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

Second meeting
Montreal, Canada, 20-22 June 2016

REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE ON ITS SECOND MEETING

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. At its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (COP-MOP) considered progress made and experience gained during the pilot phase of the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Clearing-House and adopted decision NP-1/2. In paragraph 7 of the decision, 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.
2. 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 Informal Advisory Committee would be composed of 15 experts, primarily from Parties, selected on the basis of nominations from Parties (decision NP-1/2, para. 2).
3. 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 COP-MOP at its second meeting (decision NP-1/2, para. 3).
4. The first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House was held in Montreal, Canada, from 28 to 30 October 2015. A joint session was conducted on 30 October with the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity to provide advice on issues of common interest. The second meeting was held in Montreal, Canada, from 20 to 22 June 2016.

B. Attendance

5. As additional countries have become Parties to the Nagoya Protocol and with a view to ensuring that the Informal Advisory Committee has adequate regional representation, the Secretariat issued notification 2016-045 dated 5 April 2016 inviting Parties to the Nagoya Protocol from the Central and Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean and Western European and Others regions were invited to nominate an expert for the Committee. Only one nomination was received, from the GRULAC region,

and notification 2016-065 dated 24 May 2016 was circulated indicating the new composition of the Committee. Further to this date, the Secretariat received an additional nomination from the WEOG region and was notified by Hungary of the replacement of its expert. A revised composition of the Committee taking into account these developments was made available in notification 2016-065 dated 24 May 2016.

6. The meeting was attended by experts nominated by Belarus, Benin, Cuba, Denmark, the European Union, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Mexico, Peru and South Africa. The experts from India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Madagascar, who had been selected and invited, were unable to attend the meeting.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

7. The meeting was opened at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, 20 June 2016, by Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Welcoming the participants to the second meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House, he stated that the first part of Target 16 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets had been successfully achieved when the Nagoya Protocol had entered into force on 12 October 2014, with the launching of a functional ABS Clearing-House as a key tool for facilitating the implementation of the Protocol. He informed the participants that, since the first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee, in October 2015, the Secretariat had made a great deal of progress in the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House. In April 2016, a milestone had been reached when an updated and improved version of the ABS Clearing-House had been launched. He informed the participants that 78 countries had ratified the Nagoya Protocol and expressed confidence that the number of ratifications would reach 100 by the second meeting of COP-MOP, to be held in Mexico in December 2016. He stated that, as momentum built and more countries ratified and implemented the Nagoya Protocol, the demands on the ABS Clearing-House were expected to increase significantly. He underlined that the Secretariat was committed to continuing its work to ensure that the ABS Clearing-House was administered and managed to the highest quality and standards. Assuring them of the value accorded by the Secretariat to the insights, experience and commitment of the members of the Committee, he invited the participants to actively contribute to the meeting by sharing their feedback and providing their guidance to help resolve the technical and practical issues arising from the ongoing development of the ABS Clearing-House. He expressed confidence that the discussions of the meeting would strengthen the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and contribute to a common vision in realizing the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, thereby contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In concluding, he thanked the European Union and the Japan Biodiversity Fund for their continuous support of the ABS Clearing-House, which had allowed the ABS Clearing-House to obtain the dedicated human resources required for its implementation and administration, and had enabled the Secretariat to promote its use through capacity-building and outreach activities.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

8. Mr. Christopher Lyal (nominated by Denmark) was elected Chair of the meeting.

9. On the basis of the provisional agenda ([UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2016/1/1](#)) prepared by the Secretariat, the Informal Advisory Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters.
3. Report on progress in the implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.
4. Technical issues related to the internationally recognized certificate of compliance and the checkpoint communiqué.

5. Modalities of operation and intervals to review the implementation and operation of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.
 6. Priorities for future implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.
 7. Other matters.
 8. Adoption of the report.
 9. Closure of the meeting.
10. The meeting agreed on the organization of its work as proposed in annex II to the annotated provisional agenda ([UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2016/1/1/Add.1](#)).

