

**Convention on
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ENGLISH ONLY

MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Nagoya, Japan, 17 October 2010

REPORT OF THE MEETING**INTRODUCTION**

1. The meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM-IAC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held at the Nagoya Congress Center (NCC) in Nagoya, Japan, on Sunday 17 October 2010.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened by Mr. Ravi Sharma CBD Principal Officer, Implementation and Technical Support, at 9.40 a.m., on behalf of the Executive Secretary. Mr. Sharma welcomed the participants and highlighted key points related to the clearing-house mechanism (CHM). He mentioned that the Convention on Biological Diversity was entering a new phase and that the CHM should be linked to the new Strategic Plan to be discussed during the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. He advised the Committee to consider the role of the CHM beyond biodiversity conservation by taking into account socio-economic and scientific aspects. He confirmed that the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity would soon have a strengthened team to further develop the information services of the central CHM.

3. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Han de Koeijer, Belgian CHM NFP. The Chair thanked the former Chair, Mr. Asghar Fazel of Iran, and welcomed new members and guests. Participants were then kindly given the opportunity to introduce themselves. A brief list of participants is annexed.

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ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Adoption of the agenda

4. The provisional agenda prepared by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2010/1/1) was adopted by the Committee.

2.2. Organization of work

5. The proposed organization of work was adopted by the Committee.

ITEM 3. PRESENTATIONS

6. This item began with a presentation by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity on progress made and recommendations for further development of the CHM. The presentation highlighted some key findings from document UNEP/CBD/COP/10/15 as well as the rationale behind the proposed mission, goals and objectives for the period 2011-2020. A question and answer session followed.

7. The second presentation, made by Mr. Han de Koeijer, was on the Belgian partnership with guidance on how to strengthen national capacity to develop a national CHM. He first reminded that the partnership was demand-driven and that its 5-year strategy was prepared based on the recommendations made by the partners during a brainstorming workshop held in 2007. Statistics of capacity-building and website usage were analyzed. Then, he shared his views on how a 4-year capacity-building programme for national CHM could be structured if significant funding was made available. This programme would involve a preparatory phase with the constitution of a national committee, followed by gradual establishment of a national CHM with several supporting activities.

8. Mr. Samy Gaiji, Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Senior Programme Officer for Science and Scientific Liaison, made a presentation on GBIF services to support Parties in the implementation of the Convention. After some general background, he described the current challenges faced by the biodiversity community in terms of access to relevant scientific information. To cope with this challenge, he recommended an approach that focused on good needs assessments and use cases by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the national CHM Focal Points. He then showed examples of such use cases for threatened, invasive and migratory species combined with other data sources such as protected areas.

9. Later in the day, there was a presentation by Mr. Marcos Silva, CITES Senior Training Officer and Co-chair of the MEA Information and Knowledge Management (MEA IKM) initiative. He gave some background information and described the achievements so far. He insisted on the fact that this initiative was driven by the MEAs themselves and that one objective was to build MEA capacity for information and knowledge sharing. He also took this opportunity to briefly present the CITES Virtual College and e-Permitting projects.

ITEM 4. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

4.1. *Mission, goals and objectives*

10. Under this item, the recommended mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020 were reviewed. There was a consensus among the participants that the proposed mandate established a good strategic framework to support the forthcoming updated CBD Strategic Plan.

4.2. *Priority activities*

11. This item started with a detailed presentation from the Secretariat on the information services envisaged for the central CHM, as described in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2010/1/3. This document recommends to organize the services by level of user involvement (readers vs. contributors) and by platform (website or others). The big picture can be summarized as follows:

(a) CBD web users looking for information should be able to access it as easily as possible. This is the goal of the knowledge base which should provide a global search engine as well as a good navigation mechanism between related resources;

(b) CBD web users willing to contribute by sharing information or knowledge should be able to do so in a user-friendly yet secure manner. This could be achieved through a user workspace integrating a streamlined user account creation process, a submission system, collaboration tools, and quick access to information directly related to the identified user;

(c) Information exchange between the central CHM and other information sources should be facilitated through an interoperability mechanism that automates data transfer. This assumes that the Secretariat and its partners agree on an information exchange protocol and corresponding data formats. The Secretariat proposes to investigate the Open Data Protocol, which has been designed precisely for this purpose;

(d) Given the increasing popularity of smart phones and the fact that many CBD stakeholders travel frequently, it is likely that a smart phone application providing quick access to key CBD information would be well-received.

