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**AD-HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON
REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
CONVENTION**

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Item 3.2 of the provisional agenda*

**PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM IN
SUPPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY 2011-2020**

*Note by the Executive Secretary***

INTRODUCTION

1. 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. In paragraph 5 (b) of that decision, the Executive Secretary was requested to prepare, in consultation with the informal advisory committee and interested Parties, a realistic work programme for the clearing-house mechanism, in line with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
2. Between 27 January and 25 February 2012, interested Parties were invited to provide their views and comments on a proposal which was drafted by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the informal advisory committee to the clearing-house mechanism. The feedback received was taken into account when finalizing the present document for the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention. The Working Group is invited to review this document and make a recommendation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its eleventh meeting. Additional related information is available in an information document on the proposed work programme for the clearing-house mechanism (UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/4/INF/12).

* UNEP/CBD/WG-RI/4/1.

** This document was reviewed by the COP Bureau at its meeting on 5 April 2012. Following the guidance provided by the COP Bureau, the ADVANCE COPY posted earlier was revised and re-posted for consideration of the Working Group on Review of Implementation at its fourth meeting.

In order to minimize the environmental impacts of the Secretariat's processes, and to contribute to the Secretary-General's initiative for a carbon-neutral UN, this document is printed in limited numbers. Participants are kindly requested to bring their own copy to the meeting.

APPROACH

3. The work programme for the clearing-house mechanism should be considered in the broad context of supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans at the national level. In order to have a coherent approach, this overall support covers not only Article 18 of the Convention on technical and scientific cooperation, but also other articles aiming at building capacity and providing cross-cutting support, such as Article 13 on public education and awareness, Article 16 on access to and transfer of technology, and Article 17 on exchange of information.

4. This work programme builds upon the framework defined by the mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. For each objective, various activities are recommended, keeping in mind the following aspects:

(a) *Effectiveness* - There should be a sound rationale for undertaking activities so that they effectively contribute to the achievement of the intended objective;

(b) *Requirements* - The work programme is expected to be realistic and a distinction should be made between what can be achieved with available capacity and what would be possible if further requirements were met;

(c) *Sustainability* - It is important to consider the long-term timeframe, especially in the context of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity until 2020, by taking into account maintenance and continuity needs during planning and budgeting.

5. The recommended activities are based on the list presented to the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in annex II of the note from the Executive Secretary on scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism containing the progress report and recommendations for further development (UNEP/CBD/COP/10/15). These activities have been updated to take into account inputs from Parties as well as the recent evolution in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism. For several reasons including the long-term timeframe, the uncertainty in the availability of resources, and the inherent differences between countries, it is not possible to provide an accurate timeframe. Therefore the following is recommended for planning and monitoring:

(a) Divide the implementation period until 2020 into five management stages corresponding to the intersessional periods between the tenth and the fifteenth meetings of the Conferences of the Parties; Stage 1 would end at the eleventh meeting and stage 5 at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Decide at each Conference of the Parties which activities of the overall implementation plan should be undertaken on a priority basis during the next stage, taking into account progress made, available capacity, and evolving needs;

6. The rest of this document is structured as follows to form a complete reference set:

(a) The vision of the clearing-house mechanism as expressed in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (decision X/2);

(b) The mission of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020 (decision X/15);

(c) The corresponding goals and objectives for the same period (decision X/15);

(d) The corresponding recommended activities to achieve these objectives.

VISION¹

7. Collectively those involved in implementing the Convention have a wealth of experience and have developed many useful good practice cases, tools and guidance. There is additional useful information beyond this community.

8. A biodiversity knowledge network will be developed, including a database and network of practitioners, to bring together this knowledge and experience and to make it available through the clearing-house mechanism to facilitate and support enhanced implementation of the Convention, including its various programmes and all national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

9. National clearing-house mechanism nodes comprising networks of experts with effective websites should be developed and sustained so that in each Party, all have access to the information, expertise and experience required to implement the Convention. National clearing-house mechanism nodes should also be linked to the central clearing-house mechanism managed by the Secretariat of the Convention, and information exchange between these should be facilitated.

MISSION²

To contribute significantly to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity 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.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES³

Goal 1: The central clearing-house mechanism provides effective global information services to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

- 1.1. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has the capacity to sustain an effective central clearing-house mechanism.
- 1.2. A high-quality CBD website is available in all United Nations languages.
- 1.3. Effective information exchange services are fully operational.
- 1.4. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity facilitates the development of a network of experts and practitioners among Parties and partners.
- 1.5. Guidance is available for Parties and partners to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network.

