

The mechanism's key characteristics

- Compatible with different levels of national capacity
- Needs-driven
- Structurally decentralized
- Provides access to information
- Supports decision-making
- Has no vested interest in controlling the expertise or information
- Created for the mutual benefit of all participants.



Still another initiative is the creation of a section dedicated to the Biosafety Clearing-House to support the Cartagena Protocol. The will allow the clearing-house mechanism to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information and experience relating to living modified organisms (LMOs).

The secretariat of the Convention is promoting the clearing-house and its goals through workshops addressing the scientific and technical information needs of developing countries. These workshops give priority to issues identified by the countries themselves, such as assessing national capacities for implementing the Convention, improving access to new information technologies and expertise, and strengthening education and public awareness.

The clearing-house also seeks to increase public awareness of Convention programmes and issues. It is establishing an Internet-based system to facilitate greater collaboration among countries through education and training projects, research cooperation, funding opportunities, access to and transfer of technology, and repatriation of information.

Experts are being linked to facilitate joint work programmes. For example, the mechanism works with the Global Invasive Species Programme (GISP) and with the Convention's scientific body to develop a joint scientific initiative on invasive alien species. The clearing-house also strives to link the rich human resources of developing countries with cutting-edge scientific initiatives in developed countries to create a mutually supportive and beneficial approach to problem-solving.



