



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/IV/2
15 June 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Fourth meeting
Bratislava, 4–15 May 1998
Agenda item 8

DECISION ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AT ITS FOURTH MEETING

IV/2. Review of the operations of the clearing-house mechanism

The Conference of the Parties,

Noting that decisions I/3, II/3, II/4, II/7, II/8, II/10, II/11, II/14, II/16, II/17, III/4, III/5, III/9, III/10, III/11, III/15, III/17, III/18 and III/19 of the Conference of the Parties have clearly stressed and broadened the roles of the clearing-house mechanism as a key instrument to promote and facilitate the implementation of the objectives of the Convention,

Recalling that four clearing-house regional workshops were held prior to the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and drawing upon those experiences,

Recognizing the urgent need for the private sector to be involved in clearing-house mechanism activities to ensure that the facilitation and promotion of the transfer of technology meet the needs of Contracting Parties,

Acknowledging the need to establish a reliable network of existing and evolving biodiversity institutions and initiatives which can serve the needs and demands of Parties, not only during the pilot phase but also in the long term,

1. *Requests* all Governments and bilateral and multilateral funding institutions to provide funding for the development and implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, including support for national as well as regional and subregional clearing-house mechanism activities;
2. *Recommends* that Parties include in their national reports the lessons learned through activities undertaken to implement their national clearing-house mechanisms, as appropriate;
3. *Recommends* that each Party organize an appropriate national clearing-house mechanism steering committee or working group composed of multisectoral and interdisciplinary representatives, to achieve broad participation of different stakeholders in the implementation process of the clearing-house mechanism;

4. *Invites* the Parties and other partners to use the clearing-house mechanism logo as a unifying element creating a clearing-house mechanism identity;

5. *Recommends* that, in building up the content of information in the clearing-house mechanism either at the secretariat or other level, the following major content elements, among others, be used:

(a) *National, subregional and regional levels:* country profiles, biodiversity strategy and action plans, appropriate legislation, scientific and technological information, financial sources;

(b) *Secretariat level:* Convention on Biological Diversity and its implementation, national focal points, international themes, financial sources;

6. *Requests* those Parties with access to the Internet to link their national clearing-house mechanism home page to the Secretariat's clearing-house mechanism home page, where possible;

7. *Recommends* that the development of a common format be investigated, under which the orderly sequence of the articles of the Convention should be followed; alternatively, the sequence of the three objectives of the Convention could be considered as the organizing format for information in the clearing-house mechanism;

8. *Agrees* that the clearing-house mechanism should act as the clearing-house mechanism for future programmes and activities under the Convention on Biological Diversity, subject to budgetary considerations;

9. *Requests* the Global Environmental Facility:

(a) To be a catalyst in the development and implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, so as to assist it to fulfil its role in promoting and facilitating the implementation of the Convention, in a participatory manner and fully incorporating available modern information and communication tools;

(b) To support capacity-building activities and country-driven pilot projects focused on priority areas, as critical components in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism at the national, subregional, biogeographic, and regional levels, both during and after the pilot phase;

(c) To provide by all possible means, as appropriate, increased support for country-driven projects to establish and strengthen biodiversity information systems such as, inter alia, training, technology and processes related to the collection, organization, maintenance and updating of data and information and its communication to users through the clearing-house mechanism;

(d) To evaluate at the end of the clearing-house mechanism pilot phase the experience of the Global Environment Facility's support for developing countries' activities, to consider additional efforts to meet the increasing interest in taking part in and having access to the clearing-house mechanism, including in regional networking, and to report to the Executive Secretary prior to the next meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice;

10. *Instructs* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To put in place a list server with all officially designated clearing-house mechanism national focal points and other partners for the purpose of disseminating information on new and recent developments regarding the clearing-house mechanism, at either the national, regional or international level;

(b) To act as a focal point, during and after the pilot phase, to encourage the development of a network of partners, including indigenous and local communities, and to facilitate these in developing specific training for the effective participation of users in the clearing-house network;

(c) To ensure that the clearing-house mechanism should be continuously assisted in its functioning by the Informal Advisory Committee which is to provide guidance to the Executive Secretary during and after the pilot phase, and to play a full role in the further development of the clearing-house mechanism;

(d) To provide encouragement for and facilitate the coordination of biodiversity-related networks, activities and focal points that may constitute the clearing-house mechanism, to encourage their linkages within the clearing-house mechanism network and to make available information arising from the Secretariat's own functions as outlined in Article 24 of the Convention;

(e) To assist in ensuring that the implementation of Articles 16 (Transfer of and Access to Technology), 17 (Information Exchange) and 18 (Scientific and Technical Cooperation) of the Convention on Biological Diversity is facilitated by the clearing-house mechanism;

(f) To produce an informative and widely disseminated clearing-house mechanism brochure and newsletter to increase awareness of the activities of the clearing-house mechanism;

(g) To improve synergy in regard to information exchange with other biodiversity-related conventions and ongoing international or supranational information initiatives, and to contribute to the harmonization of the information management of other biodiversity-related treaties and to continue to discuss the possibilities of joint and harmonized approaches with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(h) To facilitate support to those Parties without adequate Internet access, preparing and disseminating to them updated information arising from the Secretariat's own functions as outlined in Article 24 of the Convention on, *inter alia*, CD-ROM or diskettes, either periodically or as required, and facilitating the dissemination of appropriate information to those Parties;

(i) To collaborate, with partners, on the provision of advice to Parties and others on, *inter alia*, the necessary layout and system specifications of the clearing-house mechanism;

(j) To produce a toolkit prototype containing necessary information for national focal points to build their national clearing-house mechanisms, drawing upon the recommendations of the regional workshops and following an informal assessment of national practices in collaboration with the Informal Advisory Committee on the clearing-house mechanism;

(k) To undertake an independent review of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism, starting at the end of 1998, to be presented to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice for its consideration together with a longer-term programme of work for the clearing-house mechanism. The following elements for evaluation of the pilot phase, among others, are recommended to be used:

- (i) Number of national focal points fully and effectively connected;
- (ii) Number and relevance of thematic networks and activities connected;
- (iii) Amount of information transferred from participating nodes;
- (iv) Number and effectiveness of training events;
- (v) Effectiveness of guidelines in achieving their aims
- (vi) Whether the clearing-house mechanism is being effectively used by Parties to further the aims of the Convention;

- (vii) Number of nodes supplying relevant information such as national reports, legislation and policies;
- (viii) Use made of list servers;
- (ix) Financial support, other resources, and time allocated for the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, in particular by the Secretariat and the clearing-house mechanism national focal points.
