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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision X/15, the Conference of the Parties adopted the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020. In its decision XI/2, paragraph 11, it 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. 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.

2. The present note is a progress report on the clearing-house mechanism since the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It summarizes the main activities carried out by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in response to the above-mentioned requests and in accordance with the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism. This report updates the information provided in document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6 submitted to the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 1).

3. The remainder of this progress report is structured as follows:

- (a) Section II covers the central clearing-house mechanism;
- (b) Section III covers national central clearing-house mechanisms;
- (c) Section IV summarizes other relevant initiatives undertaken in collaboration with partners;
- (d) Section V is related to the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM-IAC);
- (e) Section VI is a brief conclusion;
- (f) An annex contains the list of Parties that have responded to notifications 2015-068 and 2016-073 related to the clearing-house mechanism award.

* UNEP/CBD/COP/13/1.

II. CENTRAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

A. Online reporting tool

4. 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. In response to this request, the CBD online reporting tool was further developed, and was made available for testing in August 2015. A number of interested Parties, as well as members of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, were granted access and provided feedback for improvement. The tool was then further developed based on such feedback.

5. On 21 March 2016, the CBD Secretariat issued notification 2016-038 to announce that the online reporting tool was ready to accept official submissions at <https://chm.cbd.int>. The tool allows Parties to report on progress in achieving national and/or Aichi Biodiversity Targets by submitting national targets, national indicators and assessments of progress toward such targets. Guidance on the online reporting tool was also made available online.¹ In addition, this tool includes a feature enabling each CBD national focal point to assign the following roles online:

(a) The National Publishing Authority (NPA) responsible for approving official submissions to the online reporting tool;

(b) The National Authorized User (NAU) allowed to prepare draft submissions for review and approval by the NPA.

6. Presently, technical adjustments are being implemented at <https://chm.cbddev.xyz> to align the functionality of the online reporting tool with the revised draft guidelines for the sixth national report, available as an annex to the draft decision on national reporting presented under item 19 in document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/2, and with the “Resource manual for the sixth national report, including annotated reporting templates” (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/21). The online reporting tool will be further adjusted as needed based on the final guidelines on the sixth national report to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting.

7. In addition to the online reporting tool, the online tool for the financial reporting framework was made available at <https://chm.cbd.int/submit/resourcemobilization> to allow Parties to submit baseline information and report on their contributions to reaching the global financial targets under Aichi Biodiversity Target 20.

8. To facilitate support to users, an online help desk facility has been embedded in the above systems. This allows any user in need of assistance to directly communicate with the help desk during the working hours of the CBD Secretariat.

B. Interoperability

9. In paragraph 18 (b) of decision XII/2 B, the Executive Secretary was requested to develop interoperability with national clearing-house mechanisms, among which is the existing portal toolkit used by many national and regional clearing-house mechanisms. In response to this request, the CBD Secretariat has been developing an application programming interface (API) to enable interoperability with national clearing-house mechanisms or other partners.

10. This API has been evolving from providing an alternative way to access records of the central clearing-house mechanism to being the primary way of accessing the records. This API-first approach means that clearing-house mechanism online services built on the new web infrastructure, such as the online reporting tool, the decision tracking tool and the ABS Clearing-House, all use this API to store and

¹ See <https://www.cbd.int/chm/doc/chm-latest-guide-online-reporting.pdf>.

retrieve their records. Moreover, the source code of these online systems is available as open-source projects on the GitHub online repository at <https://github.com/scbd>. For instance, the source code of the ABS Clearing-House project is available at <https://github.com/scbd/absch.cbd.int>.

11. Initial technical documentation for web developers is available online at <https://scbd.github.io>. Presently, work is ongoing in collaboration with the European Environment Agency (EEA) to interconnect the Target Cross-linking Tool (TCT) to the CBD online reporting tool with this API.

