



Convention on Biological Diversity

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT UNDER THE CONVENTION AND ITS PROTOCOLS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 recognizes that, collectively, Parties and stakeholders involved in implementing the Convention have a wealth of experience and many useful good practice cases, tools and guidance, and that there is additional useful information beyond this community. In this regard, it provides for the development of a biodiversity knowledge network, including databases and networks of practitioners, to bring together this knowledge and experience and to make it available through the clearing-house mechanism to facilitate and support enhanced implementation of the Convention. As well, the Strategic Plan contains, under Strategic Goal E (Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity-building), Aichi Biodiversity Target 19, i.e. By 2020, knowledge, the science base and technologies relating to biodiversity, its values, functioning, status and trends, and the consequences of its loss, are improved, widely shared and transferred, and applied.
2. The clearing-house mechanism was established pursuant to Article 18.3 of the Convention to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation. The clearing-house mechanism also plays at least two other distinct but overlapping functions, namely facilitating the exchange of information relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (Article 17) and facilitating communication and outreach. The present document relates to the information exchange function. Updates relating to the technical and scientific cooperation functions of the clearing-house mechanism are addressed in documents under agenda item 10 of the current meeting.
3. In decision [XIII/23](#), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to further develop the clearing-house mechanism in line with the web strategy and the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism. In the same decision, the Executive Secretary was also requested to implement the web strategy, in line with the framework for a communications strategy and to update it with priority actions to be taken before 2018, based on decisions emanating from the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and concurrent meetings of the Protocols.
4. Section II below provides an update on the operation of the clearing-house mechanism, in particular introducing the proposed joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanisms, which are contained in the annex. Section III below provides an update on knowledge management activities undertaken in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. This section also highlights the need to integrate a knowledge management component into the post-2020 strategic planning process and proposes possible elements for such a component. A progress report on the Secretariat's activities relating

* CBD/COP/14/1.

to knowledge management, including the clearing-house mechanism and the web strategy, is contained in information document CBD/COP/14/INF/4.

II. JOINT MODALITIES OF OPERATION FOR THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISMS

5. In order to strengthen coherence and integration between the three main clearing-houses of the Secretariat, the Secretariat has prepared joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House, taking into consideration the web strategy. The draft joint modalities were reviewed by the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House and the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-house Mechanism of the Convention. These were prepared in response to decision [NP-2/2](#), paragraph 8 (b).

6. The proposed joint modalities of operation, contained in annex I below, are meant to serve as a common basis for strengthening coherence and integration between the three main clearing-houses of the Secretariat, while preserving the specific functionalities of the clearing-houses under both the Protocols and the Convention. They are complementary to the modalities of operation adopted in decision [NP-1/2](#) for the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House as well as the modalities of operation for the Biosafety Clearing-House adopted in decision [BS-1/3](#).¹

7. The Conference of the Parties may wish to take note of these joint modalities and provide guidance on their implementation, as appropriate.

III. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

8. Knowledge management comprises a range of processes, strategies and practices through which organizations deliberately and systematically identify, generate, capture, validate, store, codify, update, share or transfer knowledge to achieve organizational objectives or specific outcomes, such as shared intelligence, improved performance, enhanced organizational effectiveness and competitiveness, innovation or informed decision-making. It includes capturing best practices and lessons learned from past experiences and feeding them into institutional memory in order to foster continued learning and application to future activities, new situations and different environments.²

9. Knowledge management goes beyond information management. Beyond capturing and organizing information, it involves transforming that information into knowledge that can be shared and applied to enhance performance, support policy and decision-making, solve problems, improve action, or achieve other goals of the organization. It may also involve distilling new knowledge on the basis of previous knowledge to address new situations. Along a continuum, it may involve various activities ranging from collection and codification of information into knowledge products (such as newsletters, briefing notes, reports and publications) to connecting people, for example through networks and communities of practice, allowing them to interact, collaborate, communicate and take action.³

10. The Convention on Biological Diversity, in its preamble, acknowledges the general lack of information and knowledge regarding biological diversity and the urgent need to develop scientific, technical and institutional capacities to provide the basic understanding upon which to plan and implement appropriate measures. By Article 17 of the Convention, Parties are required to facilitate the exchange of information, from all publicly available sources, relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Article 17 also provides that exchange of information shall include exchange of results of technical, scientific and socioeconomic research, as well as information on training and surveying

¹ Draft decisions containing these proposed joint modalities are also contained in CBD/NP/MOP/3/8, CBD/CP/MOP/9/4 and CBD/CP/MOP/9/4/Add.1.

² United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) reports on knowledge management in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2007/6 and JIU/REP/2016/10).

