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PROGRESS REPORT ON TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Article 18 of the Convention on Biological Diversity provides that Parties shall promote international technical and scientific cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, where necessary, through the appropriate international and national institutions. Article 18 further states that special attention should be given to the development and strengthening of national capabilities, by means of human resources development and institution building (Article 18.2). It also calls on Parties to establish a clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation (Article 18.3), promote cooperation in the training of personnel and exchange of experts (Article 18.4), and promote the establishment of joint research programmes and joint ventures for the development of technologies relevant to the objectives of the Convention (Article 18.5).

2. The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 recognizes the clearing-house mechanism and technology transfer as support mechanisms for the implementation of the Plan (decision X/2, annex, paragraph 22). Further, in decision X/15, the Conference of the Parties adopted the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020, with a mission to contribute significantly to the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, through effective information services and other appropriate means in order to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation, knowledge sharing, and information exchange, and to establish a fully operational network of Parties and partners.

3. In decision XI/2, the Conference of the Parties welcomed 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) and agreed to keep this work programme under review. The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to develop “a coherent, consistent and coordinated approach to technical and scientific cooperation”, building on existing mechanisms, to develop operational options and proposals, and to report to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention (WGRI) at its fifth meeting (decision XI/2, paragraph 15). The Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to identify ways to act as a convener to build partnerships and capacity, and thereby facilitate implementation of the Convention (decision XI/2, paragraph 16).

* UNEP/CBD/COP/12/1/Rev.1.

4. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary prepared the following documents for the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention:

(a) Document UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/3/Add.1 on technical and scientific cooperation which reviewed relevant work under the Convention and set out a proposed approach in response to decision XI/2;

(b) Document UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/3/Add.2 which provided a comprehensive progress report on the clearing-house mechanism.

5. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, at its fifth meeting, considered these documents, and, in recommendation 5/11, prepared a draft decision for the Conference of the Parties which includes sections on technical and scientific cooperation, and technology transfer (Part B) and the clearing-house mechanism (Part C). The draft decision is reproduced in the compilation of draft decisions (UNEP/CBD/COP/12/1/Add.2). The Working Group noted that the Conference of the Parties may consider incorporating such a decision as part of the “Pyeongchang Roadmap for enhanced implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.”

6. The Working Group also requested the Executive Secretary to prepare an updated report on enhancing technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer, including information on relevant elements of existing programmes and initiatives. Accordingly, this note describes progress made by the Executive Secretary and partners on enhancing technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and the clearing-house mechanism in order to provide further background to the Conference of the Parties when considering the draft decision under this item. Given that comprehensive reports were made available recently at the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation, the present note is limited to providing a brief survey of activities that have been conducted since that time.

II. PROGRESS REPORT

The clearing-house mechanism

7. The progress report made available to the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, at its fifth meeting, noted the following three fronts for the ongoing work of the Secretariat:

(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.

8. This work will proceed, taking into account the areas of work identified by the Working Group as well as the recent advice from the informal advisory committee available in annex I. Priority areas of work are summarized in the following paragraphs.

9. One area of priority is the completion of the development of online services that would allow Parties to report on progress towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, as requested in paragraph 1(e) of WGRI recommendation 5/2. The online reporting system will facilitate the regular review of progress in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by the Conference of the Parties, as envisaged in

decision X/2.¹ The pilot-phase of the online reporting system has now been completed,² and in preparation for the full operationalization of the system, Parties are being invited to confirm or nominate to the Secretariat the details of the person(s) who would be allowed to submit national information through this online reporting system.³

10. Other priority areas of work include:

(a) Establishing a standard information-exchange mechanism for the clearing-house mechanism to interconnect the central and national clearing-house mechanisms, as requested in paragraph 14 (a) of decision XI/2, and collaborating with relevant partners to expand the clearing-house mechanism network by seeking mutual benefits and complementarity and by promoting open access and interoperability, as requested in paragraph 14 (b) of decision XI/2;

(b) Continuing to use automated translation tools to facilitate exchange of technical and scientific information in line with Articles 17 and 18 of the Convention, as requested in paragraph 14 (c) of decision XI/2;

(c) Developing a web strategy to ensure that all information common or relevant to the clearing-house mechanism, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House, as well as other platforms developed under the Convention can be accessed centrally to avoid duplication of efforts, as requested in paragraph 5 of WGRI recommendation 5/11 C.

11. Furthermore, the informal advisory committee to the clearing-house mechanism met on 13 and 14 June 2014 in Montreal, to review the progress made on the clearing-house mechanism. A list of the main recommendations of the informal advisory committee is provided in annex I. For some of these recommendations, further details are provided in an information document. This concerns:

(a) The recommendation (B.1) to establish an online system to keep track of the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism. Such a system is expected to be used by CHM national focal points to report on the status of their national clearing-house mechanism, thus allowing the CBD Secretariat to increase its knowledge for further supporting Parties in the development of these national clearing-house mechanisms;

(b) The recommendation (B.3) to establish an award for the best national clearing-house mechanisms and, if Parties agree, announce a competition for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. This initiative is intended to encourage Parties to accelerate the establishment and development of their national clearing-house mechanisms when they have not done so, as indicated in paragraph 2 of WGRI recommendation 5/11 C.

