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Item 5 of the annotated agenda*

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Conference of the Parties, in decision X/15, adopted the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020, and in paragraph 11 of decision XI/2 B, welcomed the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31) and agreed to keep this work programme under review. In paragraph 14 of decision XI/2, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary, subject to the availability of resources, to (a) establish a standard information-exchange mechanism for the clearing-house mechanism to interconnect the central and national clearing-house mechanisms, where possible; (b) collaborate with the other biodiversity-related conventions to ensure mutual compatibility and to avoid duplication of work; (c) continue to use automated translation tools to facilitate exchange of technical and scientific information in lines with Articles 17 and 18 of the Convention.

2. The purpose of this note is to describe progress made on the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism as well as the planned actions. The Working Group may wish to consider progress made as well as the proposals provided, and develop recommendations in this area. The rest of this document is structured as follows:

(a) Section II provides an overview of where the clearing-house mechanism stands and is moving to;

(b) Section III describes the progress made by the Executive Secretary on the clearing-house mechanism since the eleventh meeting of the conference of the Parties, together with the next actions to be undertaken;

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(c) Section IV contains a draft recommendation on the clearing-house mechanism for consideration by the Working Group;

(d) Annex I summarizes the status of implementation of activities under goal 1 of the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism;

(e) Annex II contains the list of current priority activities for further developing the central clearing-house mechanism;

(f) Annex III is a proposal for an online system to track the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism.

II. OVERVIEW

3. Paragraph 22 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 envisions the clearing-house mechanism as follows:

(a) A biodiversity knowledge network will be developed, including a database and network of practitioners, to bring together this knowledge and experience and to make it available through the clearing-house mechanism to facilitate and support enhanced implementation of the Convention;

(b) National clearing-house mechanism nodes comprising networks of experts with effective websites should be developed and sustained so that in each Party, all have access to the information, expertise and experience required to implement the Convention;

(c) National clearing-house mechanism nodes should also be linked to the central clearing-house mechanism managed by the Convention Secretariat, and information exchange between these should be facilitated.

4. This vision was further articulated through the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020 adopted in decision X/15, and in the recommended activities of the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31).

5. At the central level, the goal is to provide effective global information services to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. The main central services are described in document UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2010/1/3 and consist of:

(a) A *knowledge base*: the main repository of Convention-related information and knowledge in a way that allows easy search and retrieval, as well as cross-references between related resources;

(b) A *submission system*: the update mechanism enabling Parties and stakeholders to make contributions to the knowledge base, including by reporting on implementation;

(c) *Collaboration tools*: to encourage Parties, experts, practitioners, and other stakeholders to maintain contact, share ideas, and work together;

(d) An *information exchange mechanism*: to interconnect the central and national clearing-house mechanisms and make them interoperable through an application programming interface (API).

6. Since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the priority has been to establish the technical infrastructure for these services, particularly the search and retrieval system, the submission system, and the application programming interface. This new infrastructure has been the basis for developing more specific services such as the online reporting tool, the pilot phase of the Access and Benefit Sharing Clearing-House (ABS-CH), the repository and information sharing mechanism for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs), and a new version of the LifeWeb platform.

7. At the national level, the goal is to complement the central clearing-house mechanism by providing effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). Thanks to the support from Japan and other Parties, capacity-building workshops have been organized to assist Parties in their efforts to establish or further develop their national clearing-house mechanisms.

8. In this context, Parties have been encouraged to take into account the critical relationship between national biodiversity strategies and action plans and the clearing-house mechanism: to maximize the chance that a national clearing-house mechanism effectively facilitates the implementation of the Convention at the national level, the national biodiversity strategy and action plans should include a strategic vision for this mechanism. Otherwise the national clearing-house mechanism runs the risk of being ineffective or unsustainable. At this juncture, it should be noted that, from the 25 Parties that have officially submitted their revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, 11 indicated that they plan to improve their national clearing-house mechanism and four that they plan to establish one.

9. At the partner level, the envisioned biodiversity knowledge network has resonated. Many partners have been taking steps to contribute to this global network. Examples include the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with its *UNEP Live* platform and its *MEA Information and Knowledge Management* (MEA-IKM) initiative, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with its *NBSAP Forum* and its strategy to develop a *Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services-Net (BES-Net)* web portal in support of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) with its *Global Biodiversity Informatics Outlook for Delivering Biodiversity Knowledge in the Information Age*, just to name a few.

