CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

**MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM OF THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**
Paris, France
7 July 2007

SYNTHESIS OF THE CONTENT OF THE THIRD NATIONAL REPORTS
FOR ARTICLES 17 AND 18

INTRODUCTION

A.   Background

1.   In its decision VIII/14, paragraph 18(b), the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to prepare an updated synthesis of information contained in the third national reports, and a strategic analysis that identifies barriers to implementation and options for overcoming those barriers.

2.   Given the large quantity of information contained in the third national reports, a synthesis of such information could be very handy for Parties and other stakeholder. As far as the clearing-house mechanism is concerned, the synthesis of Articles 17 and 18 is of particular relevance.

B.   Methodology and limitations

3.   The synthesis was prepared by the Secretariat in April 2007 based on 102 reports available at that time. The National Report Analyzer was extensively used to generate global statistics and group comments for Parties that have submitted their reports. The synthesis was then prepared by having a detailed look at all answers and comments. Even though the best efforts were made to capture the most relevant information, this exercise has its limitations and the next sections may not fully reflect the reality.

ARTICLE 17. EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

A.   Introduction

4.   It was determined at the outset that the exchange of relevant information on biological diversity could contribute to the implementation of the Convention. It is the rationale behind Article 17(1) stating that "the Contracting Parties shall facilitate the exchange of information, from all publicly available sources, relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account the special needs of developing countries".

5.   Article 17(2) refers to important types of relevant information such as technical, scientific and socio-economic research, training and surveying programmes, specialized knowledge, indigenous and traditional knowledge and repatriation of information.

6.   The questions are organized as follows:

- Question 126 relates to Article 17(1) and globally assesses the measures taken by Parties to facilitate the exchange of information.

- Question 127 is intended only for developed-country Parties and verifies whether they have taken into account both the special needs of developing countries, and the specific types of information mentioned in Article 17(2).

- Finally, Box LVII allows Parties to further elaborate on the implementation of this Article, the impacts of measures taken, and the constraints that were encountered.

B.   Synthesis of Responses

Question 126

126.	◊ On Article 17(1), has your country taken measures to facilitate the exchange of information from publicly available sources with a view to assist with the implementation of the Convention and promote technical and scientific cooperation?	
a)	No	4
b)	No, but potential measures are under review	7
c)	Yes, some measures are in place	67
d)	Yes, comprehensive measures are in place	13

7.   The main conclusion is that at least 80 countries have taken measures to facilitate the exchange of information related to the Convention. As only 4 countries responded "No", it is likely that measures have been taken by countries that have yet to submit their third national report.

Question 127

The following question (127) is for DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

127.	◊ On Article 17(1), has your country taken measures to facilitate the exchange of information from publicly available sources with a view to assist with the implementation of the Convention and promote technical and scientific cooperation?	
a)	No	10

| b) | Yes, but they do not include the categories of information listed in Article 17(2), such as technical, scientific and socio-economic research, training and surveying programmes, specialized knowledge, repatriation of information and so on | 8 |
| c) | Yes, and they include categories of information listed in Article 17 (2), such as technical, scientific and socio-economic research, training and surveying programmes, specialized knowledge, repatriation of information and so on | 12 |

8. The answers to this question are slightly biased due to the fact that a few developing countries answered "No" or "N/A". Since no developed country responded negatively, an adjusted interpretation is that measures have been taken, but some of them did not cover the categories of information listed in Article 17(2).

Box LVII

Box LVII.

| Please elaborate below on the implementation of this article and associated decisions specifically focusing on: outcomes and impacts of actions taken; contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention; contribution to progress towards the 2010 target; progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans; contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; constraints encountered in implementation. | 54 |

9. The comments usually describe information exchange initiatives that have been undertaken either at the national level, or in collaboration with regional or international organizations. There are references to many websites, information networks and national clearing-house mechanisms.

