



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/2
22 September 2015

ENGLISH ONLY

INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

First meeting

Montreal, Canada, 28-30 October 2015

Items 3, 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda*

PROGRESS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 14 of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization establishes an Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House (ABS Clearing-House) as part of the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) under Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
2. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP) at its first meeting considered the progress made and experience gained during the pilot phase of the ABS Clearing-House and subsequently adopted decision NP-1/2. In paragraph 7 of that decision, the COP-MOP requested the Executive Secretary to implement the ABS Clearing-House, in line with available resources, and in accordance with the modalities of operation (decision NP-1/2, annex) and feedback received, in particular that of Parties.
3. The COP-MOP established an informal advisory committee (IAC) to assist the Executive Secretary with the implementation of the ABS Clearing-House and to provide technical guidance with respect to the resolution of technical and practical issues arising from the ongoing development of the ABS Clearing-House. The decision provides that the IAC shall be composed of 15 experts, primarily from Parties, selected on the basis of nominations provided by Parties (decision NP-1/2, para. 2).
4. The COP-MOP also decided that the IAC would hold at least one meeting in the coming intersessional period, as well as informal online discussions, as needed, and address technical issues related to feedback received, including issues related to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué, and report on the outcomes of its work to the second meeting of the COP-MOP (decision NP-1/2, para. 3).
5. Pursuant to the above decision, the first meeting of the IAC will be held in Montreal from 28 to 30 October 2015. A joint session with the Informal Advisory Committee to the CBD clearing-house mechanism will be held on 30 October for consideration of issues of common interest to both informal advisory committees.

* UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/1.

6. The present document has been prepared to assist the IAC to the ABS Clearing-House in its deliberations. Section II provides an overview of progress made in the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House with regard to a number of issues. Section III explains progress made on collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations for the exchange of relevant data. Finally, section IV proposes priority activities for future implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House.

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

7. This section takes stock of progress made by the Secretariat of the Convention in the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House on the basis of (a) the functions assigned to it in accordance with the modalities of operation; (b) feedback received, in particular that of Parties; and (c) other requests to the Executive Secretary emanating from the first meeting of COP-MOP.

A. Progress made in enhancing integration of the ABS Clearing-House as part of the CBD clearing-house mechanism

8. The Conference of the Parties at its twelfth meeting requested the Executive Secretary to develop a web strategy to ensure that all information common or relevant to the CBD clearing-house mechanism, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House, as well as other platforms developed under the Convention, such as the NBSAP Forum, the website for ecologically and biologically significant marine areas and any future similar developments, could be accessed centrally to avoid duplication of efforts. The Parties also requested that the web strategy be provided to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, for its consideration at its first meeting, in preparation for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (see decision XII/2 B, subsection 3, para. 19). The first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation will be held from 2 to 6 May 2016.

9. As progress is made in the implementation of the CBD clearing-house mechanism, the ABS Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House, a better understanding is gained regarding the manner in which each of the exchange mechanisms can assist Parties in their implementation of each treaty. Consequently, there is a need to better integrate all the components of the central CBD clearing-house mechanism and improve the understanding of the way in which not only the linkages among the platforms but also the linkages with the CBD website can be enhanced.

10. This has been an important area of work of the Secretariat since the first meeting of COP-MOP, which fostered many of the changes made to the central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House. In particular, work has been done to develop better back-end systems and visual integration, uniform web design, and searching and registering functions. In addition, modifications to existing common formats and the thesaurus have been made in order to improve integration among systems while accommodating the needs of the clearing-houses.

11. The Executive Secretary has prepared a preliminary draft website strategy (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/INF/2) for the joint consideration of the IAC to the ABS Clearing-House and the IAC to the CBD clearing-house mechanism.

12. Additionally, the Secretariat is working on the development of an internal corporate communication strategy which includes branding and visual identity guidelines for Secretariat products, among them its website.

