

Meeting of the Clearing-House Mechanism Informal Advisory Committee

11 March 2001
Montreal, Canada

Present at the meeting were:

Secretariat:

Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary (Chair)
Arthur Nogueira
Marcos Silva
Tone Alstadheim

Members:

Guy Rochon (Canada, Chair)
Jackie Van Goethem (Belgium)
Soumayila Bance (Burkina Faso)
Christian Samper (Colombia)
Katharina Krieger (Colombia)
Horst Freiberg (Germany)
Horst Korn (Germany)
Gabor Nechay (Hungary)
Setijati Sastrapradja (Indonesia)
Francesco Mauro (Italy)
Elaine Fisher (Jamaica)
Paula Warren (New Zealand)
Alexander Kozharinov (Russian Federation)
Irina Merzliakova (Russian Federation)
Malcom Vincent (United Kingdom)
Jeremy Harrison (World Conservation Monitoring Centre)
Vanderlei P. Canhos (Bin 21)
Gladys Cotter and Barbara Bauldock (IABIN)
Preston Hardison (Indigenous Biodiversity Information Network)

Item 1: Opening of Meeting

H. Zedan, Executive Secretary, welcomed the IAC members to the meeting. He stressed the importance of the successful completion of the information exchange phase of the CHM and pointed to the need to use the CHM to promote technical and scientific cooperation, particularly in the implementation of measures and activities outlined in annexes I and II of decision V/14. Specifically, he emphasized the need for advice from the IAC in assisting the work of the CHM with regard to the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), Invasive Alien Species Program and coastal and marine biological diversity. Assistance was requested in the areas of identifying partners, setting a timetable, and fostering infrastructure and technological collaboration.

He also discussed the need to examine IAC operational procedures, especially in regard to open and transparent participation. Moreover, attention should be paid to regional needs and that the IAC assist the CHM in examining the use of electronic technologies – among others - to foster discussion and create virtual collaborative environments. He concluded his opening remarks by requesting SCBD and IAC members to introduce themselves.

Item 2: Organizational Matters

This agenda item was introduced by M. Silva

Item 2.1. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2.2. Organization of Work

The meeting agreed with the organization of work described in the provisional agenda.

Item 3: Operational procedures for the IAC

The meeting had before it for consideration draft operational procedures for the IAC. Views were exchanged on the need for operational procedures taking into consideration decision III/4 by which the COP established the informal advisory committee (IAC) to be constituted and coordinated, in a transparent manner, by the Executive Secretary. Many stressed the fact that IAC is an informal advisory body and as such may not require formal operational procedures. This issue, however, will be re-examined prior to COP-7 in 2004.

With regard to the current composition of the IAC, the Executive Secretary was requested to review current membership, with a view to establish a core IAC assisted by a range of expertise as and when required to assist the CHM in developing new mechanisms for information-sharing and technical and scientific cooperation. It was also recommended that the IAC be flexible, open and invite closer participation by the CHM National Focal Points. The need to promote participation from developing regions was also emphasized as well as cooperative mechanisms that encourage interaction and active participation from all regions and Parties.

Item 4: Review of the Operations of the CHM

The Secretariat offered a review of the accomplishments and operations of the CHM including:

- The new CBD website was introduced as well as its new interactive technologies to assist information exchange.

- The completion of the information exchange phase of the CHM was discussed. It was stressed that developing new mechanisms for technical and scientific cooperation did not exclude or negate the need for on-going information exchange. Rather, information exchange would now be focused onto implementing COP V decisions, with a view to participation in all program areas, and meeting the needs of Parties.
- Discussion then centered on how the IAC referred to in Decision V/14 paragraph 7(a) shall provide advice on matters relating to the Clearing-house Mechanism and in particular on how to improve the effectiveness of the CHM as a mechanism to promote scientific and technical cooperation, as well as to facilitate and encourage cooperation with other relevant international and regional information networks and initiatives such as the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP), marine and coastal programme and the GTI. This includes advice to Parties on how to further develop the CHM to assist developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to gain access to information in the field of scientific and technical cooperation.
- A brief explanation was given on the similarities and differences between the biosafety clearing-house (BCH) and the clearing-house mechanism (CHM).