**ITEM 3. REPORT ON PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND
ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING
CLEARING-HOUSE**

11. The Secretariat presented the progress made in the implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House¹ since last meeting of the Committee with respect to the issues indicated below

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

12. The Secretariat presented the improvements made to the central portal and databases of the ABS Clearing-House with a view to making it more intuitive and user-friendly, which had led to the latest version of the ABS Clearing-House, released on 22 April 2016. The presentation included a report on the progress of modifications to address compatibility issues for the most used browsers, optimization of website speed, introduction of responsive design, improvements in the webpage design, new search functions, changes to the display of search results and filters, implementation of a user notification system, functionality to report problems with records, record versioning, developments in the creation of separate working environments, and server infrastructure improvements.

13. The Committee commended the progress made by the Secretariat in introducing the features and modifications on the ABS Clearing-House following the guidance provided at its last meeting. The Committee provided positive feedback on the latest version of the ABS Clearing-House for its more intuitive and user-friendly design.

14. The experts discussed the different possibilities for conducting searches (filters, keywords, free text). In that regard, the Committee suggested that users of the ABS Clearing-House could be provided with further guidance on the functionality of the searches and, in particular, how to highlight the less visible features. The Committee indicated that examples of efficient information retrieval would be useful. It also indicated that it could be useful to expand the date filters for records.

15. The experts also considered ways to enhance clarity and certainty for potential users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge when national information is not available in the ABS Clearing-House. They advised the Secretariat not to include a disclaimer indicating that the information might not be comprehensive or up-to-date but, rather, to explore ways to address the issue by providing users with guidance regarding possible steps to follow in order to obtain relevant information regarding access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, such as frequently asked questions.

16. The experts discussed the possibility of expanding the system of notifications to allow ABS Clearing-House users to subscribe to automated alerts notifying them when selected types of records were published in the ABS Clearing-House. For example, a national focal point might be interested in receiving notifications when a reference record is published about their country. The Committee advised the Secretariat to implement the notification system in a stepwise manner.

¹ For more information, see section II of the note by the Executive Secretary on progress and priorities for future implementation and administration of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House ([UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2016/1/2](#)).

17. The experts also discussed the proposal for generating user notifications to help ensure that information in the ABS Clearing-House would be up-to-date and reliable as proposed in paragraph 20 of the progress report (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2016/1/2). The Committee agreed on the following intervals for sending automated notifications to publishing authorities:

(a) The publishing authority will receive a reminder to address outstanding publishing requests every three weeks until the request is addressed or expires;

(b) Two years from the date of submission of information on the national focal point or competent national authority, the publishing authority will receive a notification inviting them to verify the record and take action, as appropriate;

(c) Two months before the date of expiry of the permit or its equivalent, when applicable, the publishing authority will receive a notification inviting them to verify the record and take action, as appropriate;

(d) If the information submitted about the ABS measures includes the date when the measure is no longer in force or applicable, the publishing authority will receive, two months before that date, a notification inviting them to verify the record and take action, as appropriate;

(e) One year after ABS measures have been published in the ABS Clearing-House as drafts, the publishing authority will receive a notification asking them to confirm whether the measure is still a draft or otherwise invite the publishing authority to review the form to reflect the changes in its status;

18. The experts agreed that no warnings or disclaimers should be displayed for records once the time period for the publishing authority to verify the records had passed. Subject to availability of resources, follow-up could be carried out by the Secretariat to ensure that the records had been verified and are up-to-date.

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

19. The Secretariat explained the progress made on the integration of all the components of the central CBD clearing-house mechanism (CBD clearing-house mechanism, the ABS Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House).

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

20. The Secretariat reported on the progress made in the online implementation of the common formats for submitting information, including: the creation of a new record category for SCBD managed records, the expansion of virtual library to also include capacity-building resources, a new common format for submission of capacity-building initiatives (activity/project/programme), changes to the common format for submission of interim national report for the Nagoya Protocol, as well as changes in the common formats for submission of policy, administrative or legal measures, internationally recognized certificates of compliance (IRCC), checkpoint communiqués (CPC), and managing national contacts in other records.

21. The Secretariat presented the challenges and issues identified with the implementation of the endorsement function for the formats for registering model contractual clauses, codes of conduct, guidelines and best practices and/or standards, and community protocols, and customary laws and procedures as suggested in the first meeting of the Committee (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2015/1/3, paras. 48 and 53).

