

61st Working Group Meeting of the MEA IKM Initiative

Tuesday, July 28, 2020 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM CET

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

Report

Meeting Participants

BRS – Osmany PEREIRA
CBD – Alexandre RAFALOVITCH, Frederic VOGEL
CITES- Haruko OKUSU
CMS – Aydin BAHRAMLOUIAN
IPPC - Paola SENTINELLI
Minamata Convention – Eisaku TODA
Ozone Secretariat- Gerald MUTISYA
Ramsar- Manuel KERN
Regional Seas – Esther MAINA, Nancy SOI
UNCCD - Jeroen Van DALEN
UNECE-Maryna YANUSH
UNFCCC Secretariat- Jingwen YANG

KM Team

UNEP – Eva DUER, Kelly KABIRU, Iddah KAMAU, Lillian ONYANGO, Katy AYRES

Meeting Summary

Ms. Eva Duer welcomed participants to the meeting, the 61st Working Group meeting of the InforMEA initiative.

1. Update on budget InforMEA Phase II, the project development process for InforMEA Phase III; and the current situation with the Steering Committee Meeting

Ms. Duer informed the Working Group that InforMEA Phase III has been approved at all levels and is now an active project. This meeting is therefore to recap the focus for the next three years including work on Semantic tagging, Akoma Ntoso, and further mining the data including reports available in InforMEA. Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the best way of holding an online Steering Committee Meeting in 2020 since a face to face meeting is increasingly unlikely in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She informed that while the increase of users on InforMEA remains steady with currently 40,000 users now monthly, there was a steep increase on interest in the e-learning platform (which double/tripled in the last few months). She therefore suggested to pre-pone the / and re-focus on updating popular courses also in response to universities approaching the InforMEA team on using the courses.

The number of consumers has increased from 200 to 700 users per day with up to 8,000 consistent users up from 3,200 users per month.

2. PoolParty Progress Reports

Mr. Osmany Pereira (BRS) informed the meeting that PoolParty remains on the development server using the development license. BRS had temporarily benefitted from Mr. Santiago Riera, a consultant to facilitate the setting up of accounts, troubleshooting various issues on the platform, and helping the different entities who needed support in pushing their projects forward. Users of the development license were invited to share the experiences so far in developing/refining their Thesaurus on this PoolParty system, and suggestions for the anticipated follow on assignment of the consultant.

Mr. Kelly Kabiru (KM team) updated the working group that the procurement process of the InforMEA Server which has been and was pending delivery, which seemed to be considerably delayed due to the ongoing situation and disruptions of supply chains. Given some insecurities about the ease of transfer from development to production server, the focus remains on testing the InforMEA tagger and confirming what is on that server now. He once more encouraged all interested MEA Secretariats to create accounts to set up/ to test tagging against their vocabularies. To facilitate this process, a “kick-start document” on using the PoolParty system is under development. Ms. Iddah Kamau (KM team) who had worked on the InforMEA Glossary is ready to support anyone interested and will help with the documentation in advance of the migration to the production platform so that when the production server is in place, all their efforts will be invested in migrating all the existing work.

The InforMEA - PoolParty team is also trying to interface with other units within the division like the Science division and the SDG ontology among others.

Ms. Duer informed the working group that Ms. Alexandra Fante, a consultant with the InforMEA team working on Semantic Indexing, has left to join a university. Successive arrangements are being sought through an ongoing recruitment which may also rely on the BRS Secretariat and the work it had started.

Mr. Aydin Bahramlouian of CMS informed the working group that he had tested PoolParty on the CMS website and confirmed that it had worked well and that he was able to retrieve the vocabulary. He has not changed anything in the thesaurus itself but was able to make refinement in their own website. CMS plans to use the systems for the Species Thesaurus later. He also confirmed that the secretariat was currently migrating from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8.

Ms. Haruko Okusu (CITES) expressed the Secretariat’s interest in migrating the new species taxonomy developed on PoolParty through a separate arrangement to the new InforMEA PoolParty production server once available.

3. Akoma Ntoso Progress Report

Ms. Iddah Kamau demonstrated to the working group what had so far been developed with Mr. Benedict Aboki (IPBES) in line of relevant recommendations by 10th InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting so. Mr. Aboki found the GitHub repository owned by the NGO working on Akoma Ntoso for the UN (Ak4UN), Laws Africa which had allowed him to convert three documents automatically. By structure, the headings, the italics, the annex, and preamble, among others, can all be presented as a

different layer. Text links can then point back to the original PDF document on the server. The additional benefit is a hyperlinked table of contents. Ms. Kamau used an example of MARPOL to show the various amendments, showing the 'before changes' section, then shows what was added in a different colour, what was removed also in a different colour, and finally the current version as at a particular date. Schemas can be expanded to include tags to SDGs or InforMEA glossary terms. What remains to be included is a simple search function through the converted text.

Ms. Duer informed the working group that since the joining of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as an observer, funding from the Law division allowed development of the online version of the WTO Matrix to also pilot the use of the UN document standard AK4UN. Discussions with the WTO colleagues are ongoing.

Mr. Alexandre Rafalovitch of CBD added to Ms. Kamau's presentation that from the 3 or 4 software options considered by an earlier UN group, this platform called INDIGO carried most promise because of its ease of use and being open source. He strongly seconded IPBES and endorsed this approach with a suggestion that this is something that we can all work with.

Mr. Frederick Vogel of CBD informed the meeting participants that CBD will be working closely with IPBES on this project as the Secretariats look for a way to integrate its decision tracking tool with Akoma Ntoso.

Ms. Jingwen Yang of UNFCCC Secretariat seconded these comments considering the approach as an excellent idea that will benefit the Secretariat.

Mr. Osmany Pereira (BRS) contributed that BRS has always supported the idea of Akoma Ntoso and proposed to start with the decisions of all the MEAs. He called on those that are interested in the pilot to join the dedicated sub-working group to bring to the table for everyone interest to digest these options. Just like on tagging, MEAs should be enabled to do as much of that as possible on their end in terms of breaking text down and tagging, while InforMEA would then aggregate only that which has already been tagged and runs the mapping for it. The same would apply for Akoma Ntoso if you are able to get the decisions already in Akoma Ntoso format.

Ms. Iddah Kamau confirmed that an account has been created for each MEA on Indigo where they will be able to set up their profiles and then upload their documents, make changes and tweak it and then they will be able to get the desired results as was shown during the presentation. She planned to do this for the Montreal Protocol since they have various amendments.

Mr. Gerald Mutisya of the Ozone Secretariat invited Ms. Kamau to involve the Secretariat on this exercise.

4. General updates from the MEAs

Mr. Eisaku Toda of the **Minamata Convention** gave an update that during this COVID situation, including enhanced use of the digital platform and almost weekly online sessions from September about various mercury issues. Minamata Convention therefore supported plans for the SCM to be held in October or November 2020.

Mr. Jeroen Van Dalen of **UNCCD** admitted that he has not been involved in this part of the discussion because the Thesaurus and Taxonomy discussions do not really affect UNCCD. He is however interested to see how the archiving plans will proceed.

Mr. Frederick Vogel (**CBD**) planned to get the views of the CBD Executive Secretary, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, regarding her thoughts on the proposed online InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting.

Ms. Nancy Soi of **Regional Seas** was introduced to