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Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Article 6 of the Convention

Options for the development of an Article 6 information network clearing house

Note by the secretariat[*]

Summary

A small-scale model of an Article 6 information network clearing house was presented to Parties at the twentieth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), and served as a basis for further consultations and guidance from Parties. Drawing on this guidance, this note presents a feasibility study for the further development of the clearing house based on a two-phase implementation process. It outlines the features of the two phases, discusses their benefits and limitations, assesses the related costs and requirements and establishes a time frame for their implementation. It also reviews options for the coordination and maintenance of the clearing house. The SBI may wish to consider this document and offer further guidance to the secretariat to move the clearing house project forward.

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[*] This document was submitted late due to the extensive internal and external consultations that had to be undertaken.

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<u>Annexes</u>

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1.   The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI), at its twentieth session, requested the secretariat to continue its work on the development of the small-scale model of the Article 6 information network clearing house and to report to the SBI at its twenty-first session on the progress of work.[1]

B. Background

2.   The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 11/CP.8,[2] adopted the New Delhi five-year work programme on Article 6 of the Convention. To facilitate the implementation of the work programme, the same decision requested the secretariat to continue work on the development of an information network clearing house. The secretariat reported back to the SBI at its eighteenth session with a proposal[3] containing information on the possible structure and content of such a clearing house, and at its nineteenth session with a progress report[4] describing how this proposal could be implemented.

3.   Further work on the clearing house was carried out with the guidance of an interim advisory group of interested Parties, and at the twentieth session of the SBI the secretariat presented a small-scale model that served as a basis for further consultations.

C. Scope of the note

4.   This document was prepared keeping to the guiding principles outlined in the original proposal[3] and taking into account the views of Parties expressed at the twentieth session of the SBI. It presents a comprehensive feasibility study of the clearing house project following a two-phase implementation process, outlining in particular possible technical and managerial options and their estimated financial implications.

D. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

5.   The SBI may wish to consider the options and requirements presented in the document and offer further guidance to the secretariat to move the project forward.

II. Feasibility study of the further development of the clearing house

A. Guiding principles

6.   The Article 6 clearing house could be further developed drawing on the guiding principles presented in the original proposal, and in particular, could benefit from and draw upon the relaunch of the UNFCCC web site <http://unfccc.int>. The web site would provide a template for the Article 6 clearing house, and the content management system (CMS) used for the web site could serve the technical needs of the Article 6 clearing house. The main work in the development of the Article 6 clearing house could focus on identifying, collecting and processing its content, and on database integration and search functions.

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[1] FCCC/SBI/2004/10, paragraph 50.
[2] FCCC/CP/2002/7/Add.1, pages 23–29.
[3] FCCC/SBI/2003/4.
[4] FCCC/SBI/2003/INF.16.

Content management system

A system to facilitate the creation, display and organization of information. Users submit content, such as text and pictures, and the system automatically styles and places the content, and adds it to a growing collection of related content.

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7.   The Article 6 clearing house would also build on the experience of the UNFCCC technology information clearing house (TT:CLEAR) <http://ttclear.unfccc.int>. A TT:CLEAR user survey,[5] and the related conclusions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice,[6] highlighted the critical importance of search functionality, the collection and logical organization of information, and ease of use.

8.   Based on guidance from Parties at the twentieth session of the SBI, the development of the Article 6 clearing house could follow a two-phase implementation process. In the first phase, a prototype clearing house would be developed, at minimum cost, to cater to the primary needs of Parties, in particular the individuals implementing national programmes and initiatives relating to Article 6. This prototype model could be further developed in a second phase to add functionality and meet the needs of a broader user base.

9.   The clearing house would be designed with the intention of maximizing usability by taking into account national circumstances and capacities of users. It would be flexible, simple and intuitive, and make use of existing technical infrastructure.

B. Databases and features

1. Phase I – prototype clearing house

10.   The prototype clearing house (see annex I) would include various indexed textual and relational databases, search features and links to partners (nodes).[7] The content would draw on a collection of exclusive material, i.e. printed material not available elsewhere in electronic format,[8] and be enriched through continuous identification and integration of additional nodes.

11.   The main database would consist of a series of entries assigned to a set of categories comprising the six elements of Article 6 (education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation). However, in the first phase, the focus would be on information relating to education and public awareness, the priority elements identified by the Parties. Data such as the source of information, web-site link, format, date added and keywords, would be made available.

12.   An initial information pool would be established from existing data maintained by the secretariat and partners. This information would be indexed and categorized, but input by both the host organization and partners responsible for this data would be needed to maintain and enhance this information pool.