22. Further to discussions on the issue and its challenges, as presented by the Secretariat and contained in paragraphs 36-38 of the progress report (UNEP/CBD/ABS/CH-IAC/2016/1/2), the experts

agreed that such functionality was not a priority and therefore advised the Secretariat not to implement it at this time.

23. With respect to the common format for submitting legislative, administrative or policy measures, the experts advised revising the common format by replacing the question on scope of application of the measure “Does it cover all genetic resources?” with the lists of options to describe types of genetic resources and their areas of access covered by the ABS measure. It was noted that making that change in the common format would not require Parties to re-enter any information.

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

24. The Secretariat presented the progress made in the implementation and publication of capacity-building initiatives and capacity-building resources. The Secretariat also provided an update on the outcomes relevant to the ABS Clearing-House from the second meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on Capacity-Building for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, held in Montreal, Canada, from 15 to 17 June 2016.

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

25. The Secretariat presented the progress made in strengthening and increasing participation in the ABS Clearing-House, the results of the outreach and engagement campaign, website statistics on the types of browsers and devices used, geographic locations of ABS Clearing-House users, and average website load speeds over time.

26. The Committee expressed appreciation for the immediate technical support provided by the Secretariat, including through the live chat help desk service, and the outreach and engagement campaign to encourage the publication of information in the ABS Clearing-House. The experts noted that there was an urgent need for and great value in continuing those efforts in the future.

ITEM 4. TECHNICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE AND THE CHECKPOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

27. The Secretariat presented a summary of the requirements, which included relevant articles of the Protocol related to the constitution of the internationally recognized certificate of compliance (IRCC) and the checkpoint communiqué (CPC). The presentation included an overview of the process for monitoring the utilization of genetic resources and the role of the ABS Clearing-House. The Secretariat also presented the Application Programme Interface (API) as a tool for facilitating monitoring at the domestic level.

28. The experts expressed appreciation for the features and functionalities that had been implemented in the ABS Clearing-House for the IRCC and the CPC. They agreed that the system implemented in the ABS Clearing-House provided the necessary functions to support Parties in monitoring the utilization of their genetic resources. However, the experts noted that, to operationalize the monitoring system facilitated by the ABS Clearing-House, there was a need for Parties to implement the Nagoya Protocol effectively at the national level and to publish the relevant information in the ABS Clearing-House. The experts also noted that the functions of the ABS Clearing-House might evolve as further experience was acquired with the use of the IRCC and the CPC.

29. During the discussion on the monitoring system, the experts emphasized that the transmission of information collected by the checkpoint, and made available to the provider country, was an essential step in the monitoring process. They noted that the defining function of the checkpoint was to collect and receive information from the users of genetic resources along the value chain. The transmission of information to the ABS Clearing-House through the checkpoint communiqué was to be done by the publishing authority but the information could originate from any national authorized user designated

according to national circumstances (for example, by the checkpoint, competent national authority or national focal point).

30. The experts expressed concern that data on individuals, in particular users and providers, might be presented in such a way as to allow national data protection laws to be breached. One possible route would be to advise national authorities to inform such individuals about the use of data by the system through a standard disclaimer. However, that might not ensure compliance with the national legislation of all Parties. The experts advised the Secretariat to investigate data protection legislation which might apply to data made available through the ABS Clearing-House and to take appropriate steps.

31. The experts discussed the value to national authorities of easily locating information on the country of the user of genetic resources (the person or entity having been granted prior informed consent) as included in the IRCC. Some experts noted that having that information could assist provider countries in identifying the countries where the users of their genetic resources were located with a view to improving communication and cooperation. For the country where the users were located, having access to the information might be useful in the implementation of Articles 15 and 16 of the Protocol.

32. In the light of those discussions, the Committee advised the Secretariat to include a search to retrieve the IRCCs by country of the user of the genetic resource and, as a first step in the implementation of the notification system mentioned in paragraph 16 above, to provide the option to subscribe to an alert in the user notification system allowing national authorities to be informed when an IRCC was constituted providing evidence of prior informed consent being granted to a user within their jurisdiction, when the information was not confidential.

33. Acknowledging that information on users of genetic resources may be confidential in the IRCC, the Committee also agreed to revisit possible changes in the common format for submitting IRCCs at a later stage, when more experience in monitoring the utilization of genetic resources had been acquired. Nevertheless, the experts noted that provider countries could exchange information bilaterally with the country of the person or entity that had been granted prior informed consent when that information was marked as confidential in the IRCC.