10. The next section provides further details on progress made and next actions. As far as the Secretariat is concerned, the ongoing work is continuing on three fronts:

(a) Strengthening the central clearing-house mechanism by further developing its information services;

(b) Providing support to Parties in their efforts to establish or further develop their national clearing-house mechanisms;

(c) Collaborating with relevant partners to expand the clearing-house mechanism network by seeking mutual benefits and complementarity and by promoting open access and interoperability.

III. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND NEXT ACTIONS

11. This section summarizes the implementation activities of the clearing-house mechanism in which the Executive Secretary is involved. Under each goal or objective, a distinction is made between the progress made since the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the next steps to be undertaken.

Goal 1: The central clearing-house mechanism provides effective global information services to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

1.1. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has the capacity to sustain an effective central clearing-house mechanism.

Progress

12. Since the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the following actions have been undertaken at the Secretariat with a view to strengthening the capacity to sustain the central clearing-house mechanism:

(a) In December 2012, all the Secretariat's expertise in information technology was pooled into a single unified team responsible for the technical implementation of the three clearing-houses hosted by the Secretariat, with a high-priority on the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (ABS-CH);

(b) The vacant Documentation Officer post was filled in June 2013 to increase the Secretariat's capacity to manage documentation and terminology. This capacity further increased in April 2014 with the arrival of an Information Clerk to assist the Documentation Officer;

(c) A cross-divisional Knowledge Management Task Force was constituted in early 2014 to take care of knowledge management issues that spread across the Secretariat;

(d) There has been an ongoing use of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools to optimize the budget available for website translation. Training was provided to the CHM Programme Assistant acting as translation coordinator;

(e) Pursuant to paragraph 25 of decision XI/31, a functional review of the Secretariat started in February 2014; the supporting role of the clearing-house mechanism was explained to the consultants in charge of this review.

Next actions

13. Knowledge management and information technology aspects of the Secretariat were identified as elements for closer look by the functional review. The current arrangements are expected to be reviewed after the next Conference of the Parties, in light of the outcome of this functional review and its recommendations.

1.2. A high-quality CBD website is available in all United Nations languages.

Progress

14. The content of the CBD website has been updated on an ongoing basis since the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. There have been a total of 2,245 web posting requests during the period ranging from 20 October 2012 until 20 March 2014. Web pages and sections that were substantively updated include:

(a) The home page (www.cbd.int);

(b) The web pages on national biodiversity strategies and action plans (www.cbd.int/nbsap), and related information;

(c) The web pages on the preparation of the fifth national report (www.cbd.int/nr5);

(d) The Nagoya Protocol web portal (www.cbd.int/abs);

- (e) The web portal on the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (www.cbd.int/2011-2020);
- (f) The web pages on the International Day for Biodiversity for 2013 and 2014 (www.cbd.int/idb);
- (g) The online version of the latest decisions (www.cbd.int/decisions) and recommendations (www.cbd.int/recommendations);
- (h) The list of Biodiversity Champions and their pledges (www.cbd.int/champions/list);
- (i) Several thematic web portals, such as the web portal on Biodiversity for Development (www.cbd.int/development), the Global Platform on Business and Biodiversity (www.cbd.int/business), and the web portal on protected areas (www.cbd.int/protected).

15. Thanks to the generous financial support from the Governments of Japan and Canada, progress was made in translating website content. More than 875,000 words were translated in a cost-effective manner through the use of computer assisted translation (CAT) software as described in table 1 below. However, translation into Chinese has remained an issue due to the fact that a suitable Chinese translator has yet to be identified. In terms of prioritization, content related to key areas such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (www.cbd.int/sp) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (www.cbd.int/sp/targets) is translated first, followed by content of recently updated web pages and sections, such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Table 1: CBD website translation through automated tools since COP 11

Target language	Translated words
Arabic	195,217
French	190,450
Russian	231,672
Spanish	258,000
Total:	875,339

Next actions

16. Until the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the CBD website will be maintained on an ongoing basis and updated to reflect the outcomes of the recent subsidiary meetings. A web portal for the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties will be set up and kept up-to-date. Progress is also expected on several ongoing web-related initiatives, including:

- (a) Web pages on Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- (b) Web pages on biodiversity and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals;
- (c) The web portal on the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity;
- (d) The web portal on biodiversity and human well-being;
- (e) The web portal on the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI);
- (f) The web portal on biological and cultural diversity jointly developed with UNESCO.

