



UNITED  
NATIONS



Framework Convention  
on Climate Change

Distr.  
GENERAL

FCCC/SBI/2003/4  
20 March 2003

Original: ENGLISH

---

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Eighteenth session

Bonn, 4–13 June 2003

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**ARTICLE 6 OF THE CONVENTION**

**Proposal for an information network clearing house**

**Note by the secretariat**

**Summary**

This note contains information on the proposed structure and content of an information network clearing house to facilitate the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention. It also contains a proposal for the development and implementation of the project, including roles and responsibilities of the various actors in the short and long term, the development of a prototype, and estimates of resource requirements.

## CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1 – 4	3
A. Mandate.....	1 – 2	3
B. Scope of the note.....	3	3
C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation..	4	3
II. THE CLEARING HOUSE CONCEPT.....	5 – 6	3
III. THE UNFCCC INFORMATION NETWORK CLEARING HOUSE FOR ARTICLE 6 .....	7 – 37	4
A. Objectives and scope.....	7 – 11	4
B. Guiding principles.....	12 – 17	5
C. Partners and clients .....	18 – 22	5
D. Strategic approach.....	23 – 30	6
E. Outline of the clearing house project .....	31	7
F. Technical specifications .....	32 – 37	7
IV. PROPOSAL.....	38 – 52	9
A. Roles and responsibilities .....	38 – 44	9
B. Phased implementation and milestones .....	45 – 49	9
C. Financial implications.....	50 – 52	10

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 11/CP.8, adopted the New Delhi work programme on Article 6 of the Convention,<sup>1</sup> which mandates the secretariat to undertake further work on the structure and content of an information network clearing house that could, inter alia:

(a) Facilitate the implementation of the work programme;

(b) Facilitate information exchange and cooperation between Parties and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations working on Article 6 issues.

2. The secretariat was requested to prepare a proposal that would build on the existing technology information system (TT:CLEAR<sup>2</sup>), and identify institutions that could host and provide regular support for such a clearing house.

### B. Scope of the note

3. This document aims to facilitate further discussions on this matter during the eighteenth session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) by providing a definition of a clearing house concept and proposing a strategy for the development and implementation of an information network clearing house in the context of Article 6 of the Convention.

### C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Implementation

4. The SBI is invited to consider the information and proposal contained in this note, and to provide further guidance to the Parties and the secretariat on this matter.

## II. THE CLEARING HOUSE CONCEPT

5. There are several possible models of a clearing house. Examples of existing mechanisms include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) clearing houses, the World Bank web portal GDnet, and the secretariat TT:CLEAR metasite. They are built around common principles that can be generally defined as follows:

(a) A clearing house is a mechanism that brings together pre-existing information networks, and filters data based on established criteria, serving as an organizing tool to provide a more coherent and coordinated approach for accessing, synthesizing and visualizing thematic information. It is a collective pool of validated and quality assured data, information, assessments, reports and expertise. The consolidation of the data broadens the client access to information, and the filtering provides the client with tailored information according to needs.

(b) As a result, the amount and relevance of the information retrieved is independent of the expertise in managing information and technology, which may vary from country to country, as well as between clients. The clearing house ensures that all clients have access to the information they need for their work or understanding on specific issues.

---

<sup>1</sup> FCCC/CP/2002/7/Add.1.

<sup>2</sup> FCCC/TP/2001/2.

(c) The mechanism relies on broad participation by existing networks that become nodes within the clearing house and contribute information specific to their area of work and expertise. The clearing house seeks to engage any organization that brings together seekers and providers of goods, services and information on specific issues.

(d) The originating nodes retain ownership and full control over their information. This is the decentralized characteristic of a clearing house. To reduce any possible duplication of efforts of the contributing nodes, the clearing house requires one node to undertake coordination and/or leadership. This coordination also ensures responsiveness to the changing needs of the clients by implementing new tools and technological responses in a proactive manner.

(e) Clients are able to access all information from, and provide feedback to, any node in the clearing house. In order to ensure easy entrance to the clearing house, the clients need an intuitive uniform interface. This interface may also identify the needs and determine the profile of each client, so that the clearing house may disseminate tailored information in a proactive manner.

6. Many clearing house initiatives have been developed recently to address problems such as information overload and the digital divide between developing and developed countries in terms of their capacities to develop and use information and communications technologies (ICT).

### **III. THE UNFCCC INFORMATION NETWORK CLEARING HOUSE FOR ARTICLE 6**

#### **A. Objectives and scope**

7. The proposal for a UNFCCC information network clearing house to be set up to facilitate implementation of Article 6 of the Convention (hereinafter called the clearing house) will be developed bearing in mind these various functions and principles, and placing special emphasis on enhancing partnerships and facilitating the networking activities of governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that support the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention and of its work programme.

