

**Meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee of the Clearing-house Mechanism
11 November 2001
Montreal**

Present at the Meeting were:

Members:

Guy Rochon (Canada, co-Chair)
Soumayila Bance (Burkina Faso)
Horst Freiberg (Germany)
Vishwas Chavan (India)
Setijati Sastrapradja (Indonesia)
Asghar M. Fazel (Iran)
Elaine Fisher (Jamaica)
Hesiquio Benítez (Mexico)
Paula Warren (New Zealand)
Zbyszko Pisarski (Poland)
Abisai Mafa (Zimbabwe)
Dora Ann Lange-Canhos (CRIA)
Jeremy Harrison (UNEP/WCMC)
Barbara Bauldock (Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network)
Phil Andreozi (Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network)
Jamie Reaser (Global Invasive Species Program)
Preston Hardison (Indigenous Biodiversity Information Network)
David Penman (Global Biodiversity Information Facility)

Observers:

Peter Herkenrath (BirdLife International)
Grace Thitai (SBSTTA Bureau)

Secretariat:

Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary (co-Chair)
Arthur Nogueira
Marcos Silva
Tone Alstadheim
Julie Crowley

Item 1: Opening of Meeting

H. Zedan, Executive Secretary, welcomed the IAC members to the meeting. He stressed the importance of 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, the objectives of the CHM Strategic Plan and recommendations made by IAC during the 11 March 2001 meeting. He also emphasized the need for advice from the IAC concerning the need to integrate the objectives of the CHM Strategic Plan with the Strategic Plan of the Convention. In addition, he requested advice on the establishment of future international thematic focal points and on the work of the CHM in support of themes and cross-cutting issues. He concluded his opening remarks by wishing the IAC a fruitful meeting

Item 2: Organizational Matters

This agenda item was introduced by the co-Chair, G. Rochon.

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 2.3 Welcome new members

The co-Chair welcomed new members and requested members to introduce themselves.

Item 3. Progress report on implementation of the Activities identified in Annex II, Decision V/14, CHM Strategic Plan, SBSTTA recommendations and IAC recommendations.

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

Accomplishments (see Annex)

- Publication of new CHM brochure
- Launch of new web site
- Launch of the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House web site

- Development of new communication mechanisms for thematic work of the Convention (listservs, news groups, etc.)
- Development of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) Toolkit
- Development of controlled vocabulary for the CBD web site
- Completion of MoC with the Global Invasive Species Program (GISP) on the establishment of an international thematic focal point
- Establishment of the Global Taxonomy Initiative as an international thematic focal point
- Joined the GISP Information Management Working Group as a co-Chair
- Presentation of a joint CHM/BCH Regional Workshop in Africa
- Presentation of a CHM Regional Workshop in Latin America
- Participation in a BCH Regional Workshop in Latin America
- Participation in a GISP capacity building workshop in South America
- Initiation of work with the GISP on the development and implementation of a Global Invasive Species Network
- Establishment of the Dublin Core as the metadata standard for the CBD web site
- Decision on the use of eXtended Markup Language (XML) as the information exchange mechanism for the CBD web site
- Re-design of the CBD web site to accommodate all U.N. official languages
- Decision that mirror sites to the CBD web site were not needed

Recommendations from IAC pertaining to activities include:

- Reach audiences in addition to the scientific community
- Contribute to fostering public awareness and education about the Convention
- Continue to focus on technical and scientific cooperation
- Create matrix of regional workshop decisions
- Complete updating of all programmes and issues sections of the CBD web site
- Establish new international thematic focal points with relevant initiatives and organizations
- Complete the CHM/GISP “Building a Global Invasive Species Information Network” document
- Participate in new CHM/BCH regional workshops
- Participate in the GEF/UNEP Sustainable Alternatives Network
- Participate in the Global Development Gateway
- Continue to further development of controlled vocabularies and metadata standards
- Draft questionnaire on status of implementation of National CHMs
- When developing lists of best practices, include examples from developing countries and regions
- Non-web information tools should be developed parallel with the development of new web-based tools
- Whenever possible, include local expertise in capacity building workshops

Item 4. Progress report on the Biosafety Clearing-House

The Secretariat offered a review of the contribution and role of the CHM in the development and launching of the Pilot Phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, including:

- Development of standards to make distributed databases interoperable
- Development of metadata standards
- Development of a BCH Toolkit to assist users in understanding and navigating the Biosafety Clearing-House and registering information from remote locations
- Development of information exchange mechanisms.

