

60th Working Group Meeting of the MEA IKM Initiative

Tuesday, May 26, 2020 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM CET

Audio Conference – Geneva, Montreal, Bonn, Nairobi, Singapore, Rome

Report

Meeting Participants

BRS – Julien HORTONEDA
CBD – Frederic VOGEL
CITES – Haruko OKUSU
CMS/AEWA – Aydin BAHRAMLOUIAN
ECLAC – David Barrio LAMARCHE
IPBES – Benedict Aboki OMARE
ITPGRFA FAO – Francisco LOPEZ
Minamata – Anna GARCIA SANS
Ramsar – Ed JENNINGS
UNEP MAP – Maria Luisa Rodriguez LUCAS
UNEP – Diane KLAIMI
UNEP – Kazuhiko SERIU
Switzerland FOEN- Eric WIEDMER

KM Team

UNEP – Eva DUER, Kelly KABIRU, Iddah KAMAU, Peter SPEELMAN, Lillian ONYANGO

Meeting Summary

I. Updates by the InforMEA team

Ms. Duer informed the Working Group about a meeting with David Jensen of the Economics Division, who encouraged InforMEA to consider how the group engages big data platforms like Google Earth, Resource Watch, SEPAL, Earth Pile, and others. InforMEA could consider them as potential stakeholders in the next phase and invite them to participate as advisers. Feedback was invited on this item. In other updates, there have been talks with the Biosafety Clearing House and they have expressed interest in using elements of the InforMEA E-learning platform. Finally, FAO and IUCN have asked to start hosting ECOLEX tools on InforMEA's servers. Ms. Duer expressed a deep appreciation to the BRS Secretariat, who agreed in principle to integrate the InforMEA server infrastructure in Geneva.

Outreach materials developed by InforMEA have already been shared with the MEAs for comments. These include a new InforMEA Poster, and the Peatlands and Plastics videos.

(a) PoolParty update

Mr. Kabiru gave an update on PoolParty, informing the Working Group of an on-going project with the BRS Secretariat for the development and integration of PoolParty into existing infrastructure. This was tested by some of the Working Group, including IPBES, CMS, CITES, and BRS. The team made headway in the finalization of the PoolParty server, identified obstacles and challenges, and produced a “kick-start” document ensuring those unfamiliar with the PoolParty environment have an easier time setting up and joining. The team eventually halted at the point they had exhausted all that the PoolParty development server was capable of, needing now to move the rest of the work to the production server.

With the amount of work in the pipeline for InforMEA Phase III, including expanded E-learning and the ECOLEX request, there is going to be a lot more required of InforMEA in terms of hosting and support. The team is evaluating the capacity of the new server and hoping it will be delivered and set up soon. Once the production environment is set up, we can resume the work of the small team on PoolParty and have additional members join in, getting closer to our original objective of auto tagging.

Mr. Hortonedá (BRS) agreed the group was at the stage of needing to wait for the new server to put things into production, which will solve many issues. The team has put together a very good document, which can guide someone who has never used PoolParty before. A short “introduction” version of the document is also available. The long version will be a living document to compile all the lessons learned and collective knowledge. Mr. Aboki (IPBES) expressed his excitement to have joined the initial PoolParty testing, affording the opportunity to learn from what other Conventions have been doing, and reiterated the utility of the concise “kick-start” document.

Ms. Okusu (CITES) explained that CITES has also been working with PoolParty on the CITES-specific thesaurus and initial templates of a back-end auto-tagging system, in collaboration with Eau de Web for the interface. CITES had their COP in August 2019, which entailed a new set of information that needed to be loaded into the PoolParty thesaurus in terms of the document names, meeting, years, taxonomies, groups, species listing status, etc., which is now available. CITES is looking at joining the PoolParty enterprise server arrangement with InforMEA rather than an individual one and is pursuing better tagging. CITES’ experience and lessons learned can happily be shared.

