



Convention on Biological Diversity

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

Hyderabad, India, 7 October 2012

REPORT OF THE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

General information

1. The meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CHM-IAC) was held in Room G.02 of the Hyderabad International Conference Centre (HICC) on Sunday 7 October 2012 in Hyderabad, India, prior to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 11).

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened at 9.30 a.m. on 7 October 2012. The Chair, Mr. Han de Koeijer, Belgian CHM NFP, welcomed all participants. Mr. Olivier de Munck, CHM Programme Officer, also welcomed the participants and said a few words on behalf of the Executive Secretary. The participants were then given the opportunity to introduce themselves. The list of participants is available in annex I.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Adoption of the agenda

3. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2012/1/1).

2.2. Organization of work

4. The Committee adopted the proposed organization of work (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2012/1/1/Add.1).

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ITEM 3. PRESENTATIONS AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

3.1. *Work programme, progress and priorities*

5. The first presentation was made by Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) to provide the general background on the proposed work programme for the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31). This presentation included a summary of the progress made since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties as well as the priorities for the next intersessional period until the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

6. A general discussion followed with an exchange of views among the participants. They acknowledged that many tasks were carried out, as reflected by both this presentation and the progress report on the CHM (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/13/Add.2), but that there was also a lot of work ahead to implement the CHM work programme. The challenge for the next intersessional period would therefore be to prioritize the pending tasks to maximize impact with the available time and capacity. The following criteria could be used for prioritization:

(a) Activities that are on the critical path for providing key services to Parties (e.g. establish a productive web-based environment, ensure online security, develop modules allowing user contributions, etc.);

(b) Services that support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the NBSAP process and its national targets, and the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization;

(c) Provision of generic services, such as reporting functions about submissions by Parties that can benefit several programmes or major initiatives of high importance to the Convention (e.g. EBSA);

(d) Activities that have a high impact or visibility (e.g. case-studies, partnership initiative).

3.2. *Other presentations*

7. There were two additional presentations. The first one was made by Mr. Han de Koeijer (Belgium) who demonstrated the status of development of a pilot system that records national targets as well as the corresponding implementation activities. Once ready, this service is expected to be integrated in the European CHM Portal Toolkit. The participants welcomed the Belgian initiative to move towards the establishment of a system enabling Parties to keep track of the implementation of their planned activities to achieve national targets. The fact that this new information service was developed on the European CHM toolkit was also appreciated because it would allow Parties using that toolkit to benefit from it if they so wished. It was recommended that this initiative be pursued in consultation with the Secretariat of the Convention to improve interoperability and information flow with the central CHM.

8. The second presentation was made by Ms. Voahangy Raharimalala (Madagascar) who gave an overview of the situation of the national CHM in her country. Among other things, she emphasized the fact that there was a coordinated approach within major national institutions. The participants indicated that this was a good example that should inspire other countries.

ITEM 4. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

9. The following issues were discussed by the Committee:

(a) Audiences and user experience at global and national levels;

- (b) Ways to support national clearing-house mechanisms;
- (c) Promoting cross-programme coordination and synergies;
- (d) Additional issues.

4.1. Audiences and user experience at global and national levels

10. In accordance with its mission, the clearing-house mechanism is mandated to provide effective information services which contribute to the implementation of the Convention. Goals 1 and 2 of the clearing-house mechanism further elaborate this mandate at the global and national levels. It is therefore essential that primary target audiences are identified so that their expectations can be documented and prioritized. The development of relevant information services should derive from a coherent work programme for the CHM based on agreed priority actions. Such user-driven strategy is expected to greatly improve the effectiveness of the CHM.

11. Before considering audiences, it was noted that there were fundamental distinctions to make between various items:¹

- (a) The CHM as a concept encompassing all levels described below;
- (b) The central node of the CHM (central CHM managed by the Secretariat of the Convention) addressing global services of the CHM, such as global discovery and central information exchange hub;
- (c) The national nodes of the CHM (national CHMs) whose main purpose is to respond to country needs in line with their respective NBSAP;
- (d) Thematic and/or regional nodes of the CHM, complementing the central and national levels in specific thematic or geographic areas;
- (e) The CBD Secretariat website (www.cbd.int) which is at the same time the corporate website of the Secretariat of the Convention and the central node of the CHM.

12. The rationale for the dual function of the CBD website described above is to offer a single entry point to all CBD stakeholders and audiences. The role of the central CHM is not to manage all these audiences, but instead to act as a discovery mechanism routing to relevant sources without replicating their content. The central CHM is therefore a multi-audience entry point to the CBD website, to online services, and to external websites whose content is managed by their owners.

13. From a CBD corporate website perspective, the primary audience remains the Parties as well as those stakeholders interested in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 at the global level. This includes, but is not limited to, the National Focal Points interacting with the Secretariat of the Convention and participating in the negotiation processes. It also includes experts in thematic/scientific areas and major groups targeted by the communication, education and public awareness programme of the convention. It is important to keep in mind that, whenever needed, users of the CBD website should have access to relevant central CHM information services (e.g. search, submission, collaboration, reporting).

