



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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ENGLISH ONLY

MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Curitiba, Brazil
19 March 2006

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting of the CHM Informal Advisory Committee was held on Sunday, 19 March 2006, in Curitiba, Brazil.

PARTICIPATION

2. The following participants attended the meetings:

CHM IAC Members

Mr. Jackie van Goethem	CBD & CHM NFP, Belgium, Acting Chair
Mr. Soumayila Bancé	CBD & CHM NFP, Burkina Faso
Mr. Horst Freiberg	CHM NFP, Germany
Mr. Jeremy Harrison	Head, CBD & Reg. Agreements Programme, UNEP-WCMC
Mr. Tom Hammond	Senior Programme Advisor, IUCN
Mr. James Edwards	Executive Director, GBIF
Mr. Beatriz Torres	Senior Programme Officer, GBIF
Ms. Dora Ann Lange Canhos	CRIA, Brazil
Ms. Bonnie Caroll	President, International Bioinformatics Foundation, USA
Mr. Preston Hardison	Policy Advisor, Tulalip Tribes

Observers

Mr. Frank Bisby	Executive Director, Species 2000
Mr. Dario Mandelburger	CBD & CHM NFP, Paraguay
Ms. Véronique Gérard	Paraguay Wildlife Project, UNDP Paraguay

SCBD

Mr. Olivier de Munck	Computer Information Systems Officer, CHM
Mr. Ryan Hill	Programme Officer, GTI & Invasive Alien Species

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. The meeting was opened at 9:30 a.m. by Olivier de Munck on behalf of the Executive Secretary, and Mr. Jackie Van Goethem was elected as Acting Chair.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Item 2.1. Adoption of the Agenda

4. The draft provisional agenda was adopted.

Item 2.2. Organization of work

5. The proposed organization of work contained in annex I of the annotated agenda was approved.

Item 2.3. Welcome new members

6. The chair welcomed the non-members who were attending the meeting, and he thanked them for their interest in the clearing-house mechanism.

Item 3. Presentation of the note on clearing-house mechanism activities during the inter-sessional period (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/17)

7. The Secretariat presented a summary of the activities implemented by the clearing-house mechanism during its inter-sessional period, as reported in document UNEP/CBD/COP/8/17.

Comments from participants on Item 3.

8. The issue of low rates of participation in electronic forums was raised. This is generally due to a lack of user interest. Therefore, it is important to think strategically about a forum before deciding to create a new one. A forum requires good moderation to remain interesting to users and to ensure that information is up-to-date. Dual access to the forum by e-mail and the web can also increase participation.

9. Information exchange can benefit from further development in interoperability mechanisms. The Environment Management Group recently organized a meeting on this topic and the CHM should be involved in this initiative. Common formats and protocols are the two major building blocks to design distributed networks. Many existing examples, such as DiGIR could be useful to expand the CHM network and GBIF could act as a facilitator.

10. Some focus should be placed at the national and regional levels to increase the participation of country nodes and thematic focal points in the CHM network.

11. Regarding the in-depth review of the CHM for COP-10 proposed by the Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention, the COP should provide the terms of references and some guidance on how this review should be carried out. If requested, the CHM IAC could assist the COP in this process.

Item 4. Presentation of the draft updated strategic plan of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2005-2010 (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/18)

12. The Secretariat presented the updated CHM strategic plan as described in the draft updated strategic plan of the Clearing-House Mechanism for the period 2005-2010 (UNEP/CBD/COP/8/18).

Comments from participants on Item 4.

13. The CHM strategic plan has many objectives and it would be helpful to set up priorities among them.

14. The main objective is to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation. Several things could contribute to the achievement of this objective. The promotion of scientific and technical cooperation would benefit from a marketing effort, such as advertising government initiatives. Also, activities should be user-driven and respond to real needs.

15. More should be done in the field of technology transfer. Users are looking for practical solutions to specific problems. They would be interested in a distributed search that would query different information sources. What should be avoided is building a new portal that no-one uses because it does not offer any relevant service. The CHM IAC should continue to work closely with the Expert Group on Technology Transfer to explore possible options.

16. In many cases, there is a lack of scientific data and the CHM, in collaboration with relevant partners and organizations, should try to fill this gap. The CHM is not a scientific data provider, but other organizations, such as GBIF, are specialists in this field. The CHM can therefore play a role in promoting this type of information service to countries that could benefit from it. This partnership would not be limited to linking to the service. It would also include technical assistance on how to use this information service.

17. More generally, the CHM should continue to advocate the use of common formats, protocols and standards to implement interoperability, and the use of metadata for more effective information retrieval through distributed searches. BioCASE and the Species 2000 Catalog of Life were mentioned as examples.

18. The issue of financial support was also raised. Countries need more guidance on how to get support from GEF or from other sources.

