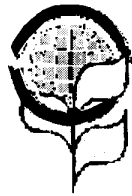


**Convention on Biological Diversity
Clearing-House Mechanism**



**Roles of the Clearing-House Mechanism
in Promoting and Facilitating the Implementation
of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

**Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and the Amazon Region
Brasilia, Brazil**

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1.0 Introduction

It is important to fully understand national (contracting parties) and international obligations and rights determined by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and, this way, determine what is required of the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM).

According to the Convention, States have sovereign rights over their own biological resources. They are responsible for conserving their biological diversity, using their biological resources in a sustainable manner and with a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. Each contracting Party shall, among other important issues, identify and monitor components of biological diversity important for its conservation and sustainable use and identify and monitor activities with adverse impacts. This involves a number of issues such as:

- developing or maintaining necessary legislation and/or regulatory provisions for the conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing of biodiversity;
- promoting public education and awareness;
- introducing appropriate procedures requiring environmental impact assessment; and
- exchanging information.

The Convention also states that the conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind and stresses the importance of, and the need to promote: international, regional and global cooperation among States and intergovernmental organizations, the non-governmental sector and the business sector for the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the sharing of benefits. The Convention establishes the procedures for adoption of protocols, training, transfer of technology, impact assessment, exchange of information, technical and scientific cooperation, handling of biotechnology and distribution of its benefits, financial resources and mechanisms, and relationship with other international conventions.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a framework convention in the sense that it has established broad principles and objectives. There is a need for further detailing, to establish specific goals and work programs. Therefore, the CBD is in constant progress coordinated by the negotiations at the Conference of the Parties (COP), which is supported by the Secretariat, the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), the Financial Mechanism, the Clearing-House Mechanism, Protocol-negotiation processes, intersessional activities and inputs from Parties, observer countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To comply with the obligations of the Convention, each Party must organize and maintain its own data. Many articles within the Convention specify essential information and data requirements necessary to achieve the aims of the Convention. Table 1.1 presents a summary of information issues mentioned by the Convention.

Table 1.1 - Kinds of Information required and/or produced, based on the Convention on Biological Diversity (not an exhaustive list)

Article of the Convention	Information Topics
6 - General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National strategies, plans or programs • Integration into sectoral policies
7 - Identification and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on components of biological diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ecosystems and habitats - species and communities - described genomes and genes • Data on biodiversity monitoring activities • Identification and monitoring of major threats
8 - <i>In situ</i> Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected Areas, including guidelines for selection, establishment and management • Degraded Ecosystems, rehabilitation and restoration programs • Threatened Species, recovery programs • Indigenous knowledge, innovation, practices • Legislation for protection of threatened species and populations
9 - <i>Ex situ</i> Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants, Animals, and Micro-organisms: conservation, research, sustainable use
10 - Sustainable Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional cultural practices • Remedial actions in degraded areas • Methods for sustainable use of biological resources
11 - Incentive Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of components of biological diversity
12 - Research and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Education Material and Programs
13 - Public Education Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotional Material
14 - Impact Assessment and Minimizing Adverse Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Impact Assessment Reports
15 - Access to Genetic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Legislation • Reports on accesses granted
16 - Access to and Transfer of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Legislation (including patents) • Available Technology • Demand for Technology
17 - Exchange of Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of technical, scientific and socio-economic research • Indigenous and Traditional knowledge • Technologies
18 - Technical and Scientific Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs, Projects, Training
19 - Handling of Biotechnology and Distribution of its Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts, Agreements, Projects • Guidelines and norms
20 - Financial Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding, program priorities, eligibility criteria, policies, strategies • Reports on funds granted
26 - National Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country Reports on measures taken and assessment of their effectiveness

At the international level, it is important for country Parties to have a focal point where to refer to for international issues concerning the Convention. The Convention Secretariat (<http://www.biodiv.org>), under the authority of the COP and support of the SBSTTA plays this role. Table 1.2 shows the information mentioned in the Convention that deals with global issues.

Table 1.2 - Kinds of Information dealing with global issues mentioned in the CBD (not an exhaustive list)

Article of the Convention	Information issues
General	Full document of the Convention Protocols to the Convention COP meetings SBSTTA meetings ratification status
18 - Technical and Scientific Cooperation	Joint research programs and joint ventures
19 - Handling of Biotechnology	Biosafety Protocol negotiations
20 - Financial Resources	List of developed country Parties and other Parties
21 - Financial Mechanism	Policy, strategy, program priorities and eligibility criteria
22 - Relationship with Other International Conventions	International Conventions and Agreements
26 - Reports	Country Reports on measures taken for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention

Each Party must establish its own information system/Clearing-House Mechanism, which should be integrated with other clearing-houses, meta-databases, virtual libraries, and directories on specific subjects of interest to the Convention. The task of compiling biodiversity information bases and establishing information services that are adequate to support international conservation and sustainable development efforts is huge. It will be possible only through the concerted efforts of many agencies and individuals.