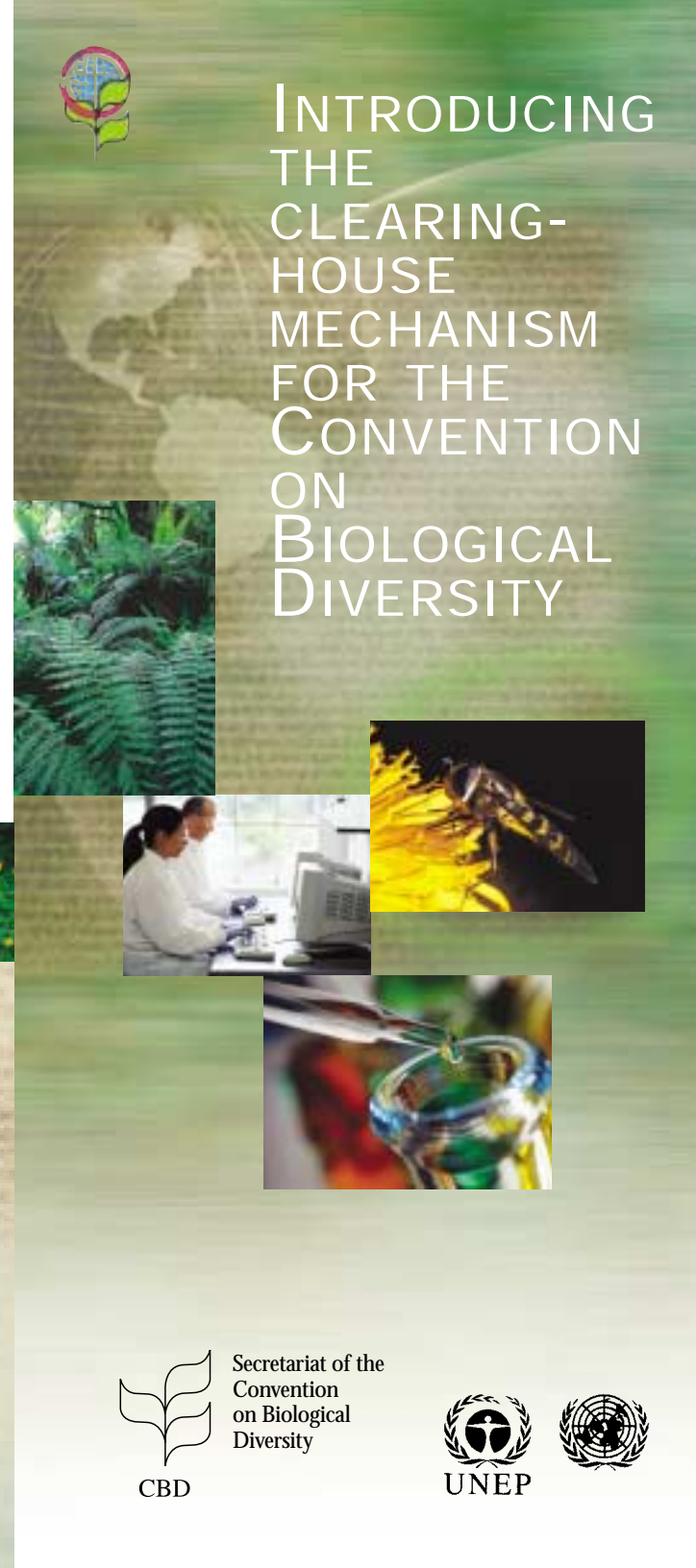
For more information

The clearing-house mechanism web site is located at www.biodiv.org

Further information is also available at:
Clearing-house mechanism
Secretariat of the Convention on
Biological Diversity

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INTRODUCING THE CLEARING- HOUSE MECHANISM FOR THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



Secretariat of the
Convention
on Biological
Diversity



Information and technology

Biological diversity is the variety of life on Earth, from the simplest bacterial gene to the vast, complex rainforests of the Amazon. Human beings are an integral part of this diversity, as is the food, medicine, clothing and other biological resources that sustain us.

Recognizing the importance of biodiversity to our daily lives and the pressure that human activities are placing on our living world, governments adopted the *Convention on Biological Diversity* in 1992 as a framework for action. From the start it was understood that scientific knowledge and technological know-how would have a vital role to play.

However, expertise in managing information and technology varies enormously from country to country. For this reason, the Convention has established a “clearing-house mechanism” to ensure that all governments have access to the information and technologies they need for their work on biodiversity.

What is a clearing-house?

The term “clearing-house” originally referred to a financial establishment where checks and bills are exchanged among member banks so that only the net balances need to be settled in cash. Today, its meaning has been extended to include any agency that brings together seekers and providers of goods, services or information, thus matching demand with supply.



The clearing-house mission

- Promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, within and between countries
- Develop a global mechanism for exchanging and integrating information on biodiversity
- Develop the necessary human and technological network.



Gaining access

The clearing-house is based on the philosophy that broad participation and easy access must be a top priority. Its database can therefore be tapped through both

traditional and electronic means of communication. Special efforts are made to ensure the participation of indigenous communities, whose unique knowledge

and expertise are so important.

The clearing-house is coordinated by the Executive Secretary and overseen and guided by an informal advisory committee (IAC) set up by the Parties to the Convention. The committee works in a transparent and cooperative manner to promote awareness of the multiple needs and concerns facing various communities, countries and regions.

In addition, a network of national focal points for the mechanism is being established to address matters relating to technical and scientific cooperation. The Parties have recently emphasized the need to strengthen the role of these focal points. Building a network of non-governmental organizations and other institutions working on biodiversity could contribute to this goal. Establishing national, regional, subregional and thematic clearing-house focal points for specific topics could also help.

Resources and activities

The clearing-house mechanism seeks to support the Convention's thematic and cross-cutting programmes of work by promoting cooperation in six key areas: tools for decision-making, training and capacity-building, research, funding, technology transfer, and the repatriation of information.



The mechanism's first priority was to ensure universal access to the Convention's official records. The texts of the Convention and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, lists of signatories and Parties, and official reports and documents have been made available through the Convention's web site, on CD-ROM and in paper form.

Since then, the range of available information has been greatly expanded. Users can now readily access case studies, national and other reports, and initiatives and programmes such as the Global Taxonomy Initiative and those on sustainable tourism and traditional knowledge. Technical and scientific expertise is promoted through a roster of government-nominated experts in relevant fields.

