



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/CHM/IM-Interop/1/1/Add.1
5 October 2004

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

INFORMAL MEETING ON INTEROPERABILITY OF
INFORMATION AMONG THE THREE RIO AND
OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS
Montreal, 2-3 November 2004

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. In paragraph 7 (e) of its decision VII/23 A, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity requested the Executive Secretary to advise on ways the clearing-house mechanism can assist to make relevant information interoperable among the three Rio conventions for review at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.
2. In paragraph 7 (d) of the same decision, the Conference of the Parties also requested the Executive Secretary to examine ways to develop regional portals to visualize and exchange national and regional cartographic information (geographic information systems and remote-sensing) from all thematic areas (including maps, satellite images and datasets).
3. Accordingly, the Executive Secretary has organized the present meeting to identify common formats, protocols and standards to facilitate the exchange of information among the three Rio and other environmental conventions and to recommend ways to develop regional cartographic web-based portals and to draft recommendations on their implementation and use.
4. The organization of the meeting responds to, and builds upon, the recommendations of the informal meeting on formats, protocols and standards for improved exchange of biodiversity information, which was held in Montreal on 19-20 February 2002 (see UNEP/CBD/COP/6/INF/1).
5. The meeting also responds to programme element 2 (Information systems) of the programme of work on technology transfer and technological and scientific cooperation adopted by the Conference of the Parties in its decision VII/29, which calls for the development of advice and guidance on the use of new information-exchange formats, protocols and standards to enable interoperability among relevant existing systems of national and international information exchange, including technology and patent databases.
6. The meeting will also consider issues relevant to the work the joint liaison group of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is examining activities related to the development of a joint strategy on information exchange, a portal for accessing national communications and reports and information issues related to capacity-building and technology transfer.
7. The meeting will consider issues relevant to the improved exchange of biodiversity-related and cartographic information. Specific objectives for this meeting include:

- (a) To recommend possible categories of information such as national focal points, national reports and decisions, among others, for interoperability of information;
- (b) To identify possible common formats, protocols, metadata and standards to facilitate interoperability among the three Rio and other environmental conventions;
- (c) To discuss the development of regional portals to visualize and exchange national and regional cartographic information;
- (d) To share experiences and knowledge.

8. The meeting will also offer side events on formats, protocols and standards such as eXtended Markup Language (XML), metadata and Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP), among others to promote sharing of expertise among participants.

B. Participants

9. Representatives from the three Rio and other environmental conventions with expertise in the development and use of information-exchange protocols and cartographic data will be invited to attend.

10. In addition to these participants, representatives from 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) Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network;
- (c) Global Biodiversity Information Facility;
- (d) UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre;
- (e) International Portal on Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health;
- (f) Integrated Taxonomic Information System;
- (g) Species 2000;
- (h) ESRI Conservation Programmes.

C. Anticipated outcome of the meeting

11. 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 among the three Rio and other environmental conventions, and will recommend possible solutions to overcome the identified constraints and impediments.

12. The recommendations of the meeting will be communicated to the Conference of the Parties at its eighth meeting, to be held in Brazil in 2006.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

13. 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., Tuesday 2 November 2004.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of Chair and Rapporteur

14. 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

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

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

16. The Secretariat will offer a brief presentation on formats, protocols, standards, products, databases and applications developed and used by the Secretariat. 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.

17. Representatives from other conventions will be invited to make presentations on information exchange projects and initiatives.

18. Participants will be invited to discuss similar initiatives and projects implemented by their organizations and programmes.

ITEM 4. IDENTIFICATION OF CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION SUCH AS DECISIONS, NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS, FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION INTEROPERABILITY PROJECTS

19. Participants will be invited to discuss possible categories of information among the three Rio and other environmental conventions for the design and implementation of interoperability projects.

20. Such categories may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Decisions;
- (b) National focal points;
- (c) Case-studies;
- (d) National reports;
- (e) Library materials.

ITEM 5. POSSIBLE FORMATS, PROTOCOLS AND STANDARDS FOR THE IMPROVED EXCHANGE OF BIODIVERSITY-RELATED DATA, INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE, AMONG THE THREE RIO AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONVENTIONS

21. The Secretariat will make a presentation on the Biosafety Clearing-House, on its use of XML and on tools developed by the Clearing-House Mechanism to facilitate interoperability of information. Accordingly, it is proposed that this item of the agenda cover the following elements:

- (a) Common format matrix of the national reports (National Reports Analyser);
- (b) Decisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity and recommendations search mechanism;
- (c) Use of XML, RDF/Dublin Core in the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

- (d) Presentation on tools developed to assist interoperability;
 - (e) Lessons learned on using common standards and formats among distributed databases.
22. These issues will be considered in light of decision VII/23 A.
23. Participants will be invited to make presentations on their use of common formats, protocols and standards.

ITEM 6. DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL PORTALS TO VISUALIZE AND EXCHANGE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CARTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

24. Under this item, participants will be invited to share experiences on the use of cartographic data and discuss the possible development of regional portals to visualize and exchange national and regional cartographic information.

ITEM 7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP ACTION

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

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

26. It is expected that the meeting will adjourn at 5 p.m. on 3 November 2004.

Annex I

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

2 November 2004 9 a.m.	1. Opening of the meeting.
9.15 a.m.	2. Organizational matters: 2.1. Election of Chair and Rapporteur 2.2. Organization of work
9.30 a.m.	3. Technical presentation on formats, protocols, standards, products, databases and applications
10.30 a.m. – 12 noon	4. Presentation of pilot projects of the Convention on Biological Diversity: (a) Common format matrix of national reports (national reports analyzer); (b) CBD decisions and recommendations search mechanism; (c) Use of XML, RDF/Dublin Core in the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House; (d) Presentation on tools developed to assist interoperability (e) Lessons learned on using common standards and formats among distributed databases. 5. Presentation by other conventions and participants.
12 noon – 1.30 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.	6. Identification of categories of information such as decisions, National Focal Points, for the implementation of interoperability projects (a) Decisions; (b) National focal points; (c) Case-studies; (d) National reports; (e) Library materials.
2.30 p.m. – 6.30 p.m.	7. Possible formats, protocols and standards for the improved exchange of biodiversity-related data, information and knowledge, among the three Rio and other environmental conventions.
3 November 2004 9 a.m. -12 noon	8. Discussion on the development of regional portals to visualize and exchange national and regional cartographic information.
12 noon.-1.30 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 p.m.	9. Recommendations and follow-up action.
6 p.m.	10. Closure of meeting.