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CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

**DECISIONS MADE BY THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
ON THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

**Decision I/3: Clearing-house mechanism for technical and scientific
cooperation**

The Conference of the Parties

1. *Decides* to implement the provisions of Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention on the establishment of a clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, operating under the authority of the Conference of the Parties;
2. *Decides also* that the activities of the clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation should be funded from the regular budget of the Secretariat as well as from voluntary contributions, subject to decisions to be taken by the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting, in the light of the study referred to in paragraph 3 of the present decision;
3. *Requests* the Secretariat to prepare, and report back to the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting on, a comprehensive study, according to Article 18 of the Convention, containing concrete costed recommendations to assist the Conference of the Parties in the establishment of the clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation, taking fully into account the views expressed at its first meeting and submitted to the Secretariat in writing before the end of February 1995, as well as the need to draw on all relevant existing institutional structures;
4. *Decides also* to include an item on this issue on the agenda of the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Decision II/3: CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

The Conference of the Parties,

1. *Takes note* of the document prepared by the Secretariat on the establishment of the clearinghouse mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation (document UNEP/CBD/COP/2/6);
2. *Notes* that many information systems and activities relevant to the objectives of the Convention have been and are being established at international, subregional, regional and national levels;
3. *Notes* that the enhanced cooperation between these information systems and activities will contribute to capacity-building, and notes that, in this context, the role of the Secretariat is to promote and facilitate access to this clearing-house mechanism;
4. *Decides*, as a contribution to the implementation of the objectives of the Convention, that the clearing-house mechanism, established by decision I/3 adopted at its first meeting in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 3 of the Convention, should be developed:
 - (a) Starting with a pilot phase for 1996-1997;
 - (b) Through specific and focused areas of activities related to the promotion of international technical and scientific cooperation;
 - (c) By gradually building up its functions in response to clear and identified demand based on experience gained and resources available;
 - (d) In a neutral, transparent, cost-effective, efficient and accessible manner;
 - (e) As a decentralized mechanism using such resources as print and electronic media, including the Internet;
 - (f) By making full use of existing facilities, which will avoid any duplication or overlap of activities and allow for the early implementation of the mechanism;
 - (g) In close cooperation with relevant international organizations and entities as active partners in the clearing-house mechanism to maximize the existing experience and expertise;

- (h) By enhancing networking between existing national, regional, subregional and international centres of relevant expertise, as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions and the private sector;
5. *Decides also* that, during the pilot phase for 1996-1997, the Secretariat should act as a focal point and should:
- (a) Encourage the development of a network of active partners, such as those specified in 4(h). These partners should focus initially on:
 - (i) developing national capabilities through exchanging and disseminating information on the experiences and lessons learned by Parties on the implementation of the Convention. This can be done through guidelines, training programmes, seminars, workshops, where appropriate, and upon request, and by using the clearing-house mechanism;
 - (ii) facilitating access to and dissemination of research relevant to the objectives of the Convention;
 - (iii) facilitating the transfer of technology through exchanging and disseminating information on experiences and technologies relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
 - (b) Provide information on and facilitate access to these operating active partners;
 - (c) Support the active partners to develop specific training for the effective participation of users in the clearing-house network;
6. (a) *Decides also* to provide funding for the pilot phase through the budget of the Convention;
- (b) *Calls also* upon the international community to make additional voluntary contributions for the implementation of the pilot phase;
7. *Takes note* of the designation by Parties of their national focal point for the clearing-house mechanism (document UNEP/CBD/COP/2/Inf.5) and calls upon those who have not designated their focal point to do so, where appropriate, as soon as possible, and no later than February 1996;
8. *Invites* all relevant international, regional, subregional and national organizations and entities willing to offer their cooperation as active partners in the operation of the clearing-house mechanism to communicate the details of their offer and requests the Executive Secretary of the Secretariat to enter into collaborative arrangements and to report to its third meeting on the results of such arrangements;

9. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility to explore the modalities of providing support through the financial mechanism to developing country Parties for capacity-building in relation to the operation of the clearing-house mechanism and report to the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting;
10. *Decides* to review the implementation of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism at its third meeting and requests the Executive Secretary to submit a progress report;
11. *Decides also* to review the implementation of the pilot phase at its fourth meeting and requests the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice to provide scientific and technical advice.

