



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

Distr
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/COP/5/INF/2
15 December 1999

ENGLISH ONLY

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
Fifth meeting
Nairobi, 15-26 May 2000
Item 18.2 of the provisional agenda¹

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND THE CLEARING-
HOUSE MECHANISM (ARTICLE 18)

Report of the independent review of the pilot phase of the clearing-house
mechanism

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting, the report of the independent review of the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism, called for by the Conference of the Parties in its decision IV/2.
2. The report is also being made available to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice at its fifth meeting, as document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/5/INF/1. At that meeting, the Subsidiary Body is expected to make recommendations on the subject for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties. The report is intended to serve as background material to assist the Conference of the Parties in its consideration of those recommendations as well as section II of the note by the Executive Secretary on mechanisms for implementation (UNEP/CBD/COP/5/13), which concerns scientific and technical cooperation and the clearing-house mechanism

¹ UNEP/CBD/COP/5/1.

Convention on Biological Diversity

**INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM
PILOT PHASE**

Final Report

October 13, 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains the results of the Independent Review of the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) Pilot Phase. The data and conclusions have come directly from insights and expertise of those with first-hand experience using and working with the CHM - the Parties to the Convention and related international initiatives and conventions.

The Growth of an Idea

Established as a mechanism “to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation”, Parties and partners working to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) saw value in the CHM and embraced it. The original mandate of the CHM has been enriched, and the result is a worldwide network of people – representing governments, initiatives, organizations, and groups – that recognize the importance of working together to obtain the information, expertise, and alliances necessary to successfully meet the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Achievements

As a tool to support implementation of the Convention, members of the global CHM network can celebrate a number of achievements. 137 countries of the 175 Parties to the Convention have “put a face” to the CHM by establishing nodes (called “National Focal Points” or NFPs) with staff and resources dedicated to obtaining and sharing information related to biological diversity. With this infrastructure in place, National Focal Points are receiving and filling information requests related to biological diversity (104 NFPs have e-mail and 41 have web sites), and are using the CHM network to fill their information needs. They are also working in partnership with organizations locally and internationally in support of the objectives of the Convention. Importantly, there are tangible examples of how the CHM has been successful in facilitating scientific and technical initiatives essential to successful implementation of the Convention.

Another important development is the CHM Secretariat's important role in supporting and facilitating the development of the CHM network. The Secretariat is recognized as a valuable source of information and documentation related to the CBD. Key tools, services, and capabilities developed and implemented to date include:

- the CHM web site, with several electronic databases, documentation archives, and two search engines to assist users in finding and obtaining the information they need;
- the CD-ROM tool kit, produced to assist the CHM National Focal Points in their efforts to design and establish CHM web sites and pages;
- the CHM newsletter (*The Disseminator*);
- the CHM brochure (available in English, Spanish, and French);
- the establishment of e-mail conference abilities (“listservs”) for National Focal Points, the CHM Information Advisory Committee, biodiversity-related conventions, and Rio conventions; and
- the enhancement of the Secretariat’s electronic communication capacity through implementation of a communication strategy focused on improvements to information structure, tools, and organization.

The Challenges

Many participants in the Independent Review shared their belief that the CHM has been helpful in working toward the goals of the Convention. Drawing on experiences and insights gained through the CHM Pilot Phase, challenges and opportunities facing the CHM were also identified. Recognizing and responding to these challenges and opportunities is essential to the ongoing development of the CHM, and work is underway to ensure these issues are addressed in both the CHM Strategic Plan and Long Term Work Plan. Challenges identified through the Review include:

- The level of knowledge regarding the CHM varies widely – some countries are very familiar with CHM activities, while others have had very little or no interaction with the CHM to date. Uncertainties exist regarding what the CHM is, how it supports countries efforts to implement the Convention, and how it relates to other international initiatives related to biological diversity. The value of participating in the CHM network is unclear to some participants, and there are countries which are having difficulty "making the case" for investing in the CHM.
- There are questions regarding "who-does-what" with respect to implementing the CHM which have made it difficult for Parties, partners and potential partners to become involved in the global CHM network. This is relevant with Parties and National Focal Points who are unsure about what is required in order to become involved in the CHM network. It is also relevant at the local level where individuals, groups, and indigenous communities with much to contribute to the conservation of biological diversity are often unaware of the CHM and the opportunities to share their expertise.
- Language barriers limit the participation of countries in the CHM. Documents which use complex vocabulary are difficult to translate, and documents need to be made available in many more languages.
- Without any long term strategies for obtaining financial or technical support, Parties are unsure about their continued ability to be involved in the CHM.
- Technological problems accessing the Internet can make it difficult to make use of the CHM network. Problems have been encountered finding, downloading and printing files, and it can be extremely time consuming to open them.

Priorities for Action

The following priorities for action have been developed in direct response to the issues and opportunities raised by participants in the Independent Review process. In every case, the priority for action is based on advice and feedback obtained during the Review. By building on the experience and expertise gained through the Pilot Phase, the Parties to the Convention have the opportunity to strengthen the global CHM network, and continue its development into an essential asset to biological diversity conservation efforts world wide.

- **Describe the CHM - What it is and how it works.** Address questions regarding what the CHM "is in business to do", how it works, who is involved, how it fits with other international initiatives related to biodiversity, and why it is something that countries working to implement the Convention should invest in.

- **Communicate - Let the Parties, partners, and public know the role and value of the CHM.** All Parties to the Convention need to be aware of the global CHM network, and the importance of taking an active role in developing the CHM and supporting the objectives of the Convention. A "template operational model" which documents the key elements of a National Focal Point needs to be developed and communicated. In addition, all existing and potential partners need to know the important contribution which their expertise and information makes to the global CHM network. There is also an important opportunity to raise the public's awareness of biological diversity, the Convention, and the role of the CHM.
- **Identify synergies - And make use of them.** The relationship between the CBD and the many other initiatives related to biological diversity need to be researched, defined, and communicated. It is essential that a process for linking the CHM to these initiatives be established, and that opportunities to increase efficiency and improve effectiveness be continually explored.
- **Use clear, concise vocabulary which is easy to translate - Everyone needs access to the information.** All CHM information needs to be simple, straightforward, and to the point. This increases the chance that ideas will be communicated accurately when translated into the UN official languages. This also makes it easier for countries to translate information into the many local languages around the world.
- **Create mechanisms of mutual support - Make it easier to work together.** Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity depends on collaboration – countries and partners working together, learning together, and sharing expertise, knowledge and experiences. Mechanisms are required to support this collaboration. There has been a strong call from CHM users for new mechanisms which include: a set of standards and guidelines for information management and exchange; a system to identify the needs of countries and partners working to implement the Convention (including strategies to overcoming the barriers which currently limit the participation of indigenous communities); a system to identify resources available to meet those needs; approaches for sharing expertise, experiences and success stories; and methods for building local and regional capacity to implement the CHM and the Convention.
- **Identify infrastructure needs - And then meet them.** To maximize participation in and access to the global CHM network, it is important to identify a minimum level of technological infrastructure required to participate in the CHM. Efforts then need to be made to ensure that Parties and partners meet this minimum technological threshold.
- **Monitor and evaluate activities of the CHM - Make a commitment to continuous improvement.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of CHM activities is essential to ensure that the needs of CHM users are being met efficiently and effectively. This ongoing process includes the proactive identification and filling of information gaps, and identification and integration of new technologies. It also includes proactively identifying gaps in skill sets and expertise, and building the capacity to develop the required knowledge.

- **Think sustainably - Plan for the long term.** The global CHM network needs to plan for its long-term sustainability, and access to resources – financial, technical, human and information – are essential to that sustainability. Relationships between the CHM and international financing initiatives need to be fostered and strengthened, and creative partnership opportunities need to be explored.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Parties to the Convention (COP), National Focal Points, the Secretariat, and the Informal Advisory Committee all have important contributions to make to the development of the global CHM network. The COP provides overall strategic guidance, while the National Focal Points are responsible for leading implementation. The Secretariat provides support and facilitation to the global CHM network, and it is the responsibility of the IAC to provide advice to the Secretariat and members of the global CHM network regarding the development and operations of the CHM.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In 1992, countries from around the world came together at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio “Earth Summit”), and agreed to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Today, there are 175 countries which have ratified the Convention, and work is underway to meet its three objectives:

- the conservation of biological diversity;
- the sustainable use of its components; and
- the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

The Convention was inspired by the world community’s growing commitment to sustainable development, and represents a dramatic step forward on a number of fronts. It recognizes that the conservation of biological diversity is a “common concern of humankind” and an integral part of the development process. It also recognizes the important role of partnerships and cooperation in achieving the objectives of the Convention.

The Clearing-House Mechanism

Article 18.3 of the Convention created a mechanism to translate the goal of partnerships and cooperation into action – the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM). The CHM was created to “promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation between the Parties to the Convention”. It is a network of Parties and partners working together to facilitate implementation of the Convention. The Parties directed the Convention Secretariat to take a leadership role in facilitating the implementation of the CHM, and also created an Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) to provide the Secretariat with feedback and advice through the CHM development process.

Guiding Principles for the CHM
<i>Neutral</i>
<i>Cost-effective</i>
<i>Efficient</i>
<i>Accessible</i>
<i>Independent</i>
<i>Transparent</i>

The activities of the CHM are directed by the Conference of the Parties (the decision-making arm of the Convention known as COP), as well as the advice of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA). COP designated 1996-1998 as the Pilot Phase of CHM operations, during which activities and services would evolve in response to the needs of countries and partners working to implement the Convention. The Parties also made a commitment to commissioning an Independent Review of the CHM after completion of a Pilot Phase.

In May 1999, our consulting team of Cullbridge Marketing and Communications and LURA Consulting was retained to conduct the Independent Review of the CHM Pilot Phase. The Independent Review was implemented in parallel with the development of the CHM's inaugural Strategic Plan, enabling both projects to share the insights and expertise gained.

1.1 Independent Review Process

It is the people who work to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity that know the most about the CHM - what has been accomplished, what works well, where the challenges lie, and what opportunities are available for the future. As a result, this Review was designed to draw directly on the insights and expertise of those with first-hand experience using and working with the CHM - the Parties to the Convention and related international initiatives and conventions.

The Review was driven by a set of criteria developed by the Parties to the Convention, many of which are highlighted in "Key Facts" boxes throughout this report. Elements of the consultation which form the foundation of this report include:

- **Feedback and Advice from the Informal Advisory Committee.** IAC members played a key role throughout the Review, providing valuable advice and direction at a number of points in the process. It was the IAC which identified the importance of linking the Independent Review of the CHM with the Strategic Planning process, in order to ensure that both projects could benefit from the lessons learned and the insights gained. On June 20, 1999 in Montreal, Canada, the IAC met to discuss both the Strategic Plan and the future workplan of the CHM. Advice from this meeting, as well as insights shared through the IAC listserv, is integrated into this report. A list of IAC members is included in Appendix C.
- **Insights and Expertise from the Parties to the Convention.** Feedback and advice from the Parties to the Convention represented a fundamental component of the Review process. A survey, telephone interviews, and a meeting at SBSTTA 4 were used to obtain feedback from the Parties -- both those who designated National Focal Points for the CHM, as well as those who have not yet designated Focal Points.

Through the last week in May, 1999, over 185 surveys were distributed via e-mail and a fax to CHM stakeholders around the world. The surveys were distributed in three languages (English, French, and Spanish), and were designed to obtain insight into the successes and challenges experienced with the CHM. Completed surveys received prior to June 11, 1999 were reported on June 21, 1999 at the meeting in Montreal, Canada at SBSTTA 4. Over 60 people representing a number of Parties to the Convention, attended the CHM meeting at SBSTTA, where participants also shared their perspectives on the ways in which the CHM can be improved to better support their countries' efforts to implement the Convention.