13. The website strategy as well as the corporate communications strategy will impact the design and future operation of the ABS Clearing-House and inform future developments and priorities.

B. Progress made in providing timely technical assistance and receiving feedback

14. According to the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House, the functions of the Secretariat include: (a) providing timely technical assistance, on demand, to Parties for the registering and

retrieving of information, as well as, as appropriate, to non-Parties, indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders; and (b) offering a mechanism to provide feedback and carry out targeted surveys on the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House (see decision NP-1/2, annex, para. 1 (n) and (m)).

15. With a view to encouraging participation in the ABS Clearing-House, the Secretariat carried out the first phase of an outreach and engagement campaign from August 2014 to May 2015. The focus of this phase of the campaign was as follows:

(a) Encouraging Parties to the Convention, and, in particular, Parties to the Protocol, to designate their publishing authority;

(b) Raising awareness of the ABS Clearing-House and of the obligation of Parties to share the information contained in Article 14, paragraph 2, of the Protocol;

(c) Encouraging the submission by Parties of the national information required in accordance with the Protocol, including by building the capacity of the publishing authorities to make existing national information available in the ABS Clearing-House;

(d) Conducting a survey to collect feedback from Parties and other Governments with a view to assessing needs for training and technical support as well as receiving feedback on the usability of the ABS Clearing-House (January to April 2015).

16. The IAC may wish to take into account the results of the campaign and surveys summarized below in order to provide guidance regarding priorities for the next phase of the outreach and engagement campaign.

Designation of publishing authorities and awareness-raising

17. During the first phase of the outreach and engagement campaign, more than 110 national focal points were contacted in order to promote participation in the ABS Clearing-House and advance the designation of publishing authorities and national authorized users. As of 9 September 2015, the Executive Secretary has received 68 designations of publishing authorities, 42 of which came from Parties to the Protocol. At the same date, a total of 96 national authorized users had been designated for the ABS Clearing-House.

Capacity-building for the ABS Clearing-House

18. The Secretariat organized 13 introductory webinars between September 2014 and April 2015 in four different languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese). The webinars, which benefited 117 participants from 52 countries, were complemented by a help desk as well as one-on-one trainings which were available to users of the ABS Clearing-House requiring technical assistance. Follow-up and continuous support was ensured through Skype, e-mails or telephone calls and by monitoring the use of the ABS Clearing-House after the trainings were completed.

19. Following the feedback received from Parties and other users, the Secretariat has been working on improving the online help in the ABS Clearing-House in order to minimize the need for capacity-building.

20. An ABS Clearing-House training website (<https://training-absch.cbd.int/>) has been established as a testing and training environment to allow users to register test records in the ABS Clearing-House. The training website is identical to the ABS Clearing-House website except that it allows users to publish, edit and delete records without modifying the live ABS Clearing-House website or data. Like the production website, in order to submit records to the training website, users require the appropriate training website roles ("national authorized training users" or the "training publishing authority"). Currently, these roles and permissions to publish information on the training website are managed and granted by the Secretariat on demand.

21. Although it would be possible for the training website to be openly accessible to the public so that information could be submitted without the need for training roles, the current system enables the Secretariat to better monitor the use of the training website and gather feedback from users.

22. With the support of Japan through the Japan Biodiversity Fund, the Secretariat is currently developing further capacity-building material on the ABS Clearing-House, including an e-learning module and other resources and materials.

Use and publication of information in the ABS Clearing-House

23. A total of 250 users have an ABS Clearing-House account, and, since October 2014, 122 of those registered users have logged in at least once.

24. As of 9 September 2015, 172 records have been published in the ABS Clearing-House. A total of 101 are national records submitted by Parties to the Protocol and other Governments, and 71 are reference records published in the Virtual Library which may be registered by any user with an ABS Clearing-House account (see table below).