10. The main points of the 54 comments provided can be summarized as follows:

- 10 describe problems or constraints (e.g. lack of resources); 6 comprise neutral information;
- 20 describe some positive results; and 18 describe major achievements (national networks).
- 18 countries refer to either the establishment of their national CHM or national network on biodiversity.
- 18 report their participation in international networks or initiatives: 6 countries describe their national node of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) network, 6 mention their participation in European environmental networks, such as the European Network of Biodiversity Information (ENBI) or Natura2000, and another 6 refer to other international intiatives.
- Approximately 20 countries mention national databases or museum collections.

11.   More details are available in the table below.

Type	Number	Countries
Problems or constraints	10	- bd: lack of capacity - ba: some projects but low implementation - br: difficulties due to dispersed information - cm: lack of funds - td: lack of financial, material and human resources - sv: limited human and financial resources; resistance towards inter-institutional coordination - id: uneven national progress due to imbalances of instruments and mechanisms - mw: inadequate capacity, lack of enabling policy, lack of national information management standards, lack of information on national biodiversity - ph: low priority so far, national information is not organized, CHM is not operational - uz: long list of obstacles (lack of resources, capacity, information, policies, participation)
Neutral information	6	- by: national library - bw: information exchange is useful - in: information exchange taking place at national level, but limited at international level - mr: CHM & BCH contribute to information exchange - ne: lack of resources, information scattered - si: no specific measures
Positive results	20	am, cl, ci, cu, ee, et, ir, il, kz, lb, na, nl, ro, rw (awareness through meetings and radio), sz, tj, tt, tn, ug, gb
Major achievements	18	au, be, ca, cn, co, dk, eur, de, hu, lv, lt, my, mx, ma, no, pl, md, se
National CHM	11	au, be, br, ca, co, cu, ee, eur, de, ir, lv
National Network	12	- au: Environmental Resources Information Network (ERIN) - be: Belgian Biodiversity Platform (BBPF) - ca: Federal Biodiversity Information Partnership (FBIP), Canadian Information System for teh Environment (CISE), NatureServe's Conservation Data Centres (CDC) - cl: Sistema Nacional de Información Ambiental (SINIA) - cn: national exchange mechanism for biodiversity information & many specialized professional networks - co: Project to create a Sistema de Información Ambiental - et: Ethiopian Environment Information System (Ethio-EIN) under progress - de: German Environmental Information Network (GEIN), Diversitas Germany - mx: Sistema Nacional de Información sobre Biodiversidad (SNIB), Comisión nacional para el conocimiento y uso de la biodiversidad (CONABIO) - my: Integration of national databases for information sharing - ro: BioPlatform program
GBIF Node	6	au (ABIF), be (BeBIF), ca (CBIF), cl, dk (DanBIF), se

Type	Number	Countries
European Networks	6	- European Network for Biodiversity Information (ENBI) - European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS) - Natura2000 - European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET) - Community Research & Development Information Service (CORDIS) - be: ENBI, EPBRS, Natura2000 - dk: ENBI - ee: Natura2000 - eur: CORDIS, Eionet, Eur-Lex - de: Natura2000 - lt: Natura2000
Other Networks	6	- au: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) - ca: NatureServe - cl: Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) - et: African Environmental Information Network (AEIN) - kz: Central Asia Regional Council (CAREC), ECONET - lv: BioCASE
National Databases or Museum collections	19	- am: thematic & taxonomic databases - au: Australia's Virtual Herbarium (AVH), Online Zoological Collections of Australian Museums (OZCAM) - bd: national databases and websites - by: national library - be: digitized taxonomical collections, African Birds Database - ca: NatureServe's CDCs, Museums, CBIF - cl: Centro de Documentación (CEDOC), various databases - cn: database system of biodiversity in China - co: taxonomic and other databases (cooperation, experts, etc) - dk: GBIF hosted at Zoological museum, natural history collections - et: national databases and websites - de: Many databases, FloraWeb, Genetic Resources Information System, GTZ Information Service - my: national biodiversity inventories by FRIM - kz: various projects and databases - lb: National databases (including taxonomic & library) - lt: Many national institutions with websites, Environmental Information Center - pl: large collections and databases - md: many databases, Environmental Information Centre - se: digitizing collections from Swedish Natural History Museums, FishBase

C. Assessment of Progress

12.   There has been tremendous progress in the exchange of information since the adoption of the Convention. Although the types of measures undertaken by countries to facilitate the exchange of information vary, nearly all countries have undertaken measures in this regard. 12 countries have reported that they have implemented a national network. 12 countries are also participating in international biodiversity information networks, such the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) taxonomic network. In addition, there are numerous information networks specialized in specific areas related to the Convention.