In response to the above, the IAC recommended the drafting of a paper summarizing the synergies and differences between the CHM and the BCH, as per the recommendation made at the Latin American and Caribbean Region held in Lima, Peru, on 7 September 2001.

Item 5. The role of the CHM in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity

The representative from Germany reported on the recommendations arising from the Pan-European Workshop on Building the CHM Partnership: Facilitating Scientific and Technical Cooperation, held in Bonn, Germany on 28-29 September 2001.

A paper was tabled on behalf of the New Zealand representative on the "Role of the CHM in Implementation." The IAC welcomes this type of contribution to the work of the Committee and would urge delegates to provide future contributions two weeks prior to the convening of the Committee.

The IAC co-Chair requested members to reflect on the relevance of the CHM Strategic Plan to the Strategic Plan of the Convention and to make recommendations to the Executive Secretary on integrating CHM objectives identified in the CHM Strategic Plan with the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

The IAC noted that Decision V/14 supports the implementation of the CHM Strategic Plan, and recommends inter alia that the strategic plan for the CHM should become a component of the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

The IAC also recognized that the CHM is an essential mechanism supporting implementation of the Convention, and as such is certain to be a key mechanism for supporting implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Convention.

The IAC also noted that Decision V/20 identifies the need for the Strategic Plan of the Convention to draw on, as far as possible, the mechanisms needed to support Convention goals and activities, and to identify the financial, human resource and other capacity requirements.

Recommendations from the IAC pertaining to the above include:

- CHM should be used as a tool to facilitate implementation of the Convention
- A statement should be included in the Strategic Plan of the Convention to be used as a preamble to or to be inserted in an appropriate section recognizing the essential role of the CHM in the implementation of the Convention and the Strategic Plan.
- The role of the CHM in supporting technical and scientific cooperation, capacity building and information exchange should be reflected throughout the Strategic Plan of the Convention
- Articulate the fundamental role of the CHM in assisting programme areas and cross-cutting issues in meeting their goals.

Further to the above, the IAC recommended that the Executive Secretary review the draft Strategic Plan of the Convention together with the CHM Strategic Plan and to draft a matrix identifying how the elements of the CHM Strategic Plan support implementation of the CBD Strategic Plan.

The IAC co-Chair also requested members to advise the Executive Secretary on work to be accomplished prior to the sixth Conference of the Parties in response to activities identified in Annex II, Decision V/14.

Recommendations from the IAC pertaining to the above include:

- Organize a formats, protocols and standards meeting and provide advice to the COP on adoption of recommendations made at the meeting
- Continue to emphasize capacity building, in particular the development of partnerships
- Further develop work in support of programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention
- Continue to establish thematic focal points with relevant organizations and initiatives
- Better communicate with Parties and the public the meaning of technical and scientific cooperation and encourage partners to call a meeting on this topic
- Draft a paper on the lessons learned from the work on the BCH and how it can be implemented in the CHM
- Reiterate the need for the financial mechanism to fund the development of national CHMs
- Emphasize the need to adhere to open information exchange protocols and standards
- Reiterate importance of full Internet access and capacity-building so countries will be able to utilize Internet technologies

N. Nogueira stated that recommendations made during the meeting would serve in the drafting of the document "Progress report on the mechanisms for implementation" (UNEP/CBD/COP/6/13).

Item 6. Preparation for the next meeting

The next IAC meeting will be held on the margins of the sixth Conference of the Parties, 8-26 April 2002.

Item 7. Other matters

Item 8. Closure of the meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 18:00 hours by the co-Chair who thanked all participants for a constructive and most productive meeting.