Decision III/4. Clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling decision I/3 of the Conference of Parties, that a clearing-house mechanism should be established, in accordance with Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention, to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation,

Recalling also decision II/3 of the Conference of Parties on the development of the clearing-house mechanism through the establishment of a pilot phase for 1996-1997 and related activities to promote technical and scientific cooperation,

Having examined the note by the Executive Secretary, contained in document UNEP/CBD/COP/3/4, which emphasizes the main features of the operational framework of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism, namely, information linking and organization, visualization and the decision support function,

Noting that progress made to date in the implementation of the pilot phase has produced valuable insights as to the future development of the clearing-house mechanism and *concerned* that it is now time for these initial experiences to be brought together and advanced in a systematic manner so as to ensure that the clearing-house mechanism is expeditiously implemented in accordance with the expectations of the Parties,

Noting also:

- (a) The crucial part played by technical and scientific cooperation on all aspects of biological diversity, including taxonomy and transfer of technology, in ensuring the capacity of the clearing-house mechanism to play an important role in the implementation of the Convention;
 - (b) The need for the clearing-house mechanism to be clearly focused on the implementation of the Convention;
 - (c) The need for the clearing-house mechanism activities to include information exchange modalities additional to the Internet to ensure the participation of Parties without Internet access;
 - (d) The need for capacity-building for the purposes of the clearing-house mechanism in developing countries, including training on information systems technologies that will allow developing countries to take advantage of the recent developments in electronic communication, including the Internet;
 - (e) The advantages of country-driven pilot projects focused on priority areas identified by the Conference of Parties which would enable developing countries to begin to implement the main features of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism,
1. *Decides* that the pilot phase approved in its decision II/3 shall be extended for a further year, until December 1998;
 2. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility to support the activities referred to in paragraphs (d) and (e) above as critical components in the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism at the national, subregional and regional levels, including in the pilot phase;
 3. *Further requests* the interim financial mechanism to implement its revised operational criteria for enabling activities in relation to the clearing-house mechanism to give effect, as quickly as possible, to the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 above;
 4. *Also requests* Governments and other bilateral and multilateral funding institutions, as far as possible and as appropriate, to provide funding for capacity-building related to the implementation of the clearing-house mechanism;
 5. *Requests* Governments and relevant financial, scientific and technical institutions to facilitate, including through the provision of voluntary contributions, regional workshops with a view to attaining a clear definition of country and regional-level scientific and technical information needs and priorities identified and modalities to deliver information and evaluate national capacities for the implementation of the Convention. Such workshops should also review experience in scientific and technical cooperation in support to the objectives of the Convention, in order to

- identify ways by which the clearing-house mechanism can best facilitate such cooperation;
- 6. *Emphasizes* that the key characteristics of the clearing-house mechanism are, *inter alia*, that it should be compatible with national capacities, needs-driven and decentralized in nature, should provide access to metadata, should provide support to the decision-making process, and should to the extent possible involve the private sector;
- 7. *Recommends* that the clearing-house mechanism should disseminate, in addition to scientific and technical information, information on policy and management issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention;
- 8. *Endorses* the proposal of the Secretariat for the publication of a clearing-house mechanism newsletter;
- 9. *Recognizes* that ownership of all information made available through the clearing-house mechanism shall remain with the provider of the information;
- 10. *Agrees* that the clearing-house mechanism shall be assisted in its functioning by an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, which will guide and integrate the development of the pilot phase activities and endeavour to ensure that all Parties can participate in the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism;
- 11. *Recommends* that one important role of the clearing-house mechanism at the national level should be to provide relevant information linkages to the national focal points and relevant thematic focal points, in order to facilitate the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Linkages to patent offices in each country for up-to-date information on new patent registrations and patents in the public domain provide an example of one mechanism;
- 12. *Recommends* that the work of the clearing-house mechanism at the international level focus on providing focal points for linking to the activities at the national and regional level;
- 13. *Recognizes* that close cooperation is needed with other conventions and agreements, and requests the Secretariat to identify those activities and organizations which could support the clearing-house mechanism, and to provide appropriate advice to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its next meeting;
- 14. *Recognizes* the role of the Secretariat in the coordination of the successful implementation of the clearing-house mechanism, and recommends that the clearing-house mechanism posts within the Secretariat should be filled as soon as possible;

15. *Requests* all Parties to designate their clearing-house mechanism national focal points and make them operational as soon as possible;
16. *Requests* those Parties with access to the Internet to connect their national clearing-house mechanism homepage to the Secretariat's clearing-house mechanism homepage on the Internet, where possible, and further requests the Executive Secretary and partners to collaborate on the provision of advice to Parties and others on, *inter alia*, the necessary layout and system specifications.

Decision 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,

Endorsing 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, sub-regional 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 fulfill 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, sub-regional, 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 Convention Articles 16 (Transfer of and Access to Technology), 17 (Information Exchange) and 18 (Scientific and Technical Cooperation) 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 tool-kit 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 serves;
- (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.

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