2.0 COP Decisions Concerning the Clearing-House Mechanism

The CBD's Clearing-House Mechanism was originally established to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation within the scope of the Convention (CBD Article 18(3) and COP Decision I/3). However, decisions taken by COP2 and COP3 have clearly broadened the role of the Clearing-House Mechanism in facilitating the implementation of the Convention. Specifically, the CHM has been called to facilitate the implementation of all three objectives of the Convention, almost all articles of the Convention and all major thematic work programs decided by the Conference of the Parties (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). More importantly, the Conference of the Parties has decided that the CHM should provide support to the decision-making processes, at policy and management levels (Decision III/4). The following kinds of support have been called for by the CBD from the CHM:

- disseminate/exchange/share: information, experiences, technologies, research results, assessments, case-studies, lessons, reports and newsletters;
- facilitate/promote access to: research, technologies, cooperation, benefit sharing and public awareness;
- promote/facilitate linkages between different stakeholders: groups needing solutions to specific problems, holders of technologies, technology-transfer brokers, enabling agencies with funds for technology transfer, policy-makers, managers, scientific organizations, government agencies, international organizations, other related international conventions and programs, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public.

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show in detail the roles of the Clearing-House Mechanism in facilitating the implementation of the Convention, as decided by the Conference of the Parties.

Table 2.1 - Summary of COP Decisions on the Role of the CHM in Relation to CBD Articles

CHM THEMATIC TASKS	CBD ARTICLE	COP DECISION
promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation	18(3)	I/3 II/3(b)
facilitate access to and disseminate research relevant to the objectives of the Convention	12	II/3(5a(ii))
facilitate the transfer of technology through exchanging and disseminating information on experiences and technologies	16	II/3(5a(iii))
promote and facilitate access to, transfer and development of technology	16	II/4(2)
disseminate information and lessons on the implementation of Articles 6 (national policies) and 8 (<i>in situ</i> conservation)	6 and 8	II/7(3)
make available studies on the use of indicators of biological diversity and the status of its components, and promote a regional approach to further enhance the collection and analysis of relevant information	7 and 17	II/8(2) SBSTTA Rec. I/3(5(iii))
exchange information with other related international conventions	22	II/14
exchange information on plant genetic resources	9	II/16(2)
disseminate relevant information in National Reports	26	II/17(10)
technical and scientific cooperation on all aspects of biological diversity, including taxonomy and transfer of technology	16 and 18	III/4(a)
country and regional-level scientific and technical information needs and priorities	18	III/4(5)
facilitate the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources	1 and 15	III/4(11)
share experiences and disseminate information relevant to Articles 6 (national policies) and 8 (<i>in situ</i> conservation)	6 and 8	III/9
Improve the flow of information on: assessment of biological diversity and methodologies for future assessments; identification, monitoring and assessment of components of biological diversity and of processes that have adverse impacts; review and promotion of indicators of biological diversity.	7 and 14	III/10(2) SBSTTA Rec. II/1(3)
disseminate taxonomic information to assist capacity-building in taxonomy	7 and 17	III/10(3) SBSTTA Rec. II/2(8) & II/2(10(f))
disseminate reports on experiences on the application of assessment methodologies and results from assessments	7 and 25(2)	III/10(7)
disseminate information on access to genetic resources, including legislative, administrative and policy measures	15	III/15(2)
disseminate case studies of the impacts of intellectual property rights on the achievement of the Convention's objectives	16(5)	III/17(1)
share experiences and case-studies on incentive measures	11	III/18(7)
Cooperate with other information systems and activities and be accessible to all countries to support implementation of the Convention at the national level with aim to the enhancement of technical and scientific cooperation, and capacity-building.	17 and 18	III/19(14)

Table 2.2 - Summary of COP Decisions on the Role of the CHM in Relation to CBD in General and to Thematic Work Programs

CHM THEMATIC TASKS	WORK PROGRAM/ CBD ARTICLES	COP DECISION
Develop specific and focused areas of activities	All	Decision II/3(4b)
Respond to clear and identified demand	All	Decision II/3(4c)
Exchange and disseminate experiences and lessons learned by Parties on the implementation of the Convention	All	II/3(5a(i))
Provide support to decision-making process	All	III/4(6)
Be <i>inter-alia</i> , compatible with national capacities, needs-driven, decentralized, provide access to meta-data, involve the private sectors	All	III/4(6)
Disseminate information on policy and management issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention	All	III/4(7)
Publish a newsletter	All	III/4(8)
Clearly focused on the implementation of the Convention	All	III/4b
Priority areas identified by the Conference of the Parties	All	III/4c
Country-driven pilot projects, focused on priority areas identified by the Conference of the Parties	All	III/5d(ii)
Address issues in the Work Program on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity	Coastal/Marine Articles: 8,9,10	II/10(3)
Link databases and information networks to collect, share and disseminate data related to responsible mariculture measures.	Coastal/Marine Articles: 8,9,10	II/10(7)) SBSTTA Rec. I/8(15(II))
Promote and facilitate the development and transfer of technology relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity	Agrobiodiversity Articles: 8,9,10,16	III/11(8)
Share case-study experiences addressing the conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biological diversity	Agrobiodiversity Articles: 8,9,10	III/11(10)
Enhance information and education to promote public awareness and understanding of the basic importance of the sustainable use of agrobiodiversity components for society	Agrobiodiversity Articles: 10,13	III/11(13)

Table 2.3 shows COP decisions that affect CHM operations.