Annex

Progress report on implementation of the Activities identified in Annex II, Decision V/14

COP Decisions V/14, Annex II	Strategic Plan*	Informal Advisory Committee Recommendations (11 March 2001) and SBSTA6 Recommendations	CHM Activities and Accomplishments
	* The Strategic Plan has 3 goals: (1) Cooperation, promotion and facilitation of scientific and technical cooperation; (2) Information exchange; (3) Network development. Each recommendation below is preceded by the goal under which it appears in the Plan.		
3.1 (a) Develop ways and means to ensure a broader understanding of the role of, and the value added by, the clearing-house mechanism.	Goal 3: Promote use of the CHM. Obj 7.1.4	Ensure that information available on the CHM reaches the scientific community. Stress the need for more engagement and interactivity—the CHM should receive as well as disseminate information. Emphasize the need for the CHM to participate in all program areas. Publish more written information on the CHM.	New CHM Brochure is being published.. Launch of new web site. Developing automatic news dissemination mechanism. Developing new mechanisms for the public to communicate with the SCBD. Programmes and issues page revised and updated
3.2 (b) Further develop non-Internet-based tools and training packages to assist Parties in their national implementation efforts.	Goal 3: promote use of the Clearing-house Mechanism Obj7.1.5	Use non-web, non-electronic tools to reach regions with inequitable access to new information technologies	Developed Toolkit for use with the Biosafety Clearing-House Developing CHM Toolkit from BCH toolkit Developing structured vocabularies for public use

COP Decisions V/14, Annex II	Strategic Plan*	Informal Advisory Committee Recommendations (11 March 2001) and SBSTA6 Recommendations	CHM Activities and Accomplishments
<p>3.3 (c) Identify and establish cooperative arrangements with those international thematic focal points that can provide relevant and appropriate thematic information, using the following criteria:</p>	<p>Goal 3: Rely on partnerships and focus on facilitation. Strat 7.2.4</p>	<p>Study joint programs with the GISP and other similar initiatives in the creation of thematic focal points.</p> <p>SBSTA6: VI/4, A.4c, 22. Decides that the clearing-house mechanism will be used to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation on the topics listed under paragraph 21 above, in order to enhance the ability of the clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, and invites the Executive Secretary to explore further with the Global Invasive Species Programme the potential for the latter to be an international thematic focal point for the clearing-house mechanism, in accordance with annex II (c) of decision V/14;</p>	<p>Finalized an MOU with GISP to act as a thematic focal point.</p> <p><u>Planning a meeting with the GISP to discuss implementation of a global invasive species network.</u> <u>USGS transferred US\$10,000 in support of the meeting.</u></p> <p><u>Joined the GISP Information Management Committee as co-Chair</u></p> <p>Discussing with the GTI the possibility of acting as a thematic focal point.</p> <p>Discussion with the Association for Biodiversity Information (ABI) creation of International thematic focal point</p>
<p>3.4 (d) Convene regional workshops to support capacity-building for clearing-house mechanism activities, training and awareness, with a focus on cooperation in biodiversity information for the implementation and management of the clearing-house mechanism at the national, subregional, bio-geographic and regional levels, as appropriate.</p>	<p>Goal 3: Provide start-up assistance and ongoing capacity. Strat 7.2.1</p> <p>Goal 3: Address obstacles to growth. Strat 7.2.2</p>	<p>Assist in the promotion of training programs in developing regions.</p> <p>Emphasize capacity building, particularly education and training.</p>	<p>Assisted in the organization and presentation of a joint BCH/CHM regional capacity building workshop in Africa.</p> <p><u>Organized CHM Latin American/Caribbean workshop</u></p> <p>Workshops in Asia and Central and Eastern Europe are planned.</p>
<p>3.5 (e) Develop a pilot initiative to assist work on the thematic issues within the work programme of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, including:</p>	<p>Goal 1: Promotion and facilitation of scientific and technical cooperation</p>	<p>Focus on the use of the CHM to promote technical and scientific cooperation, particularly within the work programme of invasive alien species and the ecosystem approach.</p> <p>Seek advice from SBSTA on the development of new CHM initiatives to promote technical and scientific cooperation.</p> <p>Seek close links with the GISP, and discuss joint work</p>	<p>Discussing with the GISP an invasive species project.</p> <p><u>Initiated work on a global invasive species network</u></p> <p>Discussing with WCMC a protected areas/marine and coastal protected areas project.</p>

