
Meeting of the Consortium of Scientific Partners
Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 20 November 2018
18:00 – 20:00

MEETING REPORT

Introduction

The objective of the meeting was to convene a follow up of the meeting that was organized in Montreal, on 4 July 2018, during SBSTTA-22. It provided another opportunity to discuss how to reinvigorate the work of Consortium of Scientific Partners on Biodiversity (CSP) which was created in 2006 to ensure that it advances work within the context of technical and scientific cooperation and to ensure it is well positioned to contribute to the post-2020 biodiversity agenda over the next biennium.

1. Welcome remarks and opening of the meeting

- The Head of the Capacity-Building and Knowledge Management Unit, Mr. Erie Tamale offered some introductory remarks, noting that while momentum has slowed lately, the Secretariat is committed to energizing the group. He underscored that the CSP has a critical role to play in the successful implementation of the Convention. Comments were made that at a side event showcasing the work of the CSP, there were many good examples of how the group can contribute to the post-2020 process. A notification was sent out by the Secretariat on how strategic partners like the CSP can contribute to the post-2020 biodiversity framework and it encouraged that all member organizations respond.
- Mr. Tamale conveyed apologies on behalf of the Executive Secretary who was unable to attend the meeting in person. Notwithstanding, she is monitoring the outcomes and progress of the CSP closely and wishes good deliberations.

2. Election of chair

- Due to commitments and demands associated with the COP Presidency, the Chair of the Consortium of Scientific Partners, Mr. Hesiquio Benitez of CONABIO stepped down from this role on 4 July 2018 at the last CSP meeting.
- The Secretariat updated the CSP that an email was sent out several months ago calling for expressions of interest from member organizations to assume the role of Chair. Furthermore, the Secretariat has also been in contact with several organizations to see who would be in the role. Two expressions of interest were received; one from the Smithsonian Institution and the other from the Alexander von Humboldt Institute.
- The floor was opened for additional expressions of interest and comments from the CSP membership. The following interventions were noted:
 - There was consensus among the group that an arrangement of Co-Chairs would serve the CSP well, as it has historically;
 - Ms. Ana Maria Hernandez clarified that Dr. Brigitte Baptiste would be the formal Co-Chair on behalf of the Humboldt Institute and that she would support as required;

- Ms. Britta Garfield expressed regret that she could not attend the meeting in person but is looking forward to supporting the group more actively going forward. As one of the founding members of the CSP, the Smithsonian highly values the Consortium and fully supports its mandate.
- Following discussion among the membership, it was decided to have two Co-Chairs. The representatives from both the Smithsonian Institution and Humboldt Institute expressed their gratitude to members and briefly mentioned how they could use their respective institutions' experience and depth of expertise towards the collective work of the CSP. The Co-Chairs looked forward to building on the successes of the group and positioning it for 2020 and beyond.
- Following his arrival from plenary, Mr. Hesiquio Benitez gave a few remarks as former Chair of the CSP, noting that COP14 presented a good opportunity to regroup, reflect and decide the types of activities it would like to execute as envisaged in the founding MoU. He gave a bit of background on the CSP; some of the thematic workshop held in 2010 and hoped that some of the good ideas and activities could be revived. He called for a common format and branding for presentations and shared some ideas with respect to branding.
- Ms. Hernandez thanked Mr. Benitez for his service as Chair and spoke on how instrumental he has been over the years.

DECISION: Members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners unanimously confirmed both the Smithsonian Institution and the Humboldt Institute as Co-Chairs of the group.

3. Adoption of the agenda

All CSP members agreed on the agenda that was proposed by the Secretariat without amendments and decided to adopt it.

DECISION: Members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners unanimously adopted the proposed agenda without deviation.