Table 2.3 - COP Decisions that Affect CHM Operations

CHM OPERATIONS	ISSUE	COP DECISION		
To promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation	Establishment	I/3 CBD Article 18(3)		
Secretariat should act as a focal point	Focal Point	II/3(5)		
Be a decentralized mechanism with activities to include information exchange modalities additional to the Internet such as print and electronic media	Media	II/3(4(e)) III/4(c)		
Be in close cooperation with relevant international organizations and entities as active partners to maximize the existing experience and expertise and avoid duplication or overlap of activities	Cooperation	II/3(4(f-g))		
Capacity-building for training on information systems technologies, including the Internet	Capacity-building	III/4(d)		
Start with a Pilot Phase for 1996 to December 1998	Pilot Phase	II/3(a) III/4(1)		
Ownership of information made available remains with the provider of the information	Information Ownership	III/4(9)		
An informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretariat in a transparent manner should assist in its functions	Guidance	III/4(10)		
Report on assessment and review of the operation to be considered in the fourth COP meeting	Review of Effectiveness	III/22(6)		
Budgets approved:	Implementation	III/24 Annex (Part A(4))		
Staffing:			1997	1998
Library development and acquisitions:			364,658	382,894
Promotion, awareness raising and publications			80,000	80,000
Implementation of CHM activities:			150,000	150,000
Servicing of CHM Workshops:			50,000	50,000
Travel of participants from developing countries to CHM Workshops:			158,000	158,000
		III/24 Annex (Part B(4))		
		III/24 Annex (Part C(4))		

3.0 CBD Decision-Making Processes and the CHM

There are two basic processes concerning the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity. They are:

- COP Decision-Making Process
- Implementation of Decisions by Parties and International Bodies (including monitoring or evaluation whether the decisions are being carried out)

The ultimate goal is to reduce biodiversity loss, increase the sustainability of biodiversity use, promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits and to increase public awareness and cooperation among people and countries.

The following “information flow” diagram intends to illustrate, in an over simplified manner, the main partners involved from the “General Public”, whom we ultimately must reach, to the Conference of the Parties.

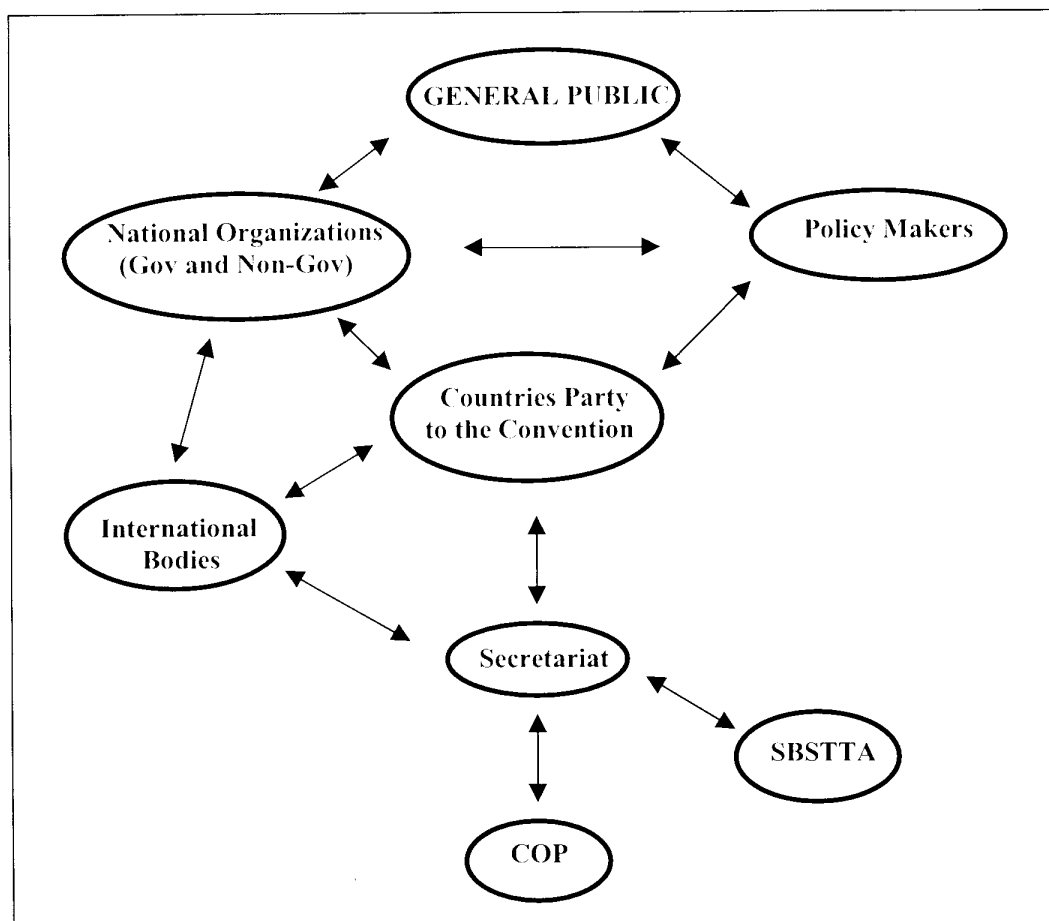


Exhibit 3.1 Information Flow Diagram Between the CBD Stakeholders

Table 3.1 shows the type of actions the different focal points to the CHM (International, National, Thematic) can play within the COP decision-making process, associated with the successive steps of activities developed between two Conferences of the Parties.

