

Meeting of the Clearing-House Mechanism Informal Advisory Committee

9 November 2003, Montreal, Canada

Present at the meeting were:

Members:

Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Iran, Co-Chair)

Bonnie Carroll (IABIN)

Han de Koeijer (Belgium)

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

Horst Freiberg (Germany)

Jeremy Harrison (World Conservation Monitoring Centre)

John Herity (Canada)

Christian Samper (Smithsonian Institute)

Observers:

Peter Herkenrath (BirdLife International)

James Seyani (Commonwealth Knowledge Network)

Secretariat:

Arthur Nogueira, Principal Officer, Implementation and Outreach

Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, Clearing-house Mechanism

David Ainsworth, Website Programme Officer

Item 1: Opening of Meeting

On behalf of Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary, Mr. Arthur Nogueira, Principal Officer welcomed Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) members to the meeting. He also welcomed Mr. Asghar Fazel from Iran as the new Co-Chair of the IAC and thanked Mr. Guy Rochon from Canada for his contribution during his tenure as Co-Chair. Mr. Nogueira also stressed the important role of the IAC in offering guidance to the Executive Secretary in the development and implementation of the CHM's programme of work and highlighted many of the Clearing-House Mechanism's (CHM) accomplishments during the inter-sessional period. He concluded his opening remarks by thanking participants for their contribution to the CHM and wished everyone a successful meeting.

Mr. Asghar Fazel, welcomed participants and thanked the Secretariat and the IAC for their support and endorsement of his nomination as Co-Chair. He noted the exceptional work completed by Mr. Guy Rochon and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the CHM and the Convention. Mr. Fazel also indicated his desire that the IAC continue its work by offering advice on the CHM to the Executive Secretary, particularly within the context of the 2010 target and the upcoming seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. He concluded by thanking participants for their participation and work.

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.

Item 3: Report on implementation of the activities identified in Annex II of Decision V/14 and Decision VI/18 of the Conference of the Parties

In introducing this item, Mr. Fazel requested the Secretariat to present a brief overview of activities accomplished in support of Annex II of Decision V/14 and Decision VI/18.

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on the initiatives accomplished by the CHM, and explained that this work was based on Conference of the Parties Decisions, SBSTTA recommendations, IAC recommendations and the CHM Strategic Plan (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/INF/3, URL: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/cop/cop-05/information/cop-05-inf-03-en.pdf>). The Secretariat also explained that the CHM followed a three-tiered strategy to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, including:

1. Investment in the development and use of new formats, protocols and standards and new information technologies;
2. Development of new tools to foster communication and networking;
3. Implementation of new activities in support of technical and scientific cooperation within the context of the CBD programme areas and cross-cutting issues.

Furthermore, activities in support of the use of new formats, protocols and standards included:

- Development of a CBD Controlled Vocabulary (<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/cbd-voc.aspx>) to serve as metadata and assist national CHMs to become interoperable;
- Development and publication of metadata standards based on the Dublin Core (<http://www.biodiv.org/chm/toolkit/>);
- Enhancement of the Convention website to facilitate interoperability with other information mechanisms and systems;
- Development of a number of thematic databases;
- Development of an XML-based (eXtensible Markup Language) facility to search COP decisions and SBSTTA recommendations (<http://www.biodiv.org/recommendations/search.aspx>);
- Development of a tool to analyze Thematic Reports (<http://www.biodiv.org/reports/analyzer.aspx>)

In support of activities related to fostering communication and networking, The Secretariat described the following:

- Development of virtual collaborative spaces for working groups;
- Creation of new electronic forums for the public and working groups;
- Development of a new electronic notification system (<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/notifications/registration.asp>) ;
- Establishment of an interactive info-bulletin on financing for biological diversity (<http://www.biodiv.org/financial/forums.aspx>)
- Establishment of a joint electronic calendar with UNCCD and UNFCCC (<http://unfccc.int/calendar/rioconv/index.html>).

The Secretariat then described activities related to technical and scientific collaboration, including:

- Cooperation with other international organizations and initiatives such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network and the European Environment Agency, among others, in capacity-building efforts;
- The establishment of new international thematic focal points (BirdLife International);
- The organization of CHM regional workshops (the Latin American and Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe CHM regional workshops were co-organized with the European Community Clearing-House Mechanism and the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network respectively);
- The development of a new online CHM toolkit (<http://www.biodiv.org/chm/toolkit/>) to assist Parties and Governments to establish national CHMs and CHM websites (the CHM Toolkit was a collaborative effort among the European Community Clearing-House Mechanism, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the Governments of The Netherlands and Belgium);

- The development of a joint project with the Government of The Netherlands to assist one of two countries to develop their CHM websites.

The Co-Chair thanked the Secretariat for its presentation, and opened the floor for comments and questions.

Dr. Christian Samper asked on the status of CHM national focal points and if it was possible to assess their effectiveness.

The Secretariat replied that to date, 148 out of 188 Parties had established CHM National Focal Points. Out of these, 63% had established websites. The Secretariat referred the question of measuring national CHM effectiveness to the Chair, who then invited Mr. Jeremy Harrison to present the *Results of the independent review of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity* (UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/12, <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/cop/cop-07/information/cop-07-inf-12-en.pdf>) which was overseen by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The review was established by a memorandum of cooperation between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and UNEP-WCMC within the context of its Chevening Biodiversity Scholarship.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison introduced the review emphasizing that it discusses the role and effectiveness of national CHMs at length. He also described the action plan presented at the end of the review, and invited participants to analyze it carefully prior to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-7).