COP Decisions V/14, Annex II	Strategic Plan*	Informal Advisory Committee Recommendations (11 March 2001) and SBSTA6 Recommendations	CHM Activities and Accomplishments
<p>3.6 (f) Propose options for improving ways and means by which the clearing-house mechanism can facilitate access to and transfer of technology.</p>	<p>Goal 1 Obj 5.1.5 strat 5.2.3</p>	<p>initiatives. Contact the UNDP concerning a survey on information access in technologically underprivileged areas.</p>	<p>Discussing with the Belgian CHM focal point mechanisms and training programs for the transfer of expertise to developing areas. Developing MoU with the GEF/UNEP Sustainable Alternatives Network</p>
<p>3.7 (g) Develop a list of best practices and identify potential functions to be recommended for implementation by clearing-house mechanism national focal points.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Track Best Practices, Needs and Priorities for Collaboration. Strat 5.2.1 Goal 2: Track information needs, priorities and best practices. Strat 6.2.2 Goal 2: Prioritize and promote expansion in content. Strat 6.2.3 Goal 3: Concentrate on value added. Strat 7.2.5</p>		<p>Discussing with the World Bank participation in the Global Development Gateway. Discussing with UNEP-GEF participation in the Alternative Technologies Network initiative.</p>
<p>3.8 (h) Identify possible formats, protocols and standards for the improved exchange of biodiversity-related data, information and knowledge, including national reports, biodiversity assessments and Global Biodiversity Outlook reports, and convene an informal meeting on this issue</p>	<p>Goal 2: development of a global mechanism for exchanging and integrating information on biodiversity Strat 6.2.1 6.2.2 6.2.4 Goal 2: Ensure compatibility through standardization and interoperability. Strat 6.2.1 6.2.2 Goal 3: Maintain local ownership of information. Strat 7.2.4</p>	<p>Examine the question of interoperability among CHM National Focal Points. Constitute a core group to examine metadata and common formats, and to report to the next IAC meeting.</p>	<p>Using the Dublin Core as the metadata standard for the CHM and BCH web pages. Will constitute a core group to examine the issue of metadata. Working with experts to develop metadata guidelines. <u>Planning a formats, protocols and standards meeting on the margins of the SBTTA7</u></p>
<p>3.9 (i) Identify options and explore cooperative arrangements to overcome language barriers affecting the use of the clearing-house mechanism, including the development or consolidation of tools and services.</p>	<p>Goal 3: development of the Clearing-house Mechanism focal points and their partners strat 7.2.2 7.2.3</p>	<p>Examine the need to produce information in different languages</p>	<p>New web page was designed to accommodate all six UN languages. The Biosafety Clearing-House has been created to accommodate all six UN Languages.</p>

COP Decisions V/14, Annex II	Strategic Plan*	Informal Advisory Committee Recommendations (11 March 2001) and SBSTA6 Recommendations	CHM Activities and Accomplishments
<p>3.10 (j) Develop a publicly accessible global electronic platform for scientific and technical cooperation in biodiversity on the Internet matching the demands and needs of Parties in accordance with Article 18 of the Convention.</p>	<p>Goal 2: development of a global mechanism for exchanging and integrating information on biodiversity strat 6.2.1 6.2.2 6.2.2</p>	<p>Review the usability of the EC's electronic virtual collaborative environment, the Circle.</p> <p>Review the success of the Mountain Forum, and explore whether any design components can assist in the work of the CHM.</p>	<p>Discussing with the World Bank participation in the Global Development Gateway.</p> <p>Discussing with UNEP-GEF participation in the Alternative Technologies Network initiative.</p>
<p>3.11 (k) Encourage the establishment and maintenance of mirror sites of the Convention's website, within the other United Nations regions, as appropriate, in order to improve access to Internet-based information</p>	<p>Goal 2: development of a global mechanism for exchanging and integrating information on biodiversity strat 6.2.1 6.2.3 6.3.4</p>	<p>IAC will link with the CBD web site from remote locations and report on access problems.</p>	<p>Has requested assistance from IAC to ascertain if mirror sites are still required.</p>