³ See <https://www.scribd.com/document/210649798/Interrelationship-Between-Document> and <http://acnudh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/slitoolkit.pdf>

programmes, specialized knowledge, indigenous and traditional knowledge. Article 18 of the Convention also provided for establishment of a clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.

11. By Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Biosafety Clearing-House was established as part of the clearing-house mechanism in order to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms, and to assist Parties in implementing the Protocol. Likewise, by Article 14 of the Nagoya Protocol, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House was established as part of the clearing-house mechanism to serve as a means for sharing information related to access and benefit-sharing and provide access to information made available by each Party that is relevant to the implementation of this Protocol.

12. Several previous decisions of the Conference of the Parties have referenced knowledge management, albeit in different forms. In decision X/5, paragraph 1(e), the Conference of the Parties emphasized the need for increased support to Parties, especially developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition, to strengthen their capacity for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention, in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including enhanced knowledge management to facilitate improved access to and effective use of relevant knowledge, information and technologies, through a strengthened central clearing-house mechanism and national clearing-house mechanism nodes.

13. Decision X/15 highlighted the clearing-house mechanism's mission to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, through effective information services and other appropriate means, in order to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, knowledge sharing and information exchange, and to establish a fully operational network of Parties and partners.

14. Other decisions have referenced the importance of knowledge management for supporting implementation. In decision XIII/7 on forest biodiversity, paragraph 5(e) refers to the clearing-house mechanism's mission to contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, through effective information services and other appropriate means in order to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, knowledge-sharing and information exchange, and to establish a fully operational network of Parties and partners. Decision XIII/24 on cooperation with other conventions and international organizations contains an annex which stressed the importance of actions in specific issue areas to enhance synergies among biodiversity-related conventions. Among the areas highlighted were management of information and knowledge, the exchange of information and experience across conventions on tools, mechanisms and best practices for data collection and reporting, and capacity-building at the national level in the area of information and knowledge.

15. Other biodiversity-related organizations and partners, such as the Global Environment Facility and Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES),⁴ recognize the importance of knowledge management for their work and have created knowledge management strategies, frameworks and work programmes to ensure that these issues are addressed in a structured fashion.

16. Effective mobilization and utilization of available knowledge is crucial for achieving biodiversity goals and targets. As Parties to the Convention and to its Protocols move towards developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, there is merit and an opportunity to include a specific component on knowledge management as one of the key support mechanisms for implementation.

17. It may be useful to develop, as part of the preparatory process for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, a knowledge management strategy that would include strategic measures to, inter alia:

- (a) Strengthen access to available information, knowledge and expertise;

⁴ See <https://www.thegef.org/topics/knowledge-learning> and <https://www.ipbes.net/>

- (b) Incentivize the generation and sharing of knowledge and experiences;
- (c) Facilitate the capture, documentation and sharing of success stories, best practices, and lessons learned;
- (d) Strengthen communities of practice, knowledge networks and collaborative dialogue platforms to support national, regional and global policy and decision-making processes.

18. The knowledge management function of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been largely executed through the work programme of the clearing-house mechanism, and through the clearing-houses of the Protocols. Information exchange, as well as data collection, reporting, organization and retrieval are made possible by online systems and tools developed through the clearing-house mechanism. Tools and resources for capacity-building are also collected and stored in the system. These tools were developed at different times, with differing goals and technologies used. Internal work continues within the Secretariat to harmonize the technologies used and provide a more consistent user experience.

19. Although these disparate collections of information and knowledge developed by a variety of actors provide support for implementation and policy decisions and have attempted to improve accessibility and findability of information, they need to be streamlined and expanded. Due to the exponential growth of the data and knowledge available, these projects currently cover only a portion of the demand.

20. The Convention, the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol have the clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-house, respectively, as their default mechanisms for knowledge management. As the preparatory process for post-2020 global biodiversity framework is defined and implemented, there is a need streamline these mechanisms through a coherent strategy for supporting knowledge management across the three instruments.

21. During the post-2020 period, the clearing-houses should pivot to playing a more active role as knowledge hubs. Working in synergy with existing mechanisms and partners, such as the NBSAP Forum, InforMEA, and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, interconnections can be built to provide not just links to relevant scientific and technical data, but also more integrated access to communities of practice. An additional area which requires improvement is that of knowledge capture. While the Secretariat collects case studies on a variety of topics, it does not systematically include the capture of lessons learned and best practices in a standardized format.

22. Increased access to existing information and knowledge assets for capacity-building continues to be a core need. The Capacity-Building portal and the Bio-Bridge Initiative web platform serve as important information and knowledge management tools. The Bio-Bridge Initiative, with its help desk functionality, also seeks to more actively create linkages and communities of practice among various thematic experts.