¹ Decision X/2, annex, paragraph 22.

² Decision X/15, annex.

³ Decision X/15, annex.

Goal 2: National clearing-house mechanisms provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

- 2.1. All Parties have the capacity to sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms.
- 2.2. High-quality national clearing-house mechanism websites are available.
- 2.3. National information is exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism network.
- 2.4. Parties collaborate and share knowledge through the clearing-house mechanism network.
- 2.5. Partners and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity have contributed to the development of national clearing-house mechanisms.

Goal 3: Partners significantly expand the clearing-house mechanism network and services.

- 3.1. Partners can sustain their participation in the clearing-house mechanism.
- 3.2. High-quality regional and thematic clearing-house mechanism websites are available.
- 3.3. Partner information is exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism network.
- 3.4. Partners collaborate and share knowledge through the clearing-house mechanism network.

ACTIVITIES

Goal 1: The central clearing-house mechanism provides effective global information services to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

Scope and purpose

10. The scope of Goal 1 covers the central node of the clearing-house mechanism network. This node is managed by the Executive Secretary and comprises the CBD website with its information services and various web portals. The main target users are those who can have an influence on the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, starting with national focal points.

11. The purpose of Goal 1 is to make key information and knowledge for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 discoverable and accessible from the central clearing-house mechanism acting as the main entry point to the biodiversity knowledge network. Such information includes official and public content held at the Secretariat as well as linkages to further sources at the national or partner levels. The purpose is also to facilitate global knowledge sharing and information exchange by allowing contributions from the whole network.

1.1. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has the capacity to sustain an effective central clearing-house mechanism.

Recommended activities

- 1.1.1. Maintain a list of priority activities to be undertaken on the central clearing-house mechanism, taking into account progress made, available capacity, and evolving needs to enable, *inter alia*, the Conference of Parties, at each of its meetings, to review progress and, as necessary, adjust the activities.
- 1.1.2. Establish processes to monitor the development and effectiveness of the central clearing-house mechanism.
- 1.1.3. Ensure that the Secretariat has the capacity to further develop and maintain the CBD website and other modern information services of the central clearing-house mechanism.

- 1.1.4. Ensure that the Secretariat has capacity to manage knowledge and information, including terminology and documentation management.
- 1.1.5. Identify, assess, and adopt appropriate publicly-available tools or services that increase the capacity and sustainability of the central clearing-house mechanism in a cost-effective manner.
- 1.1.6. Optimize the process of maintaining the CBD website in all United Nations languages by making sound use of modern translation technology.

Rationale

12. It is strategically important to adopt good planning and monitoring practices, as well as to measure the effectiveness of the central clearing-house mechanism in order to determine how to prioritize actions for further improvements.

13. To be able to contribute significantly to the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the central clearing-house mechanism must have adequate capacity to provide effective information services to exchange information and knowledge across the whole network, otherwise the operations of the whole network would be negatively affected.

14. The use of publicly available tools and services is important to avoid reinventing the wheel by developing information services that can be available out-of-the box. This is particularly true for the content management system (CMS) of the CBD website which must be a reliable and extensible platform able to meet existing and future needs.

15. Website translation is costly and time-consuming. With modern technology, this process can be streamlined in a cost-effective way that improves consistency.

1.2. A high-quality CBD website is available in all United Nations languages.

Recommended activities

- 1.2.1. Prepare a web content strategy for the CBD website in support of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and keep it in line with decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.
- 1.2.2. Maintain and improve the CBD website and its related portals in terms of content, services, appearance, user-friendliness, usability and accessibility taking into account user feedback.
- 1.2.3. Make the CBD website available in all United Nations languages.
- 1.2.4. Ensures that the CBD website evolves in accordance with its web content strategy.

Rationale

16. The CBD website is the main communication platform of the central clearing-house mechanism. A web content strategy is a means to clarify how its role translates into content and services for its target audiences. This strategy should also determine how to reach the expected level of quality, and how to manage content in all United Nations languages.

17. Many decisions of the Conference of the Parties in various thematic programmes and cross-cutting issues include components related to the clearing-house mechanism, and these components represent a significant part of the maintenance and development work to be carried out on the CBD website.