¹ The distinctions made in this paragraph were not all explicitly discussed during the meeting, but they are provided for the sake of clarity.

14. The national CHM websites logically fit into this big picture. Several national CHMs have identified as their audiences those involved in the implementation of the Convention, as well as national groups targeted by the national communication, education and public awareness programme. An approach similar to the central CHM can be adopted where the national CHM website would be a multi-audience entry point routing national users to the right place. In any case, the identified audiences and approaches depend on the national communication strategy arising from the NBSAP.

4.2. Ways to support national clearing-house mechanisms

15. Each Party has been asked to establish and sustain a national clearing-house mechanism as envisaged under goal 2 of the clearing-house mechanism as well as in several related decisions of the Conference of the Parties. Several views were expressed during the discussion on this topic:

(a) Further guidance should be provided to Parties on how to establish or further enhance their national CHM. However, the Executive Secretary is not expected to assist individual Parties to develop their specific national CHM. Instead, he should focus on general guidance applying to several Parties. Whenever possible, he should also refer Parties to existing partnerships and South-South cooperation opportunities;

(b) The interconnection between the central and national CHMs should be a priority in order to streamline and increase the information flow between these two levels, particularly for developing countries who may otherwise feel left behind;

(c) Parties should develop their national CHM to support the implementation of their NBSAP. A single model for such integration is unlikely to be appropriate for all parties. Therefore the priority of the CHM should be the provision of a general methodology on how to best approach the development of a national CHM;

(d) In order to provide Parties with sound evidence-based guidance, it would be preferable to undertake a general review of all national CHM websites to gather experiences, lessons learned and best practices. Given that there are currently 95 national CHM websites, such a review would require specific resources to be carried out thoroughly and comprehensively. CHM Partners could make a difference by contributing to this process;

(e) Capacity-building workshops on the CHM, and particularly on its contribution to the NBSAP process remain an important way to provide support to Parties, and to allow the CHM community to share experiences. The current co-organization model with relevant partners and in conjunction with regional meetings on NBSAP revision or other relevant topics is recommended and should be pursued in order to minimize costs and optimize synergies/benefits;

(f) The issue of web hosting was also discussed. As there is a wide range of available web hosting options, it is recommended to develop guidelines to help Parties choose the most appropriate option based on their situation.

4.3. Promoting cross-programme coordination and synergies

16. The clearing-house mechanism is expected to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Furthermore, many CBD programmes include activities related to the clearing-house mechanism, as indicated in the corresponding compilation of draft decisions elements in Annex II, Section C of the progress report (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/13/Add.2). However, the high number of requests in that annex raises the issue of coordination across various Convention programmes when it comes to core information services and other activities needed from the clearing-house mechanism. Such coordination can bring opportunities for synergies through common services or resource pooling, and to avoid hiring consultants to develop applications isolated from the central CHM, thus causing long-term maintenance issues.

17. During the discussion, the participants acknowledged the challenges ahead and the potential benefits arising from further coordination. They therefore strongly encourage the Executive Secretary to take any appropriate action with a view to improving coordination and synergies within the Secretariat of the Convention, for instance through the establishment of a cross-divisional task force or other appropriate means.

18. The participants indicated that they expected the future ABS Clearing-House to be integrated within the CHM since access and benefit sharing is the third objective of the Convention.

19. Some comments were also related to the involvement of the CHM in various partnerships, such as UNEP's MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (MEA-IKM) managing the InforMEA web portal, the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) coordinated by UNEP-WCMC, and the recent Global Invasive Alien Species Information Partnership (GIASIP). It was recommended that the CHM remained actively involved in these partnerships to ensure good coordination between these initiatives and related CHM activities.

4.4. Additional issues

20. Under this sub-item, there was a general discussion on how to improve the visibility and perception of the CHM by the Parties. The following recommendations were made:

(a) Further clarify the mandate and operation of the CHM and how this can be translated into information services;

(b) Share the list of current work programme priorities and corresponding activities so as to manage expectations;

(c) Disseminate a positive message on what the CHM has achieved so far and on how it could do more with additional resources;

(d) Consider increasing the priority of deliverables which have a high visibility (e.g. national targets or case studies).

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

21. Under this item, the Committee discussed matters related to its status and operations. First, the Secretariat of the Convention reminded the participants that the membership of the Committee was due for renewal. The Executive Secretary of the Convention is therefore expected to renew this membership once the Conference of the Parties, at its eleventh meeting, adopts the extension of the CHM IAC mandate.

22. The participants also raised concerns about the lack of funding to convene CHM-IAC meetings and the negative impact that this had on the attendance and effectiveness of the Committee. They noted that it was possible to minimize such costs by holding CHM-IAC meetings back-to-back with major CBD meetings (SBSTTA or WGRI) or by combining CHM-IAC meeting with other IAC meetings. They also recommended the following timing to maximize the effectiveness of these meetings:

(a) One meeting a few months after COP to determine how the CHM could best contribute to the implementation of the adopted decisions (3 to 6 months after COP);

(b) One meeting in the middle of the intersessional period to review the progress made and to make recommendations which can then be taken into account when drafting the next COP decisions (6 to 9 months before the next COP).

