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SUBREGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING  
WORKSHOP FOR SOUTH ASIA ON THE  
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM  
Dehradun, India, 12-16 December 2011

**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. In paragraph 2 (a) of decision X/15 on the clearing-house mechanism (CHM), the Conference of the Parties encouraged Parties to continue to take the necessary steps to establish, strengthen, and ensure the sustainability of, national clearing-house mechanisms (CHM goal 2).

2. To contribute to this goal, the Executive Secretary, with the generous support of the Governments of Japan and Belgium, organized a subregional capacity-building workshop for South Asia on the clearing-house mechanism from 12 to 16 December 2011 in Dehradun, India, in collaboration with the Government of India and the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP).

3. The workshop was conducted in English. It consisted of national and technical presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and discussions. A full day was devoted to hands-on training provided by the Belgian CHM focal point and his assistant. Meeting documents and presentations are available at [www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chm-cbw-2011-sa](http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=chm-cbw-2011-sa).

4. The workshop was attended by 17 government-nominated officials involved in the clearing-house mechanism and in the national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP) process. Participants included representatives from Bangladesh (2), Bhutan (2), India (6), Maldives (2), Nepal (2), Pakistan (1), and Sri Lanka (2). Additionally, two representatives from the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) attended.

5. This report provides an overview of the workshop proceedings, with the following annexes providing further details:

- (a) Annex I is the list of participants;
- (b) Annex II presents the recommendations made by the participants.

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## **II. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

### **ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP**

6. The workshop venue was the Forest Survey Institute (FSI), where registration took place from 9 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. on Monday, 12 December 2011. It was followed by the inaugural ceremony organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) from the Government of India. The following representatives made opening statements:

- (a) Dr. R. S. Gill, Joint Director, FSI, MoEF;
- (b) Mr. Olivier de Munck, Programme Officer, CHM, CBD Secretariat;
- (c) Dr. Nilkhanth Ghosh, Statistical Adviser, Environmental Information System (ENVIS), MoEF;
- (d) Dr. A. K. Wahal, Director General, FSI, MoEF.

7. This inaugural ceremony included the traditional lighting of the lamp and was followed by a high tea. Participants were then kindly invited to proceed to the meeting room to begin the working sessions.

### **ITEM 2. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES**

8. Following self-introductions of participants and matters related to the organization of work, the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/CHM/CBW/2011/SA/1) was adopted. Mr. Olivier de Munck gave an overview of the objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop. The overall objective was to build capacity and provide guidance on how to establish and sustain effective national clearing-house mechanisms, in line with decision X/15 and in support of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). The workshop was also held to contribute to the establishment of a regional clearing-house mechanism for SACEP member countries and to facilitate cooperation among them.

### **ITEM 3. THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR BIODIVERSITY 2011-2020 AND THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS**

9. Under this item, Mr. de Munck presented the vision of the clearing-house mechanism as envisaged in the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. Links were made between this vision and the corresponding mission, goals and objectives of the clearing-house mechanism for the period 2011-2020 as adopted in decision X/15.

10. Special attention was devoted to CHM goal 2 stating that national clearing-house mechanisms should provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans. This part led to the next agenda item, on the outcomes from the workshop on national biodiversity strategies and action plans held in Dehradun back-to-back with the current workshop on the clearing-house mechanism.

**ITEM 4. OUTCOMES FROM THE WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS (DEHRADUN, INDIA, 6-10 DECEMBER 2011)**

11. The purpose of this item was to make the participants aware of the major outcomes arising from the workshop on national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) held the week before the present meeting. Mr. Atsuhiko Yoshinaka, who attended the workshop on national biodiversity strategies and action plans, synthesized these outcomes which included the expected role of the clearing-house mechanism in the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

**ITEM 5. SHARING INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

12. The purpose of this item was to share two relevant international experiences contributing to the development of the clearing-house mechanism in South Asia:

(a) Mr. Han de Koeijer presented the experience learned from African and European countries in the development of national clearing-house mechanisms;

(b) Mr. W. K. Rathnadeera presented the experience of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme and its expected role as a regional clearing-house mechanism in South Asia.

**ITEM 6. SHARING NATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

13. Under this item, each country shared its experience and vision related to the development of its national clearing-house mechanism. The main purpose of this session was to enable other participants to have a good understanding of the situation and challenges in a particular national context.