1.3. Effective information exchange services are fully operational.

Recommended activities

- 1.3.1. Expand the knowledge base in a way that allows easy access and cross-references by continuously incorporating Convention-related information such as decisions, work programmes, targets, indicators, implementation activities, online sources, reference documents, case-studies, best practices, training materials, organizations, experts, contacts, events, maps, multimedia resources, and other relevant items.
- 1.3.2. Integrate collaboration tools in a user workspace encouraging Parties, experts, practitioners, and other stakeholders to maintain contact, share ideas, and work together, while providing quick access to information directly related to each user's role and activities.
- 1.3.3. Implement the online submission system as the update mechanism of the knowledge base and the collaboration tools in order to enable Parties and all stakeholders to make contributions related to the Convention and its implementation.
- 1.3.4. Implement specialized information services in accordance with decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.
- 1.3.5. Expose data held by the central clearing-house mechanism through modern interfaces based on open standards as a way to facilitate access to information about the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- 1.3.6. Provide tools enabling national clearing-house mechanisms to automatically access and display relevant information from the central clearing-house mechanism.
- 1.3.7. Continue to develop and use information exchange services to make Convention-related information easily and widely accessible, in line with technological and social trends.

Rationale

18. User feedback has revealed that the CBD website has established too many independent information services. As a result, users experience difficulties in finding information scattered across various systems. The solution is to offer four consolidated services able to respond to most of users' needs:

- (a) A knowledge base acting as the central metadata registry of all information and knowledge in a way that allows easy access and cross-references;
- (b) A user workspace providing collaboration tools while providing quick access to information directly related to each user's role and activities;
- (c) A submission system allowing users to make contributions related to the Convention and its implementation;
- (d) An aggregator collecting information from national clearing-house mechanisms in order to make it easily discoverable and accessible from the central clearing-house mechanism website.

19. More specialised services can be developed if requested by the Conference of the Parties.

20. Today, web technologies are widely based on open standards operating on heterogeneous platforms. Hence, it is possible to establish a standard information exchange mechanism for the clearing-house mechanism while promoting free and open access to information about the Convention on Biological Diversity, which can have a network effect.

21. Communication platforms beyond the CBD website can also be effective in contributing to the implementation of the Convention. Applications for smart phones and other handheld devices are becoming increasingly popular and widely used. This type of service could be offered by the clearing-house mechanism to respond to identified needs.

1.4. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity facilitates the development of a network of experts and practitioners among Parties and partners.

Recommended activities

- 1.4.1. Establish a user-friendly online networking platform for national focal points, experts, practitioners, and other relevant contacts to encourage participation.
- 1.4.2. Promote networking of Parties and partners by linking the central and national clearing-house mechanisms.
- 1.4.3. Explore opportunities to facilitate scientific and technical cooperation for the implementation of the Convention.

Rationale

22. The clearing-house mechanism can benefit from interconnections with existing professional online networking services (e.g. LinkedIn) which have been designed to be driven by self-interest.

23. While it is technically possible to interconnect the central and national clearing-house mechanisms through interoperability mechanisms, manual links are still needed to address specific networking needs.

1.5. Guidance is available for Parties and partners to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network.

Recommended activities

- 1.5.1. Establish and publish specifications to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network, including interoperability protocols, common formats, controlled vocabularies, application programming interfaces, and other technical guidelines.
- 1.5.2. Provide guidance to Parties and partners on how to exchange information through the clearing-house mechanism network, including on the data submission and validation processes.

Rationale

24. Information exchange assumes the specification of a common interface. In addition, guidance is needed to describe how to setup and use the exchange mechanism.

Goal 2: National clearing-house mechanisms provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Scope and purpose

25. The scope of Goal 2 covers the national nodes of the clearing-house mechanism network. These nodes are managed by Parties and include subnational nodes when they exist. The main target users are those who can have an influence on the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans, including national focal points, decision makers, experts, and practitioners involved in this process.

26. The purpose of Goal 2 is to make accessible key information and knowledge for the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans in order to respond to the specific needs of each country and thus complement the central clearing-house mechanism. In this process, each country is encouraged to develop synergies with related initiatives in order to be as effective and sustainable as possible. Where appropriate, relevant national expertise and experiences should be identified and shared through the clearing-house mechanism network.