12. In paragraph 18 (c) of decision XII/2 B, the Executive Secretary was requested to maintain interoperability with InforMEA to allow relevant information on the Convention on Biological Diversity to be globally searchable on the InforMEA website (www.informea.org). This request was in line with the internal cooperation agreement on InforMEA signed in March 2014 between the CBD Secretariat and the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/DELIC) in the context of the MEA Information and Knowledge Initiative (MEA-IKM).² The CBD Secretariat has been implementing and maintaining the InforMEA application programming interface (API) based on the specifications available at www.informea.org/about/api.

C. Maintenance of a high-quality website in all official languages of the United Nations

13. In line with paragraph 18 (d) of decision XII/2 B, the content of the CBD website has been updated on an ongoing basis since the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and more than 2,800 web posting requests had been processed as of 1 November 2016. Web pages and sections that were substantively updated include the daily content of the home page (www.cbd.int); the online version of the latest decisions under the Convention and its Protocols (www.cbd.int/decisions) and the recommendations of its subsidiary bodies (www.cbd.int/recommendations); the Nagoya Protocol web portal (www.cbd.int/abs); and the web pages on the International Day for Biodiversity for 2015 and 2016 (www.cbd.int/idb). Such maintenance has been continuously adapted to the Secretariat's priorities with a view to meeting Parties' expectations. In addition, several meeting-related services have been implemented by the Secretariat, including an online live agenda, an improved side-event management system, a decision tracking tool, and the PrintSmart application to reduce the volume of printed documents during major meetings.

14. As for web translation, translators were hired on a competitive basis and a roster was established to cover all official languages of the United Nations. Thanks to support from the Governments of Japan and Canada, overall web translation increased by a total of 545,000 words (15,000 in Arabic, 135,000 in Chinese, 120,000 in French, 130,000 in Russian and 145,000 in Spanish).

15. Progress was also made in the integration of the clearing-house mechanism, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House under a common web infrastructure. Such progress included improvements to the visual appearance of the new CHM information services, as well as a unified user account component allowing users to create and maintain their user accounts (<https://accounts.cbd.int>).

D. Web strategy

16. 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.

² See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/agreements/agma-unesp-delc-informea-2014-03-13-ica-web-en.pdf>.

17. A preliminary draft of this web strategy (UNEP/CBD/CHM/IAC/2015/1/INF/2)³ was prepared through a collaborative process involving members of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism and relevant Secretariat staff. At its meeting held on 30 and 31 October 2015, the Committee provided advice which was taken into account to prepare the web strategy for the Convention and its Protocols (UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/6/Add.2)⁴ submitted for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting.

18. In paragraph 4 of its recommendation 1/5, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation took note of this web strategy and requested the Executive Secretary to align it with the communication strategy that was being prepared for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting. The communications strategy has been issued as document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/14, and the aligned web strategy as document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/14/Add.1.

III. NATIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISMS

A. Support to national clearing-house mechanisms

19. Thanks to the Japan Biodiversity Fund (JBF), the Secretariat received funding for supporting the development of national clearing-house mechanisms during the period 2015-2016. Such support included two capacity-building workshops and a component to develop a tool to assist Parties in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms.

20. The two regional capacity-building workshops on the clearing-house mechanism were:

(a) The Regional Workshop for Central and Eastern Europe and Western Asia on the Clearing-House Mechanism, held from 4 to 8 April 2016 in Belgrade, Serbia;

(b) The Regional Workshop for the Pacific on the Clearing-House Mechanism, held from 13 to 17 June 2016 in Nadi, Fiji.

21. The overall objective of these workshops was to build capacity and provide guidance on how to establish and sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms in support of the process to implement national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). The workshops included country presentations to share national experiences, guidance for the development of national clearing-house mechanisms, hands-on training sessions on the new tool to assist Parties in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms, and a demonstration of the CBD online reporting tool. The reports of the workshops, including feedback from participants, are available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmws-2016-01> and <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmws-2016-02>.

22. In addition, the Secretariat participated in a capacity-building workshop for francophone partner countries of the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism held in Cotonou, Benin, from 1 to 3 February 2016, and jointly organized by the Governments of Benin and Belgium.