Finally, in order to obtain feedback from Parties who had not yet been involved in the Review, a small number of interviews were conducted with Parties identified randomly. The results of the nine interviews supported much of the feedback received through the survey, and the results are integrated through this report.

- **Opportunities related to Sister Conventions and International Initiatives .** The importance of working with sister conventions and international initiatives was a key theme of the Independent Review. In addition to receiving the survey distributed to all Parties to the Convention, interviews (via phone, fax or e-mail) were conducted with representatives of many of these initiatives. The insights, expertise and advice gained through these interviews represent an important component of this report.
- **The Contribution of the Secretariat.** With years of experience facilitating the CHM process, the Secretariat was a valuable resource throughout the Independent Review, providing their insights regarding the challenges and opportunities facing the CHM, and also by providing the contact information which enabled contact with CHM stakeholders.

Key Facts	
<i>Total number of Participants involved in the Review</i> (61 Parties, 9 sister conventions and international initiatives, 2 local partners, and the Secretariat)	74
<i>Number of Parties to which surveys distributed</i>	136*
<i>Number of surveys returned from Parties</i> (response rate of 46%)	57
<i>Number of surveys distributed to developed countries</i>	34
<i>Number of surveys completed by developed countries</i> (response rate of 47%)	16
<i>Number of surveys distributed to developing countries</i>	102
<i>Number of surveys completed by developing countries</i> (response rate of 40%)	41
<i>Number of interviews conducted and written responses received</i>	17
<i>Number of National Focal points and participants at SBSTTA 4 meeting to discuss the CHM Independent Review and Strategic Plan</i>	67

*Despite repeated attempts to distribute the survey to all 175 Parties to the Convention, only 136 were transmitted successfully. Fax transmission errors were the most common problem. Follow-up phone calls were also unsuccessful in a number of cases. Of the 39 countries that did not receive the survey, 34 were developing countries and 21 have not designated CHM National Focal Points.

Finally, in terms of process, it is important to note that while every effort was made to ensure full participation in the Independent Review, there were some cases where communication barriers made contact with CHM stakeholders difficult, and in some cases prevented contact completely. Changing contact information and interrupted fax lines were the most common problems. In addition, the distribution of the Review materials in only 3 languages (English, Spanish, and French) may have prevented participation of those countries who communicate in other languages.

1.2 This Report

This report captures the results of the Independent Review process. The body of the report integrates and synthesizes the results of all components of the Review, including survey responses, discussions at meetings, and interviews.

Following the Introduction, Section 2.0 profiles the accomplishments of the CHM to date. Sections 3.0 and 4.0 look at what works well about the CHM, and what challenges have been experienced. Opportunities for improvement are discussed in Section 5.0, while Section 6.0 puts forward priorities for action in the future. It is from these recommendations that the long-term workplan for the CHM has been developed.

Notes To The Reader

- Input and advice received from CHM stakeholders contributing to Independent Review reveal that there is a wide range in the level of familiarity and understanding which exists regarding the CHM. While there are countries who have been extensively involved in the set-up and operations of the global CHM network both locally and internationally, there are other countries who have little or no experience with the CHM. This report highlights the range of responses received.
- Throughout the report, key facts and statistics are highlighted in “Key Facts” boxes. These “Key Facts” represent a snapshot of the review results.
- Where information is drawn from the survey, it is reported in percentages rounded to the nearest percentage point. For example, when this report indicates that 50% of survey respondents support a certain direction, that means 31 of the 62 completed surveys supported that direction. Note that there are questions where the sum of all responses does not add up to 100% because not every question was answered by all 62 respondents. For a profile of who contributed to the survey, please refer to the table on the following page.
- During analysis of survey results, responses were grouped in order to reveal if there were any major differences in responses received from developed and developing countries. This analysis revealed that there are very few differences in the perspectives of developed and developing countries.* The areas where differences exist relate specifically to finance and technology issues, and these differences are identified in the report. Unless specifically noted, the reader can assume that the results reflect the perspectives of both developed and developing countries.

* In terms of process, responses to each survey question were separated into three categories: developed countries, developing countries, and international initiatives (as in Appendix D). The number of responses received within each of these categories was compared to the number of surveys returned from developed countries, developing countries, and international initiatives respectively.

Table 1. Parties to the Convention and Participants in the Independent Review

Albania ^{*@}	Egypt ^{*@}	MALI ^{*@}	Senegal [*]
Algeria ^{*x}	EL SALVADOR ^{*@ www}	Malta [*]	Seychelles ^{*@}
Angola ^x	Equatorial Guinea ^{*@}	Marshall Islands ^x	Sierra Leone
Antigua and Barbuda ^{*x@}	Eritrea [*]	MAURITANIA ^{*@www}	Singapore [*]
ARGENTINA ^{@ www}	Estonia ^{@x}	MAURITIUS ^{*@}	Slovakia ^{*@}
Armenia ^{*x@}	Ethiopia [*]	MEXICO ^{*@ www}	SLOVENIA ^{*@}
Australia ^{*@ www}	FIJI ISLAND ^{*@}	Micronesia	SOLOMON
AUSTRIA ^{*@ www}	FINLAND ^{*@ www}	Monaco [*]	ISLANDS ^{*@}
BAHAMAS ^{*@}	France ^{*x@}	Mongolia ^{*@ www}	South Africa ^{*@}
Bahrain [*]	GABON ^{*@ www}	MOROCCO ^{*@ www}	Spain ^x
Bangladesh ^x	GAMBIA ^{*@}	Mozambique ^{*@}	Sri Lanka ^{*x}
Barbados ^{*@}	Georgia ^{@x}	Myanmar ^{*@}	Sudan [*]
BELARUS ^{*@}	GERMANY ^{*@ www}	NAMIBIA ^{*@ www}	SURINAME ^{*@}
BELGIUM ^{*@ www}	Ghana ^{*x}	Nauru ^{*x}	Swaziland ^{*x}
BELIZE [*]	Grenada ^{*x}	Nepal ^{*@}	Sweden ^{@x}
BENIN [*]	Guinea ^{*@}	NETHERLANDS ^{*@ www}	Switzerland ^{*@ www}
Bhutan [*]	GREECE [@]	NEW ZEALAND ^{*@ www}	Syrian Arab Republic
Bolivia ^{*@ www}	GUATEMALA ^{@ www}	Nicaragua ^x	Tajikistan
Botswana [*]	Guinea-Bissau ^x	Niger ^{*@}	Tanzania
Brazil ^{*@}	Guyana	Nigeria ^x	THAILAND ^{*@}
Brunei Darussalam ^{*@}	Haiti	NIUE ^{*@}	TOGO [*]
Bulgaria	HONDURAS ^{*@ www}	NORWAY ^{*@ www}	Tonga ^x
Burkina ^{*@}	Hungary ^{*@}	OMAN ^{*x}	Trinidad and
Burundi [*]	ICELAND ^{*@ www}	PAKISTAN ^{*x@}	Tobago ^{*@ wwwx}
Cambodia ^{*x}	India	Palau ^x	Tunisia ^{*@}
Cameroon ^{* www}	Indonesia ^{*@}	PANAMA [*]	Turkmenistan ^{*@}
CANADA ^{*@ www}	IRAN ^{*@ www}	Papua New Guinea ^x	TURKEY
Cape Verde	Ireland ^{*@}	PARAGUAY (2) ^{*@}	UGANDA ^{*@}
Central African Republic [*]	ISRAEL ^{*@}	PERU ^{*@ www}	UK ^{*@ www}
Chad ^{*x}	ITALY (2) ^{*@ www}	Philippines ^{*@ www}	Tanzania
Chile ^{*@ www}	JAMAICA ^{*@}	Poland ^{*@ www}	UKRAINE ^{*@}
CHINA ^{*@}	JAPAN ^{*@ www}	Portugal ^{@x}	USA ^{*@ www}
COLOMBIA ^{*@ www}	Jordan ^{@x}	Qatar ^{*@ wwwx}	URUGUAY ^{*@}
Comoros ^{*@}	Kazakhstan ^{@x}	REP. OF KOREA ^{*@}	Uzbekistan ^{*x}
Congo ^x	KENYA ^{*@}	www	VANUATU ^{*@}
Cook Islands ^{*@}	Kiribati ^{*@}	Former Yugoslav	Venezuela ^{*@ www}
Costa Rica ^{* www}	Kyrgyzstan ^{*x}	Republic of Macedonia	Vietnam ^{*@}
Cote d'Ivoire [*]	Lao People's Democratic	Republic of Moldova ^x	Yemen ^{*@}
Croatia ^{*@}	Republic ^{*x}	REP. OF SAN	Zambia ^x
Cuba ^{*@}	Latvia ^{*@}	MARINO [*]	Zimbabwe ^x
Cyprus ^{*@}	Lebanon ^{*@}	Romania ^{*x}	
Czech Republic ^{*@}	Lesotho ^{*@}	RUSSIAN	BCIS ^{@ www}
Democratic People's	Liechtenstein	FEDERATION ^{*@ www}	CHM Secretariat [@]
Republic of Korea	LITHUANIA [@]	Rwanda	www
Democratic Republic o	Luxembourg ^{*@ www}	SAINT LUCIA ^{*@}	CMS ^{@ www}
the Congo ^{* www}	Madagascar ^{*@ www}	Saint Vincent and the	EEA ^{@ www}
DENMARK ^{*@}	Malawi ^{*@}	Grenadines	GBIF ^{@ www}
Djibouti ^{*@x}	Malaysia ^{*@}	Samo ^x	IABIN ^{@ www}
DOMINICA [*]	Maldives [*]	Sao Tome and Principe ^{*x}	IBIN ^{@ www}
ECUADOR ^{*@}			NABIN (2) ^{@ www}
			SADC [@]
			UNFCCC ^{@ www}

Legend and summary statistics:

* = CHM National Focal Point (137)

@ = NFPs with e-mail (104)

WWW = NFPs with a Website (41)

CAPITAL LETTERS= Participated in Independent Review (74)

@ = NFPs with e-mail (104)

x = Survey transmission was unsuccessful (39)

2.0 ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

Since 1996, the Clearing-House Mechanism has grown from an innovative idea to a network with 137 “members” around the world to date. These “members” (also called “National Focal Points” or “participating nodes”), are responsible for coordinating the activities of the Clearing-House at the national level within their countries and represent a key element of what has been described as the “global CHM network”. The global network includes Parties to the Convention and partners (e.g. sister conventions, international initiatives, institutions, organizations, and individuals) working to implement the Convention.

Through the efforts of the Parties to the Convention, their partners, the Secretariat, and the IAC, a number of significant accomplishments have been achieved by the CHM. These accomplishments have been driven by both the original mandate of the CHM (to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation) and the broader responsibility of promoting and facilitating the implementation of all Convention objectives – as delegated by the Parties through the CHM pilot phase.

In addition to COP and SBSTAA discussions, a number of meetings dedicated exclusively to discussion of the CHM have been held. These include two Expert Meetings (taking place in Bonn, Germany and Florence, Italy) and four Regional Workshops (taking place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; Gödöllő, Hungary; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Nairobi, Kenya) where Parties and their local partners worked to guide the development of the CHM through its Pilot Phase.

This section highlights CHM accomplishments through review of the following data:

- the amount and type of information exchanged;
- the number of partnerships established;
- the number of initiatives facilitated;
- the types of synergies gained;
- the amount of training delivered; and
- the amount of resource support received.

Key Facts	
<i>Number of countries which have ratified the CBD?</i>	175
<i>Number of CHM Focal Points established?</i>	137
<i>Number of CHM Focal Points with e-mail?</i>	104
Number of CHM Focal Points with websites?	41
Average number of webpages on those websites? [∞]	350*
*Number ranges from 20 to 1,100 pages, with most nodes in the 100-200 page range.	
Estimated total number of webpages[∞]	13,300
Average number of weekly visits to CHM websites[∞]	5,375*
*Number ranges from 60 visits to 43,000 visits, with most nodes in the 1,000 – 1,500 range.	
Estimated total number of weekly visits[∞]	204,250

[∞]Data is based on responses received from 12 of 41 nodes with websites.