8. The clearing house will focus on **the six key areas** of the Article 6 work programme – education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information on climate change issues, and international cooperation on these activities – by providing **increased access** to, and availability of, relevant and reliable information on these key areas for a growing audience, from policy makers to the public.

9. From an educational point of view, the clearing house will pay particular attention to information useful to develop attitudes and other forms of behaviour considered to have value for meeting the objectives of the Convention and its Protocol.

10. By providing a mechanism to collect and disseminate existing materials, services and tools, the clearing house will facilitate information exchange between Parties and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In particular, the clearing house will feature a collection of copyright-free texts and images available for re-use. It will also assist clients to identify needs and gaps as well as opportunities, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of partnership and reducing duplication of efforts. The clearing house will work towards open access to integrated national reporting covering the key areas of activity.

11. The clearing house will, in addition, be **a tool to broaden public access to information**, improve understanding on climate change issues, promote the exchange of information, and enhance international cooperation. It will pay special attention to public awareness approaches, i.e. it will ensure that different forms of public opinion, perception or awareness by society can be taken into account.

## **B. Guiding principles**

12. The clearing house will benefit from and draw upon the current revamping of the UNFCCC secretariat web site (<http://unfccc.int>) to improve access to information on-line with enhanced content management technologies, and will build on the experience and technology of TT:CLEAR.
13. The clearing house will operate as a decentralized, open and transparent, distributed and dynamic **grid of mutually supportive networks**. It will provide **integrated access** to the information sources, but responsibility for the information will remain with its source.
14. The clearing house will be **user-friendly** to facilitate easy searching and retrieving of information, and to enable and encourage end-users to share practical experiences, ideas and lessons. Wherever possible, the information will be available in **several languages**.
15. The clearing house will be **flexible and scalable** so as to accommodate both its own horizontal and vertical growth, and the growing diversity and needs of the clients. The horizontal growth relates to the broadening of the network of contributing nodes, whereas vertical growth pertains to additional categories of information in a broader context of climate change and sustainable development.
16. While making use of existing initiatives aimed at addressing the digital divide and national circumstances and capacities, the clearing house will be complemented and supported by alternatives to the web-based system, such as the dissemination of information on CD-ROM.
17. The clearing house will be consistent with, and support, the principles set out in other international and regional agreements on public access to information and public participation in environmental matters, such as principle 10 of Agenda 21, the Aarhus Convention (Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), and the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation.

## **C. Partners and clients**

18. The clearing house partners (nodes) which will contribute their relevant expertise and information will include Parties, United Nations agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in the implementation of Article 6.
19. Several Parties have expressed a strong interest in this issue at special events and Article 6 workshops over the past few years.
20. Some organizations and networks, in response to the call for cooperation and initiatives to support the implementation of the Article 6 work programme, have already offered to contribute. Formal statements were made during the eighth session of the COP from the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Conservation Union, and the Regional and International Networking Group alliance. Other organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Earth Council, subsequently expressed their intention to cooperate, and more may follow.
21. These organizations, as well as interested Parties, could be the primary partners to be engaged in supporting the development and implementation of the clearing house.
22. In line with its objectives, the clearing house is primarily targeted to support those involved in the implementation or facilitation of activities under Article 6 of the Convention, and in particular:

(a) **Parties**, specifically the negotiators, focal points and experts responsible for developing and supporting the implementation of national strategies within the scope of the Article 6 work programme. The clearing house will serve them by promoting and supporting cost-effective decision-making, international cooperation and sharing of related tools, training, education, information and expertise.

(b) **Partner organizations** which are providing, or intend to provide, a programmatic response to the Article 6 work programme. These organizations may or may not directly contribute to the clearing house, but the clearing house will nevertheless serve them all by sharing expertise and initiatives, identifying, developing and promoting opportunities and areas for cooperation, enhancing synergies, and reducing duplication.

(c) **Key actors** who participate in the policy debate, commenting on it, influencing it, and disseminating messages to a wider audience (e.g. business, media, advisory groups), thus facilitating their participation in the negotiation process. The clearing house will serve them by providing streamlined, up-to-date information on the process, environmental data, legal frameworks, etc, at national, regional and international levels. It will also help promote concepts and messages on climate change which, although they might be specific to certain geographic or cultural situations, are important to describe the global relevance or the complexity of climate change.

#### **D. Strategic approach**

23. The strategic approach for the development and implementation of the clearing house is organized around three elements:

- (a) Effective networking and potential for growth
- (b) Information exchange and cooperation
- (c) Promotion and awareness.

##### *Effective networking and potential for growth*

24. Because of the large scope of activities relating to Article 6, and the broader context of sustainable development to which Article 6 can apply, many organizations can contribute to providing a wide range of information and to responding to the needs of their clients, through the development of their own information systems.