14. The following national presentations were made and are available on the CBD website:

(a) Dr. Nilkhanth Ghosh presented the Environmental Information System (ENVIS) of India acting as the national CHM;

(b) Dr. C. Jacob Thompson presented the plans of the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) to enhance the national CHM in India, and he presented the role of the Centre for Biodiversity Policy and Law (CEBPOL) to be established in cooperation with Norway;

(c) Mr. Mohammed Solaiman Haider presented the situation of the national CHM in Bangladesh;

(d) Mr. R. S. Ratnayake presented the situation of the national CHM in Sri Lanka;

(e) Mr. Mohamed Simah presented the situation of the national CHM in Maldives;

(f) Mr. Sagar Kumar Rimal presented the situation of the national CHM in Nepal;

(g) Mr. Karma C. Nyedrup presented the situation of the national CHM in Bhutan;

(h) Dr. Mamoon Wali Muhammad presented the situation of the national CHM in Pakistan.

15. These presentations were followed by an open group discussion to express further views and synthesize the information shared.

**ITEM 7. CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM GUIDANCE AND WORK PROGRAMME**

16. The purpose of this item was to provide the participants with general guidance on the clearing-house mechanism and key elements of its work programme. The session started with a presentation by Mr. Olivier de Munck, followed by a group discussion to exchange views and collect feedback.

**ITEM 8. PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM STRATEGIES**

17. Some countries have taken steps towards the preparation of national clearing-house mechanism strategies. Under this item, Mr. Han de Koeijer presented guidance on how to prepare such strategies.

**ITEM 9. BEST PRACTICES AND TOOLS FOR NATIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM WEBSITES**

18. Over the years, establishing and maintaining websites has evolved into a multidisciplinary process covering many aspects such as information and communication technology (ICT), graphical design, project management and content management. In parallel, numerous guides and tools have emerged to facilitate this process. Under this item, Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch presented an overview of some best practices and tools commonly used to establish and maintain high-impact websites.

**ITEM 10. THE EUROPEAN CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM TOOLKIT**

19. The European Clearing-House Mechanism has developed a toolkit to facilitate the establishment of national clearing-house mechanism websites. This toolkit is being used by most European and African clearing-house mechanism websites. Under this item, Mr. Han de Koeijer introduced this toolkit and its features to the workshop participants. This item took place just before item 13 on the hands-on training.

**ITEM 11. THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS**

20. The purpose of this item was to analyse which information services could potentially facilitate the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans. This item took the form of a general brainstorming session during which ideas and suggestions were exchanged.

**ITEM 12. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISMS**

21. This item consisted of a general group discussion to compile potential recommendations that arose from previous agenda items. These recommendations focused primarily on the process of establishing effective and sustainable clearing-house mechanisms in South Asia. This item took place in parallel with the last session of the hands-on training.

**ITEM 13. HANDS-ON TRAINING**

22. The hands-on training was a major component of this capacity-building workshop. Its purpose was to enable the participants of the workshop to make use of the European Clearing-House Mechanism toolkit for establishing their national clearing-house mechanism websites. This training session was conducted by Mr. Han de Koeijer and Dr. Marie-Lucie Susini.

23. The training was computer-based. The training included the following modules:

- (a) Introduction;
- (b) The training website;
- (c) Configuration of the content management system (CMS);
- (d) User account management;
- (e) File management;
- (f) Content management;
- (g) General review.

24. While this session was technical, it also had a strategic importance because it allowed the participants to have a deep understanding of the features and potential of the toolkit, so as to assess its suitability for a particular country.

**ITEM 14. STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP SESSIONS**

25. This agenda item consisted of two break-out group sessions, as follows:

- (a) A strategic break-out group (Group 1): This group dealt with strategic aspects of a national clearing-house mechanism, focusing on recommendations and comments on the programme of work;
- (b) A technical break-out group (Group 2): This group continued with the hands-on training session and dealt with issues related to the technical implementation of a clearing-house mechanism website.

**ITEM 15. FINALIZATION AND ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

26. Under this item, participants looked at the recommendations that had been synthesized by the Convention Secretariat, and made final comments before adopting them. These recommendations are available in annex II below.

27. Prior to closure of the meeting, participants were invited to fill in a feedback form to improve the planning and organization of subsequent workshops.

**ITEM 16. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

28. The closing ceremony started at 4 p.m. on Friday, 16 December 2011. There were several closing statements, including from Dr. A. K. Wahal, Ms. Jacintha Tissera, and Mr. Olivier de Munck. Mr. Karma Nyedrup spoke on behalf of all participants to express their thanks and gratitude to all workshop organizers and particularly to the host country. The workshop closed at 4.30 p.m. and was followed by a farewell tea break.