2.1. All Parties have the capacity to sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms.

Recommended activities

- 2.1.1. If not yet done, designate, as soon as possible, a national focal point for the clearing-house mechanism, as requested by paragraph 7 of decision II/3.
- 2.1.2. Identify a national structure, as appropriate, to coordinate the development of the clearing-house mechanism with participation of relevant biodiversity-related organizations and stakeholders.
- 2.1.3. Prepare a realistic national implementation strategy for the clearing-house mechanism, where appropriate, preferably as a component of the national biodiversity strategy and action plan, based on identified needs and anticipated resources.
- 2.1.4. Mobilize and allocate resources for strengthening the institutional capacity to implement the national clearing-house mechanism and for sustaining its operations.
- 2.1.5. Define roles and responsibilities for collecting, reviewing and disseminating information, managing website content, and for outreach activities, where appropriate.
- 2.1.6. Identify, assess, and adopt appropriate tools or services that increase the capacity and sustainability of the national clearing-house mechanism in a cost-effective manner.

Rationale

27. The process of establishing a national clearing-house mechanism usually starts with the designation of a national focal point in charge of this mission. It is recommended to prepare an implementation strategy in order to define how the national clearing-house mechanism is expected to contribute to the implementation of the Convention at the national level. This strategic approach should facilitate high-level support which is essential for long-term sustainability.

28. The community of national practitioners implementing the national biodiversity strategy and action plans can greatly contribute to the effectiveness of the national clearing-house mechanism if:

- (a) They are represented in the high-level national coordination structure, so that their views and needs are well taken into account when planning the development of the national clearing-house mechanism;
- (b) They become familiar with the information services provided by the national clearing-house mechanism by using them, for their own needs and for the common needs of the community;
- (c) Processes are in place to identify changes in stakeholders and to adapt the national clearing-house mechanism to their information needs.

2.2. High-quality national clearing-house mechanism websites are available.*Recommended activities*

- 2.2.1. Prepare a web content strategy for the national clearing-house mechanism serving as a key means for the implementation and review of the national biodiversity strategy and action plan, including by providing information on implementation activities, scientific data, expertise, and technologies.
- 2.2.2. If not yet done, establish a national clearing-house mechanism providing basic information on national contacts, and on biodiversity in the country.
- 2.2.3. Identify relevant content and information sources at the national level and promote them through the national clearing-house mechanism, in line with the web content strategy.
- 2.2.4. Maintain and improve the national clearing-house mechanism website in terms of content, services, appearance, user-friendliness, usability and accessibility taking into account users' feedback.
- 2.2.5. Whenever appropriate and feasible, make the national clearing-house mechanism website available in various national and local languages.
- 2.2.6. Whenever appropriate and feasible, further develop the national clearing-house mechanism at the sub-national or local level.

Rationale

29. The web content strategy is important to clarify the type of content and services that should be provided at the national level. This strategy should also determine how to reach the expected level of quality and how to manage content in the most efficient way, including through mainstreaming or synergies with other initiatives.

2.3. National information is exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism network.*Recommended activities*

- 2.3.1. Whenever possible, develop information exchange mechanisms with relevant national sources of biodiversity information, making use, whenever applicable and appropriate, of well-established open standards.
- 2.3.2. Whenever feasible and appropriate, make use of tools to exchange information with the central clearing-house mechanism.

Rationale

30. By interconnecting the national clearing-house mechanism with both national databases and the central clearing-house mechanism, valuable national information can be made more prominent and accessible at the global level. Automation allows to reduce low-level IT tasks and to concentrate on high-level activities.

2.4. Parties collaborate and share knowledge through the clearing-house mechanism network.*Recommended activities*

- 2.4.1. Undertake a national biodiversity knowledge management initiative that identifies knowledge needs and sources for the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

- 2.4.2. Ensure that there is a repository to preserve key knowledge on the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.
- 2.4.3. Develop a knowledge-sharing culture to ensure that information and knowledge from various national sources is effectively provided and published on the national clearing-house mechanism.
- 2.4.4. Whenever possible, develop links between the national clearing-house mechanism and existing networks.
- 2.4.5. Encourage the use of the national clearing-house mechanism as a tool to dialog with the civil society, major groups and stakeholders in line with the national strategy for communication, education and public awareness.
- 2.4.6. Whenever possible, facilitate international collaboration initiatives, including scientific and technical cooperation, South-South or North-South cooperation.