13.   The fact that obstacles such as technological barriers have been diminishing has greatly contributed to the improvement in the capacity of many countries to access and exchange information.

14.   Even if it is difficult to accurately assess how useful and effective each of the measures or initiatives has been for research and decision-makers, their global impact is definitely extremely valuable.

15.   However, given the abundance of existing information sources on biodiversity, the new challenge is to acquire the most relevant information for decision-making. This raises the issue of knowledge management, a recent concept highlighting the difference between information, and the knowledge that should be extracted from it in order to make useful and sound decisions. Future progress in information exchange will have to take this important issue into account.

ARTICLE 18. TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

A. Introduction

16.   The purpose of Article 18 is to promote international technical and scientific cooperation between Parties in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Such cooperation is facilitated by a clearing-house mechanism which was established at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in accordance with Article 18(3).

17.   Articles 18(4) and 18(5) further define the scope of cooperation by requesting Parties to encourage and develop methods of cooperation for the development and use of technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies, and to promote the establishment of joint research programmes and joint ventures for the development of technologies.

18.   Reference is also made to Annex I of Decision V/14 which describes the measures to be undertaken by Parties and Governments in the 2001-2002 Biennum.

19.   The questions are organized as follows:

- Question 128 relates to Article 18(1) and globally assesses whether Parties have taken measures to promote international technical and scientific cooperation.
- Question 129 relates to Article 18(4) by focusing on methods of cooperation for the development and use of technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies.
- Question 130 relates to Article 18(5) concerning the establishment of joint research programmes and ventures for the development of technologies.
- Questions 131 to 134 allow Parties to report on the implementation on the following key paragraphs of Annex I of Decision V/14:
    (a) the establishment of links to relevant organizations;

(b) the assistance provided by developed countries;

(c) the usefulness of the CHM to researchers and decision-makers;

(d) the development and provision of services and tools.

- Finally Box LVIII allows Parties to further elaborate on the implementation of this Article, the impacts of measures taken, and the constraints that were encountered.

B.   *Synthesis of Responses*

Question 128

128.	◊ On Article 18(1), has your country taken measures to promote international technical and scientific cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity?	
a)	No	2
b)	No, but potential measures are under review	8
c)	Yes, some measures are in place (please provide details below)	69
d)	Yes, comprehensive measures are in place (please provide details below)	14
Further information on the measures to promote international technical and scientific cooperation.		78

20.   The answers clearly indicate that nearly all countries are involved in international technical and scientific cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The main players are United Nations institutions (e.g. GEF, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, FAO), large international NGOs specialized in biodiversity (e.g. IUCN, WWF, BirdLife), Regional Organizations (e.g. European Commission, ASEAN), and bilateral cooperation agencies from the most developed countries (e.g. German GTZ, Canadian CIDA, Swedish SIDA).

21.   International cooperation is also promoted through multilateral agreements and initiatives which typically focus on a particular thematic area (e.g. Ramsar, CITES, CGIAR on agriculture, CIFOR on forests), and through regional or national networks (e.g. American IABIN, Asian ASEAN, European Eionet, African AEIN Commonwealth CSIRO, Canadian CBIN, Belgian ABIC)

22.   Given differences in the level of reporting and the vast number of existing initiatives, representative global figures on cooperation cannot be extracted from these national reports.

Question 129

129.	◊ On Article 18(4), has your country encouraged and developed methods of cooperation for the development and use of technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies, in pursuance of the objectives of this Convention?	
a)	No	31
b)	No, but relevant methods are under development	29
c)	Yes, methods are in place	32

23.   The answers are split equally among the 3 groups. 31 countries indicate that measures are in place, 29 indicate that measures were under development, and the remaining 32 countries indicate that nothing has been undertaken in this regard. These answers illustrate that the development and use of technologies, including indigenous and traditional technologies, has not been prioritized by many countries.