Table: Number of Parties to the Nagoya Protocol and other Governments that have published national records in the ABS Clearing-House

Type of information published	Parties to the Protocol	Other Governments	Total
National focal points	58	112	170
Competent national authority	12	5	17
ABS measures	12	2	14
Checkpoint	4	0	4
Permit or its equivalent constituting an internationally recognized certificate of compliance	0	0	0
Checkpoint communiqué	0	0	0
National website or databases	5	4	9

Feedback received on the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House

25. Feedback has been received and collected through the survey referred to in paragraph (d) above and other means, including direct contact with Parties and other users.

26. The survey consisted of semi-structured interviews targeting publishing authorities and national authorized users that were considered advanced in using the ABS Clearing-House (for example, those that had published at least one national record). The survey goal was to collect feedback on the usability of the

ABS Clearing-House and assess needs for training and technical support. A total of 21 publishing authorities and three national authorized users agreed to take part in the survey.

27. Of the respondents who have logged into and explored the ABS Clearing-House, 56% report feeling extremely or very confident navigating through the ABS Clearing-House, and 65% find that the ABS Clearing-House is adapted to their national circumstances and needs.

28. The following summarizes some of the most common feedback received:

- (a) There is still a low level of publication by Parties of national information required in accordance with the Protocol;
- (b) Difficulties navigating through a changing website;
- (c) The need to make the ABS Clearing-House operational in the six official languages of the United Nations;
- (d) Technical problems with browsers and loading speed;
- (e) The need to improve the way thematic areas are displayed;
- (f) Suggestions to include more filters for searching records, including the possibility of displaying in alphabetical and chronological order;
- (g) Suggestions to include linkages among the different CBD webpages and clearing-houses;
- (h) Suggestions to provide more guidance on:
 - (i) The internationally recognized certificate of compliance;
 - (ii) Checkpoints;
 - (iii) How the ABS Clearing-House can be linked to national websites and databases.

29. Regarding the need for training and technical support, participants in the survey expressed the need to continue the efforts to enhance capacity for the ABS Clearing-House including through a training website, step-by-step guides in different languages, more trainings and website improvements.

30. Feedback received and collected has informed developments regarding the ABS Clearing-House as well as the proposed priority activities described in section IV below.

C. Progress made in the central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House

31. According to the modalities of operation, the functions of the Secretariat include allowing the submission of and providing access to information in, inter alia, a simple and user-friendly manner and ensure the security of the database and its contents (decision NP-1/2, annex, para. 1 (a), (b) and (d)).

32. In addition to the work done in the context of enhancing integration of all clearing-houses referred to in section A above, and on the basis of the feedback received since the first meeting of COP-MOP, improvements have been made to the ABS Clearing-House in the following areas:

(a) *Server infrastructure improvements.* Improvements have been made to the infrastructure of the CBD information technology systems, providing faster loading speed, better stability and improved scalability of the clearing-houses and web services. The server infrastructure is now synchronized and hosted in four worldwide hubs (United States East Coast; United States West Coast; Frankfurt, Germany; and Singapore) guaranteeing up time and faster access worldwide. The Secretariat has also doubled the capacity of all the back-end servers, boosting overall performance and the ability to respond better in times of high demand;

(b) *Optimization for speed.* The following actions have been taken to optimize the website for speed: deployment of the website (automatic minimization of CSS and JS files); changes in the design of the registering page in order to minimize problems related to Internet speed; and improving the back-end search engine (the system for indexing records to provide quick retrieval of records);

(c) *Introduction of a responsive design.* In recognition of the increasing popularity of mobile technology, work has been undertaken to ensure that the website responds intelligently to such devices as tablets and smart phones. The responsive design of the ABS Clearing-House allows the layout to adapt to smaller screen sizes;

(d) *Creation of three separate environments for the ABS Clearing-House:* (i) The production site (absch.cbd.int) is the official website for live ABS information that has been submitted and validated by Parties and other Governments; (ii) the training site (training-absch.cbd.int) is a copy of the production environment providing a safe environment for users to test drive the ABS Clearing-House without affecting the production website or data; and (iii) the development site is another copy of the production website that programmers use to fix bugs and test out new features before introducing any changes to the production environment;

(e) *Improvements in user interface.* The following changes have been made to improve the user interface: improvements in the home page and country profile; feedback for actions and page loading; development of a notification system displayed in the personal dashboard; improvements in the search filters, including the possibility of viewing records grouped by country or by date of creation of the record; and changes in the thematic areas and in the display of metadata about the record (status and author of the record).