Table 3.1 CHM Focal Point Actions concerning the COP Decision-Making Process

CBD Steps	Instance	Stakeholders	CHM Focal Point Actions ¹		
			International	Thematic	National
1. Disseminate COP decisions Call for contributions	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	2a,3, 11,12,13	1b,3, 11,12,13	1b,2b,3, 11,12,13
2. Party driven initiatives	Parties	Experts and Interest Groups			4,5,6, 7,8,1a
3. International Bodies & NGO driven initiatives	International Bodies	Experts and Interest Groups		4,5,6, 7,8,1a	
4. CBD intersessional activities	Secretariat	Liaison Groups Expert workshops	4,5,6, 7,8,1a	7,8	7,8
5. Prepare SBSTTA docs	Secretariat	Staff & Consultants	1a,7	1a,7	1a,7
6. Disseminate SBSTTA docs	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	2a,3, 11,12,13	1b,3, 11,12,13	1b,2b,3, 11,12,13
7. Regional Preparatory meetings	Parties International Bodies	Parties International Bodies	1a,3, 7,8	1a, 7,8	1a, 7,8
8. SBSTTA meeting	SBSTTA	Parties International Bodies	1a,3, 7,8	1a, 7,8	1a, 7,8
9. Disseminate SBSTTA recommendations	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	2a,3, 11,12,13	1b,3, 11,12,13	1b,2b,3, 11,12,13
10. Party driven initiatives	Parties	Experts and Interest Groups			4,5,6, 7,8,1a
11. International Bodies & NGO driven initiatives	International Bodies	Experts and Interest Groups		4,5,6, 7,8,1a	
12. CBD intersessional activities	Secretariat	Liaison Groups Expert workshops	4,5,6, 7,8,1a	7,8	7,8
13. Prepare COP docs	Secretariat	Staff & Consultants	1a,7	1a,7	1a,7
14. Disseminate COP docs	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	2a,3, 11,12,13	1b,3, 11,12,13	1b,2b,3, 11,12,13
15. Regional Preparatory meetings	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	1a,3, 7,8	1a, 7,8	1a, 7,8
16. COP meeting	COP	Parties International Bodies	1a,3, 7,8	1a, 7,8	1a, 7,8

Note ¹ See key to the different kinds of actions in the following page.

The CHM proposed actions are:

- 1a = prepare new documents;
- 1b = "explain" existing documents;
- 2a = translate to UN languages;
- 2b = translate to other languages;
- 3 = disseminate documents;
- 4 = prepare/update databases;
- 5 = prepare/update directories;
- 6 = identify demands, experiences and opportunities;
- 7 = run discussion lists;
- 8 = run virtual conferences;
- 9 = promote capacity building, tech transfer and experience exchange;
- 10 = promote international/regional technical and scientific cooperation;
- 11 = help desk [passive];
- 12 = proactive desk [call for contributions];
- 13 = how CBD works desk.

If this is expressed as an information flow chart (based on exhibit 3.1) we have:

