

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

Montreal, Canada, 1 May 2016

**REPORT OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ON ITS MEETING OF
1 MAY 2016**

I. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Award for national clearing-house mechanisms

1. Propose an evaluation system for the award for national clearing-house mechanisms (CHM Award) and share this proposal with the jury and CHM-IAC members for their review and adoption.
2. Share submissions received in response to notification 2015-068¹ on the CHM Award with the jury through appropriate online tools (e.g. Dropbox and Google Sheets).
3. Translate into English the narrative part of non-English submissions for the CHM Award.
4. Prepare a second questionnaire for Parties on the CHM Award, with the following objectives:
 - (a) To gather information on progress made by Parties on their national CHMs between mid-2015 and mid-2016;
 - (b) To identify potential best practices and lessons learned that can be useful for the development of other national CHMs;
 - (c) To ask permission to publicly share information provided by each Party in the context of the CHM Award, with a view to sharing useful experiences.
5. Send a notification to Parties in June 2016 asking them to reply to the above questionnaire by 31 July 2016.
6. Facilitate the work of the jury through online meetings and other means, as appropriate, in order to determine the winners to be announced at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13).

Support to national clearing-house mechanisms

7. Further collaborate with relevant partners and initiatives, such as the Belgian CHM partnership and the NBSAP Forum, in order to provide capacity-building support, such as guidance, training,

¹ See www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-068-chm-award-en.pdf, issued on 15 June 2015.

- web hosting and technical support, to developing country Parties willing to develop their national CHMs.
8. Further develop the Bioland tool to facilitate the establishment of a new national CHM.
 9. Provide training sessions on the Bioland tool, including during capacity-building workshops, and further develop corresponding capacity-building materials.
 10. Inform Parties of the availability of the Bioland tool and invite those that have not yet established their national CHMs to make use of this tool.
 11. Upgrade the existing CHM Portal Tool Kit (CHM-PTK) with a view to providing a unified modern platform for national CHMs.
 12. Establish a working group within the CHM-IAC to follow up the upgrade of the CHM Portal Tool Kit and ensure a smooth migration path for national CHMs built with it.
 13. Collaborate with relevant partners and initiatives with a view to facilitating access to national biodiversity-related information through national CHMs.
 14. Organize a side event at COP 13 on the support to national CHMs.

Technical and scientific cooperation

15. Involve the CHM-IAC in the further development of the Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI).
16. Propose a format to capture capacity-building needs in line with the Bio-Bridge Initiative.
17. Disseminate good initiatives and experiences in technical and scientific cooperation through the CHM.
18. Review the documents of the seventh Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity² to identify bottom-up ideas that could contribute to facilitating technical and scientific cooperation.
19. Make partners of the Bio-Bridge Initiative part of the CHM network.

Web strategy

20. Revise the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6/Add.2) in collaboration with the CHM-IAC and taking into account the outcomes of the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.
21. Align the revised web strategy to the forthcoming communication strategy to be prepared for COP 13.

Online reporting tool

22. Make the online reporting tool, allowing submissions by Parties on a voluntary basis, available in all United Nations languages.
23. Provide alternate procedures for submissions by Parties having limited access to the Internet.
24. Ensure that information submitted through the online reporting tool is available through interoperability, and provide examples on how to access this information.
25. Ensure that national information can be submitted to the online reporting tool through interoperability, and provide examples on how to do so.
26. Interconnect the CBD online reporting tool and the Target Cross-linking Tool (TCT) in collaboration with the European Union.

² See conference website at <http://www.naturoppsyn.no/tk7content.ap?thisId=500030442> and the corresponding report at <https://www.cbd.int/sbstta/doc/trondheim-07-cochairs-report-en.pdf>.

27. Ensure that a distinction is maintained between voluntary submissions of national reports in accordance with Article 26 and other kinds of submissions, notably in terms of authorized use (e.g. notification 2014-107),³ independent of the submission mechanism (online, offline, interoperability or interconnection).
28. Align the further development of the online reporting tool with the reporting templates for the sixth national report.
29. Continue to work towards further coherence and complementarity between various online reporting systems.

Interoperability

30. Share the list of interoperability issues with the CHM-IAC through an online tool.
31. Continue the ongoing work on interoperability between the central and national CHMs by:
 - (a) Addressing pending technical issues;
 - (b) Developing a plug-in that can be used on any national CHM to display information from the central CHM;
 - (c) Allowing updates on the central CHM through interoperability;
 - (d) Providing corresponding technical documentation;
 - (e) Providing demonstration examples for national CHMs.
32. Continue the ongoing work on interoperability between the CBD Secretariat and InforMEA by addressing pending technical issues and ensuring that the data exposed by the CBD Secretariat is accurate.

II. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

General information

1. The meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM-IAC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity was held at the CBD Secretariat in Montreal, Canada, on Sunday 1 May 2016, prior to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation. The documentation of the meeting is available online at www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=CHMIAC-2016-01. The list of participants is annexed.

Background

2. 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 and, in paragraph 11 of decision XI/2, it 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). More recently, in section 3 of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties made a number of requests concerning the clearing-house mechanism.

3. The previous meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM-IAC) was held in Montreal, Canada, on 30 and 31 October 2015, to review the progress made on the clearing-house mechanism. The report of that meeting (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/3) includes recommendations to the Executive Secretary.

³ See www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2014/ntf-2014-107-nat-rep-en.pdf, issued on 26 August 2014.

4. In preparation for the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, the Executive Secretary prepared several documents related to the clearing-house mechanism, including a note on capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6), the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6/Add.2), and an information note providing additional information on this web strategy (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/INF/3).

Expected outcome

5. The main purpose of the present meeting was to follow up on the progress made on the clearing-house mechanism in light of decision XII/2 B as well as on the guidance of the Committee to the Executive Secretary. The meeting was also an opportunity to share views on the clearing-house mechanism prior to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

6. The meeting started at 9 a.m. on 1 May 2016. Mr. Ravi Sharma, Head of Technical Support for Implementation, opened the meeting on behalf of the Executive Secretary and welcomed all participants. In his opening statement, Mr. Sharma mentioned the short time left before the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the ongoing functional review process taking place at the CBD Secretariat, and the Executive Secretary's willingness to strengthen the relationship between technical and scientific cooperation, capacity-building, and the clearing-house mechanism. He also highlighted key points related to the various agenda items, namely the award for national clearing-house mechanisms, support to national clearing-house mechanisms, technical and scientific cooperation, the web strategy, the online reporting tool, and interoperability.

7. The chair of the meeting, Mr. Han de Koeijer (Belgium), then called for a tour de table in order to give participants the opportunity to introduce themselves. He also conveyed the regrets of the participants who could not attend.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Adoption of the agenda

8. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2016/1/1) prepared by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the chair.

2.2. Organization of work

9. The Committee adopted the proposed organization of work, as described in annex I of the annotations to the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2016/1/1/Add.1).

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

10. The Committee was invited to consider the following key issues for in-depth discussion, with the understanding that additional relevant issues could be raised and discussed at the end of this agenda item:

- (a) Award for national clearing-house mechanisms;
- (b) Support to national clearing-house mechanisms;

- (c) Technical and scientific cooperation;
- (d) Web strategy;
- (e) Online reporting tool;
- (f) Interoperability.

3.1. Award for national clearing-house mechanisms

11. In paragraph 15 of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to propose, in collaboration with the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, a process to grant, at the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Conference of the Parties, subject to the availability of resources, an award to the Parties that had made the most significant progress in the establishment or further development of their national clearing-house mechanisms.

12. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) summarized progress made in that area since the previous CHM-IAC meeting. He explained that a reminder notification⁴ had been sent to Parties, that a regionally-balanced jury had been established,⁵ and that the information submitted by Parties had been compiled in an online Google sheet, which he presented. He indicated that the next steps of the process would include a second questionnaire asking Parties to report on their progress, and the evaluation by the jury. Finally, he said that guidance from the Committee would be appreciated on the following points:

- (a) What level of assessment should be done by the CBD Secretariat?
- (b) Should the jury members carry out their assessments individually or collectively?
- (c) Which information should be shared?
- (d) How to deal with the fact that questionnaires were submitted in various languages?
- (e) Which types of questions should be included in the next questionnaire?

13. When discussing the above points, the Committee agreed that no further evaluation should be done by the CBD Secretariat, that jury members should work individually, that the Google sheet and the original submissions should be shared only with the jury members. Regarding the language issue, Ms. Sandra Meehan (CBD Secretariat) indicated that the Secretariat could translate into English the narrative part of questionnaires submitted in Spanish or French. As for the next questionnaire, it was agreed that the CBD Secretariat would draft it in order to gather information on recent progress made by Parties on the development of their national clearing-house mechanisms, identify related best practices and lessons learned, and ask permission to publicly share such information.

14. Certain other issues related to the evaluation process were also raised, including scoring and weighting. It was agreed that these matters could be discussed at a later stage between jury members, possibly through online meetings.

15. The “Award for national clearing-house mechanisms” section on page 1 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

⁴ See notification 2015-126 (www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-126-chm-award-reminder-en.pdf), issued on 13 November 2015.