D. Progress made in promoting the use of the ABS Clearing-House for supporting capacity-building for the implementation of the Protocol

33. At the first meeting of the COP-MOP, the Executive Secretary was requested to do the following:

(a) Promote the use of the ABS Clearing-House for supporting capacity-building for the implementation of the Protocol (decision NP-1/2, para. 12);

(b) Promote and facilitate, in collaboration with relevant organizations, coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the strategic framework by, inter alia, providing relevant tools and information through the ABS Clearing-House (decision NP-1/8, para. 10 (a));

(c) Ensure that information on capacity-building and development needs, opportunities and activities can be submitted to and accessed from all platforms under the Convention so that access and benefit-sharing capacity development activities are integrated into the global capacity development activities under the Convention (decision NP-1/8, para. 10 (b));

34. With a financial contribution from the European Union, a meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on Capacity-building for the Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol was held in Montreal, Canada, from 15 to 17 September 2015. The informal advisory committee was invited to consider how the ABS Clearing-House could support capacity-building and development efforts by facilitating the sharing of information on capacity-building and development initiatives as well as capacity-building and development tools and resources.¹ In particular, the IAC on Capacity-building was invited to do the following:

(a) Provide comments on the draft common format for capacity-building and development initiatives (activity/project/programme) to enable Parties and partners to register such information in the ABS Clearing-House, including the modalities for ensuring timely identification, registration and updating of such information from various sources;

(b) Provide comments on the draft common format for capacity-building and development tools and resources to be used by Parties and relevant organizations to submit information on such resources to the Virtual Library in the ABS Clearing-House.

¹ For the annotated provisional agenda, see UNEP/CBD/ABS/CB-IAC/2015/1/1/Add.1.

35. The report of the IAC on Capacity-building will be made available as an information document (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CB-IAC/2015/1/3). The proposed common formats will also be discussed jointly by the IACs of the CBD clearing-house mechanism and the ABS Clearing-House.

E. Progress made in providing common formats for submitting information to the ABS Clearing-House, reviewing existing common formats and developing further common formats

36. The functions of the Secretariat, as contained in the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House, include: (a) the provision of common formats for submitting information to the ABS Clearing-House, as appropriate, while distinguishing between mandatory and optional information without prejudice to the protection of confidential information; and (b) the review of existing, and development of further, common formats and user roles, as necessary, while ensuring coherence and interoperability with entries submitted using existing common formats (decision NP-1/2, annex, para. 1 (e) and (f)).

37. At the first meeting of COP-MOP, the Executive Secretary was requested to make the guidelines and the format for the interim national report available through the ABS Clearing-House, taking into account the need to avoid duplication in the submission of information already made available through the ABS Clearing-House, and to include the option of submitting information offline in the appropriate format (decision NP-1/3, para. 2).

38. Against this background, the Secretariat has been working on the implementation and display of the following formats and information:

(a) Online tool for submission of the interim national report for the Nagoya Protocol as reflected in annex II to decision NP-1/3;

(b) Improvements in the common format for submission of policy, administrative or legal measures, in particular the section in relation to the identification of the different elements of the measure;

(c) Development of an ABS measures country matrix for displaying information on national legal frameworks in the country profile;

(d) Improvements to simplify the common format to register information in the Virtual Library;

(e) Enhanced visibility for registering and searching information on model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines, and best practices and/or standards, as well as community protocols, and customary laws and procedures;

(f) Development of common formats on capacity-building initiatives (activity/project/programme) and resources mentioned in paragraph 34 above.