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[5] FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.8.

[6] FCCC/SBSTA/2004/6, paragraph 81 (d).

[7] Clearing house partners (Parties, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in the implementation of Article 6) which will contribute their relevant expertise and information.

[8] The school manual on climate change made available by Tunisia to the UNFCCC secretariat is one example of this exclusive material.

13.   Other databases could include:

(a)   A calendar of events relating to Article 6, which would present all relevant information and link to relevant events in other calendars

(b)   A database of relevant organizations

(c)   A database of experts in the field of Article 6.

14.   It is critically important that users are able to find useful, relevant information. Therefore, from the outset, the clearing house should have a combination of search functions, allowing full text, indexed and meta searches.

Database search features available in phase I

Full text search – Finds all documents containing keyword or combination of keywords

Indexed search – Finds only documents containing keywords specifically assigned to the document

Meta search – Initiates keyword searches in several databases at once

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15.   English would be the main communication language of the clearing house, including the search interface and keyword list. However, depending on its source, some information accessible through the clearing house would also be available in other languages.

2. Phase II – full-scale clearing house

16.   Building on the initial phase, the second phase would make provision for a substantial increase in functionality, as well as quantity and quality of information, which in turn may broaden the target user base. The full-scale clearing house could also consider further options, such as the provision of subsites for partners with less sophisticated Internet resources.

17.   Phase II could enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the search function by ranking the results according to their relevance and quality. It would draw on statistical information and other user-generated content to increase the accuracy and quality of the search results.

18.   In the this phase, the tracking and display of statistics about document access (download and hits) and content review by users would help inexperienced users find more relevant information based on the previous users' expertise. An example of the latter can be found at <http://www.amazon.com>, where a product is not only described by the seller but also by previous buyers. Such a feature could substantially increase the usability and uniqueness of the clearing house.

Ranked search

A ranked search lists the best results first – most relevant, authoritative, requested, etc. – based on specified criteria.

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19.   Additional features could enhance the functionality and interactivity of the clearing house in phase II. For example:

(a)   Databases would cover the remaining four elements of Article 6 (training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation)

(b)   Partners would provide input and maintain their information directly through the content management system

(c)   Registered users would be granted the opportunity to contribute content directly to the clearing house. These contributions would be monitored by the host organization to ensure relevancy and accuracy

(d)   An electronic newsletter would inform users about the latest developments and increase their identification with the clearing house. Updates in the news section of the web site, calendar, and some newly added content could be generated automatically, but special articles and features such as frequently asked questions will need to be processed by the host organization

(e)   French and Spanish search interfaces and keyword lists would be added

(f)   Advanced training based on online e-learning methods would be proposed as a joint activity between the host organization and an e-learning provider. This platform could provide teaching, testing and a forum for the successful implementation of online training courses.

20.   Other features that might be considered in phase II include:

(a)   French and Spanish portals. Although having additional languages in the clearing house would increase its usefulness, the implementation and running costs would be high

(b)   Subsites that could enable Parties to host an Article 6 web site within the clearing house. Parties would be provided with template pages that would conform to the structure of the main site, and these pages would be hosted on the main server of the clearing house

(c)   Live discussions/forums that could feature prominent decision makers in the climate change process

(d)   Newsgroups/forums to discuss relevant topics among users.

C. Time frame for implementation

21.   The time frame for implementation depends on the provision of financial resources, and would be influenced by the choice of host organization and guidance received from the Parties following phase I.

III. Issues for consideration in the selection of the host organization of the clearing house

22.   Three options were considered for hosting and maintenance: the UNFCCC secretariat, a partner organization, or a commercial company. A comparative analysis (table 1) of these three options was undertaken and considered the following parameters:

(a)   Prompt start-up of the project; Assuming timely funding, this will depend mostly on administrative prerequisites (e.g. request for proposal, selection process, memorandum of understanding), which might be lengthy, especially if subcontracting is required

(b)   Synergy with existing systems (e.g. the UNFCCC web site, TT:CLEAR and the Convention on Biological Diversity Clearing-House Mechanism) and existing

information technology infrastructure (e.g. connection to the Internet, servers, search engine licenses) that will foster the development process and reduce maintenance costs

(c)   Level of expertise on climate change issues in general and activities relating to the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention in particular, that will impact on the ability to guide users and engage contributing partners

(d)   Links to the climate change negotiation process, that will enhance the ability to respond to policy guidance by Parties

(e)   Ability to promote the use of the clearing house (and handle the marketing and branding issues) to reach a broader audience.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of parameters

Parameters	UNFCCC secretariat	Other node	Commercial company
Prompt start-up of the project	+	-	-
Synergy with existing systems and infrastructures	+ +	+	+
Level of expertise	+	+ +	+
Links to the negotiation process	+ +	+	-
Promotion of the clearing house	+	+ +	+ +

23.   In light of this analysis, the UNFCCC secretariat appears to be the most appropriate entity for hosting the clearing house, particularly if Parties wish to maintain a maximum level of control over the development and maintenance of the project.

