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MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Online, 9 July 2020

REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, 9 JULY 2020

Summary

The Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism met virtually on 9 July 2020. It provided the Executive Secretary with views and recommendations concerning: (a) award for national clearing-house mechanisms (CHM Award); (b) knowledge management; and (c) support to national clearing-house mechanisms (see section I of the report).

The Informal Advisory Committee considered the drafts of the documents under preparation for the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation related to knowledge management and technical and scientific cooperation.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

A. Knowledge management and technical and scientific cooperation

(a) Based on the review of the draft documents on knowledge management and on technical and scientific cooperation under preparation for the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, the Committee recommends that the Executive Secretary describe clearly the cross-linkages between knowledge management, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation and other related subjects in the documents being prepared for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its fifteenth meeting to ensure consistency and avoid duplication. notification should be issued in this regard;

(b) The award should continue for the next 10 years in view of its popularity and the renewed interest by Parties both in terms of establishing and improving their national clearing-house mechanism platforms.

B. Support to national clearing-house mechanisms

1. With respect to support to national clearing-house mechanisms, the Committee reiterates its recommendation to increase the interoperability of the Bioland Tool and other existing tools, in order to provide easy access to, and exchange of, relevant national data and information, such as details of national focal points.

II. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened by the Chair shortly after 5 a.m. (EDT) on 7 July 2020. He made a brief opening statement, welcoming participants. Welcome remarks on behalf of the Executive Secretary were read out by Mr. Erie Tamale of the Secretariat.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

3. The participants agreed on the agenda and organization of work, noting the limited time available.

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

Item 3.1. Knowledge management under the Convention and its Protocols

4. In advance of the meeting, the members of the Committee had been sent a copy of the draft document elaborating a knowledge management component for consideration in support of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. While a few Committee members had submitted comments in writing to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting, it was agreed that additional written comments could be submitted to the Secretariat for the following week. The Secretariat outlined the steps for incorporating comments from this meeting. Members considered specific sections of the draft and made suggestions to enhance it.

Item 3.2. Technical and scientific cooperation

5. A copy of the draft document under preparation related to technical and scientific cooperation had been sent in advance of the meeting to the members of the Committee. The Secretariat introduced the current draft and updated the various review processes to date towards updating it. In their deliberations, members indicated their concern at the proliferation of new structures, such as bodies and committees, as part of the post-2020 process. Other comments received were related to terminology and the need to ensure consistency throughout the documents. In response, the Secretariat referred to another chapeau document under preparation to bring together proposals on related issues and include draft recommendations/decisions on cross-cutting issues for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its third meeting. Members noted that more coherence was needed among all documents requiring cross-referencing and to avoid duplication of work.

ITEM 4. UPDATES ON STANDING ITEMS

Item 4.1. Award for clearing-house mechanisms

6. The Secretariat provided a brief update on activities related to the process, noting that few submissions had been received. It was acknowledged that the global pandemic related to COVID-19 had interrupted most activities at international level. The postponement of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties would provide an opportunity to extend the deadline for Parties to complete their submission for an award. Additionally, the delay would provide more time for Parties to complete the migration of their national clearing-house mechanisms to the Bioland Tool. The impact of the situation on the process by which the jury would convene was also discussed. The Committee recommended that the Executive Secretary prepare a notification in this regard once new dates for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties were announced. The Committee would defer discussion on the jury process to its next meeting.

7. One member raised the issue of the continuation of the Awards beyond the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, as the initial decision¹ had been to provide awards at the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Conference of the Parties. The Committee considered the effectiveness of the awards in raising awareness of the need to establish and maintain effective national clearing-house mechanisms. It concluded that the popularity of the awards contributed to the creation and popularity of the Bioland Tool and therefore would subsequently recommend continuing the Award beyond the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Item 4.2 Support to national clearing-house mechanisms

8. The Secretariat provided a brief update on activities related to supporting the development and maintenance of national clearing-house mechanisms. Most of the activities related to the support provided to assist Parties in establishing and/or migrating their national clearing-house mechanisms using the Bioland tool. The Secretariat participated in a virtual workshop for member States of the Association of Southeast

¹ Decision XII/2 B.

Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. This workshop focused on training Parties and trainers. Updates to the Bioland Tool include enhanced API support and, documents import capabilities. E-learning materials are under preparation. The CHM help desk responds to enquiries. Introduction of a Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) integration plug is in progress.

9. The Committee reminded the Secretariat of the request to allow for the ability of national focal point data and access and benefit-sharing information available on the website of the Convention and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House to also be available through the Bioland Tool.

Item 4.3 Partners' contributions to the clearing-house mechanisms

10. Under this agenda item, the Chair of the Committee invited the three partner organizations and the observer from GBIF to provide an update on their recent work in support of the work of the Committee.

11. The member from ASEAN presented on the workshop to assist member States on their Bioland set-up.² This workshop focused both on training Parties and trainers in the use of the Bioland Tool. She updated members on the ASEAN contribution to the CHM Awards process by way of donation of the trophies that would be given out at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

12. The member from the United Nations Environment Programme–World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) provided a verbal update on current work. He referred to a compendium of guidance prepared with the Secretariat in relation to key data sets, data management and synergies. He indicated that this was now available in languages and that resources had been allocated to make this a living entity. UNEP-WCMC was promoting the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and was working with the Secretariat on developing a document on a monitoring framework and indicators. It was seeking input on indicators that worked at the national and international levels. He ended his update with a request to colleagues to partake in the peer review of the documents prepared for the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice before the deadline, which was set for 25 July 2020.

13. The member from the United Nations Environment Programme made a presentation on the ongoing work related to InforMEA with a focus on the DaRT moving towards an operational phase since October 2019.³ She summarized the project to date and indicated the next steps towards its further implementation and roll-out.

14. The member from GBIF provided a brief verbal update on recent activities related to the GBIF-funded project, led by the Natural History Museum of France with support from partners in Belgium and the Secretariat, allowing for eight francophone African partners to train in the use of the Bioland Tool on ways to link components of data from countries that can go through the GBIF systems to display on Bioland. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the March workshop that would have concluded this project had to be postponed. Therefore, the deadline was extended to the end of 2020. The Chair indicated that a future project would be considered for Anglophone Parties in Africa. GBIF had also included the publication by the Invasive Species Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) of validated checklists from the Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species that included near universal coverage of national lists through GBIF, as well as access via the “Invasive Alien Species” link on the country profile pages of the website of the Convention.

Item 4.4. Updates on the work of the Informal Advisory Committees to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House

15. Updates were provided by the Secretariat regarding the work of the informal advisory committees to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and to the Biosafety Clearing-House.

16. With regard to the Biosafety Clearing-House, it was reported that the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House had last met in April 2016. The Committee had recently been reconstituted

² A presentation made by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CHM-IAC-2020-01>

³ A more detailed presentation is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/CHM-IAC-2020-01>

and was actively participating in the testing of the new platform for the Biosafety Clearing-House. Testing of the new platform was taking place through the development site (<https://bch.cbdddev.xyz/>) and the Biosafety Clearing-House on [BCH Forum](#). The Informal Advisory Committee to the Biosafety Clearing-House was tentatively due to meet in October 2020.

17. Due to staffing and structural changes in the Secretariat, work on the Biosafety Clearing-House had been largely dormant from mid-2016 to mid-2019. Efforts were now under way to resume activities on the Biosafety Clearing-House, with the major focus being on the migration of the Biosafety Clearing-House to its new platform as requested by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. A beta version of the new Biosafety Clearing-House had been launched to enable Parties to submit their fourth national reports on the implementation of the Protocol, which had been due in October 2019. Migration was progressing; however, the project was very large and complex and, in many instances, involved building new infrastructure to host the data while ensuring that the new platform maintained and built upon the current functionalities of the Biosafety Clearing-House, while also making sure that the tools developed could work across the clearing-house mechanism, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House.