39. A document containing the formats mentioned above is made available as information document UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/INF/1.

F. Progress made in making the ABS Clearing-House operational in the six official languages of the United Nations

40. Paragraph 1(g) of the modalities of operation (decision NP-1/2, annex) includes as one of the functions of the Secretariat to make the ABS Clearing-House operational in the six official languages of the United Nations. A common approach in methodology and technical aspects required for making all clearing-houses operational in the six United Nations official languages has been developed, and the Secretariat is now ready to start translating the ABS Clearing-House.

G. Progress made in facilitating the exchange of information with other databases or systems

41. Paragraph 1(c) of the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House (decision NP-1/2, annex) provides that the Secretariat shall design the ABS Clearing-House to be interoperable and

facilitate the exchange of information with other databases and systems, in particular Parties' databases, as well as databases of other instruments and organizations.

42. With this aim, the Secretariat has developed an application programming interface (API). The API is the main tool to facilitate interoperability and the exchange of information with other databases and systems, in particular the databases of Parties, as well as the databases of other instruments and organizations. The API provides a standard interface described by a set of standard protocols to facilitate interaction with computer systems. The API is meant to allow the seamless integration of the data and functions of the ABS Clearing-House into other systems in ways that best fit their own needs, workflows and technologies.

43. Currently, most of the basic aspects of the API have been documented for developers and are available online at <https://api.cbd.int/developers/>.

III. COLLABORATION WITH RELEVANT INSTRUMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE OF RELEVANT DATA

44. In paragraph 13 of decision NP-1/2, the COP-MOP requested the Executive Secretary to prepare a report on progress, including progress on collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations for the exchange of relevant data.

45. Discussions have been initiated with other partners and data providers regarding possible future linkages and collaborations. The IAC may wish to provide technical guidance with respect to the resolution of technical and practical issues as well as advice on priorities for future collaboration and implementation of the ABS Clearing-House.

46. The following summarizes the developments and progress made by some selected partners and data providers in developing their information-exchange systems, as well as the status of the ongoing discussions on how to improve collaboration and linkages between these systems and the ABS Clearing-House.

A. Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

47. The Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), at its fifth session, held in Muscat in September 2013, adopted Resolution 10/2013 on the Development of the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources in the Context of Article 17 of the International Treaty, and requested the Secretary of ITPGRFA to call for an expert consultation.²

48. Pursuant to the Memorandum of Cooperation and the Joint Initiative signed between the Secretariats of CBD and ITPGRFA, preliminary discussions were held on possible opportunities to expand the Secretariats' partnership in relation to the development of the ABS Clearing-House and the consultations being carried out on the Global Information System with a view to contributing to strengthen the implementation of both ITPGRFA and the Nagoya Protocol in a mutually supportive manner.

49. Against this background, a representative of the Secretariat participated in the first meeting of the Expert Consultation on the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which was held in San Diego, United States of America, on 7 and 8 January 2015.³ The consultation considered the vision for the Global Information System. The aim of the Global Information System is to easily make available all information related to the same plant genetic resources for food and agriculture currently distributed across different systems. This includes the integration of existing phenotypic, genotypic and geographic data with passport information and other sets of relevant data to

² See http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/RES10_2013_en.pdf.

³ See the report of the expert consultation at: <http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/COGIS1re.pdf>.

create added value, including the possibility of developing a common standard for Permanent Unique Identifiers applied to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

50. According to the draft resolution presented in document IT/GB-6/15/7⁴ for the consideration of the Governing Body at its sixth session, which is being held in Rome from 5 to 9 October 2015, the proposed vision for the Global Information System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture is to integrate and augment existing systems to create a global entry point to information and knowledge for strengthening the capacity for the conservation, management and utilization of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

51. In the course of the discussions, the Secretariats identified the following information from ITPGRFA that could potentially be made available through the ABS Clearing-House, as a first step:

- (a) National focal points of ITPGRFA;
- (b) Status of ratification of ITPGRFA;
- (c) Publications related to ITPGRFA through the Virtual Library.