24.   The overall costs associated with the development and maintenance of the clearing house are a constant parameter irrespective of the choice of the host organization. The budget presented in chapter IV would ultimately have to be covered by the Parties, either assigned directly to the secretariat or other partner, or paid to a commercial contractor.

IV. Costs and requirements

A. Issues for consideration

25.   The budget was established based on a four-year plan divided equally between phases I and II. Development and maintenance costs for the two phases include information technology, software and human resources.

26.   The human resources costs are based on United Nations standards and include the salary of a regular staff member in the host organization to identify, collect and process clearing house content and undertake networking and outreach activities. Money is also allocated for consultancy fees for additional programming and technical support.

27.   Development costs would be higher in phase I due to the introduction of most of the supporting infrastructure for the clearing house. Maintenance costs would be higher in phase II as the additional features in this phase require more human resources.

28.　　Optional features that might be considered in phase II (see paragraph 20) are not budgeted in the present document.

B. Budget

29.　　Table 2 presents an estimated budget covering the first four years of development and maintenance of the two phases.

Table 2. Estimated annual costs of developing and maintaining the proposed Article 6 information network clearing house
(United States dollars)

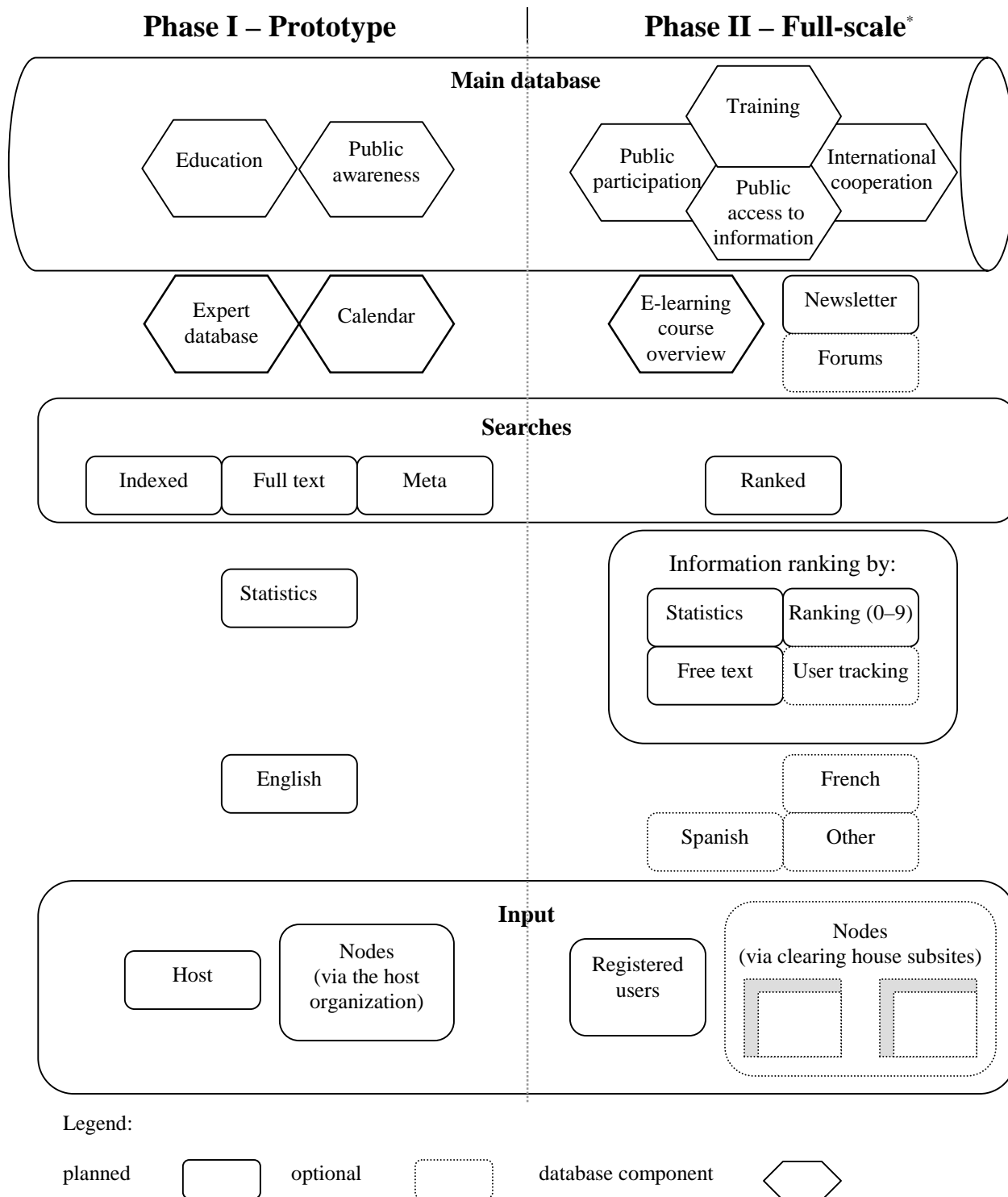|	Phase I: Prototype (2 years)		Phase II: Full-scale (2 years)	
	Development	Maintenance	Development	Maintenance
IT and software	10 000	10 000	5 000	15 000
Staff	90 000	90 000	90 000	90 000
Consultancy	65 000	15 000	45 000	30 000
Total	165 000	115 000	140 000	135 000