34. The experts discussed challenges related to the monitoring of the utilization of genetic resources when the information included in the IRCC and the CPC was confidential. With respect to the CPC, experts examined the mandatory information that needed to be submitted in order to publish a CPC and identified which information could potentially be considered confidential. In the light of the discussions, experts agreed that information on the contact details of the person or entity making information available to the checkpoint could be confidential and that, therefore, the field for submitting that information should not be a mandatory field. However, they suggested that guidance could be given when filling in the CPC to encourage the submission of the information on the person or entity making information available to the checkpoint, unless it was confidential.

35. They agreed that, even when mandatory fields were confidential, it was valuable to publish the CPC for it would assist the provider country in monitoring the utilization of its genetic resources, including through subsequent bilateral communication with the authorities in the user country. In addition, the experts noted that the country issuing the IRCC could decide to take measures to minimize the amount of information that was identified as confidential in the IRCC.

36. The Committee also discussed issues related to updating and amending the IRCC and advised the Secretariat to add clarity in the display and submission of information for updating, amending and revoking IRCC records in the ABS Clearing-House.

37. Experts also discussed the value of using the Application Programming Interface (API) to support monitoring the utilization of genetic resources at the domestic level. The Committee recognized the potential and advantages of the API and emphasized the need for awareness-raising and technical support to facilitate its use. They noted that it would be helpful to provide and showcase examples of how the API could be used, in particular for countries that were planning to develop national information systems.

38. The Committee was invited to consider the information contained in paragraphs 58 to 74 of the progress report. The following reflects the common understanding of the Committee on the IRCC, CPC and the process of monitoring the utilization of genetic resources.

A. The internationally recognized certificate of compliance

39. Parties requiring prior informed consent are to provide for the issuance of a permit or its equivalent at the time of access as evidence of the decision to grant prior informed consent and of the establishment of mutually agreed terms (Article 6, paragraph 3(e)). This information is to be made available to the ABS Clearing-House in accordance with Article 14, paragraph 2(c).

40. Article 17, paragraph 2, provides that a permit or its equivalent issued in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 3(e), and made available to the ABS Clearing-House, shall constitute an IRCC.

41. Article 17, paragraph 3, further establishes that the internationally recognized certificate of compliance shall serve as evidence that the genetic resource which it covers has been accessed in accordance with prior informed consent and that mutually agreed terms have been established, as required by the domestic access and benefit-sharing legislation or regulatory requirements of the Party providing prior informed consent.

Confidentiality

42. The ABS Clearing-House does not host confidential information. Article 17, paragraph 4, provides that the IRCC shall contain some minimum information when it is not confidential. Technically, in the ABS Clearing-House, this has been implemented by making the fields mentioned in Article 17, paragraph 4, mandatory but allowing the possibility of identifying the following fields as confidential: the provider; the person or entity that was granted prior informed consent; the subject matter or genetic resources covered by the permit or its equivalent; and the indication whether the permit or its equivalent covers commercial and/or non-commercial use.

Transmission of information

43. Once the information on the permit or its equivalent is published in the ABS Clearing-House, an IRCC is constituted. The ABS Clearing-House will then send a copy of the IRCC by electronic means to: (a) the national focal point and the competent national authority or authorities of the country responsible for issuing the permit or its equivalent; (b) the provider, if this information is not confidential; and (c) the person or entity that was granted prior informed consent, if this information is not confidential.

Updating, amending or revoking the IRCC

44. The IRCC plays an important role in securing legal certainty about the utilization of the genetic resources along the value chain. Therefore, special conditions apply for updating, amending or revoking the IRCC in the ABS Clearing-House.

45. A variety of circumstances can be conceived whereby it would be in the interest of the issuer and holder of a permit or its equivalent to modify an IRCC. For example, access could be granted for soil or water samples or other situations in which the genetic resource or species has not yet been identified. Depending on the national legislation, a new permit could be issued or the previous permit could be amended in order to include the species once identified. Also, a permit could be issued for a limited period of time. After that time, the country could decide not to renew the permit or to renew it by extending the validity of the previous permit or by issuing a new one, depending on the circumstances.

