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**Rotterdam Convention on the Prior  
Informed Consent Procedure for Certain  
Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in  
International Trade  
Conference of the Parties  
Fifth meeting**

Geneva, 20–24 June 2011

Item 5 (h) of the provisional agenda\*

**Matters related to the implementation of the Convention:  
information exchange**

**Draft strategic plan for establishing procedures for the  
operation of the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint  
clearing-house mechanism**

**Note by the Secretariat**

1. In its decision RC-4/12, on financing and budget for the triennium 2009–2011, the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade adopted a programme of work and budget that included a request to the Secretariat to establish a clearing-house mechanism for the Rotterdam Convention in cooperation with the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.
2. In addition, by decision RC-4/11, on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariats of those conventions to develop systems of information exchange on health and environmental impacts, including a clearing-house mechanism, with the aim of those systems serving all three conventions.
3. In response to the above requests, the Secretariat prepared a draft strategic plan for establishing procedures for the operation of the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism, which is set out in the annex to the present note. As the strategic plan complements the strategic plan adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention at its third meeting (UNEP/POPS/COP.3/INF/9), although some details will vary, the goals and strategies presented are similar to those adopted under the Stockholm Convention.

\* UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.5/1/Rev.1.

### **Possible action by the Conference of the Parties**

4. The Conference of the Parties may wish:

(a) To consider and approve the draft strategic plan for establishing procedures for the operation of the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism;

(b) To invite parties and other stakeholders to contribute to and promote the development of the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism through voluntary means.

## Annex

### **Draft strategic plan for establishing procedures for the operation of the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism**

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## I. Specialized terms

1. The following terms used in the present document are defined as follows:

(a) *Clearing-house mechanism*: A multi-stakeholder global mechanism to facilitate the exchange of information. It comprises a technology infrastructure, the information itself and the human capital required to generate, interpret and manage the information. Although the concept of a clearing-house mechanism does not mandate a particular mechanism or technology for information exchange, in the context employed here information exchange occurs mostly over the internet through the use of websites as the primary means of presenting and retrieving information;

(b) *Joint clearing-house mechanism*: A clearing-house mechanism that supports the exchange of information between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, including between parties and other stakeholders. The joint clearing-house mechanism is an online environment for the exchange of information related to chemicals and wastes that are hazardous to human health or the environment;

(c) *Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism*: Puts the joint clearing-house mechanism into context for the Rotterdam Convention. The Rotterdam Convention component uses and adapts the joint clearing-house mechanism to meet the specific needs of the parties to the Rotterdam Convention.

## II. Situation analysis

### A. Background and mandates

2. Paragraph 1 of Article 14 of the Convention states that:

Each Party shall, as appropriate and in accordance with the objectives of this Convention, facilitate:

(a) The exchange of scientific, technical, economic and legal information concerning the chemicals within the scope of this Convention, including toxicological, ecotoxicological and safety information;

(b) The provision of publicly available information on domestic regulatory actions relevant to the objectives of the Convention; and

(c) The provision of information to other Parties, directly or through the Secretariat, on domestic regulatory actions that substantially restrict one or more uses of the chemical, as appropriate.

3. The Conference of the Parties, in its decision RC-4/12, adopted a programme of work and budget for the period 2009–2011 that included a number of new programmes and priority activities. More specifically, it included two new priority areas (activities 18 and 38) that related to the establishment of, and training on, a clearing-house mechanism for the Rotterdam Convention, in cooperation with the Basel and Stockholm conventions.

4. In addition, by its decision RC-4/11, on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariats of those conventions to develop systems of information exchange on health and environmental impacts, including a clearing-house mechanism, with the aim of those systems serving all three conventions.

5. The joint clearing-house mechanism serving the three conventions will provide a mechanism for the exchange of information on hazardous chemicals and wastes to facilitate the effective implementation of the three conventions by parties, the secretariats and other stakeholders. It will encompass components common to the three conventions along with a convention-specific component for each.

6. The strategy presented below focuses on the component of the joint clearing-house mechanism specific to the Rotterdam Convention.

### B. Current situation

7. Throughout workshops and training sessions carried out by the Secretariat between 2008 and 2011, the Secretariat collected and compiled the views and recommendations expressed by parties with regard to information exchange and the Rotterdam Convention component of the clearing house.

