

Meeting of the Clearing-House Mechanism Informal Advisory Committee
13 February 2004 and 17 February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Members:

Asghar Mohammadi Fazel (Iran, Co-Chair)
Soumayila Bancé (Burkina Faso)
Horst Freiberg (Germany)
John Herity (Canada)
Paula Warren (New Zealand)
Preston Hardison (Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network)
Jeremy Harrison (UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre)
Mike Ruggerio (representing Ms Gladys Cotter, Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network)
Beatriz Torres (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) (13 February 2004)

Observers:

Jackie Van Goethem (Belgium)
Hans Erik Svart (Denmark)
Jukka-Pekka Jäppinen (Finland)
Naomi Kingston (Ireland)
Severin M. ten Houte de Lange (The Netherlands)
Victor Miyakawa (Peru)
Arkady Tishkov (Russian Federation)
Marina Rykhlikova (Russian Federation)
Vladimir Bocharnikov (Russian Federation)
Aminu-Kano (Birdlife International)
David Duthie (UNEP-Global Environment Facility)

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, Clearing-House Mechanism representing the co-Chair, Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, Executive Secretary

13 February 2004

Item 1: Opening of Meeting

On behalf of Mr. Hamdallah Zedan, Mr. Marcos Silva, Programme Officer, Clearing-House Mechanism welcomed Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) members and observers to the meeting. He also welcomed Mr. Asghar Fazel, from Iran, for Chairing the meeting. He stressed the important role of the IAC in offering guidance to the Executive Secretary, particularly in the context of issues such as technology transfer and cooperation. He concluded his opening remarks by thanking participants for their contribution to the CHM and wished everyone a fruitful meeting.

Mr. Asghar Fazel welcomed participants and thanked the Secretariat and the IAC for their continued support of his work as Co-Chair. After thanking the Secretariat for the documentation drafted in support of the meeting, he requested participants to introduce themselves. He concluded by stressing the significance of the IAC, particularly with regard to the upcoming decisions arising from the 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 Mr. M. Silva.

Item 2.1: Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted (see Annex I)

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, Mr. A. Fazel welcomed the observers to the meeting.

Item 3: Review of document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/ADD1, *Clearing-house Mechanism activities during the inter-sessional period*

This agenda item was introduced by Mr. M. Silva who gave a brief summary of its contents and major points.

The co-Chair, Mr. A. Fazel, requested members to reflect on document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/ADD1, and to raise issues of particular concern, particularly within the context of ongoing discussions during the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the transfer of technology and cooperation and the new role of the IAC being cases in point.

Mr. J. Herity raised the issue of the role of the Clearing-House Mechanism with other initiatives. He stated that it may be useful to have a well considered plan outlining expectations arising from collaboration with other initiatives.

Mr. J. Harrison also raised this issue, stating that perhaps there needs clarification of specification between initiatives, particularly those working on common themes, such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility. He further stated that this issue was also discussed at the Joint Latin America and Caribbean regional meeting on the Clearing-House Mechanism and the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network: building partnerships through effective networking, which was held in Cancun, Mexico from 12-

14 August 2004. Mr. Harrison also remarked that there is little communication among CHM national focal points and that more regional interaction is needed.

Ms Paula Warren described her vision of the Clearing-House Mechanism as being a catalyst in linking people, i.e., creating connections. She stressed that this should be the Clearing-House Mechanism's primary role. She offered to draft a brief statement on this view to be disseminated with the minutes of the meeting (Annex II).

Mr. P. Hardison reminded the IAC of the need to link with indigenous groups interested in technology transfer issues and the obligations under Article 8(j).

Mr. J. Herity discussed the need for the Clearing-House Mechanism to provide access to expertise noting that such needs are demand driven. He noted the need for the development of new electronic tools to facilitate the Clearing-House Mechanism's upcoming programme of work under the new inter-sessional period. He also noted the new role given to the IAC to assist in the establishment of an infrastructure to promote the transfer of technology.

Mr. Horst Freiberg discussed the need to more effectively link people together, particularly in light of the new responsibilities mandated to the IAC. He also discussed its upcoming joint meetings with the proposed expert group on technology transfer and cooperation.

Participants at the meeting decided to reconvene at a later date during the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

17 February 2004

Item 3: Review of document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/ADD1, *Clearing-house Mechanism activities during the inter-sessional period* (continued)

Ms. P. Warren further elaborated on her proposal (Annex II) on more effective ways to promote technical and scientific collaboration: The first approach is to provide improved access to information that is within the public domain or can be brought into the public domain; and the second approach is to facilitate connections between people who can then work together to:

- transfer and adapt existing information or technology;
- jointly develop new information or technology;
- partition the responsibility for developing new information or technology that is of interest to both parties.

Mr. J. Herity emphasized the need to continued work on network development by the Clearing-House, especially in light of decisions under Article 8(j) and other programme areas.

Mr. V. Bocharnikov stressed that it is now an opportune moment to further develop the Clearing-House Mechanism and that information translated in the six UN languages would assist in this effort.