25. The clearing house will not pretend to have all information on climate change issues currently available worldwide. Instead, it will be constructed around information portals for the six key areas of the Article 6 work programme (see paragraph 8), and its development will be based on a pro- and interactive approach to identifying and meeting the needs of its wide range of clients. Quality, neutrality, and relevance will be components of the selection criteria in order to tailor the information to the needs of clients.

26. The operation of the clearing house will foster the establishment and development of necessary information sources where they do not exist, and further determine priorities for growth and improvement in information content.

27. Effective networking incorporates the potential to extend to other sectors, and to help consolidate and influence the development of an emerging global information infrastructure covering other areas relating to climate change.

*Information exchange and cooperation*

28. The development of information systems as mentioned in paragraph 24 above tends to happen independently in each of the organizations, and information on cross-cutting issues cannot always be managed and accessed in a streamlined and coherent manner.

29. The clearing house will concentrate on facilitating and promoting the exchange of information, knowledge, experience and best practices. It will establish a common home for partnerships and encourage stakeholders to cooperate by pooling resources and sharing work.

*Promotion and awareness*

30. By facilitating the searching for and retrieval of information through an easily identifiable and user-friendly interface, the clearing house will serve as a tool to promote and encourage education, training, public participation and access to information, and to raise awareness and improve understanding on climate change issues.

**E. Outline of the clearing house project**

31. Table 1 is a tentative outline of the architecture of the clearing house interface – essentially a site map for the web site. Derived from the proposed strategic approach, this outline is expected to evolve based on further consultations with, and feedback from, partners and stakeholders.

32. The structure comprises:

(a) an internet information system grouped in modules and serving as the main gateway to enhance the information networks in support of Article 6 of the Convention

(b) a set of databases providing a consistent set of information, e.g. roster of experts, training courses, educational programmes and materials, action showcase, etc.

(c) some dissemination activities (e.g. automatic updates).

**F. Technical specifications**

33. The clearing house will be implemented as a specialized web site and as CD-ROMs, and will provide a means of accessing information through a database-driven system.

34. At a later stage, the system could use controlled vocabularies and keywords, based on multilingual international thesauri wherever possible, to facilitate searching and retrieval of information in the official United Nations languages.

35. Based on the identification and development of common information formats and search mechanisms, the system will allow different nodes to submit information, mostly through their own databases, and will ensure compatibility through standardization and interoperability.

36. The system will also ensure that site information is easy to download for those without access to the latest technology, e.g. by making the site available in text-only format, using “ALT tags” to represent graphics, and creating an option to send text to e-mail.

37. The formulation of detailed technical specifications will draw upon the experience of the TT:CLEAR technology. It will be based on an analysis of the main characteristics of the proposed databases, and will be delineated once this proposal has been reviewed and further guidance has been provided by the Parties.

**Table 1. Tentative outline for an information network clearing house**

<b>General information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- About climate change (scientific, technical and policy information)<sup>a</sup></li> <li>- Response to climate change (the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol, national policies and measures )</li> <li>- Article 6 of the Convention (issues modules, work programme)</li> <li>- Article 6 information network clearing house (background, partners)</li> </ul>
<b>Network and resources</b>	
- <i>Clearing house partners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Associated programmes, research and events</li> <li>- National focal points for Article 6 activities</li> <li>- National strategies, support measures, evaluation programmes</li> </ul>
- <i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National climate change curricula, educational programmes, schools' activities</li> <li>- International exchange programmes and networks</li> <li>- Teaching and learning materials</li> <li>- Roster of experts</li> </ul>
- <i>Training</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training courses, workshops and materials</li> <li>- Fellowship programmes</li> <li>- Grants and foundations</li> <li>- Roster of experts</li> </ul>
- <i>Public awareness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calendar of national and international events</li> <li>- Action showcase<sup>b</sup></li> <li>- Emissions calculators</li> <li>- Roster of communication experts</li> </ul>
- <i>Public access to information and public participation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Laws and regulations</li> <li>- Web sites and relevant links</li> <li>- Information and resource centers</li> </ul>
- <i>Cooperation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barriers and opportunities (needs assessment and capacity-building)</li> <li>- Action showcase</li> <li>- Support programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Forum<sup>c</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequently asked questions</li> <li>- Provide your comments (questions and answers, suggestions)</li> <li>- Follow me (help match initiative partners)</li> </ul>
<b>News and more</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Press room (streamlined material, briefing papers, press releases, videos)</li> <li>- Kids room (educational material, fun corner)</li> <li>- Updates (newsletter, what's new)</li> </ul>
<p><sup>a</sup> Scientific information could include IPCC findings, sources of greenhouse gas emissions and related inventories and graphics. Technical information could relate to studies, reports and findings by governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Policy information would mostly link to the Convention process, as available on the UNFCCC official web site.</p>	
<p><sup>b</sup> Action showcase would present good practices and lessons learnt on activities relating to Article 6 to form a source of practical information and analyses of experiences.</p>	
<p><sup>c</sup> The forum would serve to exchange information, ideas and experiences, ask questions and provide feedback, exposing yet untapped information sources. It would enable users to comment interactively on proposals, programmes and activities in an open and transparent manner. In practice, the forum could incorporate a system for registering subscribers; a facility to enable subscribers to post comments on a bulletin board; a system for tracking the chain of comments; and a chat feature that can facilitate real-time conferencing among subscribers.</p>	