Rationale

31. In order to gradually build a biodiversity knowledge network as envisaged by the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, a number of major activities should be undertaken at various levels to fully engage Parties and partners, to mobilize communities of practice, to capture relevant knowledge and map it to identified needs, and to enhance the information exchange infrastructure of the clearing-house mechanism.

2.5. Partners and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity have contributed to the development of national clearing-house mechanisms.

Recommended activities

- 2.5.1. Provide guidance to Parties on how to develop their national clearing-house mechanisms, taking into account a variety of implementation options.
- 2.5.2. Organize capacity-building workshops to assist Parties in developing their national clearing-house mechanisms, including through organizations which are present and active at the national or regional levels, and based on the special capacity-building needs of developing countries and on the status of their national clearing-house mechanisms.
- 2.5.3. Encourage collaboration initiatives, including South-South and North-South cooperation, as well as regional networking to further develop national clearing-house mechanisms.

Rationale

32. Most Parties need guidance and support to develop their national clearing-house mechanism in an effective way. Cooperation and partnerships can make a difference in building capacity, particularly in developing countries.

Goal 3: Partners significantly expand the clearing-house mechanism network and services.*Scope and purpose*

33. The scope of Goal 3 covers the nodes of the clearing-house mechanism network which are managed by partners. These partners usually fall into the following categories: thematic, regional, and international. Thematic partners provide specialized services in a particular biodiversity field. Regional partners support the development of the clearing-house mechanism network within their geographical area. International partners can be United Nations agencies or international governmental organizations providing information services relevant to the implementation of the Convention. These partners can also be national institutions or other centres of excellence that have a recognized role at the regional or global levels.

34. The purpose of Goal 3 is to identify and share through the clearing-house mechanism network valuable information, knowledge and expertise held by partners in order to make it accessible to those who need it for implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 or the national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

3.1. Partners can sustain their participation in the clearing-house mechanism.*Recommended activities*

- 3.1.1. Identify the benefits of participating in the clearing-house mechanism in line with the organization's mandate and strategy.
- 3.1.2. Designate an appropriate contact or focal point for the clearing-house mechanism.
- 3.1.3. Mobilize and allocate resources for contributing to the clearing-house mechanism.

Rationale

35. A partner is unlikely to participate in the clearing-house mechanism if it has not identified any benefit in doing so. This is typically determined by the partner's mandate and strategy. Then, the designation of an appropriate contact is recommended to facilitate planning and implementation of collaboration initiatives based on available resources.

3.2. High-quality regional and thematic clearing-house mechanism websites are available.*Recommended activities*

- 3.2.1. Establish or further develop regional clearing-house mechanisms that contribute to the development of national clearing-house mechanisms.
- 3.2.2. Establish or further develop thematic clearing-house mechanisms that contribute to thematic programmes of the Convention.

Rationale

36. Regional clearing-house mechanisms are in a good position to provide appropriate support to a group of national clearing-house mechanisms sharing regional commonalities. Thematic clearing-house mechanisms can act as centres of excellence in specific biodiversity areas relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

3.3. Partner information is exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism network.

Recommended activities

- 3.3.1. Collaboratively investigate ways for partners to make their Convention-related information accessible through the clearing-house mechanism.
- 3.3.2. Establish, through technical collaboration, information services enabling global access to relevant information from the Rio conventions and other multilateral environment agreements.
- 3.3.3. Develop, through technical collaboration between the Secretariats of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Convention on Biological Diversity, an interoperability mechanism that facilitates access to information on GEF-funded projects related to the implementation of the Convention.

Rationale

37. A collaborative approach is recommended to assess which information should be exchanged, and to agree on the common mechanisms and interfaces to do so.

3.4. Partners collaborate and share knowledge through the clearing-house mechanism network.

Recommended activities

- 3.4.1. Whenever possible, undertake initiatives to generate, capture, organize, package or transfer information and knowledge relevant to the implementation of the Convention.
- 3.4.2. Contribute to the knowledge base by submitting information related to the implementation of the Convention, such as projects, case-studies, and other relevant resources.
- 3.4.3. Encourage experts and practitioners to participate in the communities of practice related to their expertise.

Rationale

38. Around the world, there is a wealth of information and knowledge held by various actors in the field of biodiversity. If partners carry out the above activities, valuable information and knowledge will be gradually collected and made globally available through the clearing-house mechanism network. This is expected to benefit practitioners who implement the Convention.
