EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Background

UNEP has supported the MEA Information and Knowledge Management (MEA-IKM) Initiative since 2010. This initiative currently includes 55 global and regional legally binding instruments from 20 Secretariats that are hosted by four UN organizations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is also open to other partners and observers who share and an interest in a coherent approach to information exchange and knowledge management in the field of environment.

Since 2013 the Initiative received financial support from the European Union, through the Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (ENRTP) Process, for the enhancement and further development of its flagship product, InforMEA, and related knowledge tools. Results of this support include a search facility into COP decisions, national reports and implementation plans; an e-learning portal that offers 21 introductory courses in different languages and has over 2000 registered users from 160 countries; an interoperable MEA information exchange mechanism to facilitate information exchange among MEAs; and the publication of a common Thesaurus on environmental law and conventions (LEO). Over the past year the Initiative has worked on the development of a project document to cover another three-year period - InforMEA Phase II – which the EU had expressed interest in supporting through the GPGC (Global Public Goods and Challenges Thematic Programme) project.

The purpose of the meeting was to obtain participants’ endorsement of the draft InforMEA Phase II project document developed during the inter-sessional period with contributions by the working group, and the identification of next steps to be taken in the context of its different components (I-IV) and in the context of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, areas of common mandates and interests within clusters on which MEAs wish to collaborate – as foreseen through project component V of InforMEA Phase II project - were to be identified.

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3. [https://www.informea.org/en/about/api](https://www.informea.org/en/about/api)
I. **Meeting Summary**

The opening session of the meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, for UNEP and Ms. Haruko Okusu on behalf of Mr. John E. Scanlon, Secretary General of CITES. It was also addressed by Mr. Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS, and by Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the joint Secretariat of the BRS Conventions, through a statement made on his behalf by Mr. Osmany Pereira.

Three parallel morning sessions of group discussions were followed by two further group discussions on day two. The first four groups considered the different project components of the draft InforMEA Phase II project document. Group I discussed the most appropriate steps to enhance the overall use and awareness of the tools and services of the InforMEA Portal, especially among developing countries. Group II focused on the technical interoperability aspect during the next project phase, in particular on the implementation of a document sharing mechanism. Group III considered the requisite processes and governance mechanisms for the application of the InforMEA Law and Environment Ontology (LEO) in the context of document management, and Group IV discussed the further evolution of the e-learning tool in collaboration with UNITAR.

Group V considered the impact and opportunities that the SDGs represented for MEA Knowledge Management in general and the work of the MEA IKM Initiative in particular. This new topic, which had not yet been reflected in the InforMEA Phase II draft project document, had been suggested by MEA representatives prior to the meeting and was formally introduced by CMS Executive Secretary, Mr. Chambers, on the first day of the meeting.

On the third day, potential activities under project component V of the project document of InforMEA Phase II were considered in plenary. Component V provides for joint planning, project development and fund-raising among two or more MEAs of the Initiative with a view to further promote interoperability and knowledge sharing.

After their presentation by the designated group chairs the suggested outcomes and draft recommendations of the groups were adjusted and refined through discussions in plenary.

A [joint web story](http://www.cms.int/en/news/unep-expands-access-vast-body-environmental-law) was issued on the last day of the meeting and re-used by MEAs.
Outcomes

Outreach and enhanced usage of InforMEA is a clear goal for the Initiative, its partners and the donor. In this regard, an outreach and communication strategy creating unique storylines and audience specific trajectories focussing on the added value of InforMEA content, is to be developed. This strategy’s success would be hinged on stronger involvement of MEA communication officers and their collective networks, greater involvement by the members of the MEA-IKM Initiative, regular updates to senior management in participating organisations, improvements to the website, including a “My InforMEA” feature, and better mainstreaming of InforMEA content to other established knowledge tools.

On technical implementation issues, the group reiterated the need for strengthened capacity at the MEA Secretariat level (the source of the information), and the sharing of resources where appropriate. Collaboration with FAO, in the context of a treaty text schema (Akoma Ntoso), was agreed upon. The first application of the document schema was welcomed and the schema’s implementation entrusted to the intersessional working group, which also discussed issues related to content tagging and the possibility of integrating InforMEA’s work with other search engines such as Google, etc. Lastly, the intersessional working group has been tasked with promoting the development of ‘unique identifiers’ as well as supporting MEA Secretariats using or planning to use ‘Drupal’ as their Content Management System.

With regard to the full integration of ‘LEO’, participants endorsed a hybrid approach to tagging documents by combining the use of auto-classification tools with a process of manual review and tagging, and to develop a pilot that will demonstrate that approach on a publication database. Furthermore, the drafting of a three-pronged tagging guideline that will include best practices on indexing, the selection of LEO tags, and assigning of SDG targets and indicators, is anticipated. Other recommendations focus on governance issues and the types of analysis that will inform the development of the said guideline.

With regard to InforMEA’s e-learning platform, topics for new courses have been envisaged for development preferably through the adaptation of existing material. Also foreseen is the development of a course catalogue and a comprehensive syllabus that will bring together a

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5 [www.informea.org/documents](http://www.informea.org/documents)
number of introductory courses into a consolidated framework course on MEAs as well as enhanced outreach to academic networks in the context of promotion further translation of courses.

In the context of SDGs, the group considered the relationship between InforMEA and UNEP Live, and reiterated a set of guiding principles, including the core requirement of interoperability and automated data transfer between tools. Recommendations include the establishment of a working group on SDGs during the inter-sessional period, to which UNEP Live would be invited; the development of a dedicated e-learning course to expand interoperability between MEAs to incorporate SDG mapping, and; the creation of relationships between LEO terms and SDGs.

Lastly, under component V of the project document, considerations already expressed through the SDG group and the outreach group were echoed.

Specifically mentioned is the development of a concept note towards the transparent visualization - multi-stakeholder mapping of the joint role of MEAs towards the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The importance of enhanced awareness raising at the institutional level and at relevant meeting opportunities (COPs) for the InforMEA Project was emphasized. Targeted technical support to MEAs was reiterated as important for the successful implementation of the technical aspects of the InforMEA project. Furthermore, joint projects associated to species and sites will also be envisaged for project Component V.

The full report with its Annexes is available [here](#).