17. Annex II provides further information on the prioritization of the above activities.

18. Web translation will also proceed. The use of automated tools will focus on recent content updates as well as on latest decisions and recommendations.

1.3. Effective information exchange services are fully operational.

Progress

19. After the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the following priorities were established for the development of information exchange services to be provided by the central clearing-house mechanism:

- (a) The pilot phase of the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (ABS-CH);
- (b) An online reporting system on progress towards national targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- (c) An online reporting system on resource mobilization for biodiversity;
- (d) An online library for biodiversity-related resources;
- (e) The repository and information sharing mechanism for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs);

20. The website of the pilot phase of the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (ABS-CH) has been expanded and is available at <http://absch.cbd.int>. It was developed in accordance with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (ICNP) and guidance from the Informal Advisory Committee to the Pilot Phase of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.

21. The demonstration version of the other above-mentioned information exchange services of the central clearing-house mechanism (on reporting, library and EBSAs) is available at <http://chm.cbd.int>. They share a common infrastructure consisting of the following components:

- (a) A faceted search engine to find information (<http://chm.cbd.int/database>);
- (b) An online submission system allowing users to insert new records and update them whenever needed (<http://chm.cbd.int/management>). Access to this component is restricted and requires a CBD user account;
- (c) A user account component allowing users to create and maintain their CBD user account (<http://accounts.cbd.int>);
- (d) An application programming interface (API) enabling interoperability and allowing open access to public records through the REST communication protocol.¹

22. Table 2 contains a list of record types currently available for submission. These records are grouped according to their validation workflow:

- (a) National records submitted by national authorized users and validated by Parties;
- (b) Reference records submitted by any registered users and subject to review and validation by the Secretariat;
- (c) Secretariat's records managed exclusively by Secretariat's staff.

¹ REST stands for REpresentational State Transfer (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representational_state_transfer)

Table 2: Record types available for submission at <http://chm.cbd.int> (as of 31 March 2014)

National records	Reference records	Secretariat records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) - National reports - National targets - National indicators - Assessments of progress - Implementation activities - Financial resource mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Library resources - Organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) - Strategic Plan indicators - Case studies

23. National records have been designed to gather information on the implementation of the Convention at the national level in order to facilitate reporting against national targets. This was demonstrated during the side event entitled “Online reporting of progress in implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020” which was held on 14 October 2013 on the margins of the seventeenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. Regarding resource mobilization, the note by the Executive Secretary on methodological and implementation guidance for the indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Convention’s strategy for resource mobilization (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/14/Add.1) was the reference used to define the form enabling Parties to submit the corresponding information online.

24. The purpose of the online library is to allow the submission of biodiversity-related resources by any registered user. Submitted resources can be classified by Aichi Biodiversity Targets, subjects under the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant properties, which makes them searchable through the new faceted search engine. One of the duties of the Documentation Officer is to validate these new records before making them public.

25. Pursuant to decision XI/17, the repository and information sharing mechanism for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) has been established. Existing EBSA records are available at <http://chm.cbd.int/database/?schema=marineEbsa>. These record details include geo-location coordinates and corresponding map boundaries. This repository is managed by the Secretariat, but Parties will have the opportunity to use the online submission system to propose new areas.

26. In addition, the scope of the LifeWeb initiative has been broadened in order to seek financial support for projects consistent with all area-based Aichi Biodiversity Targets. As a result, the information exchange services offered through LifeWeb (<http://lifeweb.cbd.int>) have been expanded to allow Parties to post their financial needs not only for projects related to protected areas and Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, but also for Aichi Biodiversity Targets 5, 9, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Next actions

27. The Secretariat will continue to develop the new information services available for demonstration purposes at <http://chm.cbd.int> while also responding to other information technology requests arising from its programmes and operations. Due to the high number of pending requests, a prioritization exercise was carried out in early 2014 and its outcome is summarized in Annex II. As a result, the development of the information services of the central clearing-house mechanism will focus on the following priorities until the next Conference of the Parties:

- (a) Improvements to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House (ABS-CH);

- (b) Improvements to the repository and information sharing mechanism for ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs);
- (c) Improvements to the visual appearance of the new CHM information services by applying the CBD branding and look-and-feel;
- (d) Maintenance of the existing interoperability services with the InforMEA website;
- (e) Preparation of a working example of interoperability using the new application programming interface (API) in order to allow national CHM websites to display national information hosted by the central CHM;
- (f) Development of a module allowing the existing CBD website to display content submitted through the new CHM information services;
- (g) Development of an online system to track the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism.