V. Conclusion

30.　　The two-phase implementation process provides some flexibility by separating the development of the clearing house into manageable and economical components. It also promotes a prompt start of the project with its initial phase delivering a basic, user-friendly system to access available information on education and public awareness activities.

31.　　In providing further guidance to the secretariat, Parties may wish to consider the following:

(a)　　The start-up of the project is dependent on the availability of the entire phase-I funding requirements

(b)　　The UNFCCC secretariat could be selected as the host organization of the clearing house for the prototype clearing house

(c)　　An evaluation of the efficiency of the prototype clearing house should be undertaken to determine future steps in the development of the full-scale clearing house. The specification and role of the host organization, and the relative value of the integration of optional features, could also be revised in this evaluation.

Annex I

Features and databases of the Article 6 clearing house in phases I and II

Phase I – Prototype | **Phase II – Full-scale**[*]

Main database

Education
Public awareness

Training
Public participation
Public access to information
International cooperation

Expert database
Calendar

E-learning course overview
Newsletter
Forums

Searches

Indexed | Full text | Meta

Ranked

Statistics

Information ranking by:
Statistics | Ranking (0–9)
Free text | User tracking

English

French
Spanish | Other

Input

Host
Nodes (via the host organization)

Registered users
Nodes (via clearing house subsites)

Legend:

planned ☐ optional ⬚ database component ⬡

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[*] Phase II would include all of the features developed in Phase I, plus the additional ones shown here.

Annex II

Time frame for implementation

	Phase I: Prototype		Phase II: Full-scale	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Focus / target group				
Parties / practionners	▬▬▬			
Nodes	▬▬▬			
Registered users		▬▬	▬▬	
Public				▬▬▬
Technical infrastructure				
Server purchase	▪			
Bandwith purchase	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬			
Server upgrade			▪	
Bandwith enlargement			▬▬▬▬▬▬	
Features				
Indexed search	▬▬▬			
Meta search	▬▬			
Ranked search		▬▬	▬▬	
Ranking by users			▬▬▬	
Newsletter			▬▬	
Subsites				• • • • • •
Live discussions				• • • • • •
Newsgroup / threaded discussion				• • • • • •
Languages				
English	▬▬▬			
French				• • • • • •
Spanish				• • • • • •
Other				• • • • • •
Interfaces for search and ranking		▬▬	▬▬	
Indexing and keywords		▬▬	▬▬	
Databases				
Education	▬▬▬▬▬▬			
Public awareness	▬▬▬▬▬▬			
International cooperation		▬▬▬	▬▬	
Training		▬▬▬	▬▬	
Elearning		▬▬▬		
Public access to information		▬▬▬	▬▬	
Public participation		▬▬▬		
Links	▬▬▬			
Best practices	▬▬▬	▬▬	▬▬	
Expert database	▬▬			
Relevant organizations	▬▬▬			
Users	▬▬	▬▬	▬	
Calendar	▬▬▬			
National partner nodes	▬▬▬			
Evaluation		Evaluation		

Legend:
Primary focus ▬▬▬
Secondary focus ▬▬▬
Optional • • • • • •

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