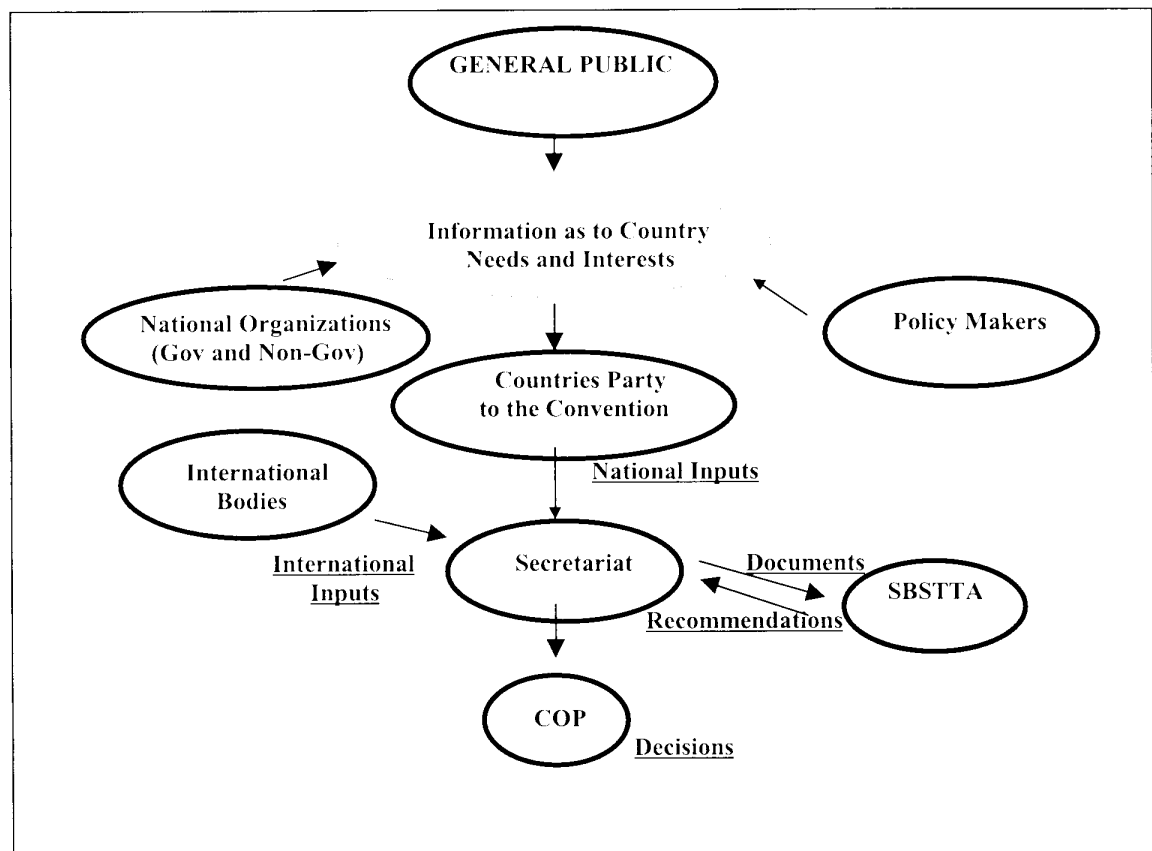


Exhibit 3.2 Information Flow Concerning the COP Decision-Making Process

Table 3.2 shows actions the different focal points of the CHM (International, National, and Thematic) can take within the implementation of COP decisions.

Table 3.2 Implementation of COP Decisions by Parties and International Bodies

CBD Steps	Instance	Stakeholders	CHM Focal Points Action ¹		
			International	Thematic	National
1. disseminate COP decisions & call for action	Secretariat	Parties International Bodies	2a,3, 11,12,13	1b,3, 11,12,13	1b,2b,3, 11,12,13
2. International Bodies & NGO driven initiatives	International Bodies & NGOs	Experts and Interest Groups		4,5,6, 8,9,10	
3. CBD intersessional activities	Secretariat	Liaison Groups Expert workshops	4,5,6, 8,9,10		
4. Financial Mechanism: GEF replenishment	GEF & implementing Agencies	Developed Country Parties	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6,11		1a/b,2b,3, 4,5,6
5. Financial Mechanism: support to projects	GEF & implementing Agencies	Developing Country Parties	1a,1b,3 4,5,6,9,11	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6,9,10	1a/b,2b,3, 4,5,6,11
6. prepare National Strategies and Action Plans	Parties	Policy-Makers General Public	4,5,6,11	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6	1a/b,2b,3, 4,5,6,7,8
7. prepare update National Laws and Norms	Parties	Policy-Makers General Public	5,6,11	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6	1a,2b,3, 4,5,7,8
8. prepare update National Policies and Incentives	Parties	Policy-Makers General Public	5,6,11	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6	1a/b,2b,3, 4,5,6,7,8,12
9. prepare National Projects for submission to GEF	Parties and GEF agencies	Experts and Interest Groups	4,5,6,11	3, 7,8,9,10	3,4,5,6 7,8,9,10,12
10. enhance Capacity to implement the CBD	Parties and GEF agencies	Policy-Makers Interest Groups	4,5,6,11	1a,3,4,5, 6,7,8,9,10	1a, 2b,3, 4,5,6,7,9
11. assess/monitor Status of biodiversity and Threats	Parties	Policy-Makers General Public	5,6,7,11	1a,1b,3, 4,5,6,7,10	1a/b,2a,3, 4,5,6,7
12. implement the three Objectives of the CBD	Parties	Policy-Makers Interest Groups	5,6,11	1a,1b,3,4, 5,6,7,9,10	1a/b,2b,3, 4,5,7,9,10
13. assess effectiveness of measures taken	Parties	Policy-Makers Interest Groups	5,11	1a/b,3,4,5 6,9,10,11	1a/b,2a,3, 4,5,6,7,9
14. prepare National Reports	Parties	Experts and Interest Groups	5,11	5,11	1a,2b, 4,5,6,7
15. disseminate National Reports	Parties & Secretariat	Policy-makers General Public	3,5	1b,2a,3	2a,3
16. prepare other reports	International Bodies	Experts Interest Groups	5,11	1a,2a, 4,5,6,7	
17. disseminate other reports	International Bodies	Policy-Makers General Public	3,5	2a,3	2b,3
18. consolidate results of reports	Secretariat	Parties Interest Groups	1a,2a,3, 4,5,6		
19. assess effectiveness of kinds of measures taken	SBSTTA	Parties Interest Groups	1a,2a,3, 4,5,6,7,8	1a,2a,3, 4,5,6,7,8	1a,2b,3, 4,5,6,7
20. assess status of biodiversity	SBSTTA	Parties Interest Groups	1a,2a,3, 4,5,6,7,8	1a,2a,3, 4,5,6,7,8	1a,2b,3, 4,5,6,7
21. prepare Global Biodiversity Outlook GBO	Secretariat	Experts and Interest Groups	1a,2a, 4,5,6,7	1a,2b 4,5,6,7	2b, 4,5,6,7
22. disseminate GBO	Secretariat	Policy-makers General Public	2a,3	3	2b,3

Note ¹ See key to the different kinds of actions in the following page

Following are the kinds of CHM actions proposed:

- 1a = prepare new documents;
- 1b = "explain" existing documents;
- 2a = translate to UN languages;
- 2b = translate to other languages;
- 3 = disseminate documents;
- 4 = prepare/update databases;
- 5 = prepare/update directories;
- 6 = identify demands, experiences and opportunities;
- 7 = run discussion lists;
- 8 = run virtual conferences;
- 9 = promote capacity building, tech transfer and experience exchange;
- 10 = promote international/regional technical and scientific cooperation;
- 11 = help desk [passive];
- 12 = "promoteur" desk [proactive call for contributions];
- 13 = how CBD works desk.