Question 130

130.	◊ On Article 18(5), has your country promoted the establishment of joint research programmes and joint ventures for the development of technologies relevant to the objectives of the Convention?	
a)	No	22
b)	Yes (please provide some examples below)	69
Examples for the establishment of joint research programmes and joint ventures for the development of technologies relevant to the objectives of the Convention.		64

24.   Responses to this question underline the fact that approximately 70 countries have been active in the establishment of joint research programmes and ventures for the development of technologies. Moreover, examples highlight that most of these programmes have been initiated through organizations mentioned in Q. 128. It should be noted that, due to their high number, a comprehensive inventory of these research programmes is beyond the scope of this national report.

Question 131

131.	Has your country established links to non-governmental organizations, private sector and other institutions holding important databases or undertaking significant work on biological diversity through the CHM? (decision V/14)	
a)	No	16
b)	No, but coordination with relevant NGOs, private sector and other institutions under way	28
c)	Yes, links established with relevant NGOs, private sector and institutions	49

25.   Approximately 50 countries have established links with partner organizations through their CHM, as requested by Decision V/14. Among those countries who have yet to do so, 28 are in the process of coordinating with relevant partners. Overall, this process can be considered as an ongoing activity for each national CHM.

Question 132

The following question (132) is for DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

132.	Has your country further developed the CHM to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to gain access to information in the field of scientific and technical cooperation? (decision V/14)	
a)	No	14
b)	Yes, by using funding opportunities	6
c)	Yes, by means of access to, and transfer of technology	9
d)	Yes, by using research cooperation facilities	7
e)	Yes, by using repatriation of information	7
f)	Yes, by using training opportunities	7
g)	Yes, by using promotion of contacts with relevant institutions, organizations and the private sector	14
h)	Yes, by using other means (please specify below)	4
Further comments on CHM developments to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to gain access to information in the field of scientific and technical cooperation		14

26.   Although this question was addressed to developed countries only, and fewer than 10 substantive comments were provided, it is nonetheless very informative. Unfortunately, they reveal that only a handful of national CHMs from developed countries are effectively assisting other countries to gain access to information in the field of scientific and technical cooperation. Paradoxically, most of the developed countries are very active in international cooperation (see Q. 128). An explanation for this could be that, in some countries, international cooperation is the mandate of a specialized national institution distinct from the national CHM. Since the main goal of the CHM is to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, coordination should be improved to involve the CHM in those cooperation initiatives.

27.   Details are available below. Empty answers (e.g. N/A) have been excluded and non-developed countries are in parenthesis.

Countries	Nothing	Funding	Techno.	Research	Repat.	Training	Contacts	Other
au			X	X			X	
at			X		X			
be		X	X	X	X	X	X	
(cm)							X	X
ca					X		X	
(cy)								X
(cz)	X						X	
dk							X	
eur		X	X	X		X	X	
(dm)	X							
fi			X		X		X	
fr	X							
de		X	X	X	X	X	X	
ie	X							
il	X							
jp	X							
lv	X							
nl			X			X	X	
no	X							
sg		X		X		X	X	
si	X							
se	X							
(tj)	X							
gb							X	

Question 133

133.	Has your country used the CHM to make information available more useful for researchers and decision-makers? (decision V/14)	
a)	No	12
b)	No, but relevant initiatives under consideration	36
c)	Yes (please provide details below)	41
Further comments on development of relevant initiatives.		62

28.   Approximately 40 countries have taken measures to make relevant information available to researchers and decision-makers through their national CHM. On the other hand, 12 countries report that nothing has been undertaken in this regard. This situation may also apply to the countries that have not submitted a third national report.

29.   Most of the comments describe the type of information available on the national CHM, and confirm that the CHM is a useful tool for researchers and decision-makers. Approximately 10 countries provide further details about their national information networks.