Other work to enhance technical and scientific cooperation

12. At present, although there is a great deal of technical knowledge, information, and willingness for institutions and organizations to help Parties meet their international obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, there is considerable room for initiatives to contribute to the implementation of Article 18.⁴ Further to decision XI/2, the recommendation for enhanced technical and scientific cooperation developed by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention at its fifth meeting, would seek to facilitate the communication of technical and scientific needs and priorities of Parties, further enhance the availability and accessibility of information with respect to best practices and expertise, and facilitate the linking of the needs of Parties with support for

¹ It is also a pre-requisite for the implementation of the draft decision contained in recommendation 5/2, paragraph 11 of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation.

² Information on the pilot phase was provided in UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/17/INF/12.

³ See notification 2014-107 (Ref. No. SCBD/SAM/NR/LC/83832), dated 26 August 2014, on the nomination or confirmation of national report focal point and national authorized user(s) for the CBD Online Reporting System.

⁴ See the report *Scientific and technical cooperation and technology transfer* (UNEP/CBD/WGRI/5/3/Add.1) made available to the fourth meeting of the Working Group on Review of Implementation

technical and scientific cooperation by relevant global, regional and national organizations and initiatives. It would need to be pursued building upon, and in partnership with, existing initiatives and those under development (see, for example, paragraph 15 below).

13. The Government of the Republic of Korea, as the incoming COP presidency, announced at the seventeenth meeting of SBSTTA and the fifth meeting of WGRI that it was exploring the development of an initiative, as the country's contribution to support technical and scientific cooperation which is envisaged to be an important part of the "Pyeongchang Roadmap". Further details on the proposed initiative (the "Bio-Bridge Initiative") will be provided by the Government of the Republic of Korea in an information document.

14. The members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners,⁵ already play an important role in facilitating technical and scientific cooperation within their respective countries, and to a limited extent, among countries. Potentially, this role could be further enhanced. Additionally, some of the member organizations could provide useful experience and institutional models, from which other countries could benefit. The Executive Secretary is consulting these organizations with a view to documenting such opportunities.

15. Under the NBSAP Forum, a call for expressions of interest from Parties was made with a view to supporting countries in revising their NBSAPs and setting national targets. The experience gained will be useful in developing broader activities on technical and scientific cooperation. The NBSAP Forum is a global partnership, hosted by the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). The web portal of the forum,⁶ which became operational in late 2013, is intended to serve as a "one-stop shop" where members can access resources (e.g. public-access articles, guide books, maps, websites, best practices) to assist with all aspects of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and other key biodiversity planning themes and also to act as a portal to other useful websites for biodiversity planning. The call for expressions of interest from Parties focuses on those seeking support in: (a) providing technical support to their national NBSAP workshops (in-person or virtually); (b) providing technical support to regional/subregional/multi-national workshops on specific themes relating to NBSAP revision; (c) facilitating experience-sharing opportunities (peer-to-peer hosts/visits); (d) providing technical support on request by e-mail, webinar, videoconference, Skype, phone etc.; (e) preparing guidance documents or e-Learning modules; and (f) providing or facilitating peer-review of draft NBSAPs, or parts thereof.

16. With a view to enhancing synergy and avoiding duplication, the Secretariat is also working with the IPBES Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme to coordinate work on technical and scientific cooperation under the Convention with related activities under the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The latter include the IPBES Capacity-Building Forum and the IPBES matchmaking facility. The intended aim of the IPBES matchmaking facility is to promote and facilitate dialogue between those who need financial or technical support, and those in a position to provide it. The Secretariat of the Convention will participate in a dialogue meeting in support of the IPBES matchmaking facility in São Paulo, Brazil, on 15 and 16 September 2014 called "Biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing - Matching capacity building needs with resources". The Secretariat is also collaborating in the development of the IPBES BES-Net web platform. The aim of the BES-Net portal is to facilitate access to the work of IPBES network participants who are developing capacity in the interface between science, policy and practice.

⁵ <http://www.cbd.int/cooperation/csp/>

⁶ <http://nbsapforum.net/>

17. The Secretariat has continued to organize capacity-building workshops which also help to promote technical and scientific cooperation among Parties. For example, in response to paragraph 5 of decision XI/16 and paragraph 10 of decision XI/24, a series of regional and subregional capacity-building workshops on ecosystem conservation and restoration have been organized in collaboration with many partners.⁷

⁷ UNEP/CBD/COP/12/22.