A detailed report on those recommendations and the Secretariat's analysis of parties' information exchange needs are provided in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.5/INF/8.

8. On the basis of the secretariat's analysis and the parties' recommendations, some Rotterdam Convention components, intended to provide support to parties and to make the information stored in the Convention's online database more accessible, along with other relevant information resources available on the website and facilities that would assist parties in implementing the Convention, have been developed and pilot-tested.

9. Activities focused initially on the development of a prototype import response module and notification of final regulatory action module. Both modules include online interactive forms designed to give designated national authorities new and innovative means of mobilizing and delivering the information required to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. The work already undertaken on the Rotterdam Convention components was made available to a select number of designated national authorities and stakeholders during the development and testing phase.

10. Two pilot training sessions were organized in conjunction with awareness-raising workshops held in Armenia in November 2009 and Viet Nam in June 2010 to present, test and collect feedback on the prototype import response online module.

11. At the time of preparation of the present document, both modules were being revised and adjusted based on feedback received. In addition, further online tools and modules were being developed, such as an online interactive facility to improve access to and sharing of the information provided in the PIC Circular and integrated cross-convention chemicals profiles.

12. Furthermore, the complete migration of the Convention website to a cross-convention standardized web interface was under way with a view to providing a more streamlined and harmonized navigation structure across the three conventions' websites.

13. Lastly, regular meetings of an inter-secretariat joint clearing-house mechanism group have been taking place for the discussion of, among other things:

(a) Development of cross-cutting information packages as what might be termed a "one-stop-shop" of information on chemicals and wastes;

(b) Preparation of a revised joint workplan for presentation to the conferences of the parties to the three conventions for adoption in 2011;

(c) Preparation of a report on other clearing-house mechanisms and similar mechanisms for presentation to the conferences of the parties.

### **III. Mission**

14. The Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism will facilitate the collection, management, distribution and exchange of information on hazardous chemicals, including by promoting communication and the exchange of information on sound measures and valuable experiences, to enable parties to make informed decisions on trade in those chemicals in the implementation of the Convention. The Rotterdam Convention component is intended to add value to other relevant information exchange mechanisms and thereby contribute to a more integrated approach to chemicals management.

### **IV. Vision**

15. The Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism will add value to the joint clearing-house mechanism to provide parties, designated national authorities, official contact points, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders with the means and capacity to exchange valuable information on Annex III chemicals and other hazardous chemicals. The information will be validated, repackaged, integrated, translated where necessary, processed and made accessible to various user groups in a user-friendly format by means of tailored information products and services. Other multilateral environmental agreements and information exchange initiatives will profit from and contribute to the mechanism; cooperation and coordination will be enhanced, resulting in the further development of synergies.

## V. Goals

### A. Goal 1: Align the infrastructure and procedures of the Rotterdam Convention component with the joint clearing-house mechanism and other relevant information exchange mechanisms

#### 1. Focus

16. The focus of the first goal is to align and integrate, as far as possible, the Rotterdam Convention component with the joint clearing-house mechanism and to develop areas of convergence in terms of information exchange with the Basel and Stockholm conventions. This includes the adoption of common infrastructure, the alignment of development approaches, the harmonization and synchronization of workplans, the sharing of skills and expertise and the adoption of standards.

17. This goal also includes observation and, where beneficial, alignment to an appropriate degree with other information exchange mechanisms and initiatives such as the Chemical Information Exchange Network and the Multilateral Environmental Agreement Knowledge Management initiative led by the Division of Environmental Law and Conventions of the United Nations Environment Programme.

18. Although this goal centres on activities at the secretariat level, it is recognized that alignment as described here has implications for the way in which parties, regional and national partners and other collaborators engage with the clearing-house mechanism. This goal therefore also includes an element of networking.

#### 2. Objectives

19. This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

(a) *Share resources*: Ensure compatibility with the joint clearing-house mechanism and increase resources to enhance mutual knowledge and cross-convention exchange of ideas, sharing of tools, practices and approaches;

(b) *Promote integrated thinking*: Facilitate the development of integrated information products and services such as chemical and country profiles using information from all three conventions; plan and implement future projects in a coordinated and integrated way;

(c) *Accessibility*: Facilitate accessibility by presenting the activities of the Rotterdam Convention through a common portal for the three conventions, providing a coherent web experience of the joint clearing-house mechanism while remaining responsive to the specific needs of the parties to the Rotterdam Convention;

(d) *Scale*: Build on the networks of partners of the three conventions to increase the collective reach, impact, quality, volume and relevance of the Rotterdam Convention component.