46. In such cases, the ABS Clearing-House provides the following options:

(a) Submitting information on a new permit, including the possibility of linking to the previous IRCC so that they can be displayed together;

(b) Updating or amending an existing IRCC. A new version of the IRCC would then be constituted and the previous version would no longer be valid;

- (c) Revoking an existing IRCC so that it is no longer valid;

47. In order to provide for legal certainty and traceability, the reason for the update of the record is required.

Transparency and traceability of the IRCC

48. Each IRCC will include a link referring to the online record on the ABS Clearing-House. In order to have certainty about the latest valid version of an IRCC, a user of the ABS Clearing-House can follow the link provided in the certificate and compare the information. With a view to ensuring transparency and traceability, the ABS Clearing-House holds previous records on the permit or its equivalent in archived form and the status of each record is displayed on the record as well as information outlining the reason for the updating of the record.

B. The checkpoint communiqué

49. Checkpoints are meant to collect and receive relevant information related to prior informed consent to the source of the genetic resource, to the establishment of mutually agreed terms, and/or to the utilization of genetic resources, as appropriate (Article 17, para. 1 (a)(i)), including from the internationally recognized certificate of compliance, when such a certificate is available. In accordance with Article 17, paragraph 1 (a)(iii), such information collected or received by the checkpoint is to be provided to relevant national authorities in the country where the checkpoint is located, to the Party providing prior informed consent and to the ABS Clearing-House, as appropriate.

50. The ABS Clearing-House, through the checkpoint communiqué, provides a tool to facilitate the transmission of information to all actors involved. It enables the collection of the following information:

(a) The IRCC (or when there is no IRCC, information made available on prior informed consent, mutually agreed terms or the source of the genetic resources) as provided by the user;

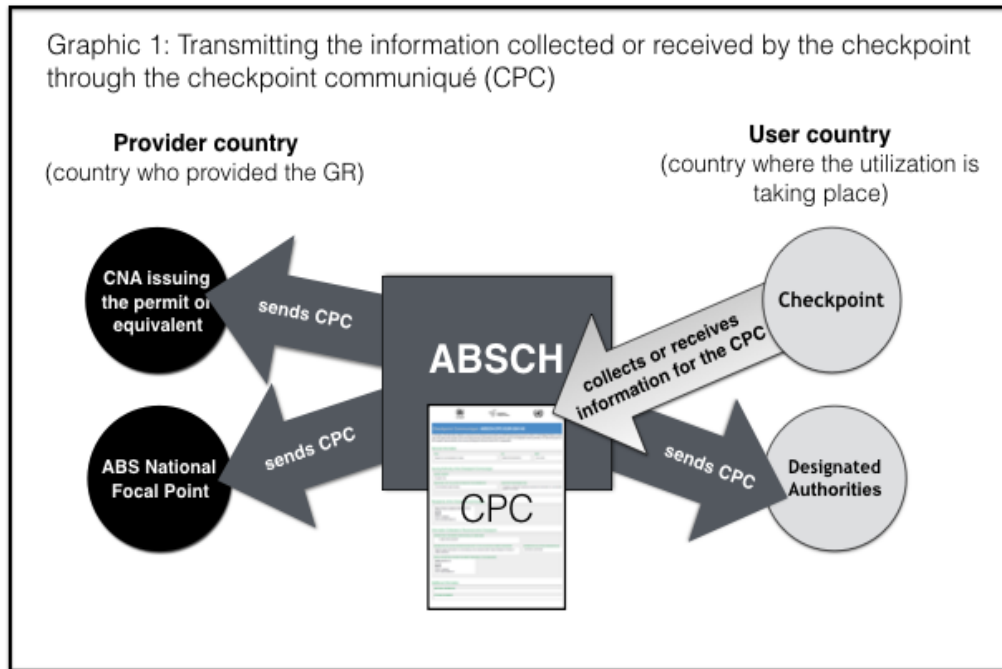
(b) The intended use of the genetic resource, including the type of use (commercial, non-commercial), and the person or entity making information available to the checkpoint on the utilization of the genetic resource.