Exhibit 3.3 illustrates the dissemination actions proposed as an information flowchart (also based on exhibit 3.1).

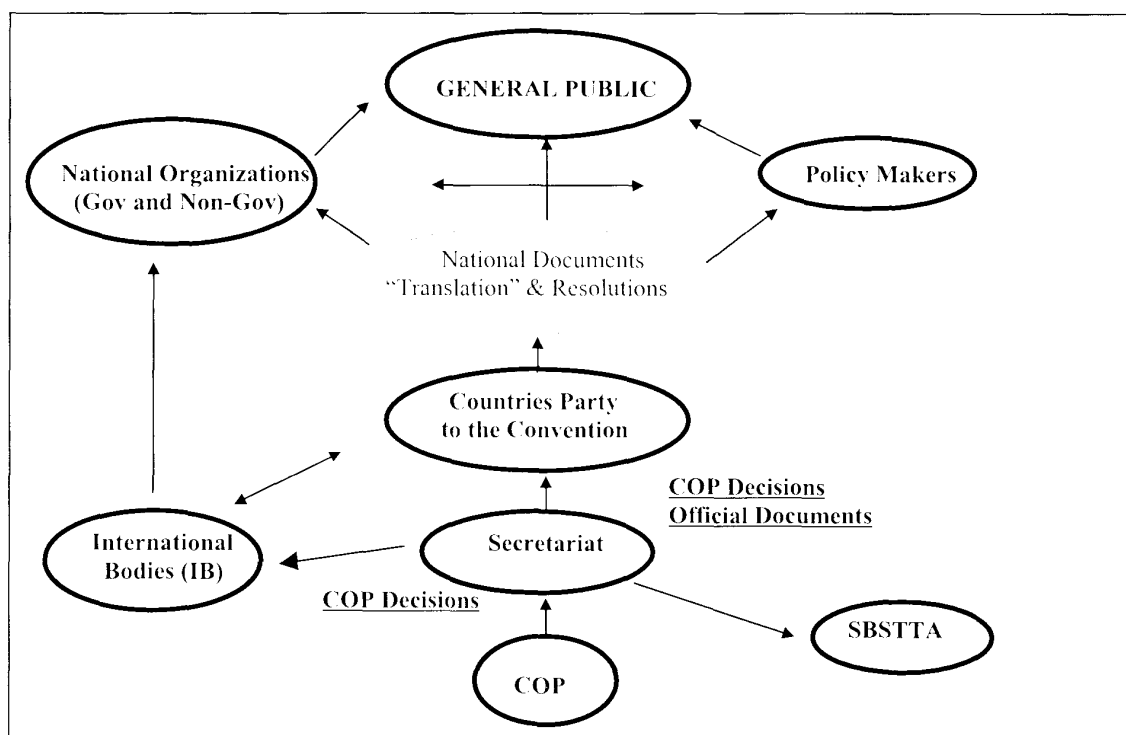


Exhibit 3.3 Information flow of COP Decisions Dissemination Process

4.0 Clearing-House Mechanism Focal Points

It is important to keep the users in mind when analyzing the role of the Clearing-House Mechanism. Who are the users? If we look at users at the international and national levels we have:

- a) At the international level (we can also consider this “the CBD inner circuit”):
 - ⇒ the Secretariat and national delegates (including the National Focal Points);
 - ⇒ international organizations (including the Thematic Focal Points) and other conventions; and
 - ⇒ international organizations and programs.

- b) At the national level:
 - ⇒ policy makers;
 - ⇒ managers;
 - ⇒ scientific institutions;
 - ⇒ NGOs;
 - ⇒ business sector; and
 - ⇒ general public.

The framework of the Clearing-House Mechanism should be:

- country-driven pilot projects focused on priority areas identified by the COP;
- needs-driven;
- decentralized in nature;
- provide access to meta-data;
- provide relevant information linkages to national focal points and to the Secretariat’s Clearing-House Mechanism homepage on the Internet;
- provide linkages to relevant thematic focal points; and
- involve, to the extent possible, all the relevant sectors.

The main players of the Clearing-House Mechanism are the Secretariat to the Convention as the International Focal Point, National Focal Points (countries Parties to the Convention) and Thematic Focal Points. The following recommendations are partially based on those of the report of the international workshop “Clearing-House Mechanism under the Convention on Biological Diversity” organized by BIN21 in Campinas, Brazil in October 1995 (http://www.bdt.org.br/bin21/wks95/chm_doc.html).

4.1 International Focal Point

The “general coordinating body” at the international level must be the Secretariat to the Convention as decided by COP (Decision II/3(5)). Article 24 of the Convention establishes the Secretariat and assigns to it the following duties:

- arrange and service meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and SBSTTA;
- assume duties assigned by potential protocols;
- prepare reports and present them to the Conference of the Parties;
- coordinate with other international relevant bodies; and
- perform other duties as determined by the COP.

