

Oral report of the Co-Chairs of the BBNJ Preparatory Commission

Informal Working Group II – Issues pertaining to the operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism

Modalities for the operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism

Delivered on 25 April 2025

Informal Working Group II considered the issue of “Modalities for the operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism” on 22, 23 and 24 April. Discussions were guided by a Note prepared by the Secretariat on this matter (A/AC.296/2025/6) and structured around the guiding questions circulated on 25 March.

The central role of the Clearing-House Mechanism in supporting the implementation of the Agreement and ensuring transparency was underscored. There was broad agreement that the Mechanism should be accessible, user-friendly, multilingual and interoperable, with a range of considerations highlighted in relation to the type, architecture and functionalities of the platform.

The importance of giving full recognition to the special requirements of developing States Parties and the special circumstances of small island developing States (SIDS) was underscored, with calls for sustained provision of capacity-building on the use of the Mechanism and a dedicated section of the Mechanism for SIDS. The need for the Mechanism to be appropriately financed, supported by adequate human resources and expertise, and cost-effective, was also emphasized.

Delegations further outlined various considerations relating to the specific functions of the Mechanism, including in relation to its role as a centralized platform for accessing, providing and disseminating information on area-based management tools, including marine protected areas, and environmental impact assessments, the process for generating the “BBNJ” standardized batch identifier, modalities to facilitate the matching of capacity-building needs with the support available and with providers for the transfer of marine technology, terms of cooperation with relevant instruments, frameworks and bodies, as well as its role in facilitating international cooperation and collaboration and facilitating access to traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. The role of the Mechanism in supporting the work of the subsidiary bodies was also highlighted.

Various views were expressed on the elements requiring in-depth technical analysis, with support expressed for requesting the Secretariat to prepare a flow chart outlining the functions of the Mechanism and its linkages with other institutional arrangements established under the Agreement, as well as with relevant instruments, frameworks and bodies.

With regard to the process for operationalizing the Mechanism, there seemed to be general agreement on adopting an incremental and phased approach, including a pilot or interim phase, with support expressed for developing a roadmap on the way forward. However, views diverged on which functions and functionalities should be prioritized and on the possible timelines. Support was expressed for the Mechanism to be built with consideration of existing platforms and draw on their experiences and lessons learned.

With regard to how the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) could best progress its work on this matter, given its technical nature and the expertise required, there was convergence towards establishing a group that would involve experts and could work intersessionally. However, views diverged on the possible size and composition of such a group, as well as on the scope and modalities of its work. In response to discussions on the competence of the PrepCom to establish such a group, we recalled that, at its organizational meeting, the PrepCom had decided that informal working groups or other working methods, including possible intersessional work, might be established by the Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Bureau, to progress the work of the PrepCom. It was further noted that any financial implications associated with the work of such a group could be supported through voluntary contributions.

On the way forward, it was agreed that draft terms of reference for a group involving experts will be prepared by the Co-Chairs, taking into account the input provided during PrepCom I. The draft terms of reference will be considered intersessionally, with a view to their approval at PrepCom II and to the group commencing its work during the intersessional period between PrepCom II and PrepCom III. In this regard, the Co-Chairs invited delegations wishing to further inform the preparation of the draft terms of reference by providing written input to do so by sending such input by 2 May. It was also agreed that a flow chart outlining the functions of the Mechanism and its possible linkages with other institutional arrangements established under the Agreement will be prepared by the Secretariat prior to PrepCom II.