Item 5: Discussion on the proposals in section III E, Facilitating the full use and access to the services provided by the clearing-house mechanism, of document UNEP/CBD/COP/8/28/Add.1, addendum to the proposed budget for the programme of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the biennium 2007-2008

19. The Secretariat presented the vision put forward by the Executive Secretary to facilitate the full use and access to the services provided by the Clearing-House Mechanism. National CHM were grouped into different categories based on their level of development and specific actions were recommended to address the needs of each level.

Comments from participants on Item 5.

20. The classification of National CHM by development level was considered as a useful approach to define an appropriate support strategy. It should be expanded to provide more details at each level.
21. The human factor is essential. It is important to work with the right people because a CHM NFP has an important pro-active role to fulfill in developing a National CHM. Identifying the right host institution for the National CHM is also a key factor.
22. Exchanging information is not the final objective. The higher-level goal is the 2010 target. It would be interesting to have a way to measure the impact of the CHM on the 2010 target.

Item 6: Brainstorming discussion on activities of the Clearing-House Mechanism to contribute to the implementation of the Convention and achievement of the 2010 target with a special focus on capacity-building and technical cooperation

23. Some guidance to the brainstorming session was provided by the Secretariat.

Comments from participants on Item 6.

24. The focus should be on implementation. Small concrete actions are better than huge plans. In the case of technology transfer, a link should be established between providers and potential users. These can be done through partnerships with very concrete activities.
25. The role of each actor should be clearly specified and implementation progress should be monitored. We should not hesitate to return to the COP decisions to check their implementation status. By comparing what has been achieved and not achieved, gaps and barriers could be identified to determine further actions. To the extent possible, we should measure impacts rather than processes.
26. National Reports contain information on the implementation status on the CHM, but they should be complemented by other mechanisms for assessing needs and demands. The CHM should develop a culture of feedback through web statistics and user surveys. These surveys could take the form of popup or bottom-of-page surveys.
27. Some specialized organizations (GBIF, Species 2000, IABIN) can offer a wide range of scientific information and partnerships with them should be more effective. The International Council for Science (ICSU) is also a valuable source of scientific information.
28. One of the priorities of the CHM should be to identify information relevant to national implementation. Once identified, the information can be stored in a database of web links with multiple ways to access it. Pages with frequently asked questions (FAQ) or questions and answers (Q&A) can be prepared. This information can also be disseminated through syndication mechanisms (RSS Feeds).
29. Other ways to support national implementation are case studies, best practices and user-group discussions in which technical questions can be answered by experts.

30. It was reminded that many developing countries still lack basic equipment facilities and experience difficulties in accessing the Internet. This is a major barrier to on-line information services. Therefore, off-line information sources, such as CD-ROMs, should be made available. The CHM can be a great facilitator of scientific and technical cooperation by disseminating the Catalog of Life CD-ROM, or the recent CBD CD-ROM on technology transfer. If needed, fax-based communication services should also be used.

31. Some examples of concrete cases of technology transfer needs were given in the context of local communities. The first one was about a handicraft technique that would facilitate the splitting of bamboos. The second one was about the possible replacement of plastic bags by organic bags in oil palm plantations. Experience has shown that better results were achieved through bilateral cooperation and human contacts, rather than through electronic mechanisms.

32. A technology transfer section is available on the German CHM and other countries are encouraged to do the same. The Belgian CHM is in the process of compiling technological information that will be made available on-line. The use of common formats and tools would facilitate access to this information through a future central gateway on technology transfer.

33. Given the high number of activities present in the CHM programme of work, it was recommended to prepare an operational plan to detail the implementation process.

ITEM 7. OTHER MATTERS

34. GBIF requested a revision of the minutes of previous CHM IAC meeting, held on 27 November 2005 in Montréal, in order to better reflect some of their views. The participants agreed that a draft revised version could be prepared and circulated by the Secretariat for approval by those who attended that meeting.

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

35. The meeting was closed on Sunday, 19 March 2006 at 4:00 p.m. The Acting Chair thanked all participants for their valuable contributions to this fruitful meeting.

Annex

Provisional organization of work for the Meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee
To the Clearing-house Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity
Curitiba, Brazil
19 March 2006

Sunday

19 March 2006

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

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. Presentation of document UNEP/CBD/COP/8/17, *Clearing-House Mechanism activities during the inter-sessional period.*
4. Presentation of document UNEP/CBD/COP/8/18, *Draft updated strategic plan of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2005-2010*
5. Discussion on the proposals in Section III.E, *Facilitating the full use and access to the services provided by the Clearing-House Mechanism*, of document UNEP/CBD/COP/8/28/Add.1, *addendum to the proposed budget for the programme of work of the Convention on Biological Diversity for the biennium 2007-2008.*

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

6. Brainstorming discussion on the implementation the Convention and achievement of the 2010 target with a special focus on capacity-building and technical cooperation
7. Other matters
8. Closure of the meeting