4. Discussion on the CSP's vision, the proposed work plan for 2018-2020 and next steps

- Under this item, the CSP was invited to discuss issues central to its mandate. The founding Memorandum of Understanding was clear on the scope of work that should be realized. Considering the momentum of the post-2020 biodiversity framework, it was a great opportunity for the CSP to reflect on ways to be more engaged in the work of the Convention as a group. The Secretariat re-presented an updated draft work plan which had previously been circulated and received feedback from a few CSP members to ensure broader ownership.
- The Secretariat provided introductory remarks, noting that a provisional work plan with suggested activities was circulated prior to the last CSP meeting in July and again, in August for consideration and additions. The Secretariat laid out the main activities i) mapping expertise and existing cooperation activities between member organizations ii) a quarterly newsletter iii) creation of a designated community space / forum where CSP members can connect and share information with one another iv) a revamp of the current CSP website v) training sessions like those organized in the past, and vi) a flagship project. The Secretariat also re-iterated its offer to help facilitate activities if needed and help track progress against the workplan. After the Secretariat's introduction, CSP members offered the following interventions:
 - Ms. Garfield thanked the Secretariat for preparing the workplan and indicated that the Smithsonian Institution did not have any objections to the proposed activities.
 - Ms. Hernandez encouraged CSP members to reflect on what members can do to achieve real action and impact under the Convention, for example leveraging its experience in

building capacities. She also called for a designated space for the CSP at future COP and SBSTTA meetings.

- Mr. Benitez noted that the group should identify 2-3 key topics for next the SBSTTA /COP and establish sub-groups among membership to align with those priorities and organize side events based on those themes in a cohesive manner.
- Mr. de Koeijer drew attention to the potential role for the CSP on the proposed Technical and Scientific Cooperation Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) and the importance of ensuring that members are part of that framework to build capacity from 2020 onwards since there are already some organizations from the CSP represented on the CHM IAC. He also noted the importance of involvement in the post-2020 capacity building framework.
- Following on this point raised by Mr. de Koeijer, Ms. Hernandez suggested this would require a deeper discussion and although a good point, we need to be aware of the new parameters of the proposed IAC as it could also weaken the CSP. There are also sensitivities of whether or not Parties will let the CSP be part of the proposed IAC and there should be a strong decision calling for greater involvement of the CSP.
- Ms. Maité Delmas noted the COP 13 work undertaken as group on Aichi targets and suggested the CSP showcase work undertaken so far.
- Ms. Hernandez concurred with the point raised by Ms. Delmas and stressed the need to update the information on the work undertaken with the support of the Secretariat.
- Mr. Christopher Lyal highlighted that one easy win is capacity building. He agrees with setting priorities and determining who would be responsible for each, from within the CSP membership. There is also a tremendous amount of data among the CSP members and partners around the world; we can find several case studies to organize a compelling side event. He also sees science as taking a central role in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Following on this point, Ms. Hernandez proposed a dedicated capacity building space at future COP and/or SBSTTA meetings to offer expertise to people and she encouraged the drafting of a proposal.
- Mr. Lyal agreed with the suggested approach and mentioned that the group ought to leverage the CSP website as much as possible in the run-up to these events to post what each member institution is doing and perhaps collect information on what each institution can provide via a questionnaire and prepare an agenda accordingly.
- On the suggestion of a newsletter, Mr. Vincent Fleming stated a quarterly release might be too ambitious, but one could be timed annually to coincide with SBSTTA and underscore that the CSP exists. There should also be an update on the website in parallel.
- Mr. de Koeijer strongly agreed with the points raised by both Mr. Fleming and Mr. Lyal and noted that we should regularly articulate what the membership does towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. This should be posted along with the capacity building needs and priorities on the CSP web page.
- Ms. Sarah Roberts noted that Kew can offer a tool to make context outside the CBD and to reconcile competing pressures.
- Mr. Tim Hirsch cautioned on creating a confusing landscape as it is already hard to explain the distinction between GTI, Science Forum and the Bio-Bridge Initiative. It is important that the CSP doesn't create confusion through parallel networks. The CSP could take on a mentoring approach that GBIF is adopting and apply it to specific CBD activities.