(b) Systems contract update

Mr. Kabiru reported that InforMEA managed at the end of 2019 to partially extend the systems contract with Eau de Web. The first section of that was set to expire on 4 July 2020. However, the Not to Extend (NTE) amount has already been exhausted well before the expiry period which is why the team is seeking No-Cost Increase for another 2 years. In terms of a costed increase, the team will go into a new solicitation for which InforMEA is currently preparing the documents aiming for an additional 5 years and have therefore requested MEAs to begin looking at their requirements for the next 5 years.

II. Round of MEA updates

Mr. Vogel (CBD) inquired as to the possibility of hosting InforMEA on cloud servers (e.g. Amazon). Mr. Kabiru clarified that the current server procurement process is already at an advanced stage. In terms of cloud hosting, there are various ongoing discussions by UNEP in Nairobi, and this is likely also something BRS will consider at some point. The proposal is thus welcome, and we will follow up, as what we are trying to procure in terms of hardware will not be sufficient for the kind of growth projected. Any information in terms of cloud hosting and costs can be shared with the wider group, and pending authorization from UNEP will be welcome for consideration.

Regarding the use of the remaining funds from InforMEA II, Ms. Okusu (CITES) supported a focus on improving and translating online courses. CITES has seen a marked increase in the number of people requesting online courses in the last few months and plans to revamp a set of old online courses.

Mr. Lopez (ITPGRFA FAO) reminded the group that the focus of ITPGRFA FAO is Biodiversity, requesting that the FAO courses appear in the Biodiversity section. He also recommended that the group explore collaboration with the FAO E-learning academy, which had asked to see how courses hosted on InforMEA can be accessed through their platform. Finally, he suggested there may need to be another way to represent associated bodies in future publications like the poster.

Mr. Omare (IPBES) reiterated his enthusiasm to further collaborate on PoolParty, and echoed Mr. Lopez's comment on representing associated bodies in future publications.

Mr. Jennings (Ramsar) welcomed the updates on new E-learning content and demand and remarked that the new Peatlands video is excellent. Mr. Jennings thanked all the parties that have been engaged on PoolParty, expressing his hope that Ramsar will be able to join the PoolParty team soon.

Mr. Bahramlouian (CMS/AEWA) echoed congratulations for the Peatlands video. CMS has just started the process of revamping their website, upgrading from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8. Now is therefore the time to think ahead about further integration with InforMEA, in terms of 2-way integrations or InforMEA APIs. CMS would like to further explore an intervention by Julien (BRS) about prototyping on their own website content related to migratory species from some resolutions, and to see how they can further explore 2-way integration. On PoolParty, CMS received access to the test server at BRS and did some testing with auto-tagging. CMS is looking forward to implementing this in the upcoming upgrade as soon as possible.

Mr. Barrio (ECLAC) updated the group on the anticipated launch of a full SDG 16 course on 5 June 2020 for World Environment Day, as part of a collaborative effort with the InforMEA team. The course is being translated from English into Spanish, and ECLAC echoed support for translations to maximize further outreach. Regarding the use of the remaining funds for InforMEA II, Mr. Barrio suggested some could be directed towards translating the new promotional material like the InforMEA poster and videos, all of which will be very useful for outreach. Specific promotional material for the E-learning platform could even be explored if funds are available. In creating synergies, ECLAC has a lot of contact with the Office of Legal Affairs, and together they are organizing a regional symposium on International Law, adding that

the OLA audio-visual library for International Law could be a useful resource. On E-Learning and International Law capacity building, Ms. Duer remarked that there is strong interest to see a Course for Negotiators developed, that could even consider the possibility of some COPs being held remotely. An REIO mini course has already been developed, which could fit in to a broader course.