*Annex I*

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*Annex II*

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**A. *Funding (to the Financial Mechanism and other donors)***

1. Inform the financial mechanism that funding for the clearing-house mechanism through national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) may not be sufficient for countries that need further support to establish their national CHM.
2. Invite the financial mechanism to consider identifiable, predictable, adequate, new and additional funding for countries in order to establish, strengthen and maintain their national CHMs, including through a systematic component in biodiversity-related projects.
3. Provide funding to ensure that the information collected to prepare national reports is captured by the national CHM in a way that facilitates updates, maintenance and reuse.

**B. *Development of national clearing-house mechanisms (to Parties)***

4. Develop a national strategy and action plan with targets and timelines for developing and maintaining the national clearing-house mechanism in line with corresponding guidance, and ensure that each CHM national focal point is operational, adequately equipped, and has appropriate human resources.
5. Encourage linkages or synergies, as appropriate, between the various clearing-houses under the Convention on Biological Diversity (Access and Benefit-sharing, Biosafety, CHM) and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) related to biodiversity, for coherence, cost-efficiency and to avoid duplication.
6. Encourage a one-stop window approach for the national CHM with links to access and benefit-sharing, biosafety, and other biodiversity information resources available at the national level.

**C. *Guidance and support (to the Belgian partnership and the Executive Secretary)***

7. Develop guidelines for national clearing-house mechanisms, including on information architecture and web content. (CBD)
8. Prepare recommendations for aligning the European CHM Portal Toolkit with CHM guidelines. (CBD)
9. Provide web hosting services if requested by countries. (Belgium and other volunteering Parties)
10. Organize capacity-building workshops to strengthen national CHMs.

**D. *Development of the regional CHM for South Asia (to SACEP)***

11. Reach a common understanding among SACEP member countries about the supporting role of the regional clearing-house mechanism, based on available resources, and taking into account that it is expected to:

- (a) Support the development of national clearing-house mechanisms in SACEP member countries;
  - (b) Facilitate cooperation between and among them, including through discussion forums;
  - (c) Provide access to relevant regional information that complements information provided by national clearing-house mechanisms.
12. SACEP should consider the integration of the CHM in its proposed Environmental Data and Information Management System.

***E. Central clearing-house mechanism (to the Executive Secretary)***

13. Increase the capacity of the Convention Secretariat to assist countries, including through the provision of a budget to provide internet-based services to Parties, such as web hosting or mailing services.
14. Develop an online system to capture national targets.
15. Develop interoperability mechanisms with national clearing-house mechanisms.

***F. Supporting tools, including the European CHM Portal Toolkit (to the CBD Secretariat and the European CHM national focal point)***

16. Enhance the European CHM Portal Toolkit in line with CHM guidance and best practices.
17. The European CHM Portal Toolkit should improve its default information architecture, based on CHM guidance.

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SUBREGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING  
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Dehradun, India, 12-16 December 2011

### **BACKGROUND NOTE ON THE PROPOSAL BY THE SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM IN SOUTH ASIA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this note is to provide the participants of this clearing-house mechanism (CHM) workshop with some background on the proposal by the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) to establish a regional clearing-house mechanism for the South Asia region. The information contained in this note has been prepared in collaboration with the representative of SACEP attending the CHM workshop.

#### **ABOUT SACEP**

2. The South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) is an intergovernmental institution including eight member countries from South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Its head office is located in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

3. The mission of SACEP is “to promote regional co-operation in South Asia in the field of environment, both natural and human in the context of sustainable development and on issues of economic and social development which also impinge on the environment and vice versa; to support conservation and management of natural resources of the region and to work closely with all national, regional, and international institutions, governmental and non governmental, as well as experts and groups engaged in such co-operation and conservation efforts.”

4. Since its creation, SACEP has implemented a number of projects and programmes in the areas of environmental education, environmental legislation, biodiversity, air pollution, and the protection and management of the coastal environment. SACEP also acts as the secretariat for the South Asian Seas Programme. SACEP encourages intergovernmental cooperation to combat the problem of transboundary air pollution. The *Malé Declaration on Control and Prevention of Air Pollution and its Likely Transboundary Effects for South Asia* has been a significant initiative in this area.

#### **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

5. In the report entitled *South Asia: State of the Environment 2011* (United Nations Environment Programme), it was stated that biodiversity was under severe threat in South Asia. This is a particularly critical issue due to the millions of people in the region who directly depend on biological resources for their livelihoods.

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6. Given that one of the key barriers to the preservation of biodiversity in the region is the lack of access to information to allow stakeholders to conserve and use these resources sustainably, SACEP has been investigating ways to improve access to relevant biodiversity-related information. In this context, contacts were established with the Belgian CHM Partnership to develop a project proposal to establish a regional CHM website for SACEP member countries.