## IV. PROPOSAL

### A. Roles and responsibilities

38. As outlined in paragraph 18 above, the **contributing nodes** to the development and implementation of the clearing house are the Parties and interested non-governmental organizations, as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies, including the climate change secretariat.
39. It is expected that additional nodes will join the clearing house network as it evolves. In the short term, the secretariat will identify and secure partnership of the initial contributing nodes (see section B below).
40. One node will assume the development and **coordinating** role, and will be supported in this effort by an **informal advisory group**. It is proposed that the project be primarily conducted under the leadership of the climate change secretariat. In the longer term, the coordinating role may be taken over by another organization (see section B below).
41. **Each node** will retain ownership and full control over its contribution and will be responsible for implementing its allocated work tasks. The nodes might choose to designate their own focal point to support them in this process. In particular, the nodes will contribute relevant information based on established criteria; develop new materials as appropriate; ensure the quality, timeliness, maintenance and accessibility of the information and products fed into the clearing house; and provide feedback, as appropriate.
42. The **coordinating node**, in addition to implementing its own work tasks, will manage the supporting infrastructure and electronic tools; initiate and manage partnerships with contributing nodes; and ensure coherency of contributions and coordinate the exchange of information requested and received from the groups.
43. The coordinating node will also respond to new and changing needs by implementing new tools and technological responses in a proactive manner, and tracking information needs and gaps, priorities, lessons learned and best practices. It will further promote the use of the clearing house and report on progress and developments.
44. The **informal advisory group** will support the coordinating node, and, in particular, will assist in developing the main lines of action; identifying information gaps; prioritizing tasks and establishing the relevancy criteria to be used in the filtering function of the clearing house; and evaluating the process.

### B. Phased implementation and milestones

45. The secretariat proposes to conduct a **pilot phase** during the year between SBI 18 and SBI 20. During this pilot phase work will focus on guiding and evaluating progress on development, as well as creating partnerships, and establishing and updating the various databases.
46. The secretariat will organize the informal advisory group, consisting of representatives of some of the initial nodes, to further guide the implementation of this pilot phase. The informal advisory group will communicate mainly through electronic means, and will also take advantage of other related events to meet.

47. Drawing upon appropriate technical expertise, the activities under the pilot phase will be established under the leadership of the secretariat and with the support and collaboration of the informal advisory group.

48. The pilot phase will comprise the following elements and time frames:

(a) Identifying and establishing an **initial network** of mutually supportive networks to include at least **five nodes** (by **end 2003** (COP 9));

(b) Designing and implementing a **prototype** that would include key information resources and the partnership of the identified nodes, with the aim of building experience, imparting technical guidance and providing feedback for the further development of the clearing house (by **first quarter of 2004**);

(c) **Identifying options** for the institutional home of the coordinating node, as well as the financial implications of the further development and maintenance of the clearing house (by **first quarter of 2004**);

(d) Organizing a **workshop** to test the prototype and further develop the contributions from key partner organizations and Parties, and to launch a feedback process for the on-going evaluation of the system, based on users' response. The workshop should take place **before SBI 20** so that the prototype can be finalized and presented at that session.

49. The secretariat will prepare a report for consideration at SBI 20 and presenting:

(a) An assessment of the effectiveness and functionality of the prototype on the basis of users' feedback and various indicators ( internet usage statistics, efficient search facilities, standard key words, level of interoperability between databases, quality and relevance of information, etc);

(b) Recommendations for the long-term financial implications;

(c) Options for the institutional home for the coordinating node of the clearing house.

### **C. Financial implications**

50. The financial resources required for the one-year pilot phase are estimated at US\$ 290,000 to cover the salaries of a Programme Officer and of an Information Assistant, the costs of a consultant and of information technology support, and the organization of one workshop.

51. An estimate of the longer term financial implications will be presented in the report of the secretariat to be considered by SBI 20.

52. The entire project is to be funded from supplementary resources.

-----