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ARTICLE 6 OF THE CONVENTION

Progress report on the development of an Article 6 information network clearing house

Summary

An information network clearing house has been proposed to facilitate the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention, and a proposal, set out in document FCCC/SBI/2003/4, has been developed to describe a possible structure and content of the clearing house. This note describes how the proposal may be further developed and implemented. In particular, it proposes that the United Nations Environment Programme's GRID-Arendal centre act as the coordinating entity and driving force for implementing the clearing house web site, supported and guided by an informal advisory group chaired by the secretariat. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation may wish to consider what further work is necessary to complete this project.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), at its eighteenth session, welcomed the secretariat's proposal for an Article 6 information network clearing house,¹ and invited the secretariat, subject to the availability of supplementary funding, to continue work on the development of the clearing house project, and to report on progress of work at SBI 19.²

B. Scope of the note

2. This document was prepared in consultation with United Nations Environmental Programme's GRID-Arendal centre (UNEP/GRID-Arendal) which expressed its interest in contributing to the overall project. It is based on the proposal contained in document FCCC/SBI/2003/4 (hereinafter referred to as the "initial proposal") and the views expressed by Parties at the eighteenth session of the SBI, and aims to facilitate further discussions by proposing a possible institutional home for the entity coordinating the clearing house, and a detailed work plan for the further development and implementation of the project.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

3. The SBI may wish to consider the information and proposed approach contained in this note, and to provide further guidance to the Parties and the secretariat on this matter.

II. PROPOSED APPROACH

A. Institutional home and distribution of responsibilities

1. Background

4. In view of the specific skills and expertise required for the development of a web-based information network, and the lack of adequate resources to initiate the project, the secretariat sought cooperation with selected intergovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies to further work on the project.

5. In early 2003, UNEP/GRID-Arendal, a centre of excellence that provides environmental information, communications and capacity-building services for knowledge management and assessment, informally offered to contribute to the development of the Article 6 information network clearing house. In September 2003, the secretariat had further consultations with UNEP/GRID-Arendal, and, noting that UNEP/GRID-Arendal had been involved in various climate-change-related activities³ with UNFCCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and UNEP, recognized that it could be an ideal partner to help the secretariat to implement an effective Article 6 knowledge management system.

2. Recommendations

6. It is proposed that UNEP/GRID-Arendal act as overall coordinating entity and driving force for implementation of the clearing house web site, based on the roles and responsibilities outlined in the initial proposal. Its focus of work shall be as the main developer of the web site, including design, technical development, maintenance, and integration with related clearing houses or other web sites.

¹ FCCC/SBI/2003/4

² FCCC/SBI/2003/8, paragraph. 35 (e)

³ These activities include the creation and maintenance of the climate portal in UNEP.Net; vital climate graphics publication and web site; vital climate graphics – Africa publication and web site; creation of web site and CD-ROM for the IPCC Third Assessment Report and Special Report on Climate Change; greenhouse gas emissions graphics for the fifth, sixth and seventh sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.

7. UNEP/GRID-Arendal will also act as the secretariat of the advisory group as defined in the initial proposal. In this respect UNEP/GRID-Arendal will assist in creating financial and progress reporting on the status of the project as required, and in overall outreach and marketing of the final product.
8. The advisory group will comprise members from interested Parties, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that: represent expertise in all six key areas of the Article 6 work programme; cover different geographical areas; and represent the different target groups and contributing nodes. The group will meet once a year in connection with sessions of the subsidiary bodies, and otherwise will conduct its business via electronic means.
9. The UNFCCC secretariat will chair the advisory group, and ensure that policy guidance provided by the SBI is taken into account in the development of the project.

B. Time frame

1. Preparation phase: October–December 2003

10. The informal advisory group will be formed to further guide the implementation of the pilot phase. UNEP/GRID-Arendal will help the secretariat to identify and establish the initial network of information providers that will include at least five nodes by the end of 2003.
11. The following topics will be discussed at the first meeting of the advisory group:
 - (a) Draft project plan and budget for implementation phase
 - (b) Organization/expectations for the main stakeholders of the project
 - (c) Name, logo, design and overall marketing and branding issues
 - (d) Technical platform and explanation of how the content management system, as well as the roles of the nodes in the network, will function
 - (e) Fund raising.

2. Implementation phase: January–June 2004

12. Based on feedback and input from COP 9, UNEP/GRID-Arendal will begin work on the architecture, the content management system, and the design concepts that were agreed upon. The main activity during this period will be the design and implementation of a prototype web site containing key information resources from existing nodes.
13. Once the first version of the clearing house has been built and tested, it will be presented to the advisory group and representatives of interested Parties for comprehensive review at a workshop to be organized in Bonn in June 2004, close to the twentieth session of the SBI. The terms of reference for the workshop will be to test the prototype and further develop the contributions from key partner organizations and Parties, and to launch a feedback process for the ongoing evaluation of the system, based on users' responses.

3. Population and testing phase, and launch: July–December 2004

14. The content nodes will be actively populating their information into the clearing house, assisted by UNEP/GRID-Arendal when needed. At the same time, there will be active testing by the user community to guarantee that the site is operating in a user-friendly way, and to ensure that the right information is flowing from the participating nodes through the network.

15. Upgrades and adjustments to the system will be accomplished throughout this period, as needed, based on feedback from stakeholders.

16. The final site, having been actively tested and regularly updated with content, will be launched in December 2004, at SBI 21.

C. Financial implications

17. As reported in the initial proposal, the financial resources required for the one-year pilot phase (December 2003 to December 2004), including for the workshop to test the prototype, are estimated at US\$ 290,000.

18. Beginning in 2005, after the initial pilot phase, maintenance of the clearing house will require ongoing work by one content management coordinator and one web developer. Each position is estimated at 75 per cent full-time. The total annual budget is initially estimated at US\$ 300,000.

19. Responsibilities of the content management coordinator include:

- (a) Acting as the secretary for the advisory group;
- (b) Working in close cooperation with relevant secretariat staff to ensure that content updating harmonizes with the UNFCCC process;
- (c) Being proactive towards contributing nodes to get updated overviews on activities relating to Article 6 that should be included in the clearing house, and in recruiting new nodes;
- (d) Promoting the clearing house to relevant target groups;
- (e) Together with web developer, being responsible for technical maintenance and development based on inputs from the secretariat, the advisory group, and target users;
- (f) Training relevant secretariat staff in content management and web management.

20. Responsibilities of the web developer include:

- (a) Helping project leader(s) assess the budget implications of new feature requests;
- (b) Implementing new feature requests, once they have been approved by the project leader;
- (c) Refining the application to ensure that it scales well as the number of users increases;
- (d) Providing guidance/assistance to current/new partners (nodes) in content syndication;
- (e) Reviewing feedback from users as it relates to technical development issues;
- (f) Ensuring that the security infrastructure of the clearing house remains consistent with the latest browser standards and protected from the latest security threats.

21. The entire project is to be funded by supplementary sources. Fund raising activities will be undertaken jointly by UNEP/GRID-Arendal and the secretariat.
