

Meeting of the Clearing-House Mechanism Informal Advisory Committee

9 March 2003

Montreal, Canada

Present at the meeting were:

Members:

Horst Freiberg (Germany, Acting Co-Chair)

James Edwards, Beatriz Torres, Christoph Hauser (Global Biodiversity Information Facility)

Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Iran)

Dehui Wang (China)

Paula Warren (New Zealand)

Gladys Cotter, Barbara Bauldock and Bonnie Carroll (IABIN)

Jeremy Harrison (World Conservation Monitoring Centre)

Christian Samper (Smithsonian Institute)

Observers:

Peter Herkenrath (BirdLife International)

Jack Hill (National Biological Information Infrastructure)

Aram Gevorgyan (World Conservation Monitoring Centre)

Secretariat:

Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary (Co-Chair)

Arthur Nogueira, Principal Officer, Implementation and Outreach

Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, Clearing-house Mechanism

Peter Wallet, Intern

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 decisions V/14 and VI/18. Specifically, he emphasized the need for advice from the IAC in assisting the work of the CHM with regard to the development of operational procedures for the IAC, for review at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Mr. Zedan also highlighted the role of the IAC in assisting the CHM to promote and facilitate more effectively technical and scientific cooperation, especially in collaboration with newly established international thematic focal points, namely: the Global Invasive Species Programme, the Global Taxonomy Initiative, NatureServe and BirdLife International.

The Executive Secretary also reviewed briefly the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House and stressed the benefits gained by the CHM during its development. He mentioned that the BCH does not have an advisory body, and that a liaison group of technical experts will be meeting on 10 to 11 April 2003 to discuss the requirements for establishment of national components for participation in the BCH and associated technical issues. Finally, in his description of the two primary components of the BCH, the central portal and national biosafety clearing-houses, the Executive Secretary requested IAC members for views on how to facilitate and promote the development of national BCHs and CHMs, particularly in the context of capacity-building.

He concluded his opening remarks by requesting the Secretariat 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 (see Annex 1).

Item 2.2. Organization of Work

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

Briefing by Mr. Christian Samper on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Fund (GEF)

The Executive Secretary invited Mr. Christian Samper to report on deliberations of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Fund.

Mr. Samper briefed the meeting on the replenishment of GEF funds, 30% of which will be devoted to capacity-building activities. Approximately US\$850 million will be devoted to biodiversity issues, especially protected areas, mainstreaming biodiversity, capacity building and the biosafety issues, including the BCH. He also mentioned his participation in the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the GEF.

In his overview of STAP/GEF activities, he described its new emphasis on development of indicators, monitoring and quantitative targets. This new direction could be an opportunity for the development of cross-cutting collaborative initiatives among the CHM, the GISP, the GBIF, etc. This may also be a good opportunity for the IAC to reflect on these possible initiatives, and to articulate the role of the CHM and the GTI.

He then suggested the creation of a few pilot projects which would take advantage of newly established international thematic focal points and the CHM. Participants in these

pilot projects could include national focal points, thematic focal points, SBSTTA members, etc. He asked the IAC on how to best engage participants, particularly the CHM.

Comments on the above stressed that thematic work programmes have been adopted within the framework of the Convention, and that they could form a basis for these pilots. Thematic areas and cross-cutting issues with work programmes include: coral reefs, invasive alien species, and the Global Taxonomy Initiative. Protected areas, pollinators, the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation and the synergetic role of the CHM vis-à-vis the Rio Conventions are two other areas where pilots could be developed. Moreover, the pilots would stress a cross-cutting approach between or among these different thematic areas, i.e., pollinators, taxonomy and the ecosystem approach.

Item 3: Operational procedures for the IAC

The meeting had before it for consideration draft operational procedures for the IAC. In introducing this topic, the Executive Secretary also requested that the IAC advise on paragraph 8 of decision V/14, which decided that the continuation and mandate of the IAC should be reviewed at the seventh meeting of the Conference of Parties. 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 and paragraph 9 of decision V/14 which called on the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the IAC, to develop operational procedures for the IAC, for review at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and to make these procedures, as well as the membership, available through the CHM.

