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INFORMAL MEETING ON FORMATS, PROTOCOLS  
AND STANDARDS FOR THE IMPROVED EXCHANGE  
OF BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION  
Montreal, 19-20 February 2002

**ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

**INTRODUCTION**

*Background*

1. Item (h) of annex II of decision V/14, the Conference of the Parties recommends that the Executive Secretary identify possible formats, protocols and standards for the improved exchange of biodiversity-related data, information and knowledge, including national reports, biodiversity assessments and Global Biodiversity Outlook reports, and convene an informal meeting on this issue.
2. Under item (e) of the same annex, the Conference of the Parties also recommended that the Executive Secretary develop a pilot initiative to assist work on the thematic issues within the work programme of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.
3. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary has organized the present meeting to identify common formats, protocols and standards and to draft recommendations for their use.
4. The organization of the meeting responds to the recommendation of the Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) made at its meeting of 11 March 2001, which requests the Executive Secretary to examine the question of interoperability among national focal points for the CHM and to constitute a core group to examine metadata and common formats, and to report to the next IAC meeting.
5. The organization of the meeting also responds to the recommendation of the Informal Advisory Committee made at its meeting of 11 March 2001, which requests the Executive Secretary to seek close links with the Global Invasive Species Programme and to discuss joint work initiatives.
6. The meeting will consider issues relevant to the improved exchange of biodiversity-related information. Specific objectives for this meeting include:
  - (a) To identify possible common formats, protocols, metadata and standards to facilitate interoperability among national and thematic reports, Global Biodiversity Outlook reports, biodiversity assessments and national focal points;

- (b) To identify possible common formats, protocols, metadata and standards in the implementation of the Global Invasive Species Information Network;
- (c) To identify likely problems and suggest recommendation in the use of common formats, protocols, metadata and standards;
- (d) To explore partnerships for improving the exchange of biodiversity-related information;
- (e) To share experiences and knowledge.

*Participants*

7. Experts qualified in management of biodiversity-related issues, information-sharing systems and database-management, establishment of clearing-houses and/or the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be invited to attend.

8. In addition to these participants, representatives of the following organizations and Convention bodies active in CHM issues have also been invited to participate as observers:

- (a) Members of the Informal Advisory Committee of the CHM (IAC);
- (b) Members of the GISP Global Information Working Group;
- (c) BioNet International;
- (d) Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network;
- (e) Global Biodiversity Information Facility;
- (f) Global Invasive Species Network;
- (g) Global Taxonomy Initiative;
- (h) IUCN;
- (i) UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre;
- (j) Ramsar Secretariat;
- (k) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/ECOPORT;
- (l) North American Biodiversity Information Network;
- (m) United Nations Environment Programme;
- (n) Integrated Taxonomic Information System;
- (o) ESRI Conservation Programs.

*Anticipated outcome of the meeting*

9. It is expected that the meeting will facilitate further development of information-sharing systems and formats, protocols and standards for improved exchange of biodiversity information, and will recommend possible solutions to overcome the identified constraints and impediments.

10. The recommendations of the meeting will be communicated to the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting, to be held in The Hague, Netherlands, from 8 to 19 April 2002.

**ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

11. The meeting will be held at the premises of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The meeting will be opened by the Executive Secretary or his representative at 9 a.m. 19 February 2002.

## **ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS**

### *2.1. Election of Chair and Rapporteur*

12. The meeting will be invited to elect its Chair and Rapporteur from among its members. Proposals will be made from the floor.

### *2.2 Organization of work*

13. The meeting may wish to consider the proposed organization of work as contained in annex I below, which provides for sessions in plenary and in two working groups.

## **ITEM 3. TECHNICAL PRESENTATION ON FORMATS, PROTOCOLS, STANDARDS, PRODUCTS, DATABASES AND APPLICATIONS**

14. The Secretariat will offer a brief presentation on formats, protocols, standards, products, databases and applications. Participants will be invited to discuss the issues relevant to the identification of possible formats, protocols, standards, products, databases and applications for the improved exchange of biodiversity-related data, information and knowledge (see annex II below).