- Ms. Hernandez underscored that we are not in competition with other alliances and that the CSP can be an umbrella and GTI could be brought in. All members currently work with diverse alliances, but the group has a clear mandate and we must strengthen what is in the MOU: providing support to CBD. One way to do so is to coordinate with other networks. This is nonetheless a good point and perhaps we ought to consider some sort of strong branding to reinforce that CSP is valuable, has depth of expertise and provides scientific support.
- Mr. Benitez reinforced the role of communication and branding and noted that we need to work with other actors. We should look at the next SBSTTA programme to build an activity agenda, implement a newsletter, and organize the next Science Forum closely aligned to the main topics at COP.
- When it comes to communication and branding, Ms. Hernandez noted that the CSP will need a lot of support from the Secretariat, including a mailing list, compilation of capacity building activities, starting with side event presentations as a starting point.
- The Secretariat pointed out that a useful tool could be to map out the current landscape of ongoing collaboration and overlay these with key biodiversity themes relevant to the CBD.
- Ms. Kristal Maze noted the relevance of a review of the 12 years and benefits of the CSP and asked whether the Secretariat has an idea of what the CSP might do.
- Responding to the question from Ms. Maze, the Secretariat highlighted that the workplan circulated was part of a larger document that was circulated prior to SBSTTA, which contains a synthesis based on previous minutes and activities undertaken against the MoU. The Secretariat is happy to circulate it again if requested.
- The Secretariat also noted that going forward; it would like to see the Consortium of Scientific Partners become the science arm of the Convention. The CSP has a lot of tools/resources that should be made available and disseminated on a wider scale. There are certainly opportunities to pool data, resources and assets to benefit Parties and the Convention. The member institutions and their depth of expertise are shared assets and should be leveraged to their full capacity.
- Participants discussed the Science Forum as a potential activity that could be organized and championed by the CSP in the future. There was consensus that the Science Forum at COP14 was organized with short notice, with little connection and coherence to other scientific activities at the Secretariat, such as the GTI forum.
- Participants agreed that the Science Forum should be organized by the CSP in the future and should include other scientific events. A letter should be sent to the ES with this offer.
- Mr. Benitez suggested that a meeting be arranged with the current organizers to discuss this operational arrangement and it would also be prudent to include the Government of China.
- Picking up on the need for branding, Mr. Benitez also suggested a logo competition. A few samples prepared by the Secretariat are available below, to choose from.



- The Secretariat noted that it would make sure a Science Forum uniting all relevant strands of work would be part of the Host Agreement with China and the COP15 choreography.
- Ms. Hernandez reminded participants that there is a slot to make a presentation on 24 November, at the COP14 Science Forum, and invited other members to represent the group as well.
- Ms. Garfield drew attention to other networks and the need to bring the CSP's work and make it relevant at other UN events highlighting how they contribute to the SDGs. She also suggested identifying bright spots or best practices and sharing them at such events.

Summarizing the interventions from this agenda item, there was consensus that the post-2020 biodiversity framework should guide activities and that science ought to play a central role going forward. There was agreement that more space should be dedicated to the work of the CSP on the website, supported by a stronger suite of communication tools. CSP members were encouraged to identify the areas where it can bring a greater contribution. The concept of branding was also raised with the idea of a yearly newsletter to coincide with SBSTTA, together with a common format for presentations and perhaps a logo competition. There was consensus that the CSP should be the champion and owner of future Science Forums and that this should tie together all science-based initiatives at the Secretariat to avoid creating a confusing and disjointed landscape. Closer coordination with other networks was also discussed as were potential approaches such as mentoring to build capacity of Parties.

ACTION ITEM: Explore the feasibility of a designated space for the CSP at future COP and SBSTTA meetings.

ACTION ITEM: Deeper discussion needed on the role of the CSP vis-à-vis the proposed IAC on Technical and Scientific Cooperation.

ACTION ITEM: Side events to be organized around a number of themes aligned with the Convention, which should focus on building capacity and offer expertise to Parties. A proposal should be drafted to elaborate.

ACTION ITEM: Make more use of the CSP website with updates coinciding with SBSTTA and COP, as well as an accompanying newsletter timed with SBSTTA.

ACTION ITEM: CSP to send a letter to the CBD Executive Secretary proposing that the Consortium on Scientific Partners become the champions of the Science Forum and that a single space is established to bring together all science-based activities and events.