Elements of discussion included:

- The need to make the operational procedures informal and flexible;
- The need to ensure that relevant expertise is well reflected in the IAC, including expertise related to the programme areas and cross-cutting areas of the Convention, technical and scientific collaboration and technology transfer and information exchange;
- The need to balance individual representation with organizational representation;
- The issues pertaining to the selection of a Chair;
- The issues pertaining to membership (regional balance and time-span).

The first draft of the operational procedures is attached as Annex II.

Item 4: Progress report on implementation of activities identified in decision V/14, annex ii, decision VI/18, the CHM Strategic Plan, SBSTTA recommendations and IAC recommendations

The Secretariat offered a review of the accomplishments and operations of the CHM in support of technical and scientific collaboration, including:

- New communication mechanisms implemented in support of technical and scientific collaboration: listservs, discussion forums (including the first public electronic forum available on the Secretariat's web site) and collaborative virtual spaces;
- Completion of a CBD Controlled vocabulary to be used as metadata and shared among CHM National Focal Points. The CBD Controlled Vocabulary has been submitted to the IAC, COP and SBSTTA Bureaus for comments;
- The establishment of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the UNEP-WCMC in support of paragraph 2 of Decision VI/18 which requests the Executive Secretary to commission a review to assess the current and potential role of the CHM in promoting technical and scientific collaboration;
- Work completed to date in the development of the second version of the CHM Toolkit;
- Planned CHM regional capacity building workshops, including the co-organization of the workshops with other inter-governmental organizations and initiatives;
- Results from the meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Traditional Knowledge and Clearing-House Mechanism, held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia from 24-26 February 2003;
- Work in support of the Global Invasive Species Information Network;
- Establishment of new international thematic focal points and the proposed programme of work.

The representative from Birdlife International stressed the potential role of CHM national focal points and the need to facilitate their cooperation in the CHM programme of work. The representative from the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) gave a summary of ongoing CHM/IABIN collaboration and plans to co-organize a joint capacity building meeting in the GRULAC region.

Item 5: Briefing on the Biosafety-Clearing House

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on the new version of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), developed in anticipation of the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Its two components, the Central Portal and National BCHs were discussed, particularly in view of the need to build national capacities to develop systems in support of national BCHs and databases.

Item 6: Preparations for next meeting

The next IAC meeting will be held on the margins of the Ninth Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), 10-14 November 2003.

Item 7: Other matters

There were no other relevant matters raised under this item.

Item 9:

The meeting was closed at 17:00 hours by Dr. Horst Freiberg and Mr. Marcos Silva, on behalf on the Executive Secretary, who thanked all participants for a constructive and most productive meeting.

Annex I

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1. Adoption of the agenda
 - 2.2. Organization of the work
3. Operational procedures for the informal advisory committee
 - 3.1. Review of the continuation and mandate of the informal advisory committee (decision V/14, paragraph 8)
 - 3.2. Development of operational procedures for the informal advisory committee (decision V/14, paragraph 9)
4. Progress report on implementation of the activities identified in decision V/14, annex II, decision VI/18, the CHM Strategic Plan, SBBSTA recommendations and IAC recommendations
5. Briefing on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH)
 - 5.1 Summary of work completed on interoperability standards;
 - 5.2 Summary of work completed on capacity building initiatives.
6. Preparation for the next meeting
 - 6.1 Draft provisional agenda
 - 6.2 Tentative date and venue
7. Other matters
8. Closure of meeting

