



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/CHM/A&P.Reg/1/2
5 February 2005

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING ON
THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM
Bangkok, 3-5 February 2005

REPORT OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. In paragraph 7(d) of its decision VII/23, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to convene, subject to the availability of financial resources, regional workshops as a catalysing mechanism to allow for the interaction of international thematic focal points with the national focal points to further enhance the scientific and technical cooperation goal of the clearing-house mechanism and to build capacities at the national level with regard to use of and access to new information technologies.
2. Accordingly, and following the generous financial contribution by the Government of Belgium, the Executive Secretary organized the regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific to provide countries of the region with an opportunity to express their needs and expectations with regard to the clearing-house mechanism's new efforts to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, particularly in regard to technology transfer, the 2010 target and cooperation with international thematic focal points and other relevant Conventions, organizations and initiatives.
3. The organization of the meeting also responded to the recommendation of the informal advisory committee made at its meetings of 9 March 2003, 9 November 2003 and 13 and 17 February 2004, by which it requested the Executive Secretary to focus on the use of the clearing-house mechanism to promote technical and scientific cooperation, particularly within the thematic and cross-cutting areas of the Convention, including invasive alien species, the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), coastal and marine biodiversity and the ecosystem approach.

B. Attendance

4. Each Party to the Convention in Asia and the Pacific was invited to nominate one participant, with experience with the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention. In response to that invitation, participants from the following countries were nominated by their respective focal points and attended the meeting: Bahrain, Bhutan, Bangladesh, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Laos, Maldives, Malaysia, Micronesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Palau, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, and Yemen.

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5. Representatives of the following bilateral donor and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participated in the meeting as observers and/or resource persons:

(a) *Bilateral donor*: The Government of Belgium;

(b) *Intergovernmental organizations active in information-exchange and scientific cooperation issues*: Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) and Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum (PBIF).

(c) *Members of the informal advisory committee of the CHM*: Mr. Horst Freiberg (Germany), Dr. Ole Hendrickson (Canada).

6. The full list of participants is contained in annex II to the present report.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

7. The meeting was opened at 9 a.m. on Thursday, 3 February 2005 by Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. He spoke on the work of the Convention, and the main issues to be discussed at the upcoming tenth meeting of SBSTTA and eighth meeting of the Conference of the parties. He also discussed issues related to the implementation mechanisms of the Convention, namely: the financial mechanism and the clearing-house mechanism. He concluded by presenting an introduction to current activities of the clearing-house mechanism, and its work related to the 2010 target and its indicators and the transfer of technology. In his final statement, he thanked the participants and wished them a successful meeting.

8. Mr. Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, clearing-house mechanism of the Convention Secretariat, was then invited to give a brief presentation on the clearing-house mechanism and its programme of work.

9. Mr. Silva welcomed the participants to the meeting. After an introduction to the new phase of the clearing-house mechanism, he presented a brief summary on new initiatives to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation with regard to the programme areas and cross-cutting areas of the Convention, including invasive alien species, the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), the ecosystem approach, coastal and marine biodiversity and Article 8(j), traditional knowledge, innovations and practices. He then invited countries to use the meeting to identify their priority needs regarding capacities to participate in these new initiatives under the clearing-house mechanism, particularly with regard to the transfer of technology. He also discussed issues related to the 2010 target, and the role of national clearing-house mechanisms. Mr. Silva concluded by expressing his gratitude to the Government of Belgium for providing financial support for the meeting.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

10. At the 1st session of the meeting, on 3 February 2005, Dr. Thilak Kendargama, Sri Lanka was elected to serve as Chair and Geoffrey Davison, Singapore, to serve as Rapporteur.

2.2. Adoption of agenda

11. The Regional Meeting adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda circulated in advance of the meeting (UNEP/CBD/CHM/A&P.Reg/1/1):

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1. Election of officers;
 - 2.2. Adoption of the agenda;
 - 2.3. Organization of work.
3. Identification of regional needs to implement and use effectively the clearing-house mechanism to promote technical and scientific collaboration and to introduce new information technologies.
4. Identification of regional needs to implement effectively recommendations related to the thematic areas and cross-cutting issues of the convention, including in facilitating technology transfer and cooperation.
5. Conclusions and recommendations.
6. Adoption of the report.
7. Closure of the meeting.