Item 4: Review of document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/12, *Results of the independent review of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity*

This agenda item was introduced by Mr. M. Silva who gave a brief summary of the independent review's findings and by Mr. J. Harrison who presented a general overview of the document.

Mr. J. Herity inquired on how the IAC would be able to handle the workload assigned to it, especially paragraph 8 of decision VII/23 which calls on the Informal Advisory Committee to assess the results of the independent review of the Clearing-House Mechanism.

Mr. A. Fazel suggested convening an IAC meeting on the margins of the proposed Clearing-House Mechanism regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific in Spring 2004.

It was decided that further discussion on Item 3 and Item 4 would be conducted electronically, and that members should propose ways on how to implement effectively the IAC's programme of work.

Item 5: Other matters

The co-Chair, Mr. A. Fazel, requested that the Secretariat, on completion of COP-7 related duties, to inform IAC members on the possibility of convening a Clearing-House Mechanism regional meeting for Asia and the Pacific in 2004.

Item 6: Closure of meeting

The meeting was closed at 2:30 by the co-Chair, on behalf of 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
 - 2.3 Welcome new members
3. Review of document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17/ADD1, *Clearing-house Mechanism activities during the inter-sessional period*
4. Review of document UNEP/CBD/COP/7/INF/12, *Results of the independent review of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity*
5. Other matters
6. Closure of the meeting

ANNEX II

Enhancing the CHM as a mechanism for connecting people to people particularly for technology transfer and development

Paula Warren
NZ CHM Focal Point

Background

Article 18(3) provides that “the Conference of the Parties, at its first meeting, shall determine how to establish a clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.”

From our experience in operating the CHM in NZ, we have concluded that there are two broad ways to facilitate s&t cooperation.

The first is to provide improved access to information that is within the public domain or can be brought into the public domain. This might be data that people can combine with their own data, analysed data and conceptual thinking (e.g. scientific papers, grey literature) or technology (e.g. best practice manuals, software). In this case the information is generally provided in the form in which it was originally produced, and it is up to the seeker of the information to find and adapt the information. The role of the CHM is to make the finding of the information easier, but does not extend to helping with adaptation. The CHM might facilitate the finding of information by moving the information into a location where it is easier to find, by translating the information into other languages, or by giving people access to the technology needed for searching information sources (e.g. internet access).

The second approach is to facilitate connections between people who can then work together to:

- transfer and adapt existing information or technology;
- jointly develop new information or technology;
- partition the responsibility for developing new information or technology that is of interest to both parties.

The emphasis of this latter approach to the CHM is on connecting people so that they can increase the total amount of information or technology available. The emphasis of the former is on increasing access to existing information or technology and helping people to search for it.

Both are important parts of the CHM, but in our view the CHM is not, at this point in time, addressing these areas equally. This is not surprising, as making existing information more accessible is clearly easier than other aspects of the CHM work.

With the new emphasis (from COP 7) on the CHM playing a role in technology transfer, improving the balance of our work is even more vital.

Connecting People to People

In our view, the key to broadening the role of the CHM is to focus on connecting people to people, rather than on connecting people to existing information, because:

1. Only by connecting people can we get an increase in the total amount of information and technology;
2. Much of the existing information that people might find useful will never be put in a searchable location because:
 - It is not in suitable form, and the holder of the information has no incentive to put it in a suitable form (e.g. the knowledge of how best to undertake a management practice may only be in the expert's head);
 - The owner of the information has no idea that anyone else might be interested in it;
 - The information is of a type that the holder would be unwilling to put down in writing but might be willing to provide verbally to another person in their field (e.g. judgements about how good an expert is);
 - The owner of the information wishes to restrict access to the information for some reason (to ensure it is only used for appropriate purposes, to gain a revenue stream, cultural sensitivity reasons, etc) and in some cases may not even want the existence of the information to be publicised outside a restricted group of people;
3. The information may not be useable without adaptation, which requires the involvement of another person other than the searcher;
4. In many cases, the best way to search for information is to ask an expert in the field, rather than to use other search methods.

Models

The following are some of the mechanisms currently in place that affect work that NZ is involved in, and which provide possible models for improving the effectiveness of the CHM.

Cooperative Islands Initiative

The CII was set up to facilitate cooperation between island managers in relation to alien species issues. A key role of the CII is to allow managers to identify best practice, potential partners for projects, and sources of information.

This is principally done by having a coordinator who keeps up to date on the subject, and who can respond to queries. At the side event on the CII which we held at COP 7, we identified a number of advantages of this approach, as opposed to developing a data base of expertise or similar system:

- The coordinator is likely to be more up-to-date than a data base.
- The coordinator can help the enquirer to refine their questions, and steer them into areas they might not have even thought about. For example, an island manager may only enquire about one pest on their island, believing that the other species are in-eradicable, when there is in fact new technology available for those species.
- The coordinator can provide information that would not be available from public information sources (see above on why this might be the case).
- The coordinator can tailor the information provided to exactly fit the enquiry.
- The coordinator can provide information in a range of ways, including ways suitable for people without access to the internet.