2.1 Information Exchanged

The exchange of information is an important capability of the CHM - one which can make an important and powerful contribution to countries' efforts to implement the Convention. Under the initiative of the CHM Secretariat, a number of tools have been developed to support countries' communications efforts, and to facilitate access to the information related to the Convention. Key tools, services, and capabilities developed to date include:

- the CHM web site, with several electronic databases, documentation archives, and two search engines to assist users in finding and obtaining the information they need;
- the CD-ROM tool kit, produced to assist the CHM National Focal Points in their efforts to design and establish CHM web sites and pages;
- the CHM newsletter (*The Disseminator*);
- the CHM brochure (available in English, Spanish, and French);
- the establishment of e-mail conference capabilities ("listservs") for National Focal Points and the Informal Advisory Committee; and
- the enhancement of the Secretariat's electronic communication capacity through implementation of a communication strategy focused on improvements to information structure (registry, filing systems, document archives), tools (databases, mapping), and organization (layout, structure).

With these and other tools in place, the Independent Review provided the opportunity to determine who it is that uses the global CHM network to find information? How often is the network used? And how successful are the search efforts? The answers to these questions, and other insights, are shared here.

- **How often do CHM nodes receive information requests?** Survey results indicate that just under 50% of participating nodes in the CHM network receive less than 10 requests for information per week, while one-third receive between 10 and 25 requests per week. 15% of nodes receive over 25 requests, with 2 survey respondents indicating that they receive over 100 requests per week.
- **What information is requested?** The most common request is for general information and advice related to biological diversity (80% of participating nodes receive these requests), however there are many other commonly requested types of information, including: legislation and policies (70%), biodiversity strategies and action plans (50%), and national reports (50%).
- **Who requests information from CHM nodes?** CHM nodes receive information requests from a wide range of individuals and groups. Requests are most commonly received from students, research/education institutions, government within the same country as the CHM node, and from non-governmental organizations (approximately 75% of nodes participating in the survey). Just over 35% of nodes reported that they receive information requests from governments in other countries, as well as from business/industry.

- How often do CHM nodes search for information using the global CHM network? How often are those searches successful?** Just over 60% of respondents indicated that they search the network fewer than 5 times per week. 15% of nodes conduct between 6 and 25 searches per week, while another 15% conduct more than 25 searches. 50% of respondents reported that these information searches are generally successful (40% are successful most of the time, while 10% reported that all searches are successful), while just over 30% reported that these searches are generally unsuccessful.
- What information is available from CHM nodes?** The information available from CHM nodes generally matches the information requested. The information most commonly available from CHM nodes is legislation and policy (80% of nodes have this information available). Over 70% of nodes have national reports, biodiversity strategies and action plans, and general information related to biological diversity.
- What technology is used to place information requests with CHM nodes? What technology is used to respond?** Requests for information are most commonly received by CHM nodes via phone (68%) and e-mail (65%), however requests are also commonly received in person (52%), by mail (52%), and by fax (47%).

When responding to requests, CHM nodes most commonly use e-mail (60% of nodes). Approximately 50% of nodes use fax, mail, and the telephone to respond to requests, with “in person” responses provided in 37% of CHM nodes. The least common technology used to respond to requests, as identified through the Independent Review survey, was the World Wide Web, with 32% of nodes indicating that they direct people with information requests there.

There was considerable consistency between the responses of developed and developing countries to these questions, with all nodes commonly receiving and filling information requests using all technologies. The only areas where there are clear differences relate to “in person” and website communications. When compared to developed countries, developing countries both receive and fill a relatively higher number of information requests in person. The only other difference relates to the number of nodes using websites to respond to information requests – there are a relatively higher number of developed countries that use this technology.

Key Facts	
<i>How many National Focal Points have received information via the CHM Focal Point listserv?</i>	55%
<i>What other listservs are used by CHM nodes?</i>	Just under 50% of survey respondents use other listservs, including: Bio-Excel, Bionet, Bioplan, IREX, and the Rio listserv.

- **Amount of non-Internet material requested and provided by CHM nodes?** As a follow-up to the original survey distributed as part of the Independent Review, a sub-set of CHM nodes were asked to estimate the number of requests for non-Internet material received each week. 18 nodes responded to this question, and results suggest that requests for non-Internet material are common. One-third of nodes receive 1-5 requests per week, and another one-third receive 6-10 requests per week. Of the remaining one-third of respondents, 2 nodes indicated that they receive 11-20 requests per week, 3 nodes receive over 20 requests, while one node reported that they do not generally receive requests for non-Internet material.

In order to gain some insight into the proportion of Internet versus non-Internet material requested, the above results were compared to the total number of information requests received by these nodes each week. For 10 of the 18 nodes, requests for non-Internet material represent between 25% and 50% of information requests each week. At 3 nodes, the majority of information requested is non-Internet material. At the remaining 5 nodes, non-Internet material requests represent less than 25% of the total information requests received. It is important to note that these percentages are approximate figures.

2.2 Partnerships Established

Collaboration and partnerships are essential to successfully meet the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and survey results indicate that CHM nodes work regularly with a number of organizations/groups/institutions within their country and outside their country to support the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Partnerships and collaborations in support of efforts to develop National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans were reported.

Participant Perspective...

"...partnerships have improved sectoral planning, fostered more consideration of biodiversity issues (in planning and programs), and raised the political level of support."

- **How many local partners do CHM nodes regularly work with to support the goals of the Convention?** Just over 75% of CHM nodes work with at least 6 partners within their country to support the goals of the Convention, with over half of those nodes (40%) working with more than 20 partners.
- **How many international partners?** CHM nodes generally have fewer international partnerships than local partnerships. While just under 75% of CHM nodes work with at least 6 international partners to support the goals of the Convention (which almost matches the number for local partnerships), only 17% work with over 20 partners. It is more common for CHM nodes to work with between 6 and 20 international partners (54%).

2.3 Initiatives Facilitated

Participants contributing to the Independent Review were generally split regarding the success of the CHM in facilitating scientific or technical initiatives which work toward implementing the goals of the Convention. Just under 40% of survey respondents indicated that “Yes, the CHM had facilitated scientific or technical initiatives, while just over 40% did not.

Examples of initiatives facilitated by the CHM include:

- a collaborative effort between Belgium and Chad to create a Chad CHM website (partnerships between Belgium and Benin, Burkina Faso, and Cote d’Ivoire are being confirmed);
- an informal collaboration between Belgium, the Netherlands, UK, Norway, Germany and Italy – established 3 years ago in order to develop common activities and CHM strategies, the group has collaborated on a number of activities, including the international symposium on Mediterranean biodiversity (1996) and an educational program for submission to the European Union;
- establishment of a network of more than 2000 Italian schools (1998) with common educational programs and tools all via the Internet;
- a meeting between ENEA and the Italian private sector (1998) regarding the implications of the Convention on Biological Diversity – the output of the meeting was an agreement between participants presented at the 2nd National Conference on Energy and the Environment;
- a liaison conference of the Natural Science Research Institute which was established in 1998 to: promote the measures related to biodiversity conservation on the basis of scientific information and data, to enhance cooperation and intelligence network mutually, and to establish building CHM;
- the establishment of the China Biodiversity Homepage, May 1998 organized by the state Environmental Protection Administration of China;
- nature reserves training within China (1998);
- all initiatives involved in SBSTTA and the Biosafety Protocol (through the Secretariat’s initiative to distribute relevant materials);
- German-Colombian initiative (ongoing);
- D.R. Congo and Belgium initiative;
- Cameroon and Germany initiative; and
- Launch of Niger and Mauritania CHM on the Belgium website.

2.4 Training Delivered

Approximately 50% of CHM nodes participating in the Independent Review have offered or promoted training events over the last 3 years. Approximately 30% of nodes offered between 1 and 5 of these events, while the other 20% offered from 5-20 events. 2 nodes offered over 20 training events. Training events most commonly focused on:

- general principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- national action related to the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- data management and processing;
- biodiversity in general (e.g. mapping, monitoring);
- computers and the Internet;
- local participation/public awareness/value of partnerships; and
- the Clearing-House Mechanism.

2.5 Resource Support Received

This section highlights the resource support received by CHM nodes – both financial and technical. This is one area where there are differences in the experiences of developed and developing countries, and those have been highlighted below.

- **Global Environment Facility.** CHM nodes have received over US\$ 800,000 in funding support from GEF through the CHM Pilot Phase. Only developing countries are eligible to receive this GEF support. A total of 69 nodes received this support, receiving an average of \$11,500 each (a list of Countries receiving GEF funding for CHM Add-on Modules is included in Appendix B, including the amount of funding received as well as the implementing agency). Of the 41 developing countries who responded to the Independent Review survey, 21 (51%) indicated that they receive support from GEF.

Results from the survey completed as part of the Independent Review indicated that almost 30% of CHM nodes have applied to sources other than GEF for funding. The majority of these nodes are in developed countries.

In terms of overall support received, both developed and developing countries (just over 50% of all respondents) receive financial support from their National Governments. With one exception, all developed countries responding to the survey indicated that they receive support from their National Governments, however similar support is only received by 25% of developing countries.

Funding from local partners, other governments, and international partners, is generally received by less than 10% of CHM nodes.

- **Long term strategies to secure financial support.** The majority of CHM nodes participating in the Independent Review survey (55%) indicated that they do not have any long term strategies to secure financial support for CHM activities, while 33% indicated that they do have a strategy. The percentage of developed countries with

long term strategies to secure this support is slightly greater than the percentage of developing countries. The most commonly identified strategy was a multi-year national work plan agreed to with the national government. Other strategies include: project proposals submitted to GEF and regional/international institutes and conventions.

- **Sources of technical support.** CHM nodes most commonly receive technical support from their respective National Governments (42% of respondents). Technical support is also received from the international development community (37%, composed primarily of developing countries), local partners (23%), and international partners (15%).
- **Long term strategies to secure technical support.** Almost 50% of CHM nodes participating in the survey do not have long term strategies to secure technical support, while 33 % do. Just as with results regarding long term financial support, the percentage of developed countries is slightly greater than the percentage of developing countries. The most common long-term strategy involves dedicating efforts to increase cooperation with other groups locally (e.g. ministries, local governments, institutes and NGOs) and internationally.

2.6 Synergies Gained

There are important linkages between the CBD and other biodiversity -related conventions and international initiatives. To date, the relationship between the CHM and these initiatives has been relatively informal. The CHM has established a joint website of the biodiversity-related conventions (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; the Convention on Migratory Species; the Convention on Wetlands; and the World Heritage Convention). Examples of specific activities underway are listed below (as identified by representatives of the related initiatives), however it is important to note that the list is based on feedback obtained through the Review process, and is not meant to be exhaustive. Opportunities to build these relationships into the future (again, as identified by representatives of the related initiatives) are put forward in Section 5.4 of this report.