52. The Secretariats of CBD and ITPGRFA will continue to collaborate as experience is gained in the operation of the Global Information System and the ABS Clearing-House with a view to supporting the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and ITPGRFA in a mutually supportive manner.

B. Global Catalogue of Microorganisms of the World Federation for Culture Collections

53. The World Federation of Culture Collections (WFCC)⁵ hosts an international database on culture resources worldwide called the World Data Center for Microorganisms (WDCM). The WFCC has developed a set of tools aiming at integrating the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol in the scientific, technical and administrative activities of culture collections. These tools are grouped into a Transparent User-friendly System of Transfer (TRUST), which comprises:

- (a) The Micro-organisms Sustainable Use and Access Regulation International Code of Conduct (MOSAICC);
- (b) The Micro-Organisms Sustainable Use and Access Management Integrated Conveyance System (MOSAICS);
- (c) A microbial commons' material exchange concept and the Network of International Exchange of Microbes (NIEMA) which is a system implementing the concept of microbial commons within the Asian Consortium for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Microbial Resources (ACM);
- (d) The Global Catalogue of Microorganisms (GCM). The GCM is the data management system and it is currently under development.

54. The Global Catalogue of Microorganisms is an integrated data management and processing system able to provide users with the ability to trace the possession, location, transmission and use of uniquely identified microbial strains (through global unique identifiers), including country of origin, existence of prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms, the creation of derived patents and all associated scientific publications. It connects microbial strain catalogue information with the corresponding nucleotide and protein sequences as well as genome sequences and references citing a particular strain. The system already includes more than 60 collections from more than 30 countries and information on nearly 290,000 strains from 41,000 species.

55. Initial discussions were held with WFCC in order to assess possible linkages between the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms and the ABS Clearing-House. At the fourth symposium of the World Data Center for Microorganisms, held in Shanghai, China, on 1 and 2 September 2014, WFCC explored

⁴ See <http://www.planttreaty.org/sites/default/files/gb6w07e.pdf>.

⁵ <http://www.wfcc.info/>.

different possibilities for linking the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms through its unique identifiers to the ABS Clearing-House, particularly in relation to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué.

56. More information on the World Federation of Culture Collections and its different tools can be found in an information document issued for the first meeting of the COP-MOP (UNEP/CBD/NP/COP-MOP/1/INF/8), which contains an annex summarizing the results of the discussions at the fourth symposium of the World Data Center for Microorganisms on linkages between the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms and the ABS Clearing-House.

57. The Secretariat and WFCC will continue to exchange information and experience on possible interactions between the Global Catalogue of Microorganisms and the ABS Clearing-House as further experience is acquired in monitoring the utilization of genetic resources, including through the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué.

C. United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements

58. The Multilateral Environmental Agreements Information and Knowledge Management (MEA-IKM) Initiative was launched from 22 to 24 September 2009 when nine multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and partners gathered to discuss how to promote greater cooperation on information and knowledge management issues.

59. This initiative currently encompasses 43 international and regional legally binding instruments from 18 secretariats hosted by three United Nations organizations as well as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

60. The first project established by this initiative is the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements (InforMEA).⁶ InforMEA harvests decisions and resolutions from the different governing bodies, news, events, membership, national focal points, national reports and implementation plans from MEA secretariats and organizes this information around a set of agreed terms.

61. The Secretariat has collaborated with this initiative since its launch, and currently contributes to the development of an international thesaurus on environmental law, the review of online courses about MEAs, and maintaining and updating the exchange of data with the InforMEA website. The Secretariat is active in the work of the steering committee and its working groups as well.

