

UNEP Workshop on Knowledge Management and MEAs

22-24 September 2009, Chexbres, Switzerland

Representatives from seven UNEP MEAs (CBD, CITES, CMS and AEWAs, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Basel) as well as other MEAs (ITPGR-FA, Ramsar, WHC) together with representatives from bodies related to processes that seek to present information derived from MEAs, such as UNEP-WCMC with InforMEA, IUCN and FAO with ECOLEX, and IUCN as a contributor to TEMATEA, as well as UNEP (DELC and DCPI) and UNON, met from 22 to 24 September 2009, in Chexbres, Switzerland, for a UNEP Workshop on Knowledge Management (KM) and MEAs to implement a Knowledge Management strategy amongst and between a broad range of MEAs.

Bradnee Chambers (UNEP), Co-Chair, opened the meeting by highlighting the need for greater coherence in the development of international environmental law. Marcos Silva, the meeting's other Co-chair, provided a comprehensive review of knowledge management within the context of the United Nations and UNEP. He also described past efforts by the MEAs to develop a knowledge management strategy through the use of new information and communication technologies.

The Co-Chairs concluded by emphasizing that the objective of the meeting was to create an enabling environment for capturing, managing and sharing the MEAs' knowledge assets. This would be made possible by enhancing the capacity of MEAs to harmonize their information resources and to develop knowledge tools to assist Parties in making more coherent and mutually beneficial decisions.

In the ensuing discussion, participants agreed that there exists an urgent need to identify the steps required to enhance technical capacity at the Secretariat level to reach agreement on standards related to information exchange and sharing. These standards would facilitate interoperability of disparate information systems and offer new possibilities for the timely development of sustainable knowledge tools needed by Parties, a CoP decisions knowledge base being a case in point.

Following these introductory remarks, representatives from the MEAs presented current KM initiatives, particularly with regard to making

interoperable disparate systems of information. Participants representing existing information tools (Ecolex, InforMEA, TEMATEA) then discussed their possible contributions to the development of a KM strategy.

DELIC presented its current efforts to develop an “Analytical Index” for the topic of International Environmental Law. This index would seek to complement existing tools and WebPages and link them together through a guide based on environmental law terminology.

There was a great sense of urgency and enthusiasm amongst the participants, who brought different backgrounds to the table but all devoted to safeguarding the environment. Throughout the meeting, the agenda was adjusted so as to allow for additional contributions from different participants, most notably a presentation on cutting edge Web 2.0 technologies that may facilitate greatly the development of new knowledge tools. Of special relevance to the meeting were the presentations by the chemical conventions on their synergies processes, which led to the development of a more harmonized approach to data sharing and exchange.

On the afternoon of the second day, participants broke out into working groups. These working groups made a number of recommendations that were further discussed during the third day of the meeting. Recommendations included a plan to move the idea of KM forward through a proof of concept project on interoperability of information such as calendars, focal points and contacts, strategic documents and COP decisions. An MEA KM long term strategy, initially based on this proof of concept note, would be developed in parallel to the project. Finally, participants agreed on a steering mechanism to guide this process. These recommendations will be presented to the executive secretaries of MEAs for consideration.