⁵ See notification 2016-032 (www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2016/ntf-2016-032-chm-award-jury-en.pdf), issued on 11 March 2016.

3.2. Support to national clearing-house mechanisms

16. In paragraph 16 of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties and partners to provide support to developing country Parties that were developing their national clearing-house mechanisms. In paragraph 17 of the same decision, it also invited Parties and donors to continue to provide financial support to establish and strengthen their national clearing-house mechanisms.

17. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) provided an update in this area. He mentioned that, thanks to the generous funding from the Japan Biodiversity Fund, the CBD Secretariat had just convened a regional capacity-building workshop on the CHM for Central and Eastern Europe and Western Asia,⁶ and that a second such workshop was under preparation for the Pacific.⁷ He also summarized the progress made in the development of the Bioland tool (available at <http://demo.chm-cbd.net>) for assisting Parties in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms, and indicated that training sessions on this tool were now an integral part of capacity-building workshops on the clearing-house mechanism. He also mentioned a parallel initiative to upgrade the current CHM Portal Tool Kit (CHM-PTK) used by many European and African countries, and thanked Belgium for its contribution to this process.

18. After this introduction, the Committee was invited to provide comments and advice on the support to develop national clearing-house mechanisms. The Committee offered to contribute to the further development of the Bioland tool and the upgrade of the CHM-PTK. Ms. Véronique Herrenschmidt (France) stressed the importance of a smooth migration process in order to avoid broken links.

19. Under this sub-item, several participants shared information about cooperation initiatives on the clearing-house mechanism in which their country was involved. Mr. Mostafa Madbouhi (Morocco) mentioned Morocco's support to various Arab and African countries, namely Bahrain, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and Sudan. Ms. Véronique Herrenschmidt (France) said that France had started a cooperation initiative with Madagascar to strengthen its national clearing-house mechanism. Mr. Han de Koeijer (Belgium) provided a brief update on the Belgian partnership for the CHM. Mr. John Tayleur (UNEP-WCMC) added that several countries had used the NBSAP Forum to request assistance for their national clearing-house mechanisms.

20. The "Support to national clearing-house mechanisms" section on page 1 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

3.3. Technical and scientific cooperation

21. In paragraph 9 of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to enhance technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer under the Convention, and report on progress to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting. Section III of document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6 summarizes progress on this issue, including on the Bio-Bridge Initiative, launched by the Republic of Korea at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to facilitate technical and scientific cooperation in the context of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

22. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) introduced this sub-item by referring to Article 18 of the Convention, on "Technical and scientific cooperation", and to section 2 of decision XII/2 B (paragraphs 9 to 13) in which the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to enhance technical and scientific cooperation, encouraged developing country Parties to express their needs and priorities,

⁶ See meeting documents at www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmws-2016-02.

⁷ See meeting documents at www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmws-2016-01.

encouraged developed country Parties and other donors to contribute to technical and scientific cooperation, and welcomed the Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI) from the Republic of Korea.

23. This introduction was followed by a presentation of the BBI by Mr. Benoît Limoges (CBD Secretariat) and Ms. Natasha McQuaid (Quebec Centre for Biodiversity Science).⁸ They provided some background on the BBI and presented its draft action plan. They also indicated that three side events were planned during the forthcoming first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, one in English, one in French, and one in Spanish.

24. The Committee was then invited to provide feedback on the BBI. During the discussion, comments were made on various aspects of the BBI, including common formats to capture capacity-building information, collaboration with relevant partners and initiatives, taking stock of the outcomes of the seventh Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity, and how the BBI and the CHM network could be mutually supportive. Also, the Committee and the BBI team jointly expressed their willingness to collaborate on the further development of this initiative.

25. The “Technical and scientific cooperation” section on page 2 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

3.4. Web strategy

26. In paragraph 19 of its decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to develop 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, could be accessed centrally to avoid duplication of efforts, and to provide this strategy to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, for its consideration at its first meeting, in preparation for the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

27. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) provided some background on the preparation of the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6/Add.2), and to the additional information contained in document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/INF/3.

28. The Committee was then invited to provide comments and advice on the web strategy. After a brief discussion, the Committee agreed that it would be wiser to wait for the consideration of this web strategy by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation before discussing any potential revision of this document.

29. The “Web strategy” section on page 2 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

3.5. Online reporting tool

30. In paragraph 18 (a) of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to establish a fully functional online reporting tool enabling Parties to submit, on a voluntary basis, information on their progress towards national targets and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, directly involving Parties in the development and testing of this tool.

⁸ See presentation at www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/chm/chmiac-2016-01/other/chmiac-2016-01-bbi-en.pdf.

31. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) summarized the progress made in this area. He referred to notification 2016-038, issued on 21 March 2016, which announced that the online reporting tool was now ready for official submission at <https://chm.cbd.int>, together with a test version at <https://dev-chm.cbd.int>.⁹ He also indicated that this notification included clarifications on national roles for drafting and publishing information with this tool. Mr. Frederic Vogel (CBD Secretariat) provided additional information on the progress made. He showed an online map of national reporting information, and mentioned the presence of an online chat button to provide immediate support to users.

32. The Committee was then invited to provide comments and advice on the online reporting tool. Suggestions were made on various aspects of the tool, including making it available in all United Nations languages, providing forms for offline submissions, making it interoperable with national clearing-house mechanisms and with the Target Cross-linking Tool (TCT), and aligning its further development with the reporting templates for the sixth national reports. Comments were also made on the relationship between the CBD online reporting tool and related initiatives undertaken by partners, such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and other multilateral environmental agreements.

33. Ms. Véronique Herrens Schmidt (France) shared the French position on online reporting with the participants. She stressed that a clear distinction should be made between information associated with official national reporting and other biodiversity-related information, the key difference being that the former should be carefully reviewed before being published while the latter can be freely exchanged without so much control.

34. In response to a question on publishing rights assigned to CHM national focal points, Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) provided further details related to notification 2016-038. He explained that, given that some Parties had concerns about publishing official information related to national reporting, the CBD Secretariat had decided to delegate to CBD national focal points the management of national users within their countries. Therefore, in a particular country, a CHM national focal point could be the national publishing authority for online reporting only if he or she was granted this role by the CBD national focal point.

35. The “Online reporting tool” section on page 2 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

3.6. Interoperability

36. In paragraphs 18 (b) and 18 (c) of decision XII/2 B, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to continue developing the following interoperability services of the central clearing-house mechanism:

(a) Interoperability with national clearing-house mechanisms, among which is the existing portal toolkit used by many national and regional clearing-house mechanisms, where applicable;

(b) Interoperability with InforMEA to allow relevant information on the Convention on Biological Diversity to be globally searchable on the InforMEA website.

37. Mr. Olivier de Munck (CBD Secretariat) summarized progress made on both requests. He showed the interoperability endpoints implemented at the CBD Secretariat for the two corresponding application programming interfaces (APIs).

⁹ See notification 2016-038 at www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2016/ntf-2016-038-online-reporting-en.pdf.

38. Further to this introduction, the Committee was invited to provide comments and advice on the further development of interoperability within the clearing-house mechanism network. The chair, after reminding the CBD Secretariat about the importance and urgency of interoperability, pointed out that there were still some pending issues related to the interoperability with InforMEA and with national CHMs. In response, Mr. Frédéric Vogel (CBD Secretariat) indicated that an example of creating and updating a national target through interoperability would soon be available for testing. The Committee expressed its interest in being kept informed of the progress made by the CBD Secretariat in resolving these interoperability issues.

39. The “Interoperability” section on page 3 contains the recommendations to the Executive Secretary arising from this sub-item.

3.7. Additional issues

40. Under this sub-item, the Committee was invited to raise and discuss any relevant issues not covered under the previous sub-items.

41. The main issue raised under this sub-item was the potential contribution of partners to the CHM network. The chair mentioned a few examples of such contributions, which included obtaining accurate information for national planning or reporting purposes, and enhancing information exchange with some online databases. Mr. Jerry Harrison (UNEP-WCMC) volunteered to prepare a discussion note on this topic.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

42. Under this item, the Committee was invited to consider any other matter, such as matters related to the operations of the Committee.

43. Participants were informed that the mandate of the Committee would be reviewed by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting (COP 13), as indicated in paragraph 12 of decision XI/2, and that a recommendation had been made to extend this mandate until the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15).

44. The Committee first considered the organization of the next CHM-IAC meeting, to be held at the margins of COP 13. It was agreed that the Secretariat would propose a suitable date after consulting its conference services team.

45. The Committee recommended that, to the extent possible, future CHM-IAC meetings be planned to enable participation of all CHM-IAC members and allow sufficient time for in-depth discussion of all agenda items. For instance, a three-day meeting with full participation could be considered if the CHM-IAC mandate was extended as recommended and a budget allocated for such a meeting.

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

46. Before closing the meeting, the Committee agreed that the discussions of the previous items would form the basis for preparing recommendations to the Executive Secretary. These recommendations are contained in section I.

ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

47. The chair made closing remarks to express his appreciation of the work done and thanked the participants for their valuable contributions. Following the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed at 4.45 p.m. on Sunday, 1 May 2016.

*Annex***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that the participant attended the meeting remotely.

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