ACTION ITEM: The Consortium of Scientific Partners to explore stronger branding that could include a shared format for presentations and a logo competition with support from the Secretariat, if needed.

ACTION ITEM: Activity to map out the current collaborations that are ongoing among the members by theme.

5. Steering Committee

At the time of its signing, the Memorandum of Understanding called for the creation of a Steering Committee composed of the organizations' respective executive leadership to help oversee and

monitor its implementation. The Secretariat provided introductory remarks indicating that this item was included for discussion because it is in the MoU and that to date, it has not been implemented. Notwithstanding, participants agreed to keep the status quo and decided not to form a Steering Committee at this time as there were questions about the value it would bring and the administrative workload to maintain it. Several members suggested deviating from the MoU and instead selecting focal points on specific areas of expertise rather than having the chief executives involved.

DECISION: The CSP decided not to establish a formal Steering Committee but was open to selecting focal points on specific thematic areas.

6. Considerations and Opportunities for Broadening the CSP membership

Under this agenda item CSP members discussed opportunities and whether it was the right time to consolidate and broaden the Consortium's membership along regional and thematic lines. The Secretariat noted this point on the agenda was a carry-over item from the previous meeting at SBSTTA-22, however there were different views at the time and no formal resolution. Interventions and contributions related to this agenda item included the following:

- Several participants noted that any subsequent addition to join the CSP via the MoU would be between any interested institutions and the CBD and therefore, it would be up to the Secretariat to consider any new request.
- Several members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners advocated for reaching out to inactive members to reconfirm their interest, ask them to nominate a focal point and encourage more substantive participation.
- Several participants were of the mind that it was time to include other areas of expertise and regional presence, but it would be essential to make sure there is alignment of any potential new members to bring complementarity and value-added to the post-2020 biodiversity framework.
- Several participants advocated in favour reconnecting with all existing members first and consolidating progress on key issues before opening membership broadly.
- The Secretariat noted that organizations such as CETAF have explicitly requested information on joining the CSP and organizations with observer status may also wish to become full members. There ought to be some guidance and direction on these cases.
- Ms. Hernandez noted that the CSP can provide some guiding principles and basic requirements but the decision rests with the Secretariat.
- Mr. Lyal advocated for not stopping institutions from joining if there is interest and the Secretariat feels it is appropriate, but nonetheless agreed there should not be an active campaign.
- There was consensus on not formally opening membership before post-2020 and once a gap analysis on potential institutions and value has been conducted. However, one-off requests can be considered if deemed appropriate by the Secretariat, according to a set of guiding principles define by the CSP.
- Reflecting on Section 6 of the MoU, Cornelia Löhne noted that the document states that *“additional institutions may join this initiative upon decision by the Steering Committee and signature of the Memorandum of Understanding...”*

DECISION: The Consortium of Scientific Partners agreed that while new expressions of interest to join will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, the group will not formally open membership until 2020 and once a gap analysis on potential institutions and their value has been conducted.

ACTION ITEM: The CSP (Mr. de Koeijer) will suggest some basic requirements and guiding principles for new members.

ACTION ITEM: The Secretariat and Mr. de Koeijer to draft a letter to re-establish connection with current members of the CSP which should also request all member institutions to confirm their CSP focal points.

7. Financial Aspects

For the CSP to fulfil its mission it will need adequate funding to organize training events and other activities central to its mission and towards the implementation of the Convention. Participants took the opportunity to discuss the best ways to raise funds and to optimize resources. Interventions with respect to this agenda item included the following:

- The Secretariat underscored that the Bio-Bridge Initiative has a limited operational budget that is fully committed to core activities and it cannot contribute to funding activities of the CSP; it is however happy to assist with fundraising activities where it can.
- The best way to find funds is to start co-organizing activities together, defining the work effort and associated costs.
- Ms. Hernandez asked if the Secretariat had any financial projections for the activities in the work plan and noted that the group will decide how to fundraise once financial demands have been defined.
- Ms. Garfield raised the prospect of engaging the GEF for some activities.

ACTION ITEM: The Secretariat will provide a cost estimate for proposed activities going forward.