2.3. Organization of work

12. At its 1st session, on 3 February 2005, the Regional Meeting approved the proposed programme of work as contained in annex II to the annotations to the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/CHM/A&P.Reg/1/1/Add.1)

Presentations

13. Following the adoption of the proposed programme of work, the Chair requested Mr. Mark Fornwall of the Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum (PBIF) to give a presentation on its activities and objectives.

14. Dr. Fornwall introduced the Pacific Biodiversity Information Forum, its background and programme of work. He discussed its work to develop a complete scientifically sound and electronically accessible Pacific biodiversity knowledge base for use in scientific research, resource management and education. He also described its work related to capacity building in two areas: taxonomy and information technology. The initial emphasis has been to build taxonomic capacity beginning with linking existing resources, developing bibliographies, species checklists internet services and networking. Current projects for image and taxonomic services were also noted. He concluded by stating that while the Internet will serve as the primary mechanism for dissemination of information, alternate mechanisms will be used where appropriate.

15. In the ensuing discussion, comments were made by the participants from Solomon Islands, Jordan, Indonesia, China, Iran and Dr. Horst Freiberg (CHM IAC).

16. Participants noted in particular issues related to geographical information systems, problems associated with capacities and small island states, digitization of museum collections, language and other capacity-building issues.

17. The Chair then invited Dr. Michael Ruggiero to speak on the Integrated Taxonomic Information System and Species 2000 and their project concerning the catalogue of Life. He discussed the objectives of the Catalogue of Life, and the need for a complete species checklist, especially since there is no comprehensive indexing system in existence. He discussed the goals and objectives of the projects, including the establishment of a federation of existing taxonomic databases.

18. Comments on the development of the Catalogue of Life were made by the Bahrain, Republic of Korea, China, Palau and Indonesia.

19. Participants also raised issues concerning standards for databases and systems, and assistance to countries regarding activities in support of projects on taxonomies.

20. At the 2nd session of the meeting, on 3 February 2005, the Chair invited the representative from China to discuss the development of the Chinese clearing-house mechanism and biosafety clearing-house. She presented the structure and content of the clearing-house mechanism and biosafety clearing-house, and the support received for their implementation. The needs associated with the further development of the clearing-house mechanism was discussed, including its target audience, technical training, capacity-building, financial support, information collection, activities related to technology transfer, translation and issues related to the differences and synergies between the Chinese clearing-house mechanism and biosafety clearing-house.

21. In the ensuing discussion, comments were made by Jordan, Republic of Korea, Bahrain and Dr. Horst Freiberg (CHM IAC)

22. Participants discussed issues related to sustained financial support required for the development of a national clearing-house mechanism and the role of the clearing-house mechanism in activities related to technology transfer. Questions on who benefits from the clearing-house mechanism were also raised and discussed. In all, issues were related to technical, financial and political commitment needs. Comments were also made on differences and synergies between the clearing-house mechanism and biosafety clearing-house.

23. Following the above discussion, the Chair requested other participants to discuss the development of their clearing-house mechanism and to describe obstacles faced regarding their further development.

24. Following the above discussion, the Chair requested Dr. Horst Freiberg to describe the role and mandate of the informal advisory committee of the clearing-house mechanism.

25. Dr. Freiberg discussed the work of the informal advisory committee, its mandate and role in the ongoing development of the clearing-house mechanism. He discussed the advice giving role of the informal advisory committee to the Executive Secretary and issues related to technology transfer.

26. After Mr. Freiberg's presentation, comments were made by Jordan.

27. On conclusion of the presentations, the representative of Jordan proposed to the meeting that it establish two groups to discuss issues related to item 3 and item 4, and to report the results of these discussions to plenary.