12. The implementation of the core part of these central services is a priority for the Secretariat in order to establish a strong central infrastructure for the CHM network. This infrastructure will facilitate collaboration, information exchange, and knowledge sharing among Parties and partners.

13. In parallel, work to strengthen national CHM should be pursued. This is expected to be a sustained effort led by national CHM NFPs in each country, with additional support whenever possible. The experiences of the Belgian CHM Partnership and of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) are very valuable, and they could serve as models to undertake similar initiatives in other regions of the world.

4.3. *Other issues*

14. The issue of resources for developing national CHMs was raised. The Committee wished for more accessible funding for expanding regional partnerships. However, the Committee was reminded that GEF allocation was essentially country-based, and that it would be unrealistic to expect significant support for regional initiatives under this scheme. Nevertheless, under GEF-5, developing countries could still get some support for their national CHM through the funding allocated to revise their NBSAP. They were therefore encouraged to do so in consultation with their national GEF Operational Focal Point. Other sources, such as bilateral cooperation, should also be targeted. As usual, donors were more likely to provide support if they saw a strong national commitment and efforts towards long-term sustainability.

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

15. A few matters related to the CHM-IAC were raised. First, the absence of funding for CHM-IAC meetings remained an issue. A request for such funding was made in the voluntary budget, but there was no guarantee that it would be fulfilled. The Chair said that he would try to mobilize funding to convene one intersessional meeting during 2011. For the rest, the Committee would have to continue to make use of communication technology to collaborate without face-to-face meetings.

16. The second point was related to membership. According to its operational procedures defined in decision VII/23, the membership of the CHM-IAC should be reviewed periodically. The recommended criteria for selection should include not only regional balance and expertise but also commitment, effective participation, and availability at major meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Secretariat and the Chair would collaborate to submit a proposal to the Executive Secretary.

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Under this item, the Committee summarized the main discussion points and made the following recommendations for the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism.

Secretariat

(a) The Secretariat should proceed with the implementation of the CHM central information services as described in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2010/1/3;

(b) The efforts made so far to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity in areas related to the CHM are welcome and should be pursued;

(c) The submission system should support various modes of submissions to distinguish between individual and Party submissions. Submissions should also remain accessible even after a change of user position;

(d) Linkages between the CHM and other CBD programmes should be strengthened;

Parties

(e) Parties are encouraged to include a CHM component with requesting GEF-5 funding to revise their NBSAPs;

(f) Coordination and collaboration at the national level are important to establish effective national CHMs and to facilitate successful NBSAP implementation;

(g) The use of meaningful titles or taglines is recommended to increase the attractiveness of national CHM websites;

(h) Parties which have not yet designated a CHM NFP should be reminded again to do so;

Partners

(i) Regional partnerships and other cooperation initiatives to build capacity for national CHMs should be encouraged;

(j) A process should be initiated with GBIF, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other partners to specify how more biodiversity data could be disseminated through the CHM network;

(k) Interoperability mechanisms should be developed to enable information exchange with partners such as the GEF, the Rio conventions, and other MEAs;

CHM-IAC

(l) The membership of the CHM-IAC should be reviewed, in accordance with its operational procedures;

(m) Funding for a CHM-IAC meeting would be welcome, particularly to prepare the next work programme for the CHM.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

18. The meeting was closed at 5.15 p.m. on Sunday, 17 October 2010.

ANNEX LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#	<i>Participant</i>	<i>E-mail</i>	<i>Government/Organization</i>
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