- **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species and Wild Animals (CMS).** CMS aims exclusively at the conservation and management of migratory species and the habitats on which they depend. CMS is well suited to be the specialized global instrument for the implementation of CBD with regard to migratory species, thus meeting the requirement of Article 5 of the CBD which invites the Contracting Parties to CBD to "*cooperate with other Contracting Parties, ..., through competent international organizations, in respect of areas beyond national jurisdiction and on other matters of mutual interest, ...*". The CBD and CMS secretariats have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which encourages the respective contracting parties to seek an integrated approach in the implementation of CBD and CHM. The CMS Secretariat has made a number of proposals to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) on how coordination and cooperation might be intensified in order to gain more synergies in the implementation of the CMS and CBD. Representatives of CMS regularly participate in and contribute to meetings of the CBD COP and SBSTTA, and a regular exchange of information and consultation is maintained between the secretariats of both conventions. The CMS is undertaking a number of

activities which will be useful case studies to demonstrate that CMS, through its instruments and functions, is assisting in and complementing the implementation of the CBD through its transboundary, coordinated and concerted action on a regional, continental and inter-continental scale

- **Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network (IBIN).** IBIN is being developed as a mechanism to help indigenous peoples to communicate and build capacity in implementing Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that Parties will: *“subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”* To date, the relationship between IBIN and the CHM has been relatively informal. A representative of IBIN sits on the CHM Informal Advisory Committee, and efforts have been dedicated to establishing an indigenous peoples' CHM. A workshop has also been held to explore issues related to creating networks that allow indigenous peoples to: better understand and engage the issues of the CBD, to meaningfully participate in the negotiations of the Convention with the Parties, and to more effectively communicate among themselves on biodiversity issues. Web-based conferencing systems (IBIN Forums) have also been created to allow users with web-browsers to have on-line discussions on topics related to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- **Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS).** BCIS was formed, in part, to directly support the CBD by providing data, information, expert advice and related services on the status and conservation of biodiversity. It is a NGO biodiversity information management initiative made up of a consortium of 12 international conservation organizations and programs of the World Conservation Union. The BCIS mission is to support environmentally sound decision-making and actions affecting the status of biodiversity and landscapes at the local, national, regional and global levels through cooperative provision of data, information, advice and related services. A representative of BCIS sits on the CHM Informal Advisory Committee, and BCIS members have been active in a number of CHM-related activities, including: regional workshops, development of a prototype CHM, and development of the European Union CHM. BCIS also co-organized a workshop on the CHM at the Global Biodiversity Forum (10) in Bratislava.
- **Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).** An initiative of the OECD Megascience Form Working Group on Biological Informatics, the CHM will be one of the most important and closest partners in the operation of GBIF. The purpose of GBIF is to coordinate the standardization, digitization and global dissemination (within an appropriate property rights framework) of the world's biodiversity data. When developing GBIF's proposed work program, the mandate of the CHM was carefully examined to ensure activities will be complimentary. A representative from the OECD sits on the CHM Informal Advisory Committee, and draft documents for the implementation of GBIF propose that the Secretariat of the CHM be the only non-government body represented on the Governing Board of GBIF.

- **BIN 21.** BIN21 is an international collaborative network of agencies involved in the management and presentation of biodiversity information. Many of its aims are similar to those of the CHM, however BIN21 does have a continuing role to play in the furtherance of information exchange within the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity. BIN 21 functions as an international collaborative test-bed to design and evaluate informatics tools and methodologies (new applications based on currently available tools as well as emerging technologies). Many of these are now being developed by participating nodes of BIN21, and the BIN21 network provides a unique opportunity to trial these in a cooperative environment. The results of much of this technology feed directly into the CHM and are compatible with the aims of the Convention in providing a mechanism for technology transfer between nations. A representative from Bin 21 sits on the CHM Informal Advisory Committee.
- **Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN).** The purpose of IABIN is to promote compatible means of collection, communication and exchange of information relevant to decision-making and education on biodiversity conservation. When completed, it will be an example of a regional network supporting the objectives of the CHM. Through the CHM Pilot Phase, IABIN members have participated in CHM activities, and a representative of IABIN sits on the CHM Informal Advisory Committee. The CHM Secretariat is regularly invited to IABIN activities and is included on the distribution list for IABIN information.
- **North American Biodiversity Information Network (NABIN).** The objective of NABIN is to create a North American network of biodiversity information through the interconnection of previously independent systems of biodiversity data. The primary goal is to assist institutions and agencies that collect, manage or use biodiversity data to collaborate on providing broader access to information across North America. The project will link with other national and international initiatives, such as IABIN and CHM in the creation of a worldwide biodiversity information network that is publicly accessible and free. The relationship between NABIN and the CHM has been relatively informal to date.
- **Southern Africa Developing Community (SADC).** Created by Malawi in 1995, the SADC Biodiversity Forum has been involved in various initiatives of the CBD, mainly at the national level. Three meetings of the Biodiversity Forum have been held, and mechanisms for linking member countries are in place. A regional CHM project proposal has been put forward, and efforts are underway to identify resources to support the initiative.

3.0 WHAT WORKS WELL

In addition to identifying the accomplishments of the CHM, an important part of assessing the success of the Pilot Phase of the CHM involves understanding what it is that stakeholders find useful about the global CHM network. Given the important role of the Secretariat in supporting and facilitating implementation of the CHM, it is also important to uncover what stakeholders see as the most valuable services provided by the Secretariat. Answers to both of these questions are presented here, along with insight into the usefulness of a range of Convention guidelines in directing the work of CHM stakeholders, and an overall assessment from CHM stakeholders of how helpful the global CHM network has been in working toward the goals of the Convention.

3.1 The most useful elements of the global CHM network

Participants in the Independent Review repeatedly identified two elements of the global CHM network that they find most useful: the access to information which it provides, and the partnerships and relationships it facilitates.

2 Most Useful Elements of the Global CHM Network
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Access to Information</i> 2. <i>Facilitation of partnerships and information sharing</i>

1. Access to Information

Access to information was identified by 67% of participants in the Independent Review as one of the most useful elements of the global CHM network. Examples of information valued by participants include: Convention documents, COP and SBSTT decisions, progress of activities under the Convention, links to other countries (including contact information), technical data, and techniques of biodiversity conservation and sustainable utilization.

2. Facilitating partnerships and information sharing

Over 40% of participants in the Independent Review indicated that one of the most valuable elements of the CHM is its role in facilitating partnerships and information sharing between organizations, institutions, individuals, and groups working to implement the Convention.

3. Other Useful Elements of the Global CHM Network

Other elements of the global CHM network which individual stakeholders indicated that they find useful include:

- Increases awareness of biodiversity at the global and local level
- CHM acts as a facilitator for implementation of the Convention

- The guidelines developed for Focal Points
- Multi-lingual support
- Training of potential participants in the CHM

Participant Perspective...

"...the CHM helps inspire and initiate certain biodiversity programs...and has helped to jumpstart and accelerate programs and initiatives well before they would have [been started] if left to themselves.."

Finally, there were a handful of respondents (5 participants or 8% of respondents) to the Independent Review survey who indicated that they have had little or no experience with the CHM.

3.2 The Utility of Guidelines

In addition to identifying the most valuable services provided by the global CHM network, the Independent Review asked respondents to indicate the utility of a number of different guidelines in directing their work to implement the Convention.

- **COP Decisions.** 75% of CHM stakeholders generally find COP decisions useful in directing their work. Over 30% indicated that COP decisions were very useful in this regard, while over 40% indicated COP decisions were somewhat useful. 15% of respondents indicated that COP guidelines were not very useful in directing work. 5% of respondents indicated that this question was non-applicable.
- **Expert meetings.** Over 70% of stakeholders respondents indicated that guidelines from Expert meetings are either very useful or somewhat useful in directing Convention-related work. Just under 50% found the guidelines from Expert meetings very useful, while just over 20% found the guidelines somewhat useful. Only 5% indicated that these guidelines were not very useful. 15% of respondents indicated that this question was non-applicable.
- **Regional workshops.** 66% of completed surveys indicated that recommendations from Regional Workshops were very useful or somewhat useful in directing Convention-related work. Almost 50% found the workshop recommendations very useful, while almost 20% indicated they were somewhat useful. Only 3% indicated that these recommendations were not very useful. Finally, 22% of respondents indicated that this question was non-applicable.

3.3 Most valuable services provided by the Secretariat

Just as CHM stakeholders were asked to identify the most valuable elements of the global CHM network, stakeholders were also asked to identify the most valuable services provided by the CHM Secretariat.

There were a few countries participating in the Review who indicated that they have never been contacted by the Secretariat and are unaware of the services provided, however 50% of respondents indicated that they find the guidance and support provided by the CHM Secretariat either helpful or very helpful in providing the guidance and support required by CHM stakeholders and/or participating nodes. 30% of respondents indicated that they were less satisfied with the guidance and support provided.

3 Most Valuable Services Provided by the CHM Secretariat
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Information and Documentation</i> 2. <i>Facilitation of Partnerships and Information Sharing</i> 3. <i>Support to CHM nodes</i>

1. *Information and Documentation*
2. *Facilitation of Partnerships and Information Sharing*
3. *Support to CHM nodes*

1. Source of Information and Documentation

67% of participants in the Review identified the Secretariat's role in providing information and documentation to CHM nodes as one of the most valuable services provided by the Secretariat. 73% of completed surveys indicated that materials provided by the CHM Secretariat are useful in directing CBD-related work, with almost 50% indicating the materials are very useful, and 25% finding the materials somewhat useful. Less than 10% of respondents indicated that materials provided by the Secretariat are not very useful, while 12% found this question inapplicable to their experience.

2. Facilitating Partnerships and Information Sharing

37% of respondents indicated that the role of the Secretariat in facilitating partnerships and information sharing is considered by many CHM stakeholders as one of the most valuable services it provides. The role of the Secretariat in accessing national Clearing-House Mechanism nodes, updating contact information, sharing web page addresses, documenting and sharing experiences from other countries, and networks for focal points, facilitate collaboration and networking) was identified.

3. Support to CHM Nodes

The third service area delivered by the CHM Secretariat and recognized for its value is the support the Secretariat provides to CHM nodes. Just under 30% of survey respondents indicated that they find this service one of the most valuable provided by the Secretariat, with recognition and appreciation for the tools, guidelines and materials provided (e.g. toolkit, ensure each country has equipment, Internet and e-mail facilities, encourage contracting parties to engage with the CHM through nomination of National Focal Points).

4. Other Useful Services Provided by the CHM Secretariat

A number of other valuable services provided by the Secretariat were identified by individual respondents, including:

- the role of the Secretariat in acting as a catalyst for the CHM process;
- the maintenance of the CHM Web page;
- training (e.g. training of CHM node personnel);
- financial support (e.g. support for the organization of workshops);
- access to web pages with information related to biodiversity (specific mention of Bioland);
- providing a roadmap to biodiversity and convention-related information;
- archiving of documents;
- overall communication and coordination;
- personal guidance from staff (Marc Auer and Beatriz Torres); and
- permanent enthusiastic atmosphere in the CHM space.

3.4 Working Toward the Goals of the Convention

When asked from an overall perspective if the CHM has been helpful in working toward the 3 goals of the Convention, just over 50% of respondents indicated that the CHM has been somewhat helpful. 5% indicated that the CHM has been very helpful, while 20% do not feel the CHM has been helpful.

4.0 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

In addition to identifying what works well about the Clearing-House Mechanism, participants in the Review shared the most common problems and difficulties they have experienced with the global CHM network.

3 Most Common Difficulties experienced with the Global CHM Network	
1.	<i>Technology problems</i>
2.	<i>Information Gaps</i>
3.	<i>Communication problems</i>

1. Technological Problems

Just under 30% of respondents indicated that they have experienced technological problems while using the global CHM network. Common problems range from those who have problems connecting to the CHM website because the server is busy or down, to those having difficulty accessing and reading CHM files. Other issues identified include:

- unsure about the safety of files downloaded from CHM sites (i.e. viruses);
- time consuming to open different pages;
- downloaded documents arrive incomplete;
- browser is not intelligent;
- unable or difficult to find and retrieve information;
- problems printing files; and
- internal hardware and software problems.

2. Information Gaps

Just over 15% of respondents have experienced limitations with the information provided by the CHM. In some cases participating nodes reported that information was insufficient and outdated, with specific reference to the need for more standards, relevant methodological guides, information on the CHM, and more material on results of efforts to implement the Convention.

3. Communication Problems

Issue related to communication were also raised through the Independent Review, with 15% of survey respondents highlighting issues such as the limited number of languages into which CHM documents are translated and the concern that CHM web pages are only known to CBD professionals. Many participants highlighted the barrier which complex vocabulary presents to those countries attempting to translate documents into their native language (particularly for those countries with native languages are outside the 6 United Nations official languages). When it is difficult to translate basic meanings correctly, it is very difficult for new participants to read, understand, absorb and implement the CHM.