1.4. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity facilitates the development of a network of experts and practitioners among Parties and partners.

Progress

28. In order to promote networking between CBD and CHM national focal points, an effort was made to hold capacity-building workshops on the clearing-house mechanism in parallel with other workshops in related areas. This was the case for the two workshops convened in 2013 as indicated in the forthcoming section on Goal 2.

29. UNDP has collaborated with the Secretariat to establish the NBSAP Forum website (<http://nbsapforum.net>) whose purpose is to connect, through communities of interests, experts and practitioners involved in the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity and action plans. This initiative was promoted during the regional workshop for Latin America on the clearing-house mechanism held on 6-10 May 2013 in Villa de Leyva, Colombia.

Next actions

30. The Secretariat will continue to promote networking and support the NBSAP forum initiative. Given that the Secretariat has several databases of experts and other relevant contacts, a series of actions can be envisaged to centralize this information into a single master expert database and/or establish interconnections with existing expert networks such as LinkedIn. However, such an initiative can only be started once more urgent information technology requests have been taken care of.

1.5. Guidance is available for Parties and partners to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network.

Progress

31. Guidance on information exchange was provided to Parties in each capacity-building workshop on the clearing-house mechanisms, as well as in response to specific requests. So far, the main focus has been on guidance to exchange information through national clearing-house mechanism websites. Guidance on how to exchange information with the central clearing-house mechanism through the application programming interface is planned, as explained below.

Next actions

32. Paragraph 14 (b) of decision XI/2 requested the Executive Secretary to establish a standard information-exchange mechanism for the clearing-house mechanism to interconnect the central and national clearing-house mechanisms. Therefore, CHM national focal points need guidance on how to make these interconnections, such as:

(a) Some simple examples to display relevant records on a national CHM website. (e.g. NFPs, NBSAPs, national reports);

(b) Documentation that can be understood by a CHM National Focal Point in charge of maintaining a national CHM website.

33. As it was estimated that 25 days of information technology expertise would be necessary to produce the full documentation of the new application programming interface (API), the current priority is to deliver at least one working example that can be demonstrated to CHM national focal points. The preparation of the documentation will follow at a later stage.

Goal 2: National clearing-house mechanisms provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Progress

34. Establishing, strengthening, and ensuring the sustainability of a national clearing-house mechanism is under the responsibility of each Party. Therefore, the main role of the Secretariat in this area is to assist Parties in their efforts to do so. Since the last conference of the Parties, capacity building has been provided through the following workshops to support Parties in the development of their national clearing-house mechanisms:

(a) The Regional African Workshop of the Belgian Partnership for the Clearing-House Mechanism was held from 11 to 14 March 2013 in Marrakech, Morocco, thanks to the support from the Governments of Morocco, Belgium and Japan. The workshop was attended by 18 participants, including CHM representatives of eight African countries and one regional institution (COMIFAC). The workshop focused on the future Belgian partnership programme 2014-2019 with developing countries on the implementation of the Strategy Plan of the Convention 2011-2020. Further details are available at http://www.biodiv.be/cooperation/chm_coop/chm-partnering/workshops/atelier-marrakech-2013/.

(b) The Regional Workshop for Latin America on the Clearing-House Mechanism was held from 6 to 10 May 2013 in Villa de Leyva, Colombia, thanks to the support from the Governments of Colombia and Japan. This workshop was attended by representatives of 18 Spanish-speaking Latin American countries. The main goal of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of these countries to develop effective and sustainable national clearing-house mechanisms. The workshop was held in parallel with the Regional Workshop for Latin America on Updating National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Joint sessions were organized to strengthen the relationship between NBSAPs and the CHM. Further details are available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chm-rw-2013-la>

(c) The Regional Workshop for the Caribbean Countries on the Clearing-House Mechanism was held from 16 to 20 September 2013 in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, thanks to the support from the Governments of Saint Lucia and Japan. This workshop was attended by 17 participants representing 11 countries in the Caribbean region. The main goal of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of these countries to develop effective and sustainable national clearing-house mechanisms. The workshop was held in parallel with the Regional Workshop for the Caribbean Countries on the Preparation of the Fifth National Report. Joint sessions were organized for topics of interest to both workshops. Further details are available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chm-rw-2013-car>.