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

23. Further to the discussions, the Committee prepared recommendations for improving the implementation and impact of the clearing-house mechanism. These recommendations are available in annex II.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

24. The meeting was closed at 5:30 p.m. on 7 October 2012.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

#	<i>Government or Organization</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>E-mail</i>
1	Belgium	Mr. Han de Koeijer	han.dekoeijer@naturalsciences.be
2	Burundi	Mr. Benoît Nzigidahera	nzigidaherabenoit@yahoo.fr
3	Comoros	Mr. Hachime Abdérémane	hachimeabder@gmail.com
4	Canada	Ms. Krista Blackborrow	krista.blackborow@ec.gc.ca
5	Grenada	Mr. Spencer L. Thomas	sthomas@ectel.int
6	Guinea	Mr. Maadjou Bah	bahmaadjou@yahoo.fr
7	Madagascar	Ms. Voahangy Raharimalala	voahangy@pnae.mg
8	Morocco	Mr. Mostafa Madbouhi	mostamad@yahoo.fr
9	Niger	Mr. Boureima Boubacar	mounjoamirou@yahoo.com
10	France	Mr. Jean-Patrick Leduc	leduc@mnhn.fr
11	GBIF Secretariat	Mr. Samy Gaiji	sgaiji@gbif.org
12	UNEP-WCMC	Mr. Jerry Harrison	jerry.harrison@unep-wcmc.org
13	UNEP/STAP	Mr. Thomas Hammond	thomas.hammond@unep.org
14	CBD Secretariat	Mr. Olivier de Munck	olivier.demunck@cbd.int
15	CBD Secretariat	Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch	alexandre.rafalovitch@cbd.int

Annex II

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. *Work programme*

1. Undertake the following activities on a priority basis:
 - (a) Develop an action plan with priority activities based on COP decisions and identified users' needs, and monitor its progress and impacts;
 - (b) Strengthen the core infrastructure of the Central CHM to improve key information services to Parties, particularly those related to discoverability and two-way information exchange (e.g. search engine, interoperability, submissions, collaboration);
 - (c) Enhance the information services that support the NSBAP process, including online services to manage national targets and report progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
 - (d) Develop tools to interconnect the central and national CHMs, starting with basic national information such as national focal points;
 - (e) Develop guidelines for national CHMs;
 - (f) Continue to convene capacity-building workshops to strengthen national CHMs;
 - (g) Prepare a corporate communication strategy, taking into account the information needs of the communication, education and public awareness programme.

B. *Audiences*

2. Consider the central CHM as a discovery mechanism serving multiple audiences and that the primary audience of the CBD website consists of the National Focal Points as well as those stakeholders interested in the Strategic Plan at the global level.
3. Consider that the primary audience of the national CHM consists of those involved in the NBSAP process, and that further national audiences will depend on the national communication strategy arising from the NBSAP.

C. *Support to national clearing-house mechanisms*

4. Prepare guidance (e.g. guidelines, best practices) to Parties on how to establish or enhance their national CHM, including a general methodology on how to approach the development of a national CHM.
5. Provide tools (e.g. web plug-in, web services) that facilitate the interconnection between the central and national CHMs, particularly for developing countries, in order to streamline maintenance of information displayed on both the central and national CHMs.
6. Undertake a general review of national CHM websites to gather experiences, lessons learned and best practices, subject to available resources.
7. Continue to convene capacity-building workshops, preferably in cooperation with relevant partners.

8. Investigate how to involve further regional or thematic partners in the capacity-building process based on expressed users' needs.

D. Cross-programme coordination and synergies

9. Undertake initiatives with a view to improving coordination and synergies within the CBD Secretariat, for instance through the establishment of a cross-divisional task force or other appropriate means.
10. Ensure that the future ABS Clearing-House is well integrated with the rest of the central CHM.
11. Continue to remain involved in partnerships such as UNEP's MEA Information and Knowledge Management Initiative (MEA-IKM) managing the InforMEA web portal, the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (BIP) coordinated by UNEP-WCMC, and the recent Global Invasive Alien Species Information Partnership (GIASIP) to ensure good coordination between these initiatives and related CHM activities.

E. Visibility

12. Further clarify the concept of the CHM and how this concept is translated into information services that effectively contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
13. Share the list of current priorities and corresponding activities so as to manage expectations.
14. Disseminate a positive message on what the CHM has achieved so far and on how it could do more with further resources.
15. Consider increasing the priority of deliverables with high visibility (e.g. case studies, partnership initiatives).

F. CHM-IAC

16. Review the membership of the CHM-IAC in accordance with its operational procedures.
17. Mobilize funding for convening CHM-IAC meetings during the intersessional period.
18. Schedule the CHM-IAC meetings as follows:
 - (a) One meeting a few months after COP to determine how the CHM could best contribute to the implementation of the adopted decisions (3 to 6 months after COP);
 - (b) One meeting in the middle of the intersessional period to review the progress made and to make recommendations which can be taken into account when drafting the next COP decisions (6 to 9 months before the next COP).