Item 5: Objectives of the IAC as identified in COP V/14

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on the objectives of the IAC as identified in COP V/14, particularly as stated in Annexes I and II.

The need to link the Strategic Plan of the CHM with its further development was discussed. It was recommended that the CHM review its Strategic Plan and outline linkages with decision V/14. Another suggestion, when creating said linkages, was to identify scientific and information issues so as to better identify the synergy between the two guiding documents. In addition, it was proposed that the CHM give a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and Annexes I and II at future IAC meetings. A recommendation to ensure information flow between the CHM and the BCH was made.

The representative from New Zealand tabled two documents in support of the objectives of the IAC as identified in COP V/14. The first paper, *Proposal For Pilot Initiative on Alien Species*, was drafted in support of Annex II(e), Decision V/14. The second paper, *The Clearing-house Mechanism*, was drafted in support of efforts by the Clearing-house Mechanism to focus more closely on the facilitation of technical and scientific cooperation.

The representative from Colombia distributed a summary of a workshop on Information and Participation, held in Havana, Cuba, 4-8 March 2001.

Item 6: Implementation of the Activities Identified in Annex II, Decision V/14

Item 6.1: The Secretariat reviewed the activities undertaken to broaden the understanding of the CHM, including: the re-design and updating of the CBD web page, the publishing of the CBD news, the publishing of pamphlets describing specific programs of work, the hiring of an Information Officer, and the creation of a public education and awareness committee to assist the CBD in communicating with the public. In addition, the CHM is examining the use of interactive technologies through the web page to increase communication with National Focal Points and with its working groups.

The IAC welcomed and expressed its appreciation to CHM staff members for these substantial achievements and recommended the following:

- Ensure that information available on the CHM reaches the scientific community;
- Examine the question of interoperability among CHM National Focal Points;
- Examine the need to produce information in different languages;
- Use non-web, non-electronic tools to reach regions with inequitable access to new information technologies;
- Stress the need for more engagement and interactivity—the CHM should receive as well as disseminate information;
- Contact the UNDP concerning a survey on information access in technologically underprivileged areas;
- Emphasize the need for the CHM to participate in all program areas;
- Assist in the promotion of training programs in developing regions;
- Publish more written information on the CHM.

Items 6.2, 6.3 & 6.4

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on informal discussions with National Focal Points, relevant Secretariat staff, and global initiatives concerning possible collaboration with the CHM in support of a pilot initiative to assist work on the thematic issues within the work programme of the SBSTTA.

Recommendations from the IAC pertaining to the above include:

- Focusing on the use of the CHM to promote technical and scientific cooperation, particularly within the work programme of invasive alien species, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, coastal and marine biodiversity and the ecosystem approach;
- Seeking advice from SBSTTA on the development of new CHM initiatives to promote technical and scientific cooperation;
- Seeking close links with the Global Invasive Species Program, and discussing joint work initiatives;
- Studying joint work programs with the GISP and other similar initiatives in the creation of thematic focal points;
- Emphasizing capacity building, particularly education and training;
- Constituting a core group to examine metadata and common formats, and to report to the next IAC meeting.

Item 6.5

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on informal discussions with the UNDP/World Bank Electronic Development Gateway, and how the initiative can assist the implementation of Decision V/14, Annex II (j).

Recommendations from the IAC pertaining to the above include:

- Review the usability of the EC's electronic virtual collaborative environment, the Circle;
- Review the success of the Mountain Forum, and explore whether any design components can assist in the work of the CHM.

Item 6.6

The pressing issue of metadata and common formats was reviewed and discussed. The need to promote interoperability among CHM National Focal Points and information databases was stressed.

Item 6.7

The Secretariat gave a short presentation on efforts concerning the use of different languages, and on the need to offer information on all languages. The problem of incurred costs was underlined.

Item 6.8

The need for mirror sites was considered. The CHM requested IAC to link with the CBD web site and to report on access problems. Once problems are identified, the CHM will be able to ascertain the need for mirror sites.

Item 7.1 & 7.2

The next IAC meeting will be held on the margins of the Open-ended inter-sessional meeting on the Strategic Plan, National Reports and the implementation of the Convention, 19-21 November 2001.

Item 8: Other matters

Item 9:

The meeting was adjourned at 13:00 hours by the Executive Secretary who thanked all participants for a constructive and most productive meeting.