23. In the first quarter of 2015 and 2016, Belgium invited the member countries of its partnership for the clearing-house mechanism to respond to calls for project proposals for the reinforcement of national clearing-house mechanisms. The Secretariat participated in the review of project proposals submitted by developing countries in response to these calls.

24. The new tool to assist Parties in the establishment of their national clearing-house mechanisms has been called Bioland. It is a basic generic national clearing-house mechanism that can be made available online to interested Parties for them to easily share key information related to their NBSAPs and their implementation. The initial version of the tool was demonstrated at the meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism held on 30 and 31 October 2015. The tool was

³ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/chm/chmiac-2015-01/information/chmiac-2015-01-inf-02-en.pdf>.

⁴ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/meetings/sbi/sbi-01/official/sbi-01-06-add2-en.pdf>.

well received by the Committee, which recommended its further development and use during capacity-building workshops. Its current version can be visualized at <https://demo.chm-cbd.net>.

25. Prior to each workshop, a national clearing-house mechanism training site was initialized for each participating country. During the hands-on training sessions of the workshops, participants were taught how to use the tool to enter and manage national content on these websites, including multilingual content in various national languages. Feedback from participants revealed that they would be considering this tool for further developing their national clearing-house mechanisms. Two countries, Albania and Kazakhstan, have already adopted it. The CBD Secretariat remains available to provide assistance to countries willing to use the tool. This Bioland tool will be demonstrated at the side-event on the clearing-house mechanism to be held the evening of Monday 5 December 2016 at the margins of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

B. Award for national clearing-house mechanisms

26. In paragraph 15 of decision XII/2 B, the Executive Secretary was requested 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, an award to the Parties that have made the most significant progress in the establishment or further development of their national clearing-house mechanisms. In response to this request, a working group was established within the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism in order to drive this process and define its modalities. In collaboration with this working group, the Executive Secretary issued notification 2015-068⁵ on 17 June 2015 to inform Parties of the modalities of the award to be granted at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and to request them to answer a first questionnaire on their national clearing-house mechanisms.

27. Further to the advice of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism, a regionally balanced jury, chaired by the representative of the President of the Conference of the Parties, was established through notification 2016-032,⁶ issued on 11 March 2016. A second questionnaire was sent to Parties through notification 2016-073,⁷ issued on 6 June 2016, in order to compile information on progress made in the development of national clearing-house mechanisms between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. As of 31 October 2016, 38 Parties had submitted at least one questionnaire in response to the above-mentioned notifications, as indicated in the annex below.

28. Presently, the submissions received are under review by the jury in order to determine the Parties that will be granted an award at the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The award ceremony is expected to take place at the CEPA Fair on the evening of Friday, 9 December 2016.

IV. OTHER RELEVANT INITIATIVES IN COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

A. Bio-Bridge Initiative

29. The Bio-Bridge Initiative (BBI) was launched in 2014 by the Government of the Republic of Korea at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to enhance technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer under the Convention, with a view to supporting the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This initiative is in line with section 2 of decision XII/2 B on technical and scientific cooperation.

30. The initial phase of BBI focused on establishing the necessary institutional structures and mechanisms to support technical and scientific cooperation, identifying partners, preparing a draft action plan for the period 2017-2020, and supporting several technical and scientific cooperation pilot projects.

⁵ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2015/ntf-2015-068-chm-award-en.pdf>.

⁶ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2016/ntf-2016-032-chm-award-jury-en.pdf>.

⁷ See <https://www.cbd.int/doc/notifications/2016/ntf-2016-073-chm-award-en.pdf>.

31. Two external partners were contracted to support the design and development of the BBI, namely the Quebec Centre for Biodiversity Science (QCBS) and the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC). These partners contributed to the preparation of the “Revised draft action plan on the Bio-Bridge Initiative 2017-2020” (UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/21) and to various outreach activities. Further information on this initiative is available at <https://www.cbd.int/biobridge> and in document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/INF/22, entitled “Stocktaking summary report on previous technical and scientific cooperation work under the Convention and other initiatives and mechanisms relevant to the Bio-Bridge Initiative”.