Question 134

134.	Has your country developed, provided and shared services and tools to enhance and facilitate the implementation of the CHM and further improve synergies among biodiversity-related Conventions? (decision V/14)	
a)	No	53
b)	Yes (please specify services and tools below)	33
Further comments on services and tools to enhance and facilitate the implementation of CHM and further improve synergies among biodiversity-related Conventions.		45

30.   More than 50 countries report that no services and tools have been developed, whereas 33 countries report that tools and services have been provided. At least 10 countries refer to their national CHM website as the on-line service through which information is shared. To date, the main tool developed in this regard is the European Portal Toolkit which is being used by most European national CHMs as well as by almost 20 African countries. Approximately 10 countries mention initiatives specifically targeted towards improving synergies among biodiversity-related conventions, mainly through national coordination mechanisms.

Box LVIII

Box LVIII.

Please elaborate below on the implementation of this article and associated decisions specifically focusing on: outcomes and impacts of actions taken; contribution to the achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Convention; contribution to progress towards the 2010 target; progress in implementing national biodiversity strategies and action plans; contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; constraints encountered in implementation.	47

31.   Most of the comments describe the status of implementation of the national CHM which varies greatly from country to country. Overall, as far as the national CHM is concerned, three rough patterns can be distinguished:

- First, little or nothing has been done in countries that lack a strong commitment to a national CHM. This is the situation in the can occur in countries that are either developing or developed.

- At the other extreme, there is a second pattern that illustrates that at least 10 countries have significantly invested in a national biodiversity information network which constitutes their national CHM. Reported examples (from Boxes LVII or LVIII) include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, the European Community, Germany and Mexico. It is interesting to note that half of these countries are not developed countries.

- Lastly, there is the common situation where the national CHM consists mainly of a national website and where efforts are being taken to enhance the information made available.

32.   Each of these situations is associated with specific challenges or difficulties. In the first case, the main problem is to mount a project and obtain the support needed to establish a national CHM. In the second case, managing a national biodiversity network is a real challenge that requires permanent effort. In the third situation, sustainability and limited capacity are often the main issues that limit further development.

C.   Assessment of Progress

33.   Although the scope of the third national report cannot provide an exhaustive list of all cooperation initiatives related to implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, it is clear that important progress has been made in the field of international technical and scientific cooperation.

34.   International organizations specialized in cooperation have been playing a major role. These organizations include not only United Nations system institutions (e.g. GEF, UNEP, UNDP, UNESCO, FAO) but also large international NGOs (e.g. IUCN, WWF) and regional institutions.   Bilateral cooperation agencies should also be credited for their efforts.

35.   Geographically, mega-diverse countries have benefited greatly from international cooperation and attracted the main players undertaking projects in the field of conservation and sustainable use.

36.   In contrast to these cooperation initiatives on biodiversity, only a handful of national clearing-house mechanisms from developed countries have assisted other countries to gain access to information in the field of scientific and technical cooperation. In many cases, the impact of such support depends on the beneficiary country's commitment to establish a sustainable national clearing-house mechanism. It should be noted that several developing countries have achieved this goal with very limited external support. Their experience could be useful to other countries.

37.   The table below summarizes the status of implementation of the national clearing-house mechanisms, based on the Secretariat's records as of April 2007.

Region	Parties / Countries	CHM NFP	CHM Websites
Africa	52/53	47	19
Asia and the Pacific	54/56	41	12
Central and Eastern Europe	23/23	18	13
Latin America and the Caribbean	33/33	29	17
Western European and Others	28/31	25	21
Total	**190/196**	**160**	**82**

38.   Overall, it is not always clear to what extent these international cooperation initiatives have been facilitated by the clearing-house mechanism. Many factors, such as national strategies and global awareness about the Convention, have to be taken into account. Another difficulty in assessing impact relates to the fact that the Secretariat receives very limited feedback on implementation. Such feedback would be extremely valuable, particularly if a link could be drawn between decisions and implementation.

39.   Given the above, further collaboration between cooperation agencies and the Secretariat should attempt to fill this information gap by systematically sharing feedback on implementation. Each Party should also be allowed to contribute to this knowledge base.   In this context, the clearing-house mechanism could play an important role through the provision of a global platform which enables such information exchange.