## **ITEM 4. POSSIBLE FORMATS, PROTOCOLS AND STANDARDS FOR THE IMPROVED EXCHANGE OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED DATA, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE, INCLUDING NATIONAL REPORTS, BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENTS AND GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY OUTLOOK REPORTS**

15. The Secretariat will make a presentation on three current pilot projects. A representative of the GISP will present developments on the establishment of the Global Invasive Species Information Network, and Canada will make a presentation on potential interoperability between the Clearing-house Mechanism and national nodes. Accordingly, it is proposed that this item of the agenda cover the following elements:

- (a) Common format matrix of the second national reports (Second National Reports Analyser);
- (b) Use of XML, RDF/Dublin Core in the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) Identification of possible standards and protocols in the implementation of the Global Invasive Species Information Network;
- (d) Lessons learned and applicability to the development of using common standards among distributed databases (national reports, Global Invasive Species Information Network, etc.).
- (e) *The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Clearing-house Mechanism and interoperability of national nodes: an option for consideration.*

16. These issues will be considered in light of decision V/14, the minutes of the Meeting of the Clearing-house Mechanism Informal Advisory Committee 11 March 2001 and recommendations made at the seventh meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). In considering item (e) above, participants will be invited to consider the benefits proposed by Canada. Possible group discussions that could be held under this item with a view to determining options for interoperability include: (i) an overview of the technology; and (ii) an overview of potential differences between the technology proposed and other systems.

## **ITEM 5. METADATA**

17. Under this item, brief presentations will be given on metadata standards and usage. Specifically, the meeting will be asked to consider:

- (a) United Nations metadata standards;
- (b) FGDC metadata standards;
- (c) Presentation on RDF/Dublin Core.

## **ITEM 6. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUP I: IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE STANDARDS AND PROTOCOLS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES NETWORK AND WORKING GROUP II: IDENTIFICATION OF POSSIBLE STANDARDS AND PROTOCOLS TO IMPROVE EXCHANGE OF BIODIVERSITY DATA**

18. In considering this item, participants will be asked to consider recommendations arising from Working Group I related to common formats, protocols and standards in the development of the Global Invasive Species Information Network. The meeting will also be asked to consider the recommendations arising from Working Group II in the development of an interoperable network of national focal points for the clearing-house mechanism and in developing interoperability among information resources, including national reports, biodiversity assessments, and Global Biodiversity Outlook reports.

## **ITEM 7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTION**

19. Participants will be invited to formulate general conclusions and recommendations on the issues considered.

## **ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

20. It is expected that the meeting will be closed at 6 p.m. on 20 February 2002.

*Annex I*

**PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE INFORMAL MEETING ON FORMATS, PROTOCOLS AND STANDARDS FOR THE IMPROVED EXCHANGE OF BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION**

19 February 2002 9:00	1. Opening of the meeting.	
9:15	2. Organizational matters: 2.1. Election of Chair and Rapporteur 2.2. Organization of work	
9:30	3. Technical presentation on formats, protocols, standards, products, databases and applications	
10:30-12:00	4. Presentation of Pilot Projects: (a) Common format matrix of the Second National Reports (Second National Reports Analyzer); (b) Use of XML, RDF/Dublin Core in the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House; (c) Identification of possible standards and protocols in the implementation of the Global Invasive Species Network; (d) Lessons learned on using common standards and formats among distributed databases (National Reports, Global Invasive Species Network, etc.). (e) The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity Clearing-house Mechanism and interoperability of national nodes: An option for consideration	
12:00-13:30	Lunch	
13:30-14:30	5. Metadata a. Presentation by on UN metadata standards b. Presentation on FGDC Metadata standards c. Presentation on RDF/Dublin Core	
14:30-18:30	Working Group I Identification of possible standards and protocols in the implementation of the Global Invasive Species Network;	Working Group II Identification of possible standards and protocols to improve exchange of biodiversity data (national reports, biodiversity assessments, GBO, etc.)
20 February 2002 9:00	6. Reports from Working Group I and II	
11:00	7. Recommendations and follow-up action.	
12:00-13:30	Lunch	
13:30	7. Recommendations and follow-up action (continued).	
18:00	8. Closure of meeting.	

## Annex II

### Examples of Formats, Protocols and Standards

LEVEL	Format	Protocol	Standard	Product	Database	Application
<b>CBD (Highest)</b>	BCH Interop (Data)	BCH Interop (Transactions)			CBD Database (Focal Points, Reports, Metadata) BCH Database	CBD Web Site Database maintenance application
<b>Public (High)</b>	MS-Word, PDF, GIF RDF+Dublin Core RDF, Dublin Core HTML	SOAP  HTTP, FTP	RDF, HTML, HTTP, FTP, ANSI-SQL, ...	Internet Information Server (IIS) SQL-Server, Oracle, Access, Adobe Acrobat, MS- Word		MS-Access, MS- Word
<b>Public (Low)</b>	XML SGML Unicode, Extended ASCII, ASCII	TCP IP	XML, SGML, TCP/IP, Unicode, ASCII			

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