28. The Chair then presented the representative of Jordan's proposal to establish two groups to discuss item 3 and then item 4. Summaries of discussions by the two groups would be presented at plenary

29. Participants agreed to establish two discussion groups to continue discussion of item 3 and 4.

ITEM 3. IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS TO IMPLEMENT AND USE EFFECTIVELY THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM TO PROMOTE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION AND TO INTRODUCE NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES.

30. Agenda item 3 was considered at the 3rd session of the meeting, on 4 February 2005. The Chair proposed that discussion under this agenda item should cover the following elements:

(a) The role of the clearing-house mechanism in strengthening national capacities, particularly in the use of new information technologies;

(b) The role of the clearing-house mechanism in the promotion of technical and scientific collaboration.

31. The Chair then requested participants to establish two discussion groups to discuss agenda item 3. Mr. Byoung-Yoon Lee of the Republic of Korea was named to lead discussion of group 1 and Mr. Sebastian Marino of Palau was named to lead discussions of group 2.

32. On conclusion of discussions, the Chair requested each group to report on issues raised and solutions proposed.

33. Following the report, the Chair asked participants for comments on the report. Comments were made by the representatives of Bahrain, Bangladesh, China Indonesia, Nauru, Singapore and the Republic of Korea.

ITEM 4. IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE THEMATIC AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES OF THE CONVENTION, INCLUDING IN FACILITATING TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COOPERATION.

34. Agenda item 4 was considered at the 4th session of the meeting, on 4 February 2005. The Chair proposed that discussion under this agenda item should cover the following elements:

(a) The role of the clearing-house mechanism in enhancing national capacity to more effectively implement obligations under the Convention with regard to the programme areas and cross-cutting issues; and

(a) The role of the clearing-house mechanism in facilitating greater national and regional participation and collaboration in thematic and cross-cutting areas projects and transfer of technology, particularly in collaboration with international thematic focal points.

35. The Chair invited participants to join their respective groups and discuss issues related to item 4.

36. On conclusion of discussions, the Chair requested each group to report on issues raised and solutions proposed.

37. Following the report, comments were made by Bangladesh, China, Jordan, Palau, Republic of Korea and Singapore Solomon Islands, Nauru, Bahrain, Indonesia and Laos.

38. 38. There was strong consensus on the need for sustainable financial support to ensure the viability of national CHMs.

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

39. Agenda item 5 was considered at the 5th session of the meeting, on 5 February 2005. The item was introduced by the Chair, who invited the Rapporteur to present the recommendations. Following discussion, the Meeting adopted the recommendations, which are attached to the present report as annex I.

ITEM 6. OTHER RELEVANT ITEMS

40. Participants took up agenda item 6 at the 5th session of the meeting, on 5 February 2005. Experts were also invited to raise and discuss other matters related to the subject-matter of the meeting.

41. There were no other relevant items raised under the item.

ITEM 7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

42. The present report was adopted at the 6th session of the meeting, on 5 February 2005, on the basis of the draft report of the meeting (UNEP/CBD/CHM/A&P.Reg/1/2), and taking into account amendments made by participants, on the understanding that the finalization of the report would be completed by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

43. The Chair declared the Asia and Pacific regional meeting on the Clearing-house Mechanism closed at 5 p.m. on Saturday, 5 February 2005.

Annex I

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

ITEM 3. IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS TO IMPLEMENT AND USE EFFECTIVELY THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM TO PROMOTE TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION AND TO INTRODUCE NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES.

Participants to the meeting recommend to the Executive Secretary to:

1. Organize technical training courses and technical workshops, subject to the availability of financial resources, at the regional and sub-regional levels on new information and web-based technologies to assist Parties of the region to enhance national capacities and to ensure sustainability of such capacities;
2. Add more technical information in the clearing-house mechanism toolkit including information pertaining to the use of information exchange protocols and web services;
3. Develop means to interconnect national focal points at the sub-regional and regional level and facilitate participation in electronic forums;
4. Develop a clearing-house mechanism website template for use by clearing-house mechanism national focal points to offer guidance in the development of websites. These templates should be incorporated in the clearing-house mechanism toolkit;
5. Establish an electronic technical reference desk service to assist Parties with their development of new clearing-house mechanism websites and use of new information technologies;
6. Organize information on the Convention website to allow the searching of national focal points by region and improve on the indexing of information on the website;
7. Enhance and make available the Convention's Roster of Experts to assist Parties in locating needed expertise. Additional domains of expertise could be added to the Roster. Encourage mutual exchange of available expertise between the Secretariat and national focal points, particularly with regard to capacity building and Convention related programme activities.