4. Local Implementation Challenges

While just under 10% of completed surveys in the Independent Review reported local implementation challenges (citing a lack of qualified staff and financial resources, and implementation delays), this issue was also raised repeatedly through direct discussion with National Focal Points participating in the CHM Cyber Café meeting at SBSTTA 4 and from the IAC.

Participant Perspectives...

"Staffing will be a problem. No dedicated person is available due to limited financial resources, therefore people involved in other duties will be involved in helping to set up the CHM initially."

Confusion exists among about Parties to the Convention and their partners regarding what the CHM is, what it does, and how Parties and partners working to implement the Convention can best benefit from it. Stakeholders have indicated that only through demonstrating the value of the CHM, will the country be able to justify allocation of scarce resources. With a finite amount of money, countries that have not yet designated CHM National Focal Points see more benefit to supporting direct outreach in support of the Convention goals, rather than in pulling together information which may or may not be used.

5. Challenges with Integration and Partnerships

Just under 10% of survey respondents indicated that they have experienced difficulties participating collaboratively in the CHM, with comments citing the need for more relevant participation of Parties and partners, and the need for more linkages between global and regional experiences. This issue was also raised by related international initiatives, some of which see a need for a more formal mechanism to link the expertise gained by different experiences implementing international biodiversity projects and activities.

6. Lack of a Clear Strategy for the CHM

Just under 10% of survey respondents indicated that they find it difficult to ascertain the philosophy behind the CHM, and are frustrated by the lack of a defined strategy. In addition to the survey feedback received, this was an issue which emerged consistently through the Review. Discussions and advice shared by the IAC, representatives of related international initiatives, and the Parties, also raised a range of issues related to strategy, including:

- the need to clearly understand the degree to which the mandate of the CHM is/should be driven by Article 18.3 of the Convention ("*The Conference of the Parties, at its first meeting, shall determine how to establish a clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation*"), particularly given the direction from COP through the Pilot Phase which expands the mandate of the CHM to include responsibility for promoting and facilitating the implementation of all Convention CBD objectives; and

- the need to define and prioritize target audience(s) for CHM information, and develop strategies to meet the needs of those audiences (including the needs of senior policy makers, biodiversity professionals, local decision-makers and the public).

Participant Perspective...

“...the CHM must first and foremost be the servant of biodiversity conservation, not a drain on its resources. Those doing environmental impact assessments of development projects need access to a central source of data before starting further study... The need to maintain databases for specialist access can be easily justified, but to provide a world-wide service to anyone who may want access to detailed information out of curiosity is another matter altogether. With so much to be done, funding of the latter cannot be justified if it means that CBD implementation suffers.”

7. Barriers to the Involvement of Indigenous Cultures

A number of barriers to the involvement of indigenous cultures in the CHM were identified through the Review, including:

- The fact that indigenous cultures almost invariably constitute minorities often means these cultures have limited access to representation at the national level. Without this representation, differences between the perspectives of State and Native cultures regarding the use of biological resources can be lost. In some cases there are also security concerns for indigenous peoples who attempt to participate in natural resource policy, planning and management – preventing participation.
- Indigenous cultures do not make the same divisions that Western science does between biodiversity, cultural and spiritual issues. In indigenous communities, all biodiversity issues are also simultaneously and indivisibly cultural and spiritual issues – and maintaining bonds between the community and biological populations is often necessary for the spiritual and physical health of the community. Without an avenue for discussing these elements of biodiversity, it is difficult for indigenous cultures to become involved.
- Indigenous peoples’ knowledge of biodiversity is not academic and primarily oral. The dependence of the CHM on the Internet makes it difficult to create systems of information flow to truly integrate “bottom to top”. There is no mechanism to reach the communities, and the information from the top is expressed in languages and media that are not comprehensible at the community level. Indigenous communities may even encode their more technical knowledge using stories, poetry, dance, and songs (in Indonesia, for example, many tribes encode their territorial knowledge into songs; Iban honey hunters encode in song the skills for harvesting honey from hives in the canopy using “honey song” cycles). They may transmit this information through and other media and mechanisms to pass on their traditions. Indigenous peoples often use video, radio, cassettes, newspapers, cartoon booklets and other media to communicate.

- Many indigenous groups lack the time, personnel, computer technology, and other resources to find and download relevant information from the Internet. Even if information is on-line, it is not necessarily discoverable or accessible

8. Lack of Flexibility to Respond to the Changing Needs of Countries and Partners

When commenting on the flexibility of the CHM to respond to the changing needs of countries and partners, participants in the Review shared the following observations:

- concern that the CHM is developing into a complex bureaucracy which compromises the ability to customize implementation of the CHM to meet country needs;
- concern that diverse opinions on local issues within countries that are not sufficiently recognized at the national and international level, and therefore diversity in views can be lost (e.g. concern that views are lost because spiritual, moral, cultural and other issues related to biodiversity are absent from the CHM and CBD because there is no avenue for communicating them);
- concern that progress in implementing the CHM is slow because activities are constrained by decisions of COP (noting that the Secretariat is cautious about exceeding its mandate and that it is difficult for non-members to influence the governance and operations of the CBD, or the framework for the CHM); and
- concern that the CHM system operates in a “top-down” approach without the dynamic interaction with users necessary to ensure local needs are identified and met.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

A key element of the Independent Review process involves drawing on the experience and expertise gained through the Pilot Phase, and identifying opportunities to improve the operations of the global CHM network in the future. Ideas captured here reflect the needs and insights shared by a range of individuals and organizations dedicated to meeting the objectives of the Convention.

The Parties are committed to developing the CHM in response to clear and identified demands, and the opportunities here will directly shape the long-term workplan of the CHM.

5.1 Opportunities to improve the CHM

A range of opportunities for improving the CHM have been identified by participants in the Independent Review. Results presented here integrate advice shared through the survey, as well as priorities identified by Parties during Cyber Café discussions at SBSTTA 4, and advice shared by IAC members through the Review.

How to improve the CHM
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Increase understanding of country needs</i> 2. <i>Demonstrate and communicate the role and value of the CHM</i> 3. <i>Increase the involvement of local knowledge and expertise</i> 4. <i>Increase synergies with other initiatives and partners</i> 5. <i>Increase support to CHM nodes</i> 6. <i>Define a clear strategy for information management</i> 7. <i>Raise awareness of the CHM and the Convention on Biological Diversity</i> 8. <i>Strengthen the link to indigenous cultures</i>

1. Increase Understanding of Country Needs

A good service is designed to meet the needs of its users, and it is important that the global CHM network be developed in response to the needs of its users – the Parties to the Convention and their partners. This was one of the strongest messages received through consultation with National Focal Points at SBSTTA 4 in Montreal, and emerged as a key theme from survey results and discussions with the IAC. Each country working toward the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity has unique needs, and with an understanding of those needs (language, financial or technical support, specific expertise or knowledge, equipment, etc.), the global CHM network can be used to facilitate the

process of ensuring those needs are met. One approach to meeting those needs, as suggested through the Review, is by creating a database which captures the needs of Parties and partners implementing the Convention, with donors able to filling those needs.

2. Demonstrate and Communicate the Role and Value of the CHM

Linking closely to the importance of responding to country needs, is the opportunity for the CHM to demonstrate its role and value. Many CHM nodes and partners participating in the Independent Review believe a clear definition of what the CHM is, what it does, its roles and responsibilities, and the value it delivers – would be extremely useful. Examples of immediate opportunities to use this information include: CHM National Focal Points which need to “make the case” for financial and technical support; and countries that need a clearer demonstration of the value of the CHM before dedicating resources to becoming a CHM National Focal Point. In addition, it is important to clearly define the active role and responsibility which Parties have in contributing to the CHM. The CHM is, by definition, a decentralized network which depends on the involvement of the Parties in development and sustainability of the CHM.

3. Increase the Involvement of Local Knowledge and Expertise

While initial efforts to develop the global CHM network focused on the creation of an international network of national governments working to implement the Convention, it is also extremely important to recognize and capture the tremendous amount of expertise and knowledge at local levels within each country. There is an opportunity for the CHM National Focal Points to increase awareness among local partners (e.g. education institutions, indigenous communities, local government, NGOs, etc.) about the Convention and the global CHM network, and about the essential role of local knowledge in meeting the objectives of the Convention. Involving these groups in discussions regarding the CBD and CHM is seen as an essential first step. The importance of providing the public with an opportunity to participate in the CHM was also raised by the IAC, 10% of survey respondents, and in written feedback received.

4. Increase Synergies with Other Initiatives and Partners

Throughout the Independent Review, the need to improve the links and synergies between the activities of the CHM with the activities of other convention and international initiatives was raised repeatedly. This is important in order to minimize duplication and maximize efficiency, and to make full use of the expertise gained through the experiences of other initiatives. A formal mechanism supporting these relationships would be helpful.

It is also essential that the relationship between the CHM and these other initiatives be clearly explained and communicated to all Parties and partners working to implement the Convention. Without this information there is confusion as to “who -does-what” in the international arena dealing with biodiversity.

Participant Perspective...

"As an internet-based activity, the traditional concept of a clearing-house does not apply...A clearing-house is a centralized place for gathering information for cataloguing and redistribution [however]...the internet is a decentralized structure. The former function of clearing-houses is now performed through providing links and searchable indexes, and every node on the Internet now does that to some extent."

5. Increase support to CHM nodes

One important way to improve the global CHM network is to increase the support provided to CHM nodes. When asked "What are the top 3 things you would recommend to improve the global CHM network?" just under 50% of responses focused on support issues, including: financial support, technical support, training and capacity-building, advice and expertise, as well as direction on what responsibilities are involved in designating and operating a CHM National Focal Point, and help in facilitating networks and partnerships. For example, creating a template which defines the roles and responsibilities of a "typical" National Focal Point was identified as an opportunity for the CHM to provide support to the Parties working to implement the Convention (e.g. supplying information, training people to use the information, writing documents and communication materials, responding to information requests, etc.). Another important task for members of the global CHM network involves sharing successful experiences between Focal Points, Parties, partners and regions. It was suggested that tracking the level of resources invested against results achieved could provide the basis for an assessment of the effectiveness of the CHM, and as a result, assist with ongoing improvement efforts.

6. Define a Clear Strategy for Information Management

One important way to improve the CHM is by defining a clear strategy for information management. Participants in the Independent Review indicated that standards and guidelines would be very helpful in facilitating the flow of information at all levels. Examples of other products which could be provided by an Internet-based CHM included archives of documents, images, databases and indexes of objects. Services such as mailing lists, web forums, chat rooms, calendars, and news could also be provided.

The importance of improving the interoperability of nodes was also identified, stressing the need to create a mechanism which can interconnect and update CHM information and databases so that the information system is dynamic. A need for stricter mechanisms to update information was also identified.

7. Raise Awareness of the CHM and the Convention on Biological Diversity

Raising awareness of the CHM and the Convention on Biological Diversity was identified by a number of participants in the Review. Not only does this effort need to be targeted at the national, regional and international levels, it also needs to reach the public. A link was identified between knowledge of the Convention and knowledge of the CHM, and therefore it is important that information about the Convention itself and the CHM be included in awareness-building efforts.

Participant Perspective...

"What needs to be done is massive public awareness. Not many people know what the CHM is all about and how they can use it to their advantage."

8. Strengthen the link to Indigenous Cultures

Opportunities to strengthen the link between activities of the CHM and indigenous cultures, as identified through the Review, include:

- including indigenous representation in national CHM development, workshops, and similar CBD-related activities;
- encourage Parties build the capacity of indigenous peoples to manage their own information resources;
- have indigenous representation at regional CHM meetings (recognizing that challenges may arise due to the fact that indigenous peoples are not Parties to the Convention);
- invite the Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network to partner in an activity with the CHM;
- facilitate the development of non-internet information products easily accessible to indigenous cultures; and
- establish a special working-group to prepare a report to the Secretariat on indigenous communication issues and needs related to the CBD.