Ms. Garcia Sans (Minamata) informed the group that Minamata is currently updating their introductory course with the InforMEA team, and requested statistics and feedback for the current course. Regarding the new Minamata website, the goal is to move to a data-driven semantically tagged website in a format that can be integrated well with the InforMEA platform. Minamata should have the new terms of reference by July 2020 and will share them with the Working Group for input and feedback. Like other MEAs, Minamata is involved in the Geneva Environment Dialogue, with their information update scheduled for 28 May 2020. They have already been organizing some expert group meetings and have their bureau meeting scheduled for the first week of June 2020. Ms. Duer assured that the course user statistics and feedback will be shared – adding that there has been a marked overall increase in usage since April 2020 – and encouraged all the MEAs to promote their courses.

Ms. Lucas (UNEP MAP) added that she was happy to know there is funding available to translate some courses into other languages, including Spanish and French, and welcomed the new E-learning website platform, the upcoming launch of the new courses, and the idea of a Course for Negotiators; most upcoming meetings will be online, and the Barcelona Convention has been approached by different countries on how to conduct negotiations in this new scenario. Ms. Lucas further asked for clarification on a discussion about harvesting ratifications from UNCLOS and regional conventions. Ms. Duer clarified that ratification information is harvested from the Office of Legal Affairs at the treaty section for all MEAs where the UN Secretary General is the depositary. Ms. Lucas suggested the possibility of providing a “step by step” guide on the ratification process in addition to the ratification table.

Ms. Kamau (KM Team) updated the Working Group on efforts to activate the link between the Regional Seas document collection with the UNEP Corporate Services Division. With the new Regional Seas Coordinator, now based in Nairobi, a developer has been hired to look at and resolve this connection, and InforMEA will create a new category for documents. These documents will include UNEP publications and UNEA Resolutions and Decisions, which have so far been manually input into the InforMEA back-end. It is hoped the developer will join the next Working Group

Ms. Duer gave a brief update on InforMEA’s work with the World Trade Organization (WTO), which joined as an observer during the 2019 Steering Committee Meeting. Non-InforMEA funds have been generated to further work with the WTO on advancing its Environment and Trade Matrix. Mr. Speelman (KM Team) further explained the idea to create an online version of the matrix of trade related MEA provisions that the WTO has been putting together periodically every 2-3 years. A framework has been agreed on how this would look, and now the team is working with Eau de Web to see how it could be hosted on InforMEA. A key aspect of the online version will be how to break decisions down to the paragraph level so that they can be tagged to terms like “trade-related measure,” where users will then be able to select specific paragraphs to see them in context and be led to the location of that decision on InforMEA. This

functionality is already available for treaties, but we have yet to explore the same for decisions. Part of this process will entail translating some 138 decisions to Akoma Ntoso, which could serve as a good pilot.

Ms. Klaimi (UNEP) provided an update on the Data Reporting Tool (DaRT). The tool has been presented at various governing body meetings, including with CBD and CMS. The more it is used, the more it can harness updated information, which will help in national reporting and tagging. Currently, the tool is in Phase II, operational since September 2019, and has moved from a private to a public server. The DaRT team is interested in having the tool hosted on the InforMEA platform and enhancing it with E-learning. The next presentation of the tool will be to the Biodiversity Liaison Group sometime in June 2020. It has also been presented to UNCTAD, focusing on the importance of trade in endangered species. The team is also organizing a series of webinars at the Bern II meeting, which is the consultative meeting with all MEAs who have also expressed interest in learning more about the tool. Phase III will focus on establishing the final administrative status, with a dedicated help desk. The team has also kept abreast of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, with DaRT being one of the tools that could provide solutions, and are working on an upgrade on interoperability with online reporting systems under the MEAs, as well as with the UNEP World Environment Situation Room, IRIS for SDGs, Bioland, and Biodiversity lab, which are knowledge tools under CBD and WCMC.

III. AOB

Mr. Vogel (CBD) mentioned that Kata is leaving CBD to take up another position in Montreal. CBD has also been facing some issues with the translation portion of Drupal, and Mr. Vogel requested anyone in Working Group with any solutions to reach out to him.