3. Any other business

All the participants were invited to the BBI side event that was being organized on 25 November.

4. Closure of the meeting

The representative of the new elected co-chair of the CSP, Ms. Hernandez, summarized the salient points and follow-up action items raised during the discussion and closed the meeting.

List of Participants

Organization	Location	Contact Name	Meeting Attendance
CORE CSP MEMBERS			
Instituto Humboldt	Colombia	Ms. Ana Maria Hernandez	In person
Singapore Botanical Gardens	Singapore	Ms. Wendy Yap	In person
Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences	Belgium	Mr. Han de Koeijer	In person
Smithsonian Institution	United States	Ms. Britta Garfield	Remote
Fundação Oswaldo Cruz	Brazil	Ms. Manuela da Silva	In person
CONABIO	Mexico	Mr. Hesiquio Benitez	In person
Natural History Museum	United Kingdom	Mr. Christopher Lyal	In person
German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	Germany	Ms. Cornelia Löhne	In person
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	United Kingdom	Mr. Vincent Fleming	In person
BfN	Germany	Mr. Lennart Kuemper-Schlake	In person
Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle	France	Mr. Denis Duclos	In person
		Ms. Maïté Delmas	In person
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	United Kingdom	Ms. Sarah Roberts	In person
SANBI	South Africa	Ms. Moshibudi Rampedi	In person
		Ms. Kristal Maze	In person
National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development	Saudi Arabia	Mr. Yousef Al-Hafedh	In person
OBSERVERS			
Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)	Denmark	Mr. Tim Hirsch	In person
Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)	Denmark	Ms. Melianie Raymond	In person
World Agroforestry Centre	Kenya	Mr. Philip Dobie	In person

List of Decisions and Action Items

Type	Responsible	Due	Status
<i>Decisions</i>			
Members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners confirmed both the Smithsonian Institution and Humboldt Institute as Co-Chairs of the group.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Members of the Consortium of Scientific Partners adopted the proposed agenda without deviation.	N/A	N/A	N/A
The CSP decided not to establish a formal Steering Committee but were open to selecting focal points on specific thematic areas.	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Consortium of Scientific Partners agreed that while new expressions of interest to join will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, the group will not formally open membership until 2020 and once a gap analysis on potential institutions and their value has been conducted.	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Action Items</i>			
Explore the feasibility of a designated space for the CSP at future COP and SBSTTA meetings.	Secretariat	Q3 2019	Open
Deeper discussion needed on the role of the CSP vis-à-vis the proposed IAC on Technical and Scientific Cooperation.	CSP	Q4 2019	Open
Side events to be organized around a cluster of number of themes aligned with the Convention, which should focus on building capacity and offer expertise to Parties. A proposal should be drafted to elaborate.	CSP	Q3 2019	Open
Make more use of the CSP website with updates coinciding with SBSTTA and COP, as well as an accompanying newsletter timed with SBSTTA.	Secretariat with support from CSP for content	Q3 2019	Open
CSP to send a letter to the CBD Executive Secretary proposing that the Consortium on Scientific Partners become the champions of the Science Forum and that a single space is established to bring together all science-based activities and events. Update: In January 2019, the Secretariat included the concept of a single science space within the draft Host Agreement for COP15 in China. This will be reviewed and discussed further in Q1 / Q2 2019 with the Government of China.	CSP	Q1 2019	Open
The Consortium of Scientific Partners to explore stronger branding that could include a shared format for presentations and a logo competition with support from the Secretariat, if needed.	CSP	Q2 2019	Open
Activity to map out the current collaborations that are ongoing between the membership by theme.	Secretariat with CSP support for content	Q2 2019	Open
The CSP (Han de Koeijer) will suggest some basic requirements and guiding principles for new members.	CSP	Q1 2019	Open

The Secretariat and Han de Koeijer to draft a letter to re-establish connection with current members of the CSP which should also request all member institutions to confirm their CSP focal points.	Secretariat with support from CSP (Han de Koeijer)	Q1 2019	Open
The Secretariat will provide a cost estimate for proposed activities going forward.	Secretariat	Ongoing	--