Next actions

35. The current priority for the Secretariat is the preparation of the forthcoming Regional Workshop for African Countries on the Clearing-House Mechanism to be held from 5 to 9 May 2014 in Buea, Cameroon, in parallel with the Coordination Meeting of the Belgian Partnership on the Clearing-House Mechanism, thanks to the support from the Governments of Cameroon, Belgium and Japan. Further details are available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chm-ws-2014-01>.

36. Between the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and 31 March 2014, 25 Parties have officially submitted their revised national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). Of these, 17 Parties have already established a national clearing-house mechanism, 11 indicated that they plan to improve this mechanism and four that they plan to establish one.

37. For the rest, keeping track of the progress made by Parties in the implementation of their national clearing-house mechanism is not something that can be realistically envisaged if it is done manually. To be able to keep track of such progress in an efficient manner, it is recommended to establish an online system that a CHM national focal point can use to easily report progress as it happens. For instance, the system could have a feature to report progress by e-mail. Moreover, the system can be designed in a generic way in order to benefit all programmes under the Convention on Biological Diversity. A proposal for such an information service is available in annex III.

Goal 3: Partners significantly expand the clearing-house mechanism network and services.*Progress*

38. Providing an exhaustive list of partner initiatives that have contributed to the clearing-house mechanism network and services would be beyond the scope of this report. Therefore, this section highlights significant contributions from key Parties and partners since the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

39. The European Union (EU):

(a) Has further developed its Biodiversity Information System for Europe (BISE) which is a single entry point for data and information on biodiversity supporting the implementation of the EU strategy and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in Europe, and serves as the clearing-house mechanism for the EU (<http://biodiversity.europa.eu>);

(b) Has organized yearly meetings of the European network of CHM national focal points held at the European Environment Agency (EEA) in Copenhagen, in November 2012 and 2013 (<http://biodiversity.europa.eu/chm-network/meetings>);

(c) Has continued to maintain the European CHM Toolkit which creates an out-of-the-box CHM portal with content management and administration features; This toolkit was developed by the European Environment Agency with EU funding and it is maintained in collaboration with user countries (<http://biodiversity.europa.eu/chm-network/the-european-chm-toolkit>);

(d) Has developed an Aichi Biodiversity Target collating tool which can be used by Parties to facilitate their reporting duties to European institutions, the Secretariat and other biodiversity-related conventions;

(e) Has funded a project to support the MEA Information and Knowledge Management initiative mentioned in the next paragraph;

40. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

(a) Has continued to bring together Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems for the benefit of Parties through its MEA Information and Knowledge Management (MEA-IKM) initiative;

(b) Has enhanced its InforMEA website (www.informe.org) which harvests key information (treaty articles, Parties, decisions, news, events, national focal points, national reports and plans) from MEA secretariats in order to make it searchable around a set of agreed terms;

(c) Has established internal cooperation agreements with various MEAs to further share relevant information and knowledge. Table 4 below summarizes the activities foreseen under the agreement signed between UNEP and the Secretariat in March 2014 (www.cbd.int/doc/agreements/agmt-unesp-delc-informe-2014-03-13-ica-web-en.pdf);

(d) Has launched its UNEP Live (www.unep.org/uneplive) knowledge platform to collect, process and share environmental science and research in order to fill gaps between data providers and consumers (www.unep.org/NewsCentre/default.aspx?ArticleID=10690&DocumentID=2758);

Table 4. Activities foreseen under the internal cooperation agreement with UNEP on InforMEA

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Results/Impact</i>
1	Continued and sustained availability of CBD information on the InforMEA website through the maintenance of the InforMEA API implemented at the CBD Secretariat.	CBD information is fully integrated within the InforMEA website.
2	Further implementation of the InforMEA API to provide support for NBSAPs and national reports.	NBSAPs and national reports can be searched along with national plans and reports of other MEAs on the InforMEA website.
3	Terms relevant to the CBD have been integrated within an InforMEA vocabulary in close collaboration with the InforMEA information specialist and the InforMEA team.	CBD terminology has been integrated with the thesaurus of the InforMEA project.
4	A list of key training and learning documents has been provided and is ready for integration with the e-learning facility of InforMEA.	CBD components are reflected in the overall e-learning facility of InforMEA.

41. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has collaborated with the Secretariat to establish its NBSAP forum website (<http://nbsapforum.net>) which is a networking and collaboration platform for experts and practitioners involved in the preparation and implementation of national biodiversity and action plans.