23. The road map for enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the international level 2017-2020 as contained in decision XIII/24, annex II, is another important tool for guiding efforts towards increased information and knowledge management among biodiversity-related conventions. It outlines a number of measures for streamlining the management of information and knowledge and alignment in national data-gathering and reporting across relevant conventions.

24. While the Secretariat can work to improve access to information and data that it collects, it must also rely on the expertise and strengths of the other conventions to provide an inclusive collection. Existing connections and structures, such as the Multilateral Environment Agreement Information and Knowledge Management initiative, should be augmented within the biodiversity community. Increased information and knowledge management is also an integral part of improving synergies among biodiversity-related conventions.

25. The actions proposed in this section would refocus and foster a cohesive approach to knowledge management to support the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. This could include the development of a knowledge hub similar to what has been developed under other instruments, such as the

Knowledge Hub of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. This Hub brings together existing information sources within a defined structure and uses improved terminology and taxonomy to better organize available information, complemented with improved policies and procedures and linkages with other information sources. This pivot is to more of a “knowledge support mechanism”, working in a more cohesive and coordinated manner to support the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

IV. ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS FOR A DRAFT DECISION

26. In recommendation 2/8, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation prepared a draft decision, including a section on the “clearing-house mechanism” which is reproduced in the compilation of draft decisions (CBD/COP/14/2; listed under agenda item 10). The Conference of the Parties may wish to consider a decision on knowledge management and the clearing-house mechanism comprising the above-mentioned section and the following additional elements:

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling decisions XIII/23, XII/2 B and X/15,

Recognizing the need to collect, organize and share biodiversity knowledge and experience to facilitate and support enhanced implementation of the Convention and its Protocols,

Emphasizing the need to strengthen coherence and integration between the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House,

1. *Welcomes* the joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House prepared by the Executive Secretary with input from the Informal Advisory Committees, as contained in annex I to the present decision,

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources:

(a) To include a knowledge management component as a part of the preparatory process for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

(b) To identify, publicize and promote communities of practice, knowledge networks and collaborative dialogue platforms relevant to the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols.

*Annex***JOINT MODALITIES OF OPERATION FOR THE CENTRAL CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM, THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AND THE ACCESS AND
BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE****A. Development and administration by the Secretariat**

1. The Secretariat shall continue to develop and administer the central clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House, and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House (hereinafter “clearing-houses”) in accordance with the relevant mandates and decisions under the Convention and its Protocols, ensuring to the extent possible, that common approaches are taken in the development and administration of the clearing-houses, while preserving the specific functionalities unique to each clearing-house, and on the basis of the guiding principles and core specifications described herein.

2. The clearing-houses shall be developed and administered in a manner consistent with the following characteristics:

(a) Guided by the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, open access, and open to all Governments, indigenous peoples and local communities and relevant stakeholders;

(b) Developed on the basis of clear and identified demand, experience gained, and available resources, avoiding duplication of systems;

(c) Ensuring that the user experience is predictable and coherent across the clearing-houses;

(d) Ensuring that the visual design and functionality is intuitive, user-friendly and consistent across the clearing-houses;

(e) Ensuring, to the extent possible, the timely provision of on-demand technical assistance for using the clearing-houses.

3. The clearing-houses shall meet the following core specifications:

(a) Access and navigation through a publicly available web portal operational in the six official languages of the United Nations;

(b) A secure central database acting as the repository of available information;

(c) A secure submission mechanism, through a single sign-on, allowing users to publish information in a structured manner through common formats and metadata and a controlled vocabulary, while distinguishing between mandatory and optional information;

(d) A publicly available search mechanism allowing the search and retrieval of the content through metadata and controlled vocabularies across all clearing-houses;

(e) Unique identifiers to search and retrieve information, where applicable;

(f) A secure update mechanism allowing users with the appropriate role to amend or update information;

(g) A design that clearly identifies who has made the information available;

(h) An interoperability mechanism to facilitate the exchange of information with external databases and systems, as appropriate;

(i) An offline mechanism for registering information and facilitating offline access to available information, upon request and, in particular, for users with limited Internet access.

B. Role of users with respect to the sharing of information

4. When sharing information through any of the clearing-houses, users shall:

(a) Follow the procedures for publication established for each clearing-house or type of information;

(b) Take responsibility to ensure that the information made available is accurate, complete, relevant and up-to-date;

(c) Not include confidential data, since all information published in the clearing-houses is publicly available;

(d) Not infringe on any intellectual property rights associated with the information published;

(e) Provide metadata which describes the primary data (such as the elements describing the content of a legislative measure chosen from a controlled vocabulary) in an official language of the United Nations, while recognizing that the primary data (for example, a legislative measure), may be submitted in the original language;

(f) Endeavour to provide a courtesy translation into one of the official languages of the United Nations of the primary data submitted.
