recruitment times.

61. Secretariat-led programmes require strategic oversight and guidance by an independent body. For example, under the CITES Tree Species Programme, such a role is played by an advisory committee, which also ensures that decision-making reflects regional and national priorities.

62. Many secretariat-led programmes are dependent on single-donor support, which represents a high risk to the sustainability of those programmes. Within the Convention on Biological Diversity this seems to be tied to the launch of initiatives as part of a commitment of a Presidency of the Conference of the Parties which leads to strong single donor ownership but limited broad donor engagement. It is important to establish a diverse donor base from the outset.

C. Advantages

63. The main advantages of this option include the following:

(a) *Alignment with convention processes:* Secretariat-led programmes are very closely tied to convention processes and, as such, coherence with strategic plans can be assured. As the post-2020 global biodiversity framework comes into effect, this alignment will be particularly important;

(b) *Targeted interventions:* Secretariat-led programmes tend to deliver better results in terms of targeting projects that address emerging challenges to implementation and are better aligned with reporting on targets;

(c) *Clear reporting lines:* Operating within a secretariat through mandates issued by convention bodies establishes clear reporting lines and responsibilities that can enhance transparency;

[21] Documents consulted for CITES Tree Species Programme include Progress Reports on the Joint ITTO-CITES Timber Project, Notifications to Parties on the CITES Tree Species Programme, Calls for Proposals for the CITES Tree Species Programme, Reports of the Regional Meetings, and CITES COP Decision 17.167.

(d) *Effective outreach:* With direct lines to convention national focal points, secretariat-led technical and scientific cooperation programmes can be implemented simultaneously with other capacity development, communication, outreach and knowledge management support provided by the secretariat to Parties;

(e) *Strong technical capacity:* In addition to a dedicated team, secretariat-led programmes can draw on the technical expertise of secretariat staff, as appropriate. This is particularly useful when designing and delivering capacity-building, as well as in evaluating highly technical project proposals.

D. Disadvantages

64. The main disadvantages of this option include the following:

(a) *Overlap in mandates:* As secretariats run many initiatives and programmes in parallel, there is a potential risk of overlap in their mandates and scope. This can cause reductions in efficiency and duplication of efforts;

(b) *Delays in service delivery:* As secretariats are not implementing agencies set up to manage projects, they often experience operational challenges such as ensuring timely disbursement of funds and recruitment processes, which can cause delays in providing project management support and delivering services;

(c) *Limited regional and national presence:* Secretariat-led programmes are centrally managed, thus reducing the extent to which those programmes respond adequately to regional and national needs, priorities and circumstances. There is a high reliance on national focal points and regional representatives to provide this regional and national presence. However, there are seldom sufficient resources made available for focal points to fulfil this additional mandate;

(d) *Low sustainability:* Secretariat-led programmes tend to rely upon a single donor or a limited pool of funding sources, which could jeopardize the sustainability of those programmes.

E. Cost estimates

65. The review of the Ramsar SGF noted that, to be effective, funding should reach a minimum of $1 million per year.[22] The Japan Biodiversity Fund operated with a staffing level ranging from six to nine staff members and annual expenditures ranging from $2.7 million to $9.2 million per year.

66. Table 4 presents a possible cost estimate for this option based on experience with the JBF, taking into account the projected scope and mandate presented in section V of document CBD/SBI/3/7/Add.2

Table 4. Secretariat-led TSC programmes and initiatives

Cost category	Description	Costs per year	Costs for 5 years
Staff and consultants	1 – P4 (Programme manager) 2 – P3 (to support cross-cutting areas such as resource mobilization, communication and partnerships) 1 – P2 (Finance/projects officer) 2 – G6 (Programme/administrative assistants)	$929,330	$4,646,650
Direct country support	Small grants and/or technical assistance (serving at least 25 new countries per year)	$3,750,000	$18,750,000
Meetings, workshops and training costs	Regional meetings, technical workshops, webinars and online	$420,000	$2,100,000

[22] Ramsar resolution VII.5.

Cost category	Description	Costs per year	Costs for 5 years
	training (including travel of participants)		
Travel	Attendance at relevant meetings, convening of governing bodies, monitoring and evaluation of direct country support	$75,000	$375,000
Contractual services	IT and website design, printing (assuming use of existing Secretariat IT infrastructure)	$20,000	$100,000
Operating expenses	Office costs (assuming cost sharing with host), supplies	$20,000	$100,000
Programme support costs (13%)		$677,863	$3,389,315
TOTAL		**$5,892,193**	**$29,460,965**

Box 3. Budget assumptions for table 4:

- The Secretariat will provide significant administrative and financial support.
- The Secretariat will operate a cost sharing model for operating expenses.
- Direct support to countries will include both small grants and technical assistance provided by Secretariat-led initiatives and programmes, with an average yearly value of $150,000 per project country.
- Professional staff costs are calculated on the pro forma rate for Montreal.
- Costs for programme/administrative assistants are calculated at G6 step V level.

Annex

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