42. The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB):

(a) Has further developed its Biodiversity Information Sharing Service serving as the regional clearing-house mechanism for ASEAN member States (<http://chm.aseanbiodiversity.org>);

(b) Has provided support to ASEAN member states in their efforts to establish their national clearing-house mechanisms.

43. The *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)* has added a biodiversity component to its Mediaterrre social network (<http://www.mediaterrre.org/biodiversite>) and collaborated with the Secretariat in order to increase the visibility of French content disseminated through the clearing-house mechanism network. Notification 2013-100 (Ref. No. SCBD/TSI/RS/ODM/82882) was issued to inform French-speaking Parties about the existence of the biodiversity component of Mediaterrre and to encourage them to use this new service.

Next actions

44. Ongoing collaboration with existing partners will continue, including for the implementation of activities under the cooperation agreement with UNEP on InforMEA.

IV. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

Based on the content of previous sections, the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention may wish to adopt a recommendation along the following lines:

The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention,

Recalling the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31) and its recommended activities;

Taking note of the progress report on the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/3/Add.2),

Aware of the need to prioritize further developments of the central clearing-house mechanism due to limited available resources,

Emphasizing the importance of providing effective information services that contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and to the national biodiversity strategies and action plans,

1. *Invites* Parties and partners to submit information through the central clearing-house mechanism and to provide user feedback whenever possible;

2. *Recommends* that the Executive Secretary continue to develop the information services of the central clearing-house mechanism, taking into account user feedback and recommendations from the informal advisory committee to the clearing-house mechanism.

Annex I

STATUS OF ACTIVITIES UNDER GOAL 1 OF THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

The table below summarizes the status of implementation of activities under Goal 1 of the work programme for the clearing-house mechanism in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (UNEP/CBD/COP/11/31).

Table 5. Status of implementation of activities under Goal 1 of the CHM work programme.

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Programme Element</i>	<i>Status</i>
Goal 1:	<i>The central clearing-house mechanism provides effective global information services to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.</i>	
Obj. 1.1:	The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has the capacity to sustain an effective central clearing-house mechanism.	
1.1.1.	Maintain a list of priority activities to be undertaken on the central clearing-house mechanism, taking into account progress made, available capacity, and evolving needs to enable, inter alia, the Conference of Parties, at each of its meetings, to review progress and, as necessary, adjust the activities.	The list of priority activities is available in annex II.
1.1.2.	Establish processes to monitor the development and effectiveness of the central clearing-house mechanism.	An online system to track progress is proposed in annex III.
1.1.3.	Ensure that the Secretariat has the capacity to further develop and maintain the CBD website and other modern information services of the central clearing-house mechanism.	All IT expertise of the Secretariat has been pooled into a single team.
1.1.4.	Ensure that the Secretariat has capacity to manage knowledge and information, including terminology and documentation management.	A Documentation Officer has been hired and the recruitment process for an assistant has been completed.
1.1.5.	Identify, assess, and adopt appropriate publicly-available tools or services that increase the capacity and sustainability of the central clearing-house mechanism in a cost-effective manner.	Web technologies have been evolving rapidly and a series of options are being considered.
1.1.6.	Optimize the process of maintaining the CBD website in all United Nations languages by making sound use of modern translation technology.	Automated tools are being used to optimize web content translation. Further optimization may be possible by upgrading some of the existing tools.
Obj. 1.2:	A high-quality CBD website is available in all United Nations languages.	
1.2.1.	Prepare a web content strategy for the CBD website in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and keep it in line with decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.	Internal discussions have taken place and a functional review is ongoing. The current strategy is to focus on the development of information services without making major structural changes to the existing website.
1.2.2.	Maintain and improve the CBD website and its related portals in terms of content, services, appearance, user-friendliness, usability and accessibility taking into account user feedback.	Done on an ongoing basis with available resources.
1.2.3.	Make the CBD website available in all United Nations languages.	Progress in translation is summarized in Table 1.