#### 3. Strategy

20. These objectives will be achieved through the following four strategies:

(a) *Collaboration*: Use opportunities for collaboration identified through the analysis of other clearing-house mechanisms and similar mechanisms in the area of chemicals and wastes carried out by the three secretariats, as discussed in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.5/INF/15;

(b) *Joint planning*: Develop joint workplans for the three conventions for the joint clearing-house mechanism;

(c) *Joint projects*: Conduct collaborative clearing-house mechanism development projects;

(d) *Networks*: Seek out areas of collaboration and opportunities for synergistic action at the regional and national levels, exploiting the overlaps in partner networks, through, for example, coordinating workshops to provide training for parties, establishing a coordinated approach to raising awareness of information exchange, developing combined training materials and encouraging synergistic actions between partners.

### B. Goal 2: Establish an integrated content development and delivery method

#### 1. Focus

21. The focus of the second goal is on identifying, elaborating and meeting the information needs of the parties to the Rotterdam Convention.

## 2. Objectives

22. The objectives set out below reflect desired growth in necessary and complementary areas of action:

- (a) *Presentation*: Identify and create new ways of packaging and presenting information to increase understanding and the variety of ways in which information products are used;
- (b) *Promote combination*: Package information in such a way as to make it easier to combine it with other sources of hazardous chemicals information through the adoption of inter-operability standards to deal with integrated issues such as chemicals life-cycle management and the identification and evaluation of new and emerging hazardous chemicals;
- (c) *Mobilization*: Identify and refine new and innovative means of mobilizing and delivering targeted information relevant to issues of concern under the Rotterdam Convention through, for example, the development of specific online tools;
- (d) *Differentiation*: Meet with increasing accuracy and relevance the information needs of targeted groups within parties to the Rotterdam Convention, differentiating between the specific needs of individual groups and meeting them more effectively;
- (e) *Reach*: Increase the reach of Rotterdam Convention information products into relevant areas of the public and private sectors and encourage open access to and widespread use of Rotterdam Convention information and information made available by parties to the Convention.

## 3. Strategy

23. These objectives will be achieved through six strategies:

- (a) *Standardization*: Ensure compatibility through standardization and inter-operability by engaging with other providers of relevant information;
- (b) *Tracking needs*: Track information needs, priorities and best practices considering regional and sectoral variations through such methods as questionnaires, workshops and consultations;
- (c) *Streamlining of efforts*: Consult parties to the Rotterdam Convention, designated national authority host institutions and other multilateral environmental agreement secretariats to eliminate duplication of information and effort;
- (d) *Develop new pathways*: Research new information sources, tools and technologies to understand the precise deployment context (location, time, function, purpose) of the information and the appropriate tool for delivering information accordingly;
- (e) *Information niche*: Seek to understand the context of information specific to the Rotterdam Convention within a diverse global demand for related information and to design information products that complement and enhance global knowledge on chemicals management;
- (f) *Open access*: Promote open access to Rotterdam Convention information through support for international and cross-sectoral information exchange standards; develop agreements and guidelines on appropriate use of information.

## C. Goal 3: Establish a network of information providers and collaborators

### 1. Focus

24. The focus of the third goal is on strengthening partnerships between Rotterdam Convention stakeholders to energize a wider network of relevant parties to provide and use information within the clearing-house mechanism and to encourage participation and innovation in information exchange.

25. The focus is also on developing collective interest and responsibility between stakeholders for the identification and development of new information products and tools and for the improvement of existing ones. This goal is related to the second goal in that it aims to promote the reach and impact of Rotterdam Convention information. It differs, however, in that it focuses on developing a network as the main aim.