*Annex I***RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

This annex contains the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Advisory Committee to the clearing-house mechanism (CHM-IAC) which took place on 13 and 14 June 2014 in Montreal. The recommendations in sections A to C are addressed to the Executive Secretary. **Recommendations in bold** should be considered **with a higher priority**, and recommendations which would require a decision from the Conference of the Parties are grouped in section D (Possible elements for drafting future decisions). The documentation for the meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee, including its report (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2014/1/2) is available online at www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=CHMIAC-2014-01.

A. CENTRAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM*Strategic Advice*

- A.1. **Involve the CHM-IAC in planning the development of CHM information services with a view to ensuring that they meet Parties' needs and expectations.**
- A.2. Provide timelines for the deployment in production of the new CHM information services.
- A.3. Prepare a web strategy for the development and maintenance of the central CHM in consultation with the CHM-IAC with a view to increasing consistency between the 3 clearing-houses as well as with other platforms developed under the Convention.

Interoperability

- A.4. **Make publicly available a first version of the application programming interface (API) of the central CHM** in order to allow interested national CHM and partners to start working on the interconnection with the central CHM (decision XI/2, paragraph 14(a))
- A.5. **Finalize the implementation of the interoperability with InforMEA to allow national reports and NBSAPs** to be globally searchable on the InforMEA website (decision XI/2, paragraph 14(b)).

Online information services

- A.6. **Finalize the development of the new CHM services**, preferably in consultation with the CHM-IAC.

Technical Advice

- A.7. Continue to make the source code of newly-developed tools available on open-source repositories (e.g. GitHub) and provide the necessary documentation to allow Parties and partners to reuse this code as needed.
- A.8. Adapt the common formats and metadata based on the advice to be provided by the CHM-IAC working group that will review them.
- A.9. Adopt and use open standards for exchanging information on biodiversity whenever possible.

B. NATIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISMS*Information services*

- B.1. **Establish an online system to keep track of the implementation of national CHM.**
- B.2. **Collaborate with the European Environment Agency on the further development of the European CHM Portal Toolkit (PTK)** used by many national CHMs, particularly to make it interoperable with the central CHM.

Promotion of national CHMs

- B.3. **Establish an award for the best national CHMs at COP 12** and, if Parties agree, announce a competition for COP 13.
- B.4. Prepare a promotional package to help Parties raise awareness on their national CHMs.
- B.5. Develop a sensitization workshop on the CHM and its role in NBSAP implementation for target groups of CHM users, using standardized templates and tools that can be customized for different national CHMs.
- B.6. Recommend the selection of a simple meaningful name for to a national CHM, and discourage the prominent use of the CHM acronym. In French, " Centre d'échange d'informations sur la biodiversité " is recommended.

Support to NBSAP implementation

- B.7. Encourage the creation of national help desks to respond to requests on biodiversity and implementation of the CBD at the country level.
- B.8. Carry out an assessment of the contribution of the national CHM to the NBSAP revision or National Report preparation processes in order to identify gaps and barriers.

Capacity-building

- B.9. Take steps to increase the number of national CHMs, including through the establishment of a help desk facility at the CBD Secretariat to support the development of national CHMs.
- B.10. Prepare a training module to assist Parties in building their national CHMs.

C. CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM NETWORK*Technical and scientific cooperation*

- C.1. Support the establishment of a match-making facility in order to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.
- C.2. Given that the CHM is more than a technical platform, explore opportunities to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation through human networking, such as match-making and identification of capacity-building needs during CBD workshops.

Promotion of partners' tools and services

- C.3. Inform Parties of the existence of relevant tools and services (e.g. NBSAP Forum, Target Cross-Linking Tool, etc.) and promote their use.

Collaboration

- C.4. Further collaborate with the MEA-IKM initiative in order to increase access to and sharing of biodiversity-related information and knowledge held by MEAs, including through further work on interoperability, common vocabularies, and thesaurus.
- C.5. Further collaborate with relevant initiatives, including UNEP-WCMC's Biodiversity Indicators Partnership and UNDP's NBSAP Forum, in order to make relevant data hosted by them accessible through the central and national CHMs.
- C.6. Collaborate with IPBES through the task force on knowledge and data and the task force on capacity-building, including on the IPBES discussions on the establishment of a matchmaking facility.
- C.7. Explore ways to collaborate with existing projects and networks (e.g. UNDP's BIOFIN, The Valuing Nature Network (VNN), Invasive Species Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS)) in order to generate specific data and information on thematic areas relevant to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (e.g. Ecosystem service mapping, valuation).

D. POSSIBLE ELEMENTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN FUTURE DECISIONS

- D.1. Invite Parties to assist other Parties in the development of national CHMs by building upon successful experiences and good practices.
 - D.2. Encourage global partners to play a more active role in engaging with the CHM network.
 - D.3. Encourage Parties and other donors to further support capacity-building activities such as workshops.
 - D.4. Invite Parties, partners and other donors to provide resources to establish and maintain effective national CHMs.
 - D.5. Encourage parties to develop funding proposals aiming at mobilizing resources for further developing their national CHMs.
 - D.6. Encourage pilot projects, including pilot projects between global partners and national CHMs.
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