



Convention on Biological Diversity

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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Third meeting
Buenos Aires, 4–15 November 1996
Agenda item 5

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT ITS THIRD MEETING

III/4. Scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling decision I/3 of the Conference of Parties, that a clearing-house mechanism should be established, in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention, to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation,

Recalling also decision II/3 of the Conference of Parties on the development of the clearing-house mechanism through the establishment of a pilot phase for 1996-1997 and related activities to promote technical and scientific cooperation,

Having examined the note by the Executive Secretary, contained in document UNEP/CBD/COP/3/4, which emphasizes the main features of the operational framework of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism, namely, information linking and organization, visualization and the decision support function,

Noting that progress made to date in the implementation of the pilot phase has produced valuable insights as to the future development of the clearing-house mechanism and concerned that it is now time for these initial experiences to be brought together and advanced in a systematic manner so as to ensure that the clearing-house mechanism is expeditiously implemented in accordance with the expectations of the Parties,

Noting also:

(a) The crucial part played by technical and scientific cooperation on all aspects of biological diversity, including taxonomy and transfer of technology, in ensuring the capacity of the clearing-house mechanism to play an important role in the implementation of the Convention;

(b) The need for the clearing-house mechanism to be clearly focused on the implementation of the Convention;

(c) The need for the clearing-house mechanism activities to include information exchange modalities additional to the Internet to ensure the participation of Parties without Internet access;

(d) The need for capacity-building for the purposes of the clearing-house mechanism in developing countries, including training on information systems technologies that will allow developing countries to take advantage of the recent developments in electronic communication, including the Internet;

(e) The advantages of country-driven pilot projects focused on priority areas identified by the Conference of Parties which would enable developing countries to begin to implement the main features of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism,

1. *Decides* that the pilot phase approved in its decision II/3 shall be extended for a further year, until December 1998;

2. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility to support the activities referred to in paragraphs (d) and (e) above as critical components in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism at the national, subregional and regional levels, including in the pilot phase;

3. *Further requests* the interim financial mechanism to implement its revised operational criteria for enabling activities in relation to the clearing-house mechanism to give effect, as quickly as possible, to the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 above;

4. *Also requests* Governments and other bilateral and multilateral funding institutions, as far as possible and as appropriate, to provide funding for capacity-building related to the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism;

5. *Requests* Governments and relevant financial, scientific and technical institutions to facilitate, including through the provision of voluntary contributions, regional workshops with a view to attaining a clear definition of country and regional-level scientific and technical information needs and priorities identified and modalities to deliver information and evaluate national capacities for the implementation of the Convention. Such workshops should also review experience in scientific and technical cooperation in support of the objectives of the Convention, in order to identify ways by which the clearing-house mechanism can best facilitate such cooperation;

6. *Emphasizes* that the key characteristics of the clearing-house mechanism are, *inter alia*, that it should be compatible with national capacities, needs-driven and decentralized in nature, should provide access to meta-data, should provide support to the decision-making process, and should to the extent possible involve the private sector;

7. *Recommends* that the clearing-house mechanism should disseminate, in addition to scientific and technical information, information on policy and management issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention;

8. *Endorses* the proposal of the Secretariat for the publication of a clearing-house mechanism newsletter;

9. *Recognizes* that ownership of all information made available through the clearing-house mechanism shall remain with the provider of the information;

10. *Agrees* that the clearing-house mechanism shall be assisted in its functioning by an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, which will guide and integrate the development of the pilot phase activities and endeavour to ensure that all Parties can participate in the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism;

11. *Recommends* that one important role of the clearing-house mechanism at the national level should be to provide relevant information linkages to the national focal points and relevant thematic focal points, in order to facilitate the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Linkages to patent offices in each country for up-to-date information on new patent registrations and patents in the public domain provide an example of one mechanism;

12. *Recommends* that the work of the clearing-house mechanism at the international level focus on providing thematic focal points for linking to the activities at the national and regional level;

13. *Recognizes* that close cooperation is needed with other conventions and agreements, and requests the Secretariat to identify those activities and organizations which could support the clearing-house mechanism, and to provide appropriate advice to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its next meeting;

14. *Recognizes* the role of the Secretariat in the coordination of the successful implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, and recommends that the clearing-house mechanism posts within the Secretariat should be filled as soon as possible;

15. *Requests* all Parties to designate their clearing-house mechanism national focal points and make them operational as soon as possible;

16. *Requests* those Parties with access to the Internet to connect their national clearing-house mechanism homepage to the Secretariat's clearing-house mechanism homepage on the Internet, where possible, and further requests the Executive Secretary and partners to collaborate on the provision of advice to Parties and others on, *inter alia*, the necessary layout and system specifications.