5.2 Strategies to Build Capacity Locally

Building capacity to implement the CHM is essential. Participants in the Review identified a number of opportunities at both the local and regional level to build this capacity. Highlights of local opportunities are provided here, focusing on the “Top 4” strategies identified. Section 5.3 uses this same approach for capturing regional opportunities for capacity-building.

Top 4 needs for Local Capacity-Building
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>More training</i> 2. <i>Improved information management systems, strategies and standards</i> 3. <i>Improved partnerships and information sharing</i> 9. <i>Increased Financial Support</i>

1. More Training

The most common need identified for local capacity-building was training – identified by just over 45% of respondents to the Independent Review survey. The most common training required is in the area of information technology, including skills required for computer set-up and maintenance, use of hardware, software, Internet, and information exchange mechanisms. Needs were also identified for training in use of the CHM, as well as on biodiversity and how to manage it.

2. Improved Information Management Systems, Strategies and Standards

Just as strategies for handling information are an important component of the global CHM network, the same strategies are essential to strengthen the ability of local CHM partners to implement the Convention. 30% of survey respondents identified a need for improved information management systems, strategies and standards. Specific suggestions included:

- creating national biodiversity information systems and networks;
- standardizing information collection techniques and presentation;
- integrating information on biodiversity which is highly dispersed, kept in various formats, and housed in a number of different institutions;
- prioritizing information requirements based on the problems faced;
- creating an information access policy framework at the national or program level.

3. Improved Partnerships and Information Sharing

Improving partnerships and information sharing is essential in order to build the cooperative relationships which form the foundation of national CHMs. 25% of survey respondents that these are necessary locally in order to build the capacity to implement the CHM, highlighting a number of opportunities to fill this necessity, including:

- increasing the effectiveness of cooperation between ministries and institutions dealing with matters related to biological diversity;

- establishing information sharing and integration policies;
- working collaboratively with people who have expertise in the CHM and the CBD (e.g. through the establishment of a CBD committee or partnership)
- developing local level CBD CHM web pages;
- increasing the interconnection of resources; and
- increasing non-electronic information networks.

4. Increased Financial Support

Increased financial support was identified by 20% of survey respondents as an important tool to building the capacity of local partners to implement and participate in the CHM. Activities in need of financial support include: CHM operations, salaries, biodiversity conservation projects, for new technology, in-country surveys, field assessments, and data analysis, and to participate in CHM workshops.

5. Other Local Capacity-Building Needs

Other local capacity building needs identified by participants in the Independent Review are listed below:

- improved information technology infrastructure (13%);
- improved education and awareness (12%); and
- improved knowledge of biodiversity (8%).

5.3 Strategies to Build Capacity Regionall

In addition to identifying the capacity-building needs at the local level, participants in th Independent Review also identified capacity -building needs regionally. Highlights of regional opportunities are provided here, focusing on the “top 4” strategies identified.

Top 4 needs for Regional Capacity-Building
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Improved networking and information sharing</i> 2. <i>Training</i> 3. <i>Protocols for information exchange</i> 4. <i>More financial support</i>

1. Improved Networking and Information Sharing

In order to build capacity to implement the CHM at the regional level, improvements in networking and information sharing need to be made. This need was identified by j ust under 40% of participants in the Review, the majority of which represent nodes in developing countries. Suggestions on how to improve networking and sharing included a number of mechanisms for networking and information exchange, such as:

- regional workshop consultations, meetings;
- more effective coordination between Parties (e.g. through the establishment of regional networks and partnerships, address lists and links, interconnection of national resources);
- sharing of experiences (e.g. through an regional Internet chat-line);
- development of national databases that include human resources, background information, agencies, organizations, etc.; and
- improved assessment of information needs.

2. More Training

Training was identified by just under 30% of participants in the Review as one of the “top 4” capacity-building needs at the Regional Level. Specific training requirements include: needs assessment, regional workshops, training of Regional Focal Points, use of databases, Internet training, financing for training, and “train the trainers” sessions.

3. Protocols for Information Exchange

18% of survey respondents identified a need for criteria, guidelines, protocols and mechanisms for information exchange. The importance of ensuring that there is a capacity for CHM partners to negotiate the benefits derived from the knowledge that indigenous communities and local people have on biodiversity was also identified.

4. More Financial Support

The last of the “Top 4” regional capacity-building needs, 13% of completed surveys called for increased financial support to improve the ability of regions to implement the CHM. Activities in need of financial support include:

- training and workshops;
- implementing recommendations of regional workshops;
- implementing regional initiatives (e.g. joint projects, regional planning);
- support for cooperation and horizontal collaboration; and
- support for personnel hired to complete CHM-related activities.

5. Other Regional Capacity-Building Needs

Other regional capacity building needs identified by participants in the Independent Review are listed below:

- increased awareness and education (10%);
- improved information technology infrastructure (telecommunications, hardware, software, other equipment);
- clarified definition of “Regional Level”;
- new initiatives on biodiversity conservation by biogeographical regions;
- establishment of regional centres of interest;
- creation of regional level CBD CHM web pages;
- system design, set-up, maintenance and management; and
- increased access to genetic resources.

5.4 Synergies with Other Conventions and International Initiatives

Feedback from Parties, other Conventions and international initiatives included a number of suggestions regarding how the CHM can identify and act on opportunities to work together with other biodiversity efforts. Advice shared during the Review included the belief that:

- a key step toward understanding the potential scope of involvement of related initiatives in the CHM depends on a firm understanding of the definition of the CHM and its role and responsibilities, as well as the role and responsibilities of the related initiative;
- more effective mechanisms are required to realize the synergies that are possible, noting the important opportunity for input through the IAC, and the opportunity to expand participation through facilitating access to resources such as the CBD financial mechanism;
- it is important to maintain open links, both formal and informal, between initiatives to ensure that both parties have opportunities to participate in developing programs of work – ongoing communication is critical (e.g. extending regular invitations to other initiatives to participate in CHM-related activities);
- it is important to identify mutually beneficial projects which can be implemented collaboratively (noting that when seeking resource support for mutually beneficial initiatives, cross-endorsement can increase the likelihood of obtaining support); and
- it is important to gain synergies by drawing on the expertise others have gained through implementation of similar initiatives.

5.5 Opportunities for the Secretariat

Participants in the Independent Review shared their thoughts regarding how services provided by the Secretariat could be improved.

Top 3 opportunities for the Secretariat to improve its services
--

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Improve how information is communicated</i> 2. <i>Improve information content</i> 3. <i>Provide increased guidance and leadership</i> |
|---|

1. Improving How Information is Communicated

The most common suggestion for the Secretariat addressed the issue of communication, and opportunities to improve the way in which materials and information are exchanged between the Secretariat and CHM stakeholders. 25% of participants in the Review shared this view, and many made specific comments regarding what aspects of communications they would like to see improved, including:

- heightened focus on non-Internet communication (including recognition of the shortcomings of technology, more personal and telephone contact);

- increased availability of information provided in other languages;
- materials distributed further in advance;
- improved design and structure of the CHM website (e.g. more interactive, suggest an interactive Internet chat room where people can ask questions and others can reply); and
- improved technology (e.g. ensure compatibility of software, decrease the amount of server “downtime”).

2. Improving Information Content

In addition to suggestions regarding how information is communicated, just over 20% of survey respondents focused on how to improve the content of material exchanged. Participants in the Review indicated that they would like to have:

- better information about CHM services, how to access them, how to use them;
- COP decisions which are clearly identifiable, easily recognized, and easy to read;
- more case studies and examples of solutions;
- more information about regional initiatives;
- thematic information;
- more updates on progress to implement the Convention; and
- more information how to contact individuals with specific expertise (e.g. through an “expert roster” available on the world wide web, by providing the e-mail addresses for the contact person in each country); and
- more direction on where to find information on specific topics (e.g. by classifying information which can be accessed on other web pages, providing Focal Points with Internet addresses on subjects of interest).

With limited resources dedicated to the Secretariat, the importance of clarifying the role of the Secretariat in filling information needs was raised. One option to address this issue involves focusing the Secretariat’s efforts on identifying where information can be found, and leaving actual delivery of the information the responsibility of the source.

3. Increased Guidance and Leadership

Providing increased guidance and leadership was identified by 15% of respondents as an important way to improve Secretariat services. This includes providing a common vision for all CHMs, more specific guidance on how to build a national CHM, and better information about CHM services, how to access them and how to use them.

4. Increased Support to CHM Nodes

In addition to increased guidance and leadership, participants in the Review also see an opportunity for the Secretariat to improve its services by providing increased support to CHM nodes. Just under 15% of respondents would like to see the Secretariat to dedicate more time to learning the needs and capacities of countries, and then delivering services and support which is customized to meet those needs. Specific areas in which CHM nodes identified a need for increased support include: implementation of technology, financing, training and capacity-building.

5. Networks, Synergies, Partnerships

Networks, synergies and partnerships are essential for successful implementation of the Convention, and 10% of respondents to the Independent Review Survey identified an opportunity for the Secretariat to work more actively with the Parties on facilitating related networks and initiatives that could contribute to the CHM in the future.

6. Other Opportunities

Other opportunities to improve Secretariat services which were each identified by 5% of participants include:

- clarifying the mandate and role of the CHM;
- initiating a fundraising process;
- follow-up with what has been purchased with funds and what has been installed with CHM Focal Points;
- increasing staff and resources to adequately address COP decisions and requests made by the Parties;
- taking bold steps in adopting technological solutions;
- using a participatory approach rather than a top-down approach to supporting implementation of the Convention;
- creating the means to foster public participation; and
- making the Secretariat site more welcoming and explanatory for people who know nothing about the CHM.

5.6 Opportunities for the Informal Advisory Committee

Through the Independent Review, CHM stakeholders were asked to describe how effective the CHM Informal Advisory Committee has been in (1) guiding and integrating the development of the CHM, and (2) ensuring that all Parties can participate in the CHM. One important insight gained from these questions is that most participants in the Independent Review were not familiar enough with IAC activities to comment on the effectiveness of its work (40-50%).

For those who were familiar with the IAC, responses were generally split between respondents who believe and do not believe that the IAC has been effective in fulfilling these two responsibilities. For example, there are as many people who believe the IAC has been effective in guiding and integrating the development of the CHM, as there are those who do not believe the IAC has been very effective in this role (approximately 20% each). Almost the same is true for comments related to the IAC's ability to ensure that all Parties can participate in the CHM – 13% of respondents felt the IAC had been effective, while 20% indicated that the IAC had not been effective.

Building from this knowledge, participants in the Review were asked to share their thoughts regarding how the role and operation of the IAC can be improved.

Top 3 opportunities for the IAC to improve its effectiveness	
1.	<i>Closer ties to CHM Focal Points</i>
2.	<i>Share more information about the IAC</i>
3.	<i>Take more leadership</i>

1. Closer Ties to CHM Focal Points

30% of respondents believe that IAC activities can be improved through increased interaction with CHM Focal Points. This includes establishing and maintaining direct contact with the Parties to find out more about the activities in each country, an ongoing role in collecting information about the needs of these countries, and following-up with the progress made.

There are also respondents who believe:

- it is essential for the IAC take a participatory approach to facilitating the development of and guiding the CHM;
- it is important for the IAC to accept more opportunities for public involvement in the CHM process;
- there is an opportunity for the IAC to lend their expertise to participating countries through on-site visits;
- there is a role for the IAC in the identification of resources and funds to increase involvement of developing countries and representatives; and
- it is important for the IAC to work more closely with the Secretariat.

2. Share More Information about the IAC

With many CHM stakeholders indicating that they are unfamiliar with at least some aspects of the IAC's activities, many completed surveys (17%) identified an opportunity for the IAC to increase awareness of its functions and activities by distributing information about its composition, role, responsibilities, and workplan.