Confidentiality

41. The ABS Clearing-House does not host confidential information. Article 17, paragraph 1 (a)(iii), of the Protocol provides that the information collected or received by the checkpoints is to be provided to relevant national authorities, to the Party providing prior informed consent and to the ABS Clearing-House, as appropriate and without prejudice to the protection of confidential information. Technically, in the ABS Clearing-House, this has been implemented by limiting the number of mandatory fields needed for publishing the CPC to the following: the “source of the genetic resource”; the “subject matter or genetic resources relevant to the information collected or received”; and the “short description of the information collected or received by the checkpoint relevant to the utilization of genetic resources, including the type of use”. Text fields offer sufficient flexibility to those registering the information for the CPC to provide the necessary information to assist provider countries to monitor the utilization of their genetic resources while ensuring that no confidential information is entered in the ABS Clearing-House.

Transmission of information

51. When the checkpoint communiqué is published in the ABS Clearing-House containing the information collected by the checkpoint, a copy is automatically sent by electronic means to the following entities, as appropriate: (a) the designated national authority/ies of the user country as determined in the common format on checkpoints; (b) the national focal point and the competent national authority/ies of the country providing of the genetic resource; and (c) the person or entity that was granted prior informed consent, if this information is not confidential. The following graphic describes the flow of transmission of information through the checkpoint communiqué.



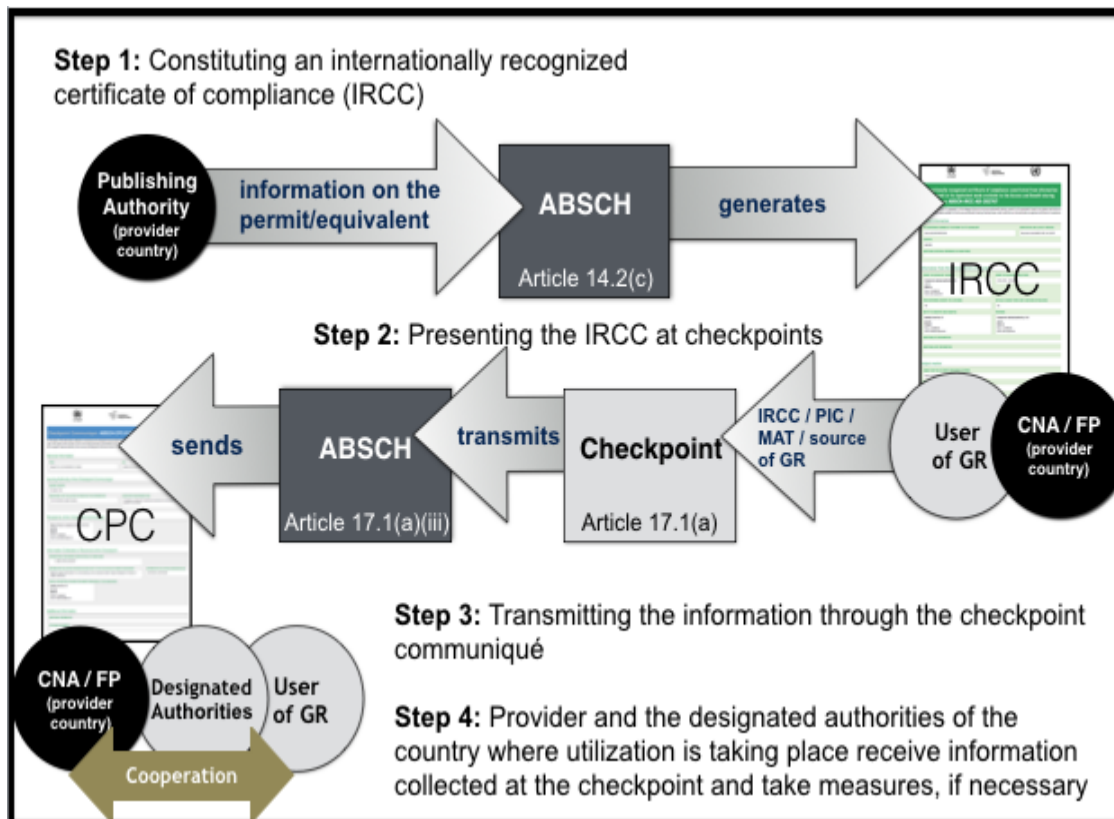
C. Monitoring the utilization of genetic resources

52. For the monitoring system to work, the country providing the genetic resource and that has issued the permit should receive the information collected or received by the checkpoints. Without prejudice to the protection of confidential information, the checkpoint is to collect the information provided by the user; subsequently, this information is to be transmitted to relevant authorities, as foreseen by Article 17, paragraph 1 (a)(iii), of the Protocol.