7. Subsequently, this proposal was adopted by the Tenth Governing Council of SACEP held in January 2007 in Kathmandu, Nepal, in the presence of the environmental ministers of all member countries. Contacts were then established with potential donors to fund the project, but so far no funding has been made available for implementation. Nevertheless, support was provided in September 2004 and in April 2011 by the Belgian CHM Partnership to train a SACEP expert on the use of the European Portal Toolkit, with a view to initiating the establishment of the regional CHM using existing resources available at SACEP. Further, the Belgian CHM Partnership made funds available to conduct two national CHM capacity-building workshops for postgraduate students in Sri Lanka in 2007.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

8. The **goal** of the project is to contribute to the achievement of Aichi Biodiversity target 19 and to the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) in South Asia through the establishment and maintenance of one regional and eight national clearing-house mechanisms in SACEP member countries.

9. The **expected benefits** of the project are better preservation of biodiversity in South Asia through a more efficient NBSAP implementation process thanks to enhanced cooperation, networking, knowledge sharing, and information exchange.

10. The project has two major **objectives**:

(a) To increase the capacity of SACEP member countries to establish and maintain national clearing-house mechanisms that provide effective information services to facilitate the implementation of the national biodiversity strategies and action plans;

(b) To establish a sustainable regional clearing-house mechanism on biodiversity for South Asia that links together its national clearing-house mechanisms and provides a forum for regional cooperation within SACEP member countries.

11. **Project governance** will be assured by the SACEP Governing Council, which will have the ultimate decision-making authority for the project, including for its strategic mandate and funding. The project will be executed by SACEP, which will designate a **project manager** responsible for day-to-day operations and for product delivery.

12. The project would have the following **deliverables**:

(a) A strategic document, including the site objectives and target audience, the recommended information architecture, and the content management strategy;

(b) The list of web pages with their purpose;

(c) The identification and compilation of corresponding information, such as a list of related websites and online references;

(d) The minimal visual elements including branding, banner, logo and typography;

(e) The initial setup on a host server, using the European CHM toolkit;

(f) The gradual creation of the web pages;

(g) The collection of web usage feedback and analytics;

(h) Information updates on a regular basis.

13. In considering the above items, the primary focus will remain on effectiveness and quality rather than on quantity. It is better to have 10 web pages that users visit frequently rather than 200 pages with no added value to anyone.

14. One of the objectives of the capacity-building workshop will be to determine which content should be made available on the regional and national CHM websites based on available resources. Suggestions for content include:

- (a) Status of biodiversity, ecosystems and threats in the region;
- (b) Major reports and references;
- (c) National targets;
- (d) Maps with biodiversity information;
- (e) List of centres of excellence/specialized organizations;
- (f) List of cooperation agencies;
- (g) List of ongoing projects in the region;
- (h) List of biodiversity experts in the region;
- (i) List of information sources.

15. Taking into account the fact that funding has not yet been secured, two project scenarios are being considered:

- (a) A small-scope scenario with existing resources and modest expected benefits;
- (b) A full-scope scenario with additional resources and higher expected benefits.

16. In either scenario, a business case will be prepared to confirm the viability of the project, that is, its expected ability to deliver the expected benefits with the available resources and time frame. Realistically, the project will first focus on the small-scope scenario and will maintain the option of the full-scope scenario to mobilize resources and to adapt swiftly should the opportunity for further funding materialize.

17. The small-scope scenario assumes that the project resources are limited to the project manager being an existing staff member of SACEP who can devote an average of 40 per cent of his or her time (two days a week) to the establishment of a regional clearing-house mechanism at SACEP. Given these limited resources, the project's initial objectives would be reduced as follows:

- (a) Only minimal support could be provided to SACEP member countries, primarily through email exchange; and
- (b) Only a small regional clearing-house mechanism could be established and maintained.

18. The full-scope scenario assumes that a formal cooperation project has been approved by the financial mechanism (Global Environment Facility, GEF) or another donor.

19. Given that each SACEP member country has control over use of its GEF allocation for its national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP), one suggestion to mobilize funding could be to submit a proposal to the SACEP Governing Council recommending that a small percentage of the GEF allocation for the NBSAP from each country be allocated to the SACEP project.

20. In the case of a full-scope scenario, support to national CHM websites will be enhanced by:

- (a) More technical support;
- (b) Common platform with economies of scales;
- (c) Capacity-building workshops to share experiences.

21. In this full-scope scenario, the regional CHM website will be improved thanks to:
- (a) Enhanced visual design to drive user traffic;
  - (b) Enhanced content with more scientific information;
  - (c) A relational database interconnecting various resources;
  - (d) An open information exchange mechanism exposing key information through data feeds and an application programming interface (API) accessible by all SACEP countries;
  - (e) A regional search engine.

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