Annex II

Operational Procedures for the Informal Advisory Committee

1. The Conference of the Parties at its third meeting agreed that the clearing house-mechanism shall be assisted in its functioning by an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, which will guide and integrate the development of the pilot phase activities and endeavour to ensure that all Parties can participate in the pilot phase of the clearing house-mechanism.
2. In paragraph 10 (c) of decision IV/2, the Conference of the Parties instructed the Executive Secretary to ensure that the clearing house-mechanism should be continuously assisted in its functioning by the Informal Advisory Committee which is to provide guidance to the Executive Secretary during and after the pilot phase, and to play a full role in the further development of the clearing house-mechanism.
3. In paragraph 7(a-e) of decision V/14, the Conference of the Parties also decided that the informal advisory committee referred to in decision III/4 shall have the following objectives:
 - a. Provide advice on matters relating to the clearing house-mechanism, and in particular, on how to improve the effectiveness of the clearing house-mechanism as a mechanism to promote scientific and technical cooperation;
 - b. Facilitate the implementation of guidance from the Conference of the Parties concerning the clearing house-mechanism;
 - c. Facilitate greater input of Parties into the development of the clearing house-mechanism;
 - d. Advise on ways and means to facilitate the development of the clearing house-mechanism network;
 - e. Facilitate and encourage cooperation with other relevant international and regional information networks and initiatives.
4. The Conference of the Parties also decided in paragraph 8 of decision V/14 that the continuation and mandate of the informal advisory committee shall be reviewed at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties;
5. Finally, in paragraph 9 of decision V/14, the Conference of the Parties called upon the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Informal Advisory Committee, to develop operational procedures from the Informal Advisory Committee, for review at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and to make these procedures, as well as the membership, available through the clearing house-mechanism.

In light of the above, below are operational procedures for discussion and review.

1.0 Objectives

1.1 The IAC shall, in providing guidance to the Executive Secretary have the following objectives:

- a) Provide advice on matters relating to the clearing house-mechanism, and in particular, on how to improve the effectiveness of the clearing house-mechanism as a mechanism to promote scientific and technical cooperation;
- b) Facilitate the development and implementation of guidance from the Conference of the Parties concerning the clearing house-mechanism and the Strategic Plan of the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/INF/3);
- c) Facilitate and encourage cooperation with other relevant international and regional scientific and technical cooperation initiatives;
- d) Advise on means to facilitate the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism at the national level.
- e) Enhance the scientific and technical cooperation benefits of all Convention activities.

2. Operational Procedures

2.1 The Executive Secretary, in constituting and coordinating the IAC, shall seek to ensure regional balance and relevant expertise and knowledge, including of relevant international and regional scientific and technical cooperation initiatives, and non-governmental organizations.

3. Membership

- 3.1 The members of the Informal Advisory Committee shall be selected by the Executive Secretary. In selecting members, he shall seek to ensure a balance of expertise and regional and biogeographical balance.
- 3.2 Informal Advisory Committee members shall be selected for their expertise, affiliation and understanding of the clearing-house mechanism and the Convention, taking into account the need for expertise including: scientific and technical cooperation; capacity building; information exchange and sharing; and facilitating partnership with other organizations and initiatives.
- 3.3 Informal Advisory Committee members shall be selected for 2 years. The term is renewable by the Executive Secretary.
- 3.4 The Executive Secretary should ensure that changes in membership do not affect the continuity of the work.
- 3.5 Proxies may be agreed to by the Executive Secretary.

4. Chair

- 4.1 The Chair of the Informal Advisory Committee shall be selected by the Executive Secretary, after consultation with the members, and serve for at least two years.

5. Meetings

- 5.1 Meetings will be convened by the Executive Secretary and held back-to-back with the SBSTTA and COP meetings. Additional meetings, electronic or in person, may be convened by the Executive Secretary as required to ensure the timely handling of issues.
- 5.2 The draft agenda for each meeting shall, if possible, be made available two months prior and otherwise at least one month prior to each meeting, and be posted on the Convention on Biological Diversity web site and notified to the Informal Advisory Committee and clearing house-mechanism Focal Points by fax and/or email, and/or post.
- 5.3 Minutes of each meeting, and related information documents, will be posted on the Convention on Biological Diversity web site as soon as practical following its review by the Executive Secretary. This information will also be made available to the Informal Advisory Committee and clearing house-mechanism national focal points by fax or email or post .