53. The provider country is the best placed to assess whether access to the genetic resource was obtained in accordance with the ABS measures and whether the genetic resource is being used in accordance with prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms. The provider country, once it receives the reference to the IRCC and the information on how the genetic resource is being used, will be able to consult the original national permit containing all confidential information and compare this information against the information provided by the checkpoint communiqué and decide to take appropriate measures or contact the user in case of doubt or discrepancy.

54. Designated authorities of the user countries will also receive the information coming from their own checkpoints about how genetic resources are being used within their jurisdiction. This allows provider countries and user countries to establish a channel of communication that will help all involved to ensure compliance with ABS measures and to cooperate in cases of alleged violation.

55. The following graphic summarizes the different steps in monitoring the utilization of genetic resources.



ITEM 5. MODALITIES OF OPERATION AND INTERVALS TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

56. The Chair reminded participants that, at its first meeting, COP-MOP adopted the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House and requested the Executive Secretary to further refine the modalities, taking into account progress made, the advice given by the Informal Advisory Committee, and feedback received on the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House, in particular that of the Parties, for consideration by COP-MOP at its second meeting. The Chair also recalled that adopting an integrated approach to the development of the clearing-house mechanism had been an important area of work for the Secretariat.

57. Taking into account progress made in the operation and implementation of the ABS Clearing-House and in the light of the feedback received since the adoption of the modalities of operation at the first meeting of COP-MOP, the Committee noted that there was no need to further refine the modalities of operation in preparation for the second meeting of COP-MOP and advised that the Secretariat could further refine the modalities of operation of the ABS Clearing-House in the light of experience acquired with the implementation of the ABS Clearing-House during the next biennium, for their consideration by COP-MOP at its third meeting.

58. The experts also considered the proposal to develop joint modalities of operation to enhance coherence in the implementation and operation of all the components of the central CBD clearing-house mechanism in preparation for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the ninth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the third meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol. Although they supported an integrated approach to the development of all the components of the central CBD clearing-house mechanism with a view to enhancing coherence between the clearing-house mechanism, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the ABS Clearing-House, the experts stressed the

fundamental role of the ABS Clearing-House in the implementation of the Protocol and, hence, the importance of ensuring that the necessary functionalities of the ABS Clearing-House were not compromised by the development of the joint modalities. Joint modalities of operation could be considered for common elements of the three clearing-houses. However, it was pointed out that the need for specific modalities of operation for the ABS Clearing-House would remain in the light of the specific functions of the ABS Clearing-House in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. The Committee indicated that it could provide advice on the joint modalities of operation to be developed, as well as those specific to the ABS Clearing-House and welcomed the opportunity of contributing to the development of an integrated approach to all clearing-houses under the Convention, including by exchanging information and experience on their implementation and development, while ensuring that the modalities meet the needs of the Nagoya Protocol, prior to their consideration by COP-MOP at its third meeting.

59. With respect to the issue of intervals to review the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House to be considered by COP-MOP at its second meeting (decision NP-1/2, para. 6), the Committee supported the proposal put forward by the Secretariat that the review of the implementation and operation of the ABS Clearing-House could be part of the assessment and review process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Protocol established by Article 31 of the Protocol.

ITEM 6. PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE

60. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat presented a list of proposed priorities for future implementation and administration of the ABS Clearing-House, taking into account progress made, feedback received and advice provided by the Committee.

61. During the discussion, the experts emphasized that Parties needed to make all relevant information available to the ABS Clearing-House, in accordance with the Protocol, so that Parties and other users had the tools and information required to implement the Nagoya Protocol. In that regard, the experts stressed that the Secretariat played an important role in providing support to build the capacity of Parties to publish information in the ABS Clearing-House and that those efforts should continue to be a priority. Experts invited the Secretariat to explore the possibility of setting targets for the population and use of the ABS Clearing-House with a view to increasing the number of Parties to the Nagoya Protocol that publish their available national information in the ABS Clearing-House.