### 2. Objectives

26. The following four objectives are established for the Rotterdam Convention:

- (a) *Network membership and enrolment*: Involve a critical mass of members and expand the network membership progressively across countries, regions and institutions, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and cross-sectoral thematic partners. The

focus is on populating a comprehensive, global, selective but non-discriminatory, multisectoral network. The outputs include terms of reference for providers and users, lists of user groups, providers and experts, indicating their expertise, and user profiles and provider profiles;

(b) *Member responsiveness*: Increase and steadily improve the capacity of network members to express information needs, agree on priorities and share experiences and expertise, leading to a comprehensive global dialogue on the exchange of information on hazardous chemicals and their trade. The focus is on the commitment of network members and their active participation, and outputs include member contributions;

(c) *Awareness and use*: Steadily increase awareness of the benefits and capabilities of the clearing-house mechanism and progressively expand the use made of the information and services available through it. The focus is on marketing the clearing-house mechanism and its use. Outputs include promotional events and materials;

(d) *Collaboration*: Develop and steadily improve collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and funding agencies in support of information exchange initiatives. The focus is on the development of synergies and partnerships. Outputs include partnerships and agreements.

### 3. Strategy

27. The above objectives will be achieved through the following six strategies:

(a) *Concentrating on key users*: Ensure an effective and efficient use of resources by maximizing results while economizing on resources and by identifying leverage points on which to focus efforts. Concentrate initially on key users with the potential to have a major impact on the implementation of the Convention;

(b) *Grouping users according to their affinities and promoting their interlinkages*: Consider multidisciplinary and multisectoral approaches in addition to thematic or like-minded groups to avoid compartmentalization and to stimulate creativity and innovation;

(c) *Fostering joint endeavours to develop synergies and avoid duplication of effort*: Promote mentoring and learning between network members to profit from the network's knowledge base and strengthen its capacity. This can be achieved by, for example, developing e-learning tools and databases of experts;

(d) *Relying on partnerships and focusing on facilitation*: Rely on partnerships and focus on facilitation by concentrating on facilitating, encouraging, promoting and engaging a wide range of stakeholders to pool resources and share work. This includes the promotion of the clearing-house mechanism and contributing to partners' activities related to the Rotterdam Convention through joint endeavours;

(e) *Nurturing membership and partnerships*: Nurturing membership and partnerships by clarifying and communicating roles and responsibilities, ensuring member satisfaction, rewarding valuable contributions and initiatives, developing good communication at all levels, organizing and improving communication resources between the Secretariat and network members and between network members, and developing communication mechanisms to ensure global participation, including by those in areas with poor or no internet access;

(f) *Promoting the clearing-house mechanism*: Promoting awareness, understanding, use and expansion of the clearing-house mechanism through communication and education activities.

## VI. Roles and responsibilities

28. While the Secretariat plays a key role in the attainment of the above goals, the following other stakeholders also play important roles:

(a) Parties to the convention (through official contact points and designated national authorities);

(b) Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;

(c) Joint Convention Services and the United Nations Office at Nairobi Division of Conference Services;

(d) States that are not parties (through official contact points);

(e) Environmental non-governmental organizations;

- (f) Industry and private-sector associations;
- (g) Multilateral environmental agreements (including information exchange initiatives such as the Chemical Information Exchange Network and pollutant release and transfer registers);
- (h) United Nations bodies and specialized agencies such as the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations;
- (i) Funding agencies and mechanisms and other donors;
- (j) Researchers, universities and related initiatives;
- (k) Basel and Stockholm convention regional centres.

## VII. Concept, implementation and management approach for the clearing-house mechanism

29. The Rotterdam Convention will align its management approach with that of the Stockholm Convention, given the rapid convergence of project and budgetary cycles and schedules. The following definitions, concept and analysis, implementation and evaluation cycle are adapted from the Stockholm Convention clearing-house mechanism strategic plan (UNEP/POPS/COP.3/INF/9), with an emphasis on convergence of the activities.

### A. Definitions

30. For the purposes of the text below, the following definitions apply:

- (a) *Cycle*: One cycle is understood to mean one full rotation through the stages described in paragraph 32 and figure I. One clearing-house mechanism cycle covers two calendar years, coinciding with the Convention budget cycle;
- (b) *Phase*: One phase of clearing-house mechanism implementation and operation covers two clearing-house mechanism cycles;
- (c) *Pilot phase*: The pilot phase covers the period before adoption of this strategic plan and includes tools already developed such as the import response module;
- (d) *Network members*: The term “network members” is understood to mean the people and institutions formally exchanging information under the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism.