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Programme Element</i>	<i>Status</i>
1.2.4.	Ensures that the CBD website evolves in accordance with its web content strategy.	For the time being, no major structural changes are being planned. Future evolution will depend on the strategic direction taken.
Obj. 1.3.	Effective information exchange services are fully operational.	
1.3.1.	Expand the knowledge base in a way that allows easy access and cross-references by continuously incorporating Convention-related information such as decisions, work programmes, targets, indicators, implementation activities, online sources, reference documents, case studies, best practices, training materials, organizations, experts, contacts, events, maps, multimedia resources, and other relevant items.	New information services have been developed. Information types have been defined to collect information on implementation. Technical implementation is ongoing.
1.3.2.	Integrate collaboration tools in a user workspace encouraging Parties, experts, practitioners, and other stakeholders to maintain contact, share ideas, and work together, while providing quick access to information directly related to each user's role and activities.	The new information services include a user account management component. This component is essential for establishing user-based collaboration services.
1.3.3.	Implement the online submission system as the update mechanism of the knowledge base and the collaboration tools in order to enable Parties and all stakeholders to make contributions related to the Convention and its implementation.	The new information services include an online submission system enabling Parties and other authorized users to submit information.
1.3.4.	Implement specialized information services in accordance with decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.	Several information services have been implemented, including the ABS-CH and the EBSA repository and information sharing mechanism.
1.3.5.	Expose data held by the central clearing-house mechanism through modern interfaces based on open standards as a way to facilitate access to information about the Convention on Biological Diversity.	An application programming interface (API) is under development to expose CHM records. This API is based on the REST protocol.
1.3.6.	Provide tools enabling national clearing-house mechanisms to automatically access and display relevant information from the central clearing-house mechanism.	The development of such a tool is planned. The tool will be based on the above-mentioned API.
1.3.7.	Continue to develop and use information exchange services to make Convention-related information easily and widely accessible, in line with technological and social trends.	There is an increasing use of mobile devices. This is taken into account when developing new CHM information services.
Obj. 1.4.	The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity facilitates the development of a network of experts and practitioners among Parties and partners.	
1.4.1.	Establish a user-friendly online networking platform for national focal points, experts, practitioners, and other relevant contacts to encourage participation.	UNDP has collaborated with the Secretariat to establish the NBSAP Forum website whose purpose is to connect experts and practitioners involved in the preparation and implementation of NBSAPs.
1.4.2.	Promote networking of Parties and partners by linking the central and national clearing-house mechanisms.	This activity will be carried out when the API is available.

<i>Ref.</i>	<i>Programme Element</i>	<i>Status</i>
1.4.3.	Explore opportunities to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation for the implementation of the Convention.	Opportunities are being explored with interested Parties. One possibility under consideration is the use of LifeWeb as a platform to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.
Obj. 1.5.	Guidance is available for Parties and partners to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network.	
1.5.1.	Establish and publish specifications to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network, including interoperability protocols, common formats, controlled vocabularies, application programming interfaces, and other technical guidelines.	The new Application Programming Interface has not yet been officially released. Technical documentation will be provided in due course.
1.5.2.	Provide guidance to Parties and partners on how to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network, including on the data submission and validation processes.	The new CHM information services have not yet been finalized and launched. Guidance will be provided in due course.

*Annex II***CURRENT PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPING THE CENTRAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

The clearing-house mechanism has a supporting role in the implementation of the Convention. This explains why many requests to further develop this mechanism arise from various programmes under the Convention. Given that the Secretariat has limited information technology capacity to fully respond to all these requests, a prioritization exercise was carried out and completed during the first quarter of 2014. The table below contains the list of current priority activities for further developing the central clearing-house mechanism by the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Table 6. Current priority activities for further developing the central CHM (as of 31 March 2014).

Area	Activity
<i>Core CHM Activities</i>	
CHM information services	Improvements to the visual appearance of the new CHM information services by applying the CBD branding and look-and-feel.
Information exchange mechanism with InforMEA	Maintenance of the existing interoperability services with the InforMEA website (resolve technical issue on missing links for national reports and NBSAPs).
Information exchange mechanism with national CHM websites	Preparation of a working example of interoperability using the new application programming interface (API), in order to allow national CHM websites to display national information hosted by the central CHM.
CBD website	Development of a module allowing the existing CBD website to display content submitted through the new CHM information services.
Implementation tracking	Development of an online system to track the implementation of the CHM.
<i>CHM Activities in support of CBD programmes</i>	
ABS	Improvements to the ABS Clearing-House (record formats, search, web design).
Marine and coastal	Improvements to the EBSA repository (record format for submission, search and display).
Marine and coastal	Development of the Web portal on Sustainable Ocean Initiative.
Protected areas	Migration of database content (tools, experts, reporting framework, actions plans).
Aichi Biodiversity Targets	Development of new web pages on Aichi Biodiversity Targets.
Traditional Knowledge	Establishment of web portal on Biological and Cultural Diversity.
Biodiversity for development	Establishment of web portal on Biodiversity for Human Well-Being and Sustainable Development.
United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (UNDB)	Improvements to the UNDB website. (online submission of UNDB events and partners, promotion of biodiversity champions, country profiles)