3. Take more Leadership

12% of respondents identified an opportunity for the IAC to take more leadership in guiding the implementation of the CHM at all levels. Specific suggestions on ways to implement this leadership role included: creating formats, standards, guidelines; helping prioritize the activities of national CHMs; creating a better workplan for the CHM on behalf of COP; and supporting more bilateral cooperation.

4. Formalize the Role of the IAC

Formalizing the role of the IAC was identified by 10% of participants in the Independent Review as an opportunity which would improve the services provided by the IAC. Elements of a more formal IAC (as shared through the survey) included:

- more operational guidelines;
- clarification of the IAC mandate;
- increased accountability;
- election of a chair;
- a regular meeting schedule;
- more responsibility and support
- increased use of the IAC listserv as a means of providing guidance and feedback to the CHM Secretariat;
- introduction of electronic voting procedures and meetings conducted over the Internet; and
- mechanisms for regional consultations prior to IAC meetings, so regional representatives can bring regional issues to the table.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Established as a mechanism “to promote and facilitate scientific and technical cooperation”, the Parties and partners working to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity saw value in the CHM and embraced it. As reflected in the decisions and recommendations from COP, SBSTTA, Expert Meetings, and Regional Workshops during the CHM’s Pilot Phase, the Parties have enriched the CHM’s original mandate and created a mechanism which is working to respond to the needs of its users. The result is a worldwide network of people – representing governments, initiatives, organizations, and groups – that recognize the importance of working together to obtain the information, expertise, and alliances necessary to successfully meet the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As a tool to support implementation of the Convention, members of the global CHM network can celebrate a number of accomplishments. In identifying National Focal Points, countries have “put a face” to the Convention with staff and resources dedicated to obtaining and sharing information related to biological diversity. National Focal Points are receiving and filling information requests, and are using the CHM network to fill their information needs. They are also working in partnership with organizations locally and internationally in support of the objectives of the Convention. Importantly, there are also tangible examples of how the CHM has been successful in facilitating scientific and technical initiatives essential to successful implementation of the Convention.

In addition to capturing the accomplishments of the CHM, the Independent Review provided an opportunity for Parties to the Convention, as well as sister conventions and international initiatives, to share their hands-on experiences and advice on how the global CHM network can strengthen its ability to support implementation of the Convention into the future. Just over half of the Parties responding to the Independent Review Survey believe that the global CHM network has been helpful at supporting efforts to implement the Convention. With the advice and suggestions put forward in this report, the Parties have a synthesis of the needs and priorities of national governments working to implement the Convention, and concrete suggestions on what needs to be done in order to address those needs.

The Proposals for Action identified below are drawn directly from the ideas and advice received from participants in the Review, and represent essential elements of the CHM’s long-term workplan. Based on direction received through the Review, roles and responsibilities for implementers of the proposals are also described.

6.1 Priorities for Action

- **Describe the CHM – What it is and how it works.** The CHM was created by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity as a mechanism to support efforts to implement the Convention. There have been a number of important accomplishments through the Pilot Phase which highlight the value of the CHM, however questions remain regarding what the CHM “is in business to do”, how it works, who is involved, how it fits with other international initiatives related to biodiversity, and why it is something that countries working to implement the Convention should invest in. It is important that these questions be addressed, and that the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the CHM be clearly described.
- **Communicate - Let the Parties, partners, and public know the role and value of the CHM.** All Parties to the Convention need to be aware of the global CHM network, and the importance of taking an active role in developing the CHM and supporting the objectives of the Convention. A "template operational model" which documents the key elements of a National Focal Point needs to be developed and communicated. In addition, all existing and potential partners need to know the important contribution which their expertise and information makes to the global CHM network. There is also an important opportunity to raise the public's awareness of biological diversity, the Convention, and the role of the CHM.
- **Identify synergies - And make use of them.** The relationship between the CBD and the many other initiatives related to biological diversity need to be researched, defined, and communicated. It is essential that a process for linking the CHM to these initiatives be established, and that opportunities to increase efficiency and improve effectiveness be continually explored.
- **Use clear, concise vocabulary which is easy to translate - Everyone needs access to the information.** All CHM information needs to be simple, straightforward, and to the point. This increases the chance that ideas will be communicated accurately when translated into the UN official languages. This also makes it easier for countries to translate information into the many local languages around the world.
- **Create mechanisms of mutual support - Make it easier to work together.** Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity depends on collaboration – countries and partners working together, learning together, and sharing expertise, knowledge and experiences. Mechanisms are required to support this collaboration. There has been a strong call from CHM users for new mechanisms which include: a set of standards and guidelines for information management and exchange; a system to identify the needs of countries and partners working to implement the Convention (including strategies to overcoming the barriers which currently limit the participation of indigenous communities); a system to identify resources available to meet those needs; approaches for sharing expertise, experiences and success stories; and methods for building local and regional capacity to implement the CHM and the Convention.

- **Identify infrastructure needs - And then meet them.** Sharing expertise and information with countries and partners from around the world requires a leading-edge knowledge of communication and information management infrastructures. Challenges arise when different users of the CHM use different infrastructures. To maximize participation in and access to the global CHM network, it is important to identify a minimum level of technological infrastructure required to participate in the CHM. Efforts then need to be made to ensure that Parties and partners meet this minimum technological threshold.
- **Monitor and evaluate activities of the CHM - Make a commitment to continuous improvement.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of CHM activities is essential to ensure that the needs of CHM users are being met efficiently and effectively. This ongoing process includes the proactive identification and filling of information gaps, and identification and integration of new technologies. It also includes proactively identifying gaps in skill sets and expertise, and building the capacity to develop the required knowledge.
- **Think sustainably - Plan for the long term.** The global CHM network needs to plan for its long-term sustainability, and access to resources – financial, technical, human and information – are essential to that sustainability. Relationships between the CHM and international financing initiatives need to be fostered and strengthened, and creative partnership opportunities need to be explored.

6.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Parties to the Convention, National Focal Points, the CHM Secretariat, and the Informal Advisory Committee have important contributions to make to the development of the global CHM network. Based on the Independent Review, the following roles and responsibilities are envisioned for implementation of the priorities for action identified:

Conference of the Parties – Strategic Direction

- make decisions which provide overall strategic direction regarding the CHM.

National Focal Points – Lead Implementation

- lead the implementation of the global CHM network;
- share information regarding their country's efforts and knowledge related to implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity with other members of the global CHM network;
- seek the involvement of local expertise and knowledge within their country in the CHM;
- dedicate efforts to increasing public awareness of the Convention and the CHM; and
- monitor and evaluate activities on an ongoing basis.

The Secretariat – Support and Facilitation

- support and facilitate the Parties efforts to develop the global CHM network as a key tool for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- increase the level of guidance, support and leadership provided to the global CHM network and individual CHM nodes and partners;
- support the implementation of communication and engagement strategies; and
- facilitate the development of networks and partnerships.

The Informal Advisory Committee – Advisors

- provide advice to the Secretariat and members of the global CHM network regarding the development and operations of the CHM;
- establish closer ties with CHM nodes, enhancing their knowledge of the activities within these nodes;
- share information about their role and responsibilities with members of the global CHM network; and
- provide more leadership in the development of the CHM.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Glossary of Acronyms

BCIS.....	Biodiversity Conservation Information System
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CHM	Clearing-House Mechanism
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species (also known as the “Bonn Convention”)
COP.....	Conference of the Parties
EU	European Union
GBF.....	Global Biodiversity Foru
GBIF	Global Biodiversity Information Facility
GEF.....	Global Environ ent Facility
IABIN.....	Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network
IAC.....	Informal Advisory Committ
IBIN	Indigenous Peoples Biodiversity Information Network
NABIN	North American Biodiversity Information Network
NBSAP.....	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NFP	National Focal Point (also referred to as “node”)
OECD.....	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Ramsar	Convention on Wetlands
SADC.....	Southern Africa Developing Community
SBSTT	Scientific Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
UNEP	United Nations Environment Progra
UNFCCC.....	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Chang
WH.....	World Heritage Convention
WWW	World Wide Web

APPENDIX B: List of Informal Advisory Committee Members

COUNTRY MEMBERS				
Country	Name	Email	Telephone	Fax
Burkina Faso	Mr. Louis Traore	bancebo@conagese.mee.b	+226-312-464	+226-316-491
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BCIS	Mr. Jeremy Harrison	jerryh@wcmc.org.uk	+44 1223 277314	+44 1223 277136
IABIN	Ms. Gladys A. Cotter	us_chm_fp@cbi.cr.usgs.gov	+1-703-648-4090	+1-703-648-4042
OECD	Mr. Ebbe Nielsen	ebbe.nielsen@ento.csiro.au	+612-6246-4258	+612-6246-4264
IBIN	Mr. Preston Hardison	phardison@igc.apc.org	+1-206-527-0119	+1-206-527-0119

APPENDIX C: List of Countries receiving GEF funding for CHM Add-on Modules*

No	Country	Amount (US \$)	Implementing Agency	CEO OK (m/d/y)
1	Algeria	14,000	UNDP	.
2	Antigua + Barbuda	14,000	UNDP	.
3	Bahamas	14,000	UNEP	4/16/98
4	Belarus	12,300	UNEP	1/15/98
5	Belize	7,000	UNDP	.
6	Benin	13,950	UNDP	6/23/98
7	Bolivia	14,000	UNDP	.
8	Bulgaria	10,200	UNDP	9/14/98
9	Burkina Faso	13,984	UNDP	4/23/98
10	Burundi	11,085	UNDP	.
11	Cameroon	13,000	UNEP	2/11/98
12	C.A. Republic	13,600	UNDP	.
13	Cape Verde	14,000	UNDP	3/4/98
14	Chad	13,970	UNDP	.
15	Comoros	14,000	UNDP	.
16	Congo	13,500	UNDP	10/26/98
17	Côte d'Ivoire	13,800	UNDP	.
18	Czech Republic	12,000	WB	12/15/97
19	D.R. of Congo	12,710	UNDP	.
20	Dominica	7,150	UNDP	.
21	Dominican Rep.	10,000	WB	4/16/98
22	Ecuador	5,900	UNDP	4/27/98
23	Egypt	14,000	UNEP	1/9/98
24	Ethiopia	12,000	UNDP	1/27/99
25	Fiji	11,150	UNDP	7/14/98
26	Gabon	12,750	UNDP	5/19/98
27	Gambia	13,950	UNEP	4/16/98
28	Grenada	5,020	UNDP	4/16/98
29	Guinea	13,450	UNDP	12/16/97
30	Haiti	12,000	WB	2/24/98
31	Honduras	10,000	UNDP	3/17/98
32	Hungary	7,000	UNEP	10/29/97
33	Indonesia	10,300	UNDP	.
34	Jamaica	8,050	UNDP	4/16/98
35	Jordan + Pal. Auth.	12,500	UNDP	7/10/98
36	Lebanon	9,500	UNDP	7/2/98
37	Madagascar	10,000	UNEP	10/29/97
38	Malawi	11,000	UNEP	11/10/97
39	Maldives	12,206	UNDP	.
40	Mali	13,140	UNDP	5/8/98
41	Mauritania	14,000	UNDP	4/16/98
42	Mauritius	12,300	UNEP	4/23/98
43	Moldova	10,000	WB	3/12/98
44	Mongolia	8,050	UNDP	.
45	Morocco	14,000	UNEP	6/5/98