And this may be a cheaper way to provide the information. Searching for the same information on the web might take many more hours, produce less information that is less accurate, and require the use of slow and expensive internet services. In addition, this approach allows donors to fund one project that serves the needs of all island countries.

AliensL

This is a listserv run by IUCN/ISSG. It allows people with an interest in alien species work to send out questions that other members may be able to answer. The discussions on the listserv fall into three broad groups:

- queries about technical questions (e.g. I am looking for any information on the health effects of fireweed (*Senecio madagascarensis*) on geese or other waterfowl.)
- alerting people to press releases, conferences, etc that might interest them
- debates about philosophical questions

Cooperation Surveys

NZ has a strong aid and biodiversity relationship to Chile. As CHM Focal Point I undertook an exercise to identify potential areas of technical cooperation between the two countries. This involved:

- I visited Chile and met with senior people in key agencies to identify the type of work that they are doing.
- I then wrote a paper setting out those areas where I felt that NZ expertise could be useful to them.
- We then met again to prioritise areas for cooperation.
- I have since helped them to access funding from NZ Aid and other donors to undertake the cooperation work, e.g. by helping them write funding applications.

A colleague then gained NZ Aid funding to undertake a more detailed survey of the potential for cooperation with Chile and Argentina in the area of marine biodiversity.

We are now looking at similar exercises with Peru and Mexico.

In many cases, the areas of potential cooperation were not ones which the Chilean officials had considered. In some cases this was because they were not aware of how different their approaches were to what NZ considers best practice. In other cases it was because they did not realise that NZ had similar biodiversity or similar work areas.

CHM Focal Point as Point of Contact

Rather than creating a web site, we have used the CHM focal point as our main CHM mechanism. Biodiversity managers outside NZ can contact me and ask about NZ expertise in specific areas. I will then help them to identify whether NZ has expertise that may help them, and if so to connect with that expertise.

For example, a Chilean agency recently sought help with finding an expert they could hire to work on standards to reduce waste oil discharges to inland waters. I identified a number of possible experts in NZ, translated the spanish documents to English for them to read, and then helped them to respond to Chile. Interestingly, the Chileans had concluded by looking at NZ web sites that NZ was the right source of expertise, but our experts advised that while NZ had standards that looked good on paper, the system was not functioning well in practice and we were not the right place to look for the type of expertise they wanted.

Mink Network

In working with the Chileans, I learned that they have a problem with invasive minks. Discussions with a Danish colleague at COP 6 meant that I knew that Denmark also had a problem. At COP 7, I identified 5 countries (Chile, Denmark, Iceland, Finland and the UK) who all had mink problems and were either working on that problem now or planning work in the near future. Representatives of all the countries agreed that creating an email network of the experts working in the field would be useful. I also hope to connect them to NZ's network of people working on stoat control (another mustelid species). My role would be simply to provide an initial connection and occasionally encourage them to maintain the link.

What Could We Do to Enhance the CHM

Looking at these models and our experience, I would suggest that there are three things that we could do in the short term that would enhance the effectiveness of the CHM.

Create More Cooperative Networks

Identify a small number of issues in which technology transfer and development would enhance biodiversity management in a number of countries. The following are a few

examples of areas that have been discussed in the margins of the CBD, but there may be better issues out there:

- Development of standards for deciding whether hull fouling is a quarantine risk (for the Pacific and adjacent Southern Ocean).
- Identifying best practice for establishing quarantine systems within a country for offshore islands and archipelagos.
- Identifying and enhancing best practice for forest fire risk assessment systems, generally and for groups of countries with similar vegetation (looked at from a fuel perspective).

Find one person who would act as a network facilitator for setting up an initial linkage between experts working in these fields. Then use the CHM focal points network to identify potential collaborators for the network and pass these to the linkage person.

If the CHM focal point network worked on even only a few of these a year, it would be a significant contribution to technology cooperation at very small cost to focal points.

Advertise Networks and Cooperative Initiatives

We could add a place on the CHM web site in which networks could advertise themselves, or where people could advertise a need for a network.

Encourage the Funding of New Cooperative Initiatives

The CHM (in the form of the Secretariat unit and the focal points) could “adopt” one or two new cooperative initiatives (based on the islands model), and actively seek support for them (funding for a coordinator or hosting for the work). In the case of the CII, the coordinator is funded by the NZ Government, and his accommodation and administrative support provided by ISSG and Auckland University.

In choosing suitable topics for initiatives, the programme officers could play a key role, and SBSTTA Focal points could be consulted as well. The programme officers could then take a lead in providing terms of reference for the initiative. COP has already explicitly identified the need for a cooperative initiative on marine alien species, and there are probably elements in POWs that could be achieved through such initiatives.

Identifying Translation Services

COP 7 recognised that there was a need to develop new sources of free translation for technical material of interest to other countries. Again, the CHM focal points network could seek possible sources of such services, and then help connect them to priority needs. Possible sources would be language courses, companies that use translators and might be prepared to donate a proportion of their time, volunteers, universities, etc.