Annex III

ONLINE SYSTEM TO TRACK THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

A. Introduction

1. Keeping track of the progress made by Parties in the implementation of their national clearing-house mechanisms is not something that can be realistically envisaged if it is done manually. To be able to keep track of such progress in an efficient manner, it is recommended to establish a user-friendly online system that a CHM national focal point can use to easily report progress as it happens. Moreover, the system can be designed in a generic way in order to benefit all programmes under the Convention on Biological Diversity. This annex is a concept note describing the features of such an information service.

B. System overview

2. The main features of this information service should allow CHM NFPs to easily:
- (a) Describe the current status of their national CHM;
 - (b) Describe the main activities or projects related to their national CHM;
 - (c) Provide quick updates whenever some progress is made on any of these activities.
3. The core system relies on the three information types described in table 7 below. These formats are expected to be developed and fine-tuned as needed.

Table 7. Information types.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Created by</i>	<i>Description</i>
National CHM Status	CHM NFP	Description of the current status of a national CHM in a country. When editing this record, the user has the option to update the list of activities related the National CHM.
Activity	CHM NFP, SCBD, Partner	Brief general description of an activity or project related to the CHM. Among other things, this activity can be tagged with one of more elements of the CHM work programme. When editing this record, the user has the option to update the progress made on this activity.
Progress Update	CHM NFP, SCBD, Partner	Record describing some progress at a given time. The format of this record is similar to a blog post.

4. While the *National CHM Status* information type is specific to the CHM programme, *Activities* and *Progress Updates* are generic types that apply to any programme under the Convention. This is because an *Activity* can be tagged by elements coming from any decision or work programme. The selection of tags should be presented hierarchically (from decisions and programmes to specific elements).

Operations

5. When a CHM NFP signs in, one of his/her records is an online form to describe the status of his/her national CHM. This record is automatically created for each country and cannot be deleted. It can be updated by the CHM NFP and any other authorized user. The latest published version of the *National CHM Status* record is public and is replaced whenever the CHM NFP publishes a new version.

6. When updating the *National CHM Status* record, the CHM NFP is invited to add one or more *Activity* records related to this national CHM. This opens a separate form allowing the CHM NFP (or any authorized user) to describe this new *Activity*. This description is initialized once for each major activity or project, but without including any progress update against this activity. Instead, the description focuses on general stable information, particularly on metadata tags that connect this activity to a national target, programme element, or any other relevant reference. One of the properties is the status of the activity which can be ongoing, planned, completed or cancelled. While the emphasis is on present and future activities, the CHM NFP is free to create records on completed activities to gradually enhance the institutional memory about the national CHM.

7. When updating an *Activity* record, the CHM NFP is invited to add one or more *Progress Update* records. These updates should be easy to enter, like a simple blog post or tweet. At this level, there is no need to repeat metadata elements that have already been entered at the *Activity* level.

8. A mailing mechanism could also be envisaged to allow the NFP to provide progress updates by sending e-mail messages, as indicated in table 8. Such a feature would typically be turned on or off by a configuration switch in the user's profile (e.g. allow progress updates by e-mail? [Yes/No]). A validation process would be in place to protect against potential fake messages, as follows: when a *Progress Update* e-mail is received by the system, an acknowledgement is sent back with a link to either validate the new *Progress Update* record or discard it.

Table 8. Progress update information sent through e-mail.

<i>E-mail Message</i>	<i>Progress Update Record</i>	<i>Description</i>
Date	Date	The e-mail date is used as the date of the <i>Progress Update</i> record
From	User	The <i>From</i> e-mail should match the email of an existing user who has the privilege to create <i>Progress Update</i> records.
To	update@cbd.int	General e-mail address to provide updates on progress.
Subject	Activity #: Title	The number (#) should match an existing <i>Activity ID</i> to which the identified user can add <i>Progress Update</i> records. The second part of the <i>Subject</i> is used as the <i>Title</i> of the <i>Progress Update</i> record.
Body	Description	The <i>Body</i> of the message is used as the <i>Description</i> of the <i>Progress Update</i> record.
Attachments	Attachments	The attachments (documents and images) are added to the <i>Progress Update</i> record.