### B. Concept

31. The Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism is a multi-stakeholder global mechanism established and operated by Joint Convention Services in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention, under the guidance and oversight of the parties, to facilitate the exchange of information on trade in hazardous chemicals. Efforts have been made to integrate the cycles and phases to match those already established in the strategic plan for the Stockholm Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism. This will allow improved efficiency and integration of the mechanism. The three major elements of the Rotterdam Convention component are:

- (a) *Information capital*: The information exchanged by the clearing-house mechanism network members. It consists primarily of information on trade in hazardous chemicals, but may include some additional information as decided by the parties;
- (b) *Human capital*: The global network of information providers, users and institutions working to implement the Rotterdam Convention and formally contributing to and using the clearing-house mechanism;
- (c) *Operational capital*: The set of information tools, products and services and the processes and resources necessary to design, implement, operate and further enhance them.

32. The proposed clearing-house mechanism concept, implementation and management approach is illustrated in figure I. The implementation and management process will proceed in phases, with each phase consisting of two cycles and each cycle consisting of the following three stages:

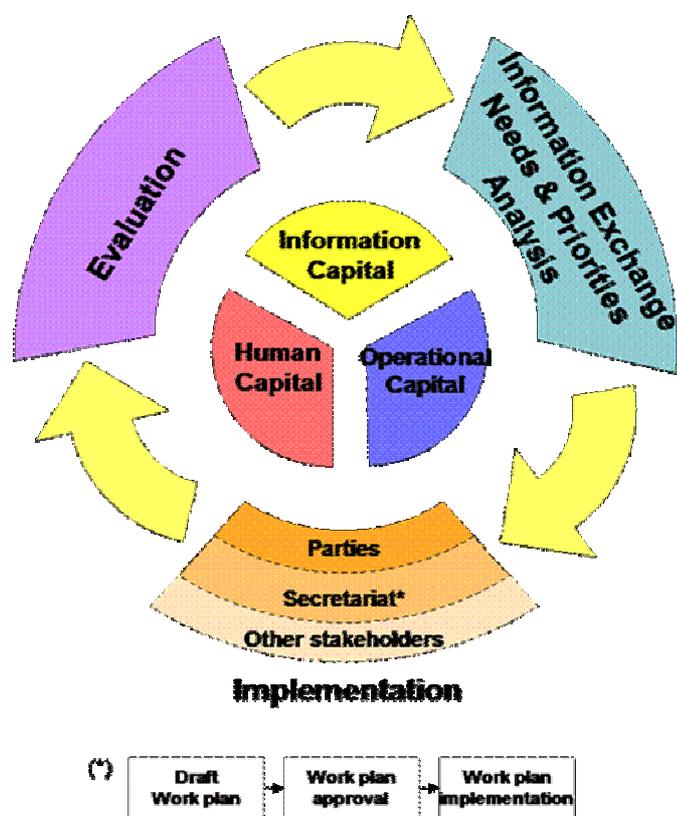
- (a) Analysis of information exchange needs and priorities;
- (b) Implementation;

(c) Evaluation of the success of each cycle.

33. Each cycle is aimed at increasing the usefulness of the clearing-house mechanism for the implementation of the Convention through a steady improvement of its performance.

Figure I

**Clearing-house mechanism concept, implementation and management approach**



## C. Analysis, implementation and evaluation cycle

### 1. Information exchange needs and priority analysis

34. Every four years, at the initiation of a phase, the Secretariat, in consultation with the parties, will analyse information exchange needs and priorities of parties. This analysis will be presented for consideration at a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. The parties will have the opportunity to adjust those needs and priorities after two years, at the end of the first cycle.

### 2. Implementation

35. On the basis of the above-mentioned analysis, the Secretariat will develop a draft workplan and budget for the first cycle and an indicative workplan and budget for the second cycle and present them to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and approval. The indicative workplan and budget will be adjusted at the end of the first cycle on the basis of the results of a midterm evaluation and any new priorities that the parties may have identified.

### 3. Evaluation

36. The evaluation will be conducted through two main mechanisms: a survey-based midterm evaluation, performed during the first cycle, and a major evaluation, performed during the second cycle. The results of those evaluations will be presented to the Conference of the Parties for its consideration.

37. The midterm evaluation is performed with the purpose of reporting progress to the Conference of the Parties and to determine any adjustments that might be required to the workplans and budget for the second cycle.