Participants agreed that recommendations pertaining to the review could be made from the floor during the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Following the above discussion, the Chair invited Ms. Bonnie Carroll to give a brief presentation on the Pacific Basin Information Forum (PBIF) meeting held as a side meeting at the Joint Forum meeting in Tsukuba, Japan on 4 to 5 October 2003. On completion of her presentation, Ms Carroll asked if the Secretariat was planning an Asia CHM regional workshop, especially given the potential for collaboration with the PBIF in capacity-building activities.

The Secretariat replied that a CHM regional workshop for Asia is being planned, but has been delayed because of a lack of funds.

The Co-Chair offered to look into the possibility of hosting the meeting in Iran.

The Co-Chair then gave the floor to Dr. James Edwards, who reported on workshops on becoming a Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) data provider. Mr. Edwards discussed possibilities to better link GBIF's technical courses with the Secretariat's capacity building projects. It was agreed to continue these efforts, and to attempt to organize joint meetings whenever possible, the upcoming GBIF Governing Board Meeting in New Zealand being a case in point.

Dr. Christian Samper asked the Secretariat to report on the status of recently established international thematic focal points and to comment if any of these new relationships had been evaluated for effectiveness. Discussion followed on the origins of Annex II (c) of Decision V/14 which asks the Executive Secretary to identify and establish cooperation arrangements with those international thematic focal points that can provide relevant and appropriate thematic information.

There was agreement that an evaluative procedure for international thematic focal points may be required, and that Annex II (c) of Decision V/14 requires more in-depth discussion and review.

It was further agreed that that IAC members would brief their respective delegations on this issue and request that a recommendation be made from the floor during the seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties for the Executive Secretary to develop an evaluative procedure for programmes established with international thematic focal points.

On conclusion of discussions, the Co-Chair requested the Secretariat to report on CHM regional workshops in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe.

The Secretariat reported that the CHM African regional workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya on 31 March to 2 April 2003 (<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=CHMAFR-01>) counted on the participation of many international organizations and international thematic focal points. It offered national CHMs the opportunity to meet with these organizations and thematic focal points and discuss ways and means to raise capacity at the national and regional level.

With regard to the CHM Latin America and Caribbean Meeting (*Joint Latin America and Caribbean regional meeting on the Clearing-House Mechanism and the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network: building partnerships through effective networking*, <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=CHMIBIN-01>), held on 12 to 14 August 2003, in Cancun, Mexico, CHM national focal points benefited from the participation, co-funding and co-organization of the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN). Discussion centered on enhancing the capacities of CHM national focal points and on the establishment of the IABIN. The meeting also offered the opportunity for CHM national focal points to comment and offer advice on the drafting of IABIN's Project Implementation Plan, particularly with regard to IABIN's relationship to the CHM.

The CHM regional Central and Eastern Europe meeting (*Convention on Biological Diversity Clearing-House Mechanism and European Community Clearing-House Mechanism joint regional meeting for Central and Eastern Europe*, <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=CHMEC-01>) constituted the first Pan-European meeting of CHM national focal points. There was much discussion on the establishment of joint programmes, particularly with regard to the use and development

of common formats, protocols and standards and joint initiatives in support of the programme areas and cross-cutting issues of the Convention. IAC participants welcomed the organization of these workshops, and reiterated the need for a CHM regional workshop in Asia.

Item 4: Progress report on the Biosafety-Clearing House

The Secretariat gave a brief presentation on the technical work completed in support of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). It stated that the BCH is ready for use and that the Secretariat will receive further direction on its development from the upcoming first meeting of the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to be held in Malaysia from 23 to 27 February 2004.

Mr. Han de Koeijer remarked that in African countries, the most active national BCHs appear to be those with active CHMs, indicating perhaps possibilities for increased synergies between the two mechanisms. He also mentioned that it is important for developing countries to integrate both mechanisms as much as possible to avoid duplication of work and maximize available resources. He wondered if an informal advisory group for all mechanisms could be an effective tool for promoting greater synergies at the national level.

The Co-Chair asked if participants believed that there is a perception that the BCH is totally independent from the CHM and if countries realize that the BCH is indeed part of the CHM.

In response, Mr. Horst Freiberg asked if reference to the CHM could be made more explicit on the BCH website, and if this could be implemented as soon as possible.

The Secretariat stated that it would raise this issue with the Executive Secretary.

Item 5: Other matters

The Co-Chair requested the Secretariat to present a paper drafted by Ms Paula Warren (New Zealand) on issues related to technology transfer and cooperation and the CHM.

Following introduction of the paper by the Secretariat, discussion ensued on how the CHM can become a more effective partner in this process.

It was decided that the IAC would raise these issues in greater detail during COP-7 and during the current SBSTTA-9 meeting.

Item 6: Closure of Meeting

The meeting was closed at 12:30 hours by the Co-Chair, on behalf on the Executive Secretary, who thanked all participants for a constructive and most productive meeting.

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to the Clearing-house Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity
Montreal, Canada
9 November 2003

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1. Adoption of the agenda
 - 2.2. Organization of the work
3. Report on implementation of the activities identified in Annex II, Decision V/14 and Decision VI/18 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
4. Progress report on the Biosafety Clearing-House
5. Other matters
6. Closure of the meeting