62. It was noted that, in implementing and administering the ABS Clearing-House, the activities and functionalities that support Parties in their implementation of the Nagoya Protocol should be considered as the most important.

63. Regarding further developments of the ABS Clearing-House, the Committee agreed that maintaining current functionalities should be prioritized over the development of new features.

64. The Committee agreed on a set of specific goals and activities, and their respective level of priority (high, medium, low). It was noted that, although all activities selected were high priority, the priority level assigned indicated the order in which they should be implemented. The outcomes of the discussions are reflected in the annex to the present report. The experts advised the Secretariat to take them under consideration for future development and administration of the ABS Clearing-House.

ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS

65. The Chair invited the experts to raise any other relevant issues that were not addressed during the previous discussions.

66. The experts were of the opinion that it would be useful to provide opportunities for sharing experiences in the implementation of the ABS Clearing-House and/or organize a training workshop to promote the publication of information by Parties and stakeholders on the ABS Clearing-House during the second meeting of COP-MOP and advised the Secretariat to explore opportunities for the organization of such events.

ITEM 8. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

67. The Chair introduced the draft report of the meeting, which was adopted as orally amended.

ITEM 9. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

68. In his closing remarks, the Chair thanked the experts for their work and high spirit during the meeting and remarked about the wide range of insights and expertise shared among the experts. He congratulated the Secretariat for the work undertaken in the ABS Clearing-House and in the preparations for the meeting. He pointed out that, thanks to all the work done by the Committee and the Secretariat, the ABS Clearing-House had achieved the stability required by all its users. Finally, the Chair thanked the European Union and Japan for their funding support to the implementation of the ABS Clearing-House.

69. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed at 4 p.m. on Friday, 22 June 2016.

Annex

PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING CLEARING-HOUSE BY THE SECRETARIAT

Priorities	Level
GOAL 1: Population and increased use of the ABS Clearing-House	High
<i>Outreach and engagement:</i>	
Continue proactive engagement and outreach campaign	High
Provide on-demand technical support (Skype, email, phone, live chat help desk)	High
Promote and disseminate capacity-building resources for the use of the ABS-CH	Medium
<i>Capacity-building:</i>	
Development of an e-learning module	High
Development of step-by-step guides (with translation)	High
Support training, as needed	Medium
Develop new capacity-building common formats (e.g. opportunities)	Low
Improve the display of information on capacity-building for the Nagoya Protocol	Low
<i>Interoperability and collaboration:</i>	
Raise awareness and provide technical support for the use of the API	Medium
Facilitate the exchange of information with national databases or systems	Medium
Explore collaboration with relevant instruments and organizations (e.g. ITPGRFA, InforMEA, WFCC)	Low
GOAL 2: Translation and functionality for operationalizing the ABSCH in the six United Nations languages	High
Implement manual translation of the ABS-CH (common formats and webpages)	High
Develop a translation mechanism for the clearing-house mechanism (including the ABS-CH)	Medium
GOAL 3: Maintain and improve functionality	High
Perform general website maintenance (ongoing)	High
Improve existing functions and fix bugs in accordance with feedback received	High

Priorities	Level
Optimize the website, in particular for slow Internet connections	High
Improve search engine and tools to manage common vocabularies and keywords	Medium
Implement new features as necessary and in accordance with feedback from the Informal Advisory Committee	Medium
Improve browser compatibility	Low
Improve responsiveness for other devices (mobile telephones and tablets) and small screen sizes	Low
Develop tools to manage information on organizations and consolidate databases	Low
Develop report analyzer (in collaboration with the Biosafety Clearing-House based on the tools they have developed)	Low
GOAL 4: Integration with the clearing-house mechanism	Medium
Support backend integration and efficiencies in maintaining shared IT infrastructure	High
Support development of integrated and automated testing and monitoring of web applications and related services to ensure the IT infrastructure is functioning properly	Medium
Complete work on development environment	Medium
Support development and implementation of SCBD website and communications strategy	Medium
Ensure records submitted through the clearing-house mechanism are made available on the ABSCH, and vice versa	Low
Develop joint modalities of operation for the CBD clearing-house mechanism, the ABS Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House	Low