Participants to the meeting recommend to Parties to:

1. Share technical expertise in new information and web-based technologies throughout the region;
2. Provide technical expertise, as appropriate, to the Secretariat with a view to assist in the organization of training courses and technical workshops in new information and web-based technologies;

3. Encourage nations to make their clearing-house mechanism websites more broadly useful by providing information in the national language, local languages and any widely spoken or the six official United Nations official languages, as appropriate;
4. Promote capacity building for web-based technologies as it can enable broader technology transfer and cooperation;
5. Use common formats, protocols and standards to facilitate the sharing and interoperability of information such as provided by the clearing-house mechanism toolkit. Existing bodies of work, such as Pacific Biodiversity Information forum, Integrated Taxonomic Information System, Global Biodiversity Information Facility, SPECIES 2000, Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network and national government initiatives, *inter alia*, are invited to collaborate with the clearing-house mechanism so that efficient use of resources are ensured..

ITEM 4. IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE THEMATIC AREAS AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES OF THE CONVENTION, INCLUDING IN FACILITATING TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND COOPERATION.

Participants to the meeting recommend to the Executive Secretary to:

1. Encouraged the clearing-house mechanism to make use of the communication, education and public awareness programme to raise awareness of clearing-house mechanism related activities and also biodiversity related issues.;
2. Disseminate information, knowledge, and experience on and from case studies related to transfer of technology through the clearing-house mechanism;
3. Assist Parties to more effectively participate in the development of the Global Invasive Species Information Network;
4. Enhance cooperation to make data from projects such as the Global Invasive Species Information Network interoperable with spatial data using XML and other protocols;
5. Assist Parties to develop communication networks for use by indigenous and local communities;
6. Make information, especially metadata, on patent databases available through the clearing-house mechanism;
7. Establish databases on relevant technologies available in the public domain through the clearing-house mechanism;

Participants to the meeting recommend to Parties to:

1. Simplify the language used to describe indicators with regard to the 2010 target. Make available through national Clearing-House Mechanisms existing datasets to assist Parties in developing indicators;
2. Develop initiatives pursuant to the Global Taxonomy Initiative's operational objectives in decision VI/8 and highlight the costs associated with the taxonomic impediment;
3. Develop initiatives pursuant to the Global Taxonomy Initiative's operational objectives in decision VI/8 and highlight the costs associated with the taxonomic impediment;

4. Invest in the Global Taxonomy Initiative to enhance taxonomic capacity at the national level;
5. List ongoing activities of work under their respective programme area or cross-cutting issue;
6. Encourage clearing-house mechanism national focal points to foster collaboration among relevant ministries by providing information on biodiversity related activities and responsibilities
7. Encourage use of a common and generalized world mapping system to share information about species distribution;
8. Simplify the language used to describe indicators with regard to the 2010 target. Make available through national clearing-house mechanisms existing datasets to assist Parties in developing indicators;
9. Encourage national and international non-governmental organizations to share data and information through national clearing-house mechanisms;
10. National clearing-house mechanisms should link with the national focal points of the Global Taxonomy Initiative to assist with work pertaining to invasive alien species;
11. Use national clearing-house mechanisms to provide information about protected areas and areas requiring restoration, through use of relevant approaches, such as through the use of the ecosystem approach and developing inventories of bilateral and regional projects;
12. Enhance measures to involve indigenous and local communities to develop information exchange systems and communication networks pursuant to decision VI/18 paragraph 5
13. Promote projects to digitize museum specimen collections, with special emphasis to type specimens and linkages between museums;

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