B. NBSAP Forum

32. The NBSAP Forum (<http://nbsapforum.net>) was jointly established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP-WCMC and the CBD Secretariat as a global community of practice that develops capacity, shares learning and offers countries support in updating and implementing their NBSAPs. A thematic section about the clearing-house mechanism is available on this forum, and requests for assistance were received through it. Such collaboration has allowed the Secretariat to be more aware of the needs and challenges of Parties in their process of establishing national clearing-house mechanisms that support NBSAP implementation.

C. Collaboration among multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)

33. The Secretariat participated in the expert meeting on enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of MEA implementation: interoperability between reporting systems for biodiversity data, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 15 and 16 December 2014 and co-organized by UNEP-WCMC and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

34. The Secretariat supported the organization of a workshop on synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 8 to 11 February 2016, at which knowledge management was one of the topics discussed. The report of this workshop was made available as document UNEP/CBD/SBI/1/INF/21. Further details are available in document UNEP/CBD/COP/13/15, entitled “Enhancing synergies among the biodiversity-related conventions at the national and international levels”.

35. Collaboration has been ongoing with the MEA Information and Knowledge Management (MEA-IKM) initiative through participation in the various working groups established under this initiative. Among other things, progress was made in improving interoperability with InforMEA,⁸ in enhancing the usability of the InforMEA website, and in reviewing terminology for the Law and Environment Ontology (LEO).

36. The CBD Secretariat was represented at the sixth and seventh Steering Committee meetings of the MEA-IKM initiative held in Montreux, Switzerland, from 15 to 17 September 2015 and from 21 to 23 June 2016 respectively. The objectives of these meetings were to review the progress made through the first phase (to June 2016) of the InforMEA project, and to plan the second phase of the project, expected to last until the end of 2018.⁹ This project has been funded by the European Commission through its Programme for the Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, Including Energy (ENRTP).

D. Target Cross-linking Tool

37. The Target Cross-linking Tool (TCT) for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets is a stand-alone web-based tool developed by the European Environment Agency (EEA). While this tool is made

⁸ See <https://www.informea.org/about/api>.

⁹ See <https://www.informea.org/about>.

available primarily to European national clearing-house mechanisms,¹⁰ it can be used by any Party. The TCT enables cross-linkages between biodiversity-related targets defined at the national, European, and global level, in order to support national and regional assessment of progress and facilitate related reporting obligations.

38. The Secretariat participated in the technical meeting on interoperability between the CBD online reporting tool and the Target Cross-linking Tool, held on 5 December 2014 in Copenhagen and organized by the European Environment Agency (EEA). Follow-up meetings were held on the margins of SBSTTA 19 and through videoconferencing. Based on such collaboration, it was determined that relevant national information held in the TCT could be used to automatically populate corresponding information on the CBD online reporting tool. Work has started on implementation of such an information exchange mechanism, as indicated above in the section on interoperability.

V. INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM (CHM-IAC)

39. Further to paragraphs 15 to 19 of decision XII/2 B, the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM-IAC) was involved in a number of initiatives, such as testing the online reporting tool, drafting the preliminary web strategy, contributing to the clearing-house mechanism award process, and providing guidance on other matters related to the clearing-house mechanism. Two meetings of this committee were convened. The first was held on 30 and 31 October 2015 at the margins of the nineteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 19). It included a joint meeting day with the first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House (ABSCH-IAC) to discuss issues of common interest between the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House. The second was held on 1 May 2016 at the margins of the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI 1). The reports of these two CHM-IAC meetings are available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmiac-2015-01> and <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chmiac-2016-01>.

40. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of decision XI/2, the mandate of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism is expected to be reviewed by the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth meeting. Through paragraph 7 of the draft decision contained in its recommendation 1/5, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation recommended that the Conference of the Parties decide to extend the mandate of the informal advisory committee to the clearing-house mechanism, as defined by its operational guidelines, and to undertake a further review of that mandate at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

VI. CONCLUSION

41. This progress report has given an overview of the progress made on the clearing-house mechanism since the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. As can be seen from the previous sections, significant progress was made on many fronts. At the central level, the online reporting tool was made available for online submission, and the web strategy was prepared and aligned to the communication strategy. At the national level, national clearing-house mechanisms were strengthened, a new tool was made available to facilitate the establishment and development of national clearing-house mechanisms, and the clearing-house mechanism award process was carried out as requested. At the partner level, fruitful collaboration has been ongoing with other MEAs through the information and knowledge management initiative, and progress was made in shaping up the Bio-Bridge Initiative to support technical and scientific cooperation. Further details on such progress will be shared during the side event on the clearing-house mechanism taking place the evening of Monday, 5 December 2016.

¹⁰ See <http://biodiversity.europa.eu/chm-network>.

42. The next steps will be to build upon these results during the intersessional period until the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in order to make further progress towards the achievement of the mission, goals and objective of the clearing-house mechanism adopted by decision X/15. This is the spirit of the clearing-house mechanism elements contained in the draft decision arising from recommendation 1/5 adopted by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its first meeting. Furthermore, the meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to the Clearing-House Mechanism to be held on Saturday, 3 December 2016, will allow the members of this committee to review the progress made and provide additional guidance to the Executive Secretary on how to further develop the clearing-house mechanism in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

*Annex***LIST OF PARTIES HAVING RESPONDED TO NOTIFICATIONS 2015-068 AND 2016-073**

The table below contains the list of Parties that have responded to notifications 2015-068 and 2016-073 on the Clearing-House Mechanism Award, issued respectively on 17 June 2015 and 6 June 2016.

#	Code	Party	Category	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
1	af	Afghanistan	New	2015-08-03	
2	au	Australia	Existing	2015-07-31	2016-08-01
3	bh	Bahrain	New	2015-11-23	
4	by	Belarus	Existing	2015-12-30	
5	be	Belgium	Existing	2015-07-31	2016-07-07
6	ba	Bosnia and Herzegovina	New	2015-07-29	2016-07-20
7	bg	Bulgaria	Existing	2016-07-28	2016-07-28
8	bi	Burundi	Existing	2015-07-30	2016-07-30
9	kh	Cambodia	Existing	2015-07-31	
10	ca	Canada	Existing	2015-07-29	
11	cn	China	Existing	2015-07-31	
12	cd	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Existing	2015-12-28	2016-07-29
13	do	Dominican Republic	Existing		2016-06-07
14	et	Ethiopia	Existing	2015-12-29	
15	ee	Estonia	Existing		2016-06-16
16	fr	France	Existing	2016-01-08	2016-08-10
17	gt	Guatemala	Existing		2016-07-31
18	hn	Honduras	Existing		2016-08-01
19	iq	Iraq	New		2016-07-31
20	jm	Jamaica	Existing	2015-12-31	2016-07-29
21	jp	Japan	Existing	2015-07-31	2016-07-25
22	ke	Kenya	New	2015-10-13	2016-07-19
23	mg	Madagascar	Existing	2015-07-31	2016-07-30
24	my	Malaysia	Existing	2015-07-31	2016-07-27
25	mx	Mexico	Existing	2015-08-19	2016-09-02
26	ma	Morocco	Existing	2015-07-09	2016-07-01
27	mz	Mozambique	Future	2015-07-31	
28	nl	Netherlands	Existing	2015-07-22	2016-07-06
39	ng	Nigeria	New	2015-08-18	
30	rs	Serbia	Existing		2016-07-07
31	sc	Seychelles	New	2015-08-15	
32	sd	Sudan	New	2015-07-29	2016-08-04
33	mk	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	New	2015-07-31	

#	Code	Party	Category	Questionnaire 1	Questionnaire 2
34	tg	Togo	Existing	2015-08-31	2015-08-23
35	tt	Trinidad and Tobago	Existing		2016-07-25
36	ug	Uganda	Existing	2015-07-30	
37	uy	Uruguay	New	2015-07-31	
38	ve	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Existing	2015-12-31	