No	Country	Amount (US \$)	Implementing Agency	CEO OK (m/d/y)
46	Mozambique	13,300	UNEP	11/10/97
47	Nige	11,338	UNDP	11/10/97
48	Oman	14,000	UNDP	12/16/97
49	Panama	14,000	UNEP	1/9/98
50	Pakistan	10,600	UNEP	2/11/98
51	Papua New Guinea	12,000	WB	11/23/98
52	Paraguay	5,610	UNDP	8/26/98
53	Peru	9,250	UNDP	6/30/98
54	Philippines	11,300	UNDP	2/18/98
55	Poland	11,000	UNEP	9/1/98
56	Rwanda	13,950	UNDP	6/24/98
57	St. Lucia	14,000	UNEP	2/3/98
58	Senegal	11,300	UNDP	2/25/98
59	Seychelles	10,100	UNEP	10/29/97
60	Slovenia	12,000	WB	3/4/98
61	Solomon Islands	8,580	UNEP	9/28/98
62	South Africa	13,500	UNDP	8/26/98
63	Sudan	14,000	UNDP	8/26/98
64	Togo	11,300	UNEP	
65	Ukraine	14,000	WB	5/8/97
66	Uruguay	13,837	UNDP	.
67	Vanuatu	13,100	UNEP	6/10/98
68	Vietnam	12,000	UNDP	6/16/98
69	Yemen	14,000	UNDP	6/26/98
TOTAL (US\$)	804, 580			
Average (US\$)	11,661			

APPENDIX D: Summary of Survey Results

Total number of surveys distributed: 185

Total number of completed surveys received: 74

Countries and organizations represented by completed surveys:

Argentina	Gambia	Morocco	Thailand
Austria	Greece	Namibia	Togo
Bahamas	Guatemala	Netherlands	Turkey
Belarus	Honduras	New Zealand	Uganda
Belgium	Iceland	Niue	United Kingdom
Benin	Iran	Norway	Ukraine
Canada	Israel	Pakistan	Uruguay
China	Italy (2)	Panama	USA
Colombia	Jamaica	Paraguay (2)	Vanuatu
Denmark	Japan	Peru	
Dominican Republic	Kenya	Republic of San	BCIS
Ecuador	Lithuania	Marino	CHM Secretariat
El Salvador	Mali	Russian Federation	European
Fiji Island	Mauritania	Saint Lucia	Environment Agency
Finland	Mauritius	Solomon Islands	IABIN
Gabon	Mexico	Suriname	NABIN (2)

I. MEETING YOUR NEEDS	Total	Developed Country	Developing Country	Internat'l Initiative
1. What is your relationship to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
Convention on Biological Diversity National Focal Point	30	5	25	0
Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) National Focal Point	45	12	33	0
CHM Regional Focal Point	0	0	0	0
CHM Sub-Regional Focal Point	0	0	0	0
CHM Thematic Focal Point	1	1	0	0
Member of the Informal Advisory Committee (IAC)	7	3	3	1
Biodiversity -Related Conventions other than CB	11	3	8	0
Funding Institutions/Agencies	1	1	0	0
Other Partner (specify)	9	3	6	0
2. How useful have you found the following guidelines in directing your work?				
(a) Conference of the Parties (COP) decisions				
Very useful	22	5	17	0
Somewhat useful	25	8	15	2
Not very useful	9	4	3	2
Not applicable	3	0	3	0
(b) Expert meetings				
Very useful	31	8	21	2
Somewhat useful	14	5	8	1
Not very useful	3	2	1	0
Not applicable	9	2	6	1
(c) Regional workshops				
Very useful	31	7	24	0
Somewhat useful	11	5	5	1
Not very useful	2	2	0	0
Not applicable	13	3	7	3

I. MEETING YOUR NEEDS (continued)	Total	Developed Country	Developing Country	Internat'l Initiative
(d) Materials provided by the CHM Secretariat				
Very useful	30	10	20	0
Somewhat useful	15	5	15	1
Not very useful	4	1	3	0
Not applicable	8	0	5	3
3. How helpful has the CHM Secretariat been in providing guidance and support to your organization?				
Very helpful	12	5	12	0
Helpful	19	4	13	2
Not very helpful	11	3	11	0
Not helpful	7	1	5	1
Not applicable	8	4	3	1
4. What do you consider the 3 most valuable services provided by the Clearing- House Mechanism Secretariat?				
Written responses integrated in Section 3.3 presented in the body of the report.				
5. How can the services provided by the Secretariat be improved?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.5 presented in body of report.				
6. How effective has the CHM Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) been in guiding and integrating the development of the CHM?				
Very effective	2	1	1	0
Somewhat effective	11	4	7	0
Not very effective	12	4	5	3
Don't know	25	7	17	1
7. How effective has the CHM Informal Advisory Committee (IAC) been in ensuring that all Parties can participate in the CHM?				
Very helpful	2	0	2	0
Somewhat effective	7	2	5	0
Not effective	12	2	7	3
Don't Know	31	11	19	1
8. How can the role and operation of the IAC be improved?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.6 presented in the body of the report.				
9. How helpful has the GLOBAL Clearing-House Mechanism network been in working toward the 3 goals of the Convention (conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of the components of biological diversity, fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources)				
Very helpful	3	0	3	0
Somewhat helpful	33	11	21	0
Not very helpful	9	3	5	1
Not helpful	3	1	2	0
10. What are the 3 things you find MOST USEFUL about the global CHM network? (e.g. access to information, facilitating partnerships, etc.)				
Written responses integrated in Section 3.1 of the report.				
11. What problems or difficulties have you experienced with the global CHM network?				
Written responses integrated in Section 4.0 of the report.				
12. What are the top 3 things that you would recommend to improve the global Clearing-House Mechanism network?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.1 of the report.				
13. How often do access the global Clearing-House Mechanism network to search for information?				
0-5 searches per week	37	12	23	2
6-10 searches per week	7	2	4	1
11-25 searches per week	3	1	2	0
26-50 searches per week	1	1	0	0
Over 50 searches per week	2	0	1	1

I. MEETING YOUR NEEDS (continued)	Total	Developed Country	Developing Country	Internat'l Initiative
14. Roughly how many of your information searches are successful?				
All searches are successful	5	3	2	0
Most searches are successful	24	10	12	2
Some searches are successful	8	1	6	1
Few searches are successful	6	0	5	1
No searches are successful	2	0	2	0
15. Have you encountered compatibility problems (e.g. with computers or scientific terminology) in your information searches?				
No	37	12	21	4
Yes	11	3	8	0
16. Which of the following listservs set-up through the CHM Secretariat do you use? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
CHM Focal Point listserv	29	9	19	1
CHM informal Advisory Committee listserv	12	3	6	3
Rio listserv	6	1	4	1
Other biodiversity-related convention listserv	18	6	10	2
Other (specify)	5	0	4	1
II. HELPING OTHERS MEET THEIR NEEDS				
17. What type of biological diversity information is AVAILABLE from your office? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
National Reports	46	13	31	2
Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans	45	12	31	2
Country Studies	35	10	23	2
Legislation and policies	49	14	33	2
News / newslette	26	12	12	2
General information/advice related to biological diversit	46	16	28	2
Referrals to other information sources	36	16	18	2
Other (please specify below)	17	7	8	2
18. What type of biological diversity information is commonly REQUESTED from your office? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
National Reports	32	9	21	2
Biodiversity strategies and Action Plans	35	9	24	2
Country Studies	25	4	20	1
Legislation and policies	44	12	30	2
News / newslette	23	5	16	2
General information/advice related to biological diversit	49	13	33	3
Referrals to other information sources	25	10	12	3
Other (please specify below)	13	6	8	0
19. Generally, WHO requests the information? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	43	11	29	3
Business/Industry	22	8	13	1
Research/Educational Institutions	46	14	30	2
Students	48	12	33	3
Government within your country	46	15	30	1
Government from other countries	26	7	17	2
Other (specify)	18	6	11	2

II. HELPING OTHERS MEET THEIR NEEDS (continued)	Total	Developed Country	Developing Country	Internat'l Initiative
20. HOW OFTEN does your office receive requests for information?				
Less than 10 requests per week	30	7	22	1
10-25 requests per week	21	5	16	0
26-50 requests per week	4	2	0	2
51-100 requests per week	3	1	1	1
Over 100 requests per week	2	1	1	0
21. Generally, how does your office most commonly RECEIVE information requests?				
Phone	42	13	28	1
By Fax	30	6	23	1
E-mail	41	11	26	4
Mail	32	10	20	2
In Person	33	5	28	0
22. Generally, how does your office most commonly FILL information requests?				
Phone	29	10	18	1
Fax	35	7	27	1
E-mail	37	11	22	4
We -site	19	7	10	2
Mail	31	11	19	1
In Person	23	2	21	0
23. If you have a website, estimate how many "visits" or "hits" your site receives (if possible and appropriate, please base this estimate on the number of visitors that go past the first page of your site)				
Less than 10 visits per week	1	1	0	0
10-25 visits per week	3	0	3	0
26-50 visits per week	3	2	1	0
51-100 visits per week	2	0	1	1
over 100 visits per week	19	9	7	3
Don't know	6	1	5	0
24. If you have any other statistics on use of your Web site and CHM, please provide them here, or attach the relevant report files.				
Written responses integrated into report.				
III. PARTNERSHIPS				
25. Estimate the number of organizations / groups / institutions WITHIN YOUR COUNTRY that your organization regularly works with to support the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity?				
0-5	5	1	4	0
6-10	18	4	13	1
11-20	5	3	2	0
21-50	14	4	10	0
Over 50	12	3	8	1
26. Estimate the number of organizations / groups / institutions FROM OTHER COUNTRIES that your organization regularly works with to support the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity?				
0-5	17	4	13	0
6-10	13	2	11	0
11-20	19	7	10	2
21-50	6	2	4	0
Over 50	4	2	0	2
27. To your knowledge, has the Clearing-House Mechanism facilitated scientific or technical initiatives which work toward implementing the goals of the Convention?				
No	27	10	16	1
Yes	22	7	13	2

IV. CAPACITY BUILDING	Total	Developed Country	Developing Country	Internat'l Initiative
In terms of building the capacity required to implement the Clearing -House Mechanism...				
28. What are the 3 most important areas of need for capacity-building at the LOCAL LEVEL (i.e. within your country)?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.2 of the report.				
29. What are the 3 most important areas of need for capacity -building at the REGIONAL LEVEL?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.3 of the report.				
30. How many training events has your node (or organization) offered or promoted during the PAST THREE YEARS related to the CHM and/or the Convention on Biological Diversity?				
0-5 (with 18 who have held at least 1 event)	38	12 (3)	24 (14)	2 (1)
5-10	5	0	4	1
11-20	6	2	4	0
Over 20	2	1	0	1
V. RESOURCES				
31. In terms of FINANCIAL SUPPORT, has your institution/organization applied to GEF for funding to develop its CHM node?				
No	34	16	16	2
Yes	20	0	20	0
32. Has your institution/organization applied to sources OTHER THAN GEF for funding to develop its CHM node?				
No	36	7	27	2
Yes	17	9	7	1
33. From what sources does your node receive financial support? Put an "x" in as many that apply.				
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	23	0	22	1
National Government	34	16	16	2
Local partners (i.e. institutions or organizations within your country)	5	2	2	1
Other Governments	6	1	5	0
International partners	5	2	3	0
Other (specify)	4	2	2	0
34. Does your node (or organization) have any long term strategies to secure financial support for activities ?				
No	35	8	25	2
Yes	20	8	11	1
35. In terms of TECHNICAL SUPPORT, does your node receive (Put an "x" in as many that apply):				
Support from the international/regional/aid development communit	22	2	20	0
Support from your National Government	25	6	17	2
Support from local partners (i.e. organizations or groups within your country)	15	4	10	1
Support from other Governments	4	1	3	0
Support from international partners	9	3	6	0
Support from other sources (specify)	4	1	3	0
36. Does your node (or organization) have any long term strategies to secure technical support for activities ?				
No	31	8	22	1
Yes	20	8	11	2
37. What long-term strategies are necessary, both nationally and internationally, to secure long-term support for the CHM? For those that are already under way, how could they be improved?				
Written responses integrated in Section 5.2 of the report.				