18. With regard to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House, it was reported that country progress and the provision of proactive outreach to encourage the publication and use of the ABS-CH continued. In this regard, Parties had made some progress, though they still had more work to do to meet information-sharing obligations. Help and documentation could be improved, and the Secretariat wished to reduce the need for technical support and training as well as encourage the submission and updating of information in more efficient ways.

19. With respect to the Clearing-House UI/UX Project, it was reported that this project benefited from the recognition that the best websites were the ones that a user did not need any help or documentation to use. The goal was to improve the UI/UX and minimize the need for additional help and documentation. Any help and documentation provided should be simple for users, provided in an appropriate and effective format, and easily accessed or available at the appropriate time. This project would review and improve the design of the websites, primarily focusing on the common or similar internal and external processes and functionality related to the Biosafety Clearing-House, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism.

20. Data included for various reports is found in a variety of databases and systems. The Secretariat plans to develop an online, standardized automatic report format and interface to allow users to explore the information for a specified timeframe. This could also be used to provide information for reports of the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House.

21. Improvements and new functionality that were included in the latest update highlight search improvements such as— (a) new and improved second level filters for record types, improved layout, and matrix search; (a) new “explore” section providing a list of individual records as search results; (c) a number of common format changes and improvements (Checkpoint, Checkpoint communiqué, and new Measures status common format); (d) an integrated issue-tracking system for Parties, including automated reminders on information-sharing obligations or issues with published records (e.g., a weekly or monthly report on a Party’s progress for national focal points which would include a checklist and instructions on how to resolve ABSCH issues or tasks, such as missing or unclear information in a particular record, or the need to designate a publishing authority); (e) inclusion of the Bio-Bridge information in the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House; and, finally, (f) integration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House information into the Bioland Tool.⁴

22. The Committee expressed appreciation for the greater integration among the clearing-houses.

⁴ The report of the fourth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/NP-ABSCH-IAC-2019-01>.

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

23. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat indicated to members that the chapeau document referenced during the meeting would require the Committee to consider and provide feedback. The Chair of the Committee agreed and expressed the wish to also review the next version of the capacity development document. It was suggested that the Committee should try to meet again virtually before the end of August 2020 with those members who might be available. The Secretariat reminded the Committee that, as all documents were to be posted in August, written feedback would be solicited in advance.

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

24. The recommendations resulting from this meeting are indicated in section I above. The Chair expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for the good work done under the difficult current circumstances. Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Director, Implementation Support Division, thanked everyone on behalf of the Executive Secretary for their participation and thanked them for their valuable recommendations over the years. She also provided an update on the vacant staff positions and invited members to share the terms of reference throughout their respective networks as they became available.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

25. The meeting concluded at 7.20 a.m. (EDT).

*Annex***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Gender</i>
1	Belgium	Mr. Han de Koeijer - Chair	M
2	Cameroon	Mr. Rigobert Ntep	M
3	Morocco	Mr. Mostafa Madbouhi	M
4	Serbia	Mr. Slaviša Popović	M
5	Sri Lanka	Ms. H. M. H. E. Herath	F
	<i>Partner organization</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Gender</i>
6	ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity	Ms. Sheila Vergara	F
7	MEA-IKM Initiative	Ms. Eva Duer	F
8	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)	Mr. Jerry Harrison	M
	<i>Observers</i>		<i>Gender</i>
9	Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)	Mr. Tim Hirsch	M
10.	Consultant	Mr. Chad Carpenter	M
	<i>Secretariat</i>		<i>Gender</i>
11.	Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp	Director, Implementation Support Division	F
12.	Mr. Erie Tamale	Senior Programme Officer	M
13.	Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch	Programme Officer	M
14.	Mr. Frederick Vogel	Programme Officer	M
15.	Ms. Sandra Meehan	Senior Programme Management Assistant	F
16.	Mr. Djessy Monnier	Senior Programme Management Assistant	M
17.	Ms. Clair Parois	Programme Management Assistant	F