The Secretariat, as the International Focal Point of the Clearing-House Mechanism will enhance and complement existing information systems (e.g., databases, meta-databases, directories, virtual libraries, special interest networks) of significance to the Convention. It will focus on information about the Convention, especially those related to the activities and decisions of the COP, SBSTTA recommendations and the Secretariat initiatives and documents. The International Focal Point will also hold or provide links to all information of global interest and will be responsible for the accreditation of national, regional and thematic focal points. The proposed media of communication is the Internet using the World Wide Web as a tool. Basic information shall also be provided through other media such as print, and electronic media. The Secretariat will be supported by an informal Advisory Committee, which will provide general guidance to the CHM as decided by the COP (Decision III/4(10)).

<p>Convention on Biological Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full document Protocols to the Convention Ratification status COP (meetings, documents) SBSTTA (structure, members, meetings, documents) Intersessional activities Other Conventions <p>National Focal Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directory with links Services Training <p>International Themes (Thematic Focal Points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scientific Technical Technological <p>Financial Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of developed country parties Financial mechanisms: policy, strategy, program priorities and eligibility criteria Enabling activities <p>Enabling Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines (standards, information technology) Scientific and Technical Education and Training Technology Transfer <p>Help Desk</p>

Box 4.1 - Proposed structure for the web server of the International Focal Point

The structure outlined in Box 4.1, like those discussed for other focal points, is an indication of what type of data/information the Clearing-House Mechanism should disseminate.

4.1.1 Proposed Actions

- a) Setup the Clearing-House Mechanism coordinating unit at the Secretariat
- b) Improve Internet access for National Focal Points
 - ⇒ The aim should be to establish fully functional National Focal Points with minimum services to provide standards of connectivity sufficient for full Clearing-House Mechanism participation
- c) Establish appropriate guidelines
 - ⇒ To promote participation in the Clearing-House Mechanism and to provide support to participating nodes, guidelines on the following topics will need to be prepared and maintained during the pilot phase:
 - on setting up a web server;
 - on data quality control;
 - on network security;
 - on intellectual property rights and copyright;
 - on maintenance and presentation of meta-database information;
- d) Promote participation and capacity-building in developing countries with respect to communications and information technology
 - ⇒ The aim should be to have training capabilities on relevant communications and information technology available at all national nodes.
- e) Sponsor the development of technological solutions and tools and the incorporation of emerging information and communication technologies
 - ⇒ For the Clearing-House Mechanism to be most effective it is important to make use of appropriate technologies and to keep abreast of new and emerging developments which may help to fully carry out its functions. In the short term these may include areas such as:
 - methods for searching distributed databases across the internet;
 - the linking of biological data to GIS via the internet;
 - new methods of information presentation;
 - utilization of emerging image technologies;
 - improved user interface design;
 - methods of remote conferencing;
- f) Evaluate the Pilot Phase
 - ⇒ Evaluation of the Pilot Phase should take two parts: an independent evaluation by an external body, and a series of case studies.

- Ideally, evaluation of the pilot phase would be conducted by an independent body, preferably completely not in the field of Biodiversity. This may be an organization such as the International Telecommunications Union, the Internet Society, or an International Library Technology Organization.

A series of case studies would be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Clearing-House Mechanism in supporting the development of national policies, supporting international cooperation, and increasing public awareness, including that of policy makers.

4.1.2 Quality Control/Assessment

The implementation of the pilot phase of the Clearing-House Mechanism should be reviewed by:

- progress reports prepared by the Secretariat for the COP;
- requesting scientific and technical advice from the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) for the 4th COP.

4.1.3 Capacity-Building

- a) The Secretariat should promote cooperation between international, sub-regional, regional and national levels and facilitate access to the Clearing-House Mechanism
- b) Clearing-House functions should be built-up based on resources available and on experience gained at each level (i.e., international, sub-regional, etc.), and in response to clear and identified demand. This can be done through:
 - guidelines
 - ⇒ enabling activities;
 - ⇒ operational programs encompassing long-term measures;
 - ⇒ short-term response measures;
 - training in information systems technologies that will allow developing countries to take advantage of new technologies in electronic communications, including the Internet
 - programs
 - seminars
 - workshops
 - the Executive Secretary and partners should collaborate on the provisions of advice to Parties on, *inter alia*, the necessary layout and system specifications
- c) Invitations should be extended to all relevant international, regional, sub-regional 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.

d) The Clearing-House Mechanism should:

- provide information and facilitate access to these operating active partners; and
- support the active partners to develop specific training for the effective participation of users in the Clearing-House network

4.2 Thematic Focal Points

Thematic Focal Points will hold databases, meta-databases, directories, and/or virtual libraries of subjects of interest to the Convention. Priority themes to be developed could include, but not be limited to:

- **Coastal and Marine Biodiversity** (biodiversity status, management methods, conservation measures, indicators of effectiveness of measures, ...);
- **Terrestrial Biodiversity**, including Forestry, Agriculture and Protected Areas (biodiversity status, management methods, conservation measures, indicators of effectiveness of measures, ...);
- **Access to Genetic Resources** (directory of services, regulations, contracts, ...);
- **Biosafety** (Protocol negotiations, guidelines, assessment of releases, directory of services, ...);
- **Intellectual Property Rights** (directory of services, negotiations, regulations, ...);
- **Technology Transfer and Development** (directory of services, technology opportunities, technology sought, ...);

4.3 National Focal Points

Each contracting party shall “facilitate the exchange of information from all publicly available sources relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”

The Clearing-House Mechanism includes National Focal Points (NFPs) officially designated by each contracting Party. National Focal Points are fundamental. All countries must be able to collect, organize, analyze and disseminate data/information. This may involve collaborative efforts with third parties, but local involvement is mandatory if solution to local problems is sought.