IV. PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

62. In the light of the progress made in the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House and feedback received, the IAC is invited to provide technical guidance and advice on the future implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House. The Secretariat has identified a number of priorities for future work until the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

63. *Integration of CBD online platforms:* As progress is being made in the development of the internal corporate communication strategy and the web strategy for adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting, the Secretariat needs to continue working on the integration of all CBD webpages, both in terms of design, operative rules, common formats, and information technology infrastructure. This process will require substantial effort in terms of human resources and may involve changes in controlled vocabulary, design and modalities of operation. Back-end integration can also create efficiencies in the use of programming codes and minimizes knowledge gaps in developing and maintaining CBD systems.

⁶ <http://informea.org/>.

64. *Technical assistance and capacity-building for the ABS Clearing-House.* During the next phase of the outreach and engagement campaign, the Secretariat will continue to encourage Parties to the Convention and, in particular, Parties to the Protocol to designate their publishing authority and generally encourage the submission of national information by providing general capacity support and raising awareness of the ABS Clearing-House.

65. In addition, it is proposed that particular emphasis be placed on the following aspects:

(a) Providing technical support and follow-up for the registration of ABS measures, including by developing guidance materials and providing feedback and recommendations to Governments for registering the information in the clearest and most useful manner;

(b) Engaging with partners, organizations, and representatives of indigenous and local communities for registering reference records, such as Virtual Library resources, capacity-building initiatives, and resources, with a view to making the ABS Clearing-House the central hub of knowledge for access and benefit-sharing;

(c) Further developing capacity-building materials and resources for registering information in the ABS Clearing-House, including guidance on the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and checkpoints;

(d) Promoting the training website and engaging with capacity-building providers for increasing awareness and capacity about the ABS Clearing-House;

(e) Seeking feedback from potential users of the ABS Clearing-House including indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders on the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House;

(f) Providing technical assistance for the use of the API and understanding its interoperability.

66. *Implementation and display of common formats:* The Secretariat will also work on the online implementation of the agreed common formats on capacity-building initiatives and resources. In coordination with the Biosafety Clearing-House and CBD clearing-house mechanism, a tool for viewing and analysing the results of the interim national reports will also be developed.

67. *Making the ABS Clearing-House operational in the six official languages of the United Nations.* Once the ABS Clearing-House is translated into all official languages, the cost and complexity of implementing certain types of changes to the website will increase significantly. Taking this into account, a step-by-step approach is proposed for advancing the translation of the different components of the website, starting with those components for which (a) more experience and feedback has been gathered and (b) stability in terms of their content, design and functioning can be better ensured. It is proposed that information and common formats on national focal points and competent national authorities and ABS legislative, policy or administrative measures be translated first as they are unlikely to change in the near future. The Secretariat will continue the process of translating the ABS Clearing-House component by component as the website content and functionality stabilizes.

68. *Exchange of information with other databases or systems.* As part of the priorities for future development and implementation of the ABS Clearing-House, it is proposed that the Secretariat work on elaborating documentation to raise awareness of the potential for interoperability. In order to make full use of the possibilities and opportunities that interoperability can offer, it is necessary to: (a) improve API documentation and sample codes; (b) develop pilot projects and partner programmes; (c) provide developer and technical support; and (d) develop awareness-raising materials with a view to assisting Parties and other Governments and organizations in understanding how to interact with the API service and its benefits.

69. *Collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations for the exchange of related data.* The Secretariat will continue to collaborate with ITPGRFA, WFCC and InforMEA.

70. *Issues related to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué.* According to the IAC mandate contained in paragraph 3 of decision NP-1/2, the IAC will address technical issues related to feedback received, including issues related to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué, and report on the outcomes of its work to the COP-MOP at its second meeting. The IAC is invited to provide guidance on the best way to advance consideration of this issue. In the light of the experience acquired with the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, a possible way forward could include asking Parties, other Governments and relevant stakeholders for: (a) information on experience gained in the implementation of national permit requirements or their equivalent; and (b) views on the common formats available in the ABS Clearing-House for the creation of the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué.

71. This information could be compiled and made available for the consideration of the IAC at its next meeting.