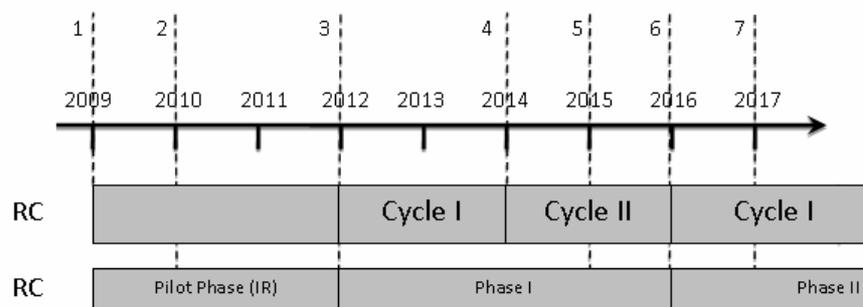
38. Major evaluations of the clearing-house mechanism may be conducted by an external entity and are aimed at taking stock of progress and assessing the need to enhance the clearing-house mechanism further.

#### 4. Time frame

39. Figure II describes the proposed schedule for the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism phases, cycles and evaluations.

Figure II

#### Proposed schedule for the Rotterdam Convention component of the joint clearing-house mechanism phases, cycles and evaluations



#### Proposed Rotterdam Convention components of the joint clearing-house mechanism schedule of phases, cycles and evaluations

1. Pilot phase: Start of the activities of the Rotterdam Convention component with a pilot import response module.
2. Evaluation of pilot phase modules.
3. Harmonization of Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm convention budget cycles; phase I: Submission of Rotterdam Convention component strategic plan to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth meeting.
4. Phase I Cycle I evaluation.
5. Major evaluation. Decision on the need for joint clearing-house mechanism strategic plan.
6. Phase I Cycle II evaluation.
7. End of budget period.

### VIII. Performance indicators

40. Performance indicators relevant to the Rotterdam Convention component strategic goals will be developed and applied in the evaluation of the component.

41. User satisfaction surveys will be targeted specifically at the Rotterdam Convention user community. As a result of platform integration, user satisfaction can be measured through tools established through the joint clearing-house mechanism.

42. Additional possible evaluation criteria are set out in the following table:

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Related goal</i>	<i>Objective</i>
1. Data relating to performance (speed)	1	Measures the stability of the clearing-house infrastructure
2. Number of information sources	2, 3	Demonstrates number of new sources identified and/or partnerships with providers
3. Percentage of information gaps filled	2	Demonstrates progress against information needs for which no source had been identified
4. User perception of value of information to meeting goals of convention	2	A measure both of content and tools used to package and deliver content which together create added value for users
5. Number of times tools accessed; range and diversity of users accessing tools	1, 2	Simple measure of the demand on clearing-house tools. Various related measures could be "frequency of use of different tools", "number of repeat visits by a particular user", along with regional and institutional patterns of tool use
6. Quantity and type of information downloaded	2	Simple measure of success in finding relevant information
7. User perception of information and service quality and ease of use	1, 2, 3	Measure of overall satisfaction derived from implementation of strategic plan
8. Partner involvement	3	Includes number of information providers, number of pilot projects started and number of new partnerships. Demonstrates rate of network growth

43. Where appropriate, evaluation categories will be disaggregated by user group and region to provide regional and sectoral pictures of clearing-house reach.

44. Post-workshop satisfaction surveys have been conducted for the import response module. They were found to be successful and informative and similar surveys will be included as important tools for evaluating the clearing-house mechanism.

## **IX. Funding issues**

45. The Secretariat will continue to pursue funding in conjunction with the secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm conventions, in accordance with the omnibus decision adopted by the three conferences of the parties at their simultaneous extraordinary meetings held in Bali, Indonesia, from 22 to 24 February 2010. By that decision, the Conference of the Parties invited parties and other stakeholders to contribute to the development of the clearing-house mechanism through voluntary means.

46. Where appropriate and as mandated by the parties, the Secretariat will pursue partnerships for developing clearing-house mechanism projects and, wherever possible, engage with partner networks established under the Basel and Stockholm conventions.

47. The Secretariat will engage in joint fund-raising activities described in the workplans for the joint clearing-house mechanism.