One of the greatest challenges of the National Focal Points is to “translate” all official documentation (including all COP decisions) to the public in general. By “translate” one means translation to the national language and “translation” of legal and scientific terms to common terminology. All NFPs must aim at raising awareness about the threat of biodiversity loss to humankind and the opportunities offered by biodiversity for sustainable development. The structure suggested for the National Focal Points is outlined in Box 4.2.

<p>Information shall include, but not be limited to:</p> <p>International Activities and Resolutions (CBD circuit) Translation of COP and SBSTTA documents and resolution to country language(s) "Translation" (non-technical language) of all resolutions and opportunities (e. g. enabling activities)</p> <p>National Strategies, Plans of Programs Policies and programs Country reports</p> <p>National Legislation Access to genetic resources Access to and transfer of technology Patents Biosafety Environmental legislation Incentive measures</p> <p>Scientific Data Data on components of biological diversity ecosystems and habitats species and communities described genomes and genes Data on monitoring activities Protected areas (<i>in situ</i> conservation) <i>Ex situ</i> conservation (plants, animals, micro-organisms) Methods and experiences for sustainable use of biological resources</p> <p>Technological Data Technology (available, required) Indigenous/traditional knowledge, technology, innovation Patent registrations and patents in public domain</p> <p>Research Results Technical, scientific, socio-economic</p> <p>Services Training Surveying Specialized scientific and/or technological expertise</p> <p>Help Desk</p>
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Box 4.2 - Proposed structure for the web server of the National Focal Points

4.3.1 Proposed Actions

The following documents/information, in addition to others, should be made available through the Clearing-House Mechanism:

- national reports submitted by Parties in accordance with Article 26 of the Convention;
- lessons drawn from national experiences;
- information on policy and management issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention;
- dissemination of scientific and technical information;
- dissemination of research relevant to the objectives of the Convention;

- dissemination of information on experiences and technologies relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (Articles 6 and 8);
- dissemination of case studies of the impacts of intellectual property rights on the achievement of the Convention's objectives, including:
 - ⇒ relationships between intellectual property rights and the knowledge, practices and innovations of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity
- publish a Clearing-House Mechanism newsletter

Implementation

Assistance should be given to and guidelines set for the implementation of the pilot phase of the Clearing-House Mechanism as follows:

- funding for the pilot phase should be provided through the budget of the convention;
- support from the GEF to developing country Parties should be given;
- Parties should designate their national focal points and make them operational as soon as possible;
- assistance in its functioning could be provided by an informal advisory committee;
- one of its functions should be to support the decision-making process;
- be clearly focused on the implementation of the Convention;
- ownership of all information made available through the Clearing-House Mechanism shall remain with the provider of the information.

Country Parties

Country Parties should be conscious of their role of constantly reviewing the effectiveness and needs of the Clearing-House Mechanism by:

- facilitating regional workshops to clearly define country and regional-level scientific and technical information needs and priorities and identify ways by which the Clearing-House Mechanism can best facilitate cooperation;
- identifying modalities (media) to deliver information; and
- evaluating national capacities for the implementation of the Convention.

5.0 CHM and the Change of Paradigm

The Convention on Biological Diversity is revolutionary for it is the first to include, in a single agreement, the following elements:

- a) genetic variability of species and ecosystems, including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems, including all species, either wild or domesticated;
- b) biodiversity conservation, both *in situ* and *ex situ*, sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the commercial use of genetic resources;
- c) different financial commitments for developed and developing countries, and the setting up of a financial mechanism;
- d) the main instruments of biodiversity management, specially, public policies, economical incentives, monitoring, evaluation and mitigation of impacts,
- e) access to genetic resources, intellectual property, arbitration of conflicts between countries, protection of traditional community knowledge, transference of technology and scientific cooperation.

The new international paradigm of biodiversity links conservation to sustainable use and benefit sharing. This necessarily involves even greater issues such as:

- a redefinition of the first world's focus on international development and foreign policy;
- a broader development paradigm, with greater emphasis on social and environmental sustainability;
- a learning oriented society, transforming *aid* into *partnership*;
- an equitable access to knowledge, to transform our planet into something better to all, poor and rich;
- recognition of the bi-directionality of knowledge exchange and mutual learning

These points are being discussed at "Global Knowledge 97" initiative (<http://www.globalknowledge.org>) and are key issues to the success of the Clearing-House Mechanism to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The South must be empowered with information and knowledge, which, if effectively applied can be the great equalizer to all of humanity. Accessibility (or Internet capability) is clearly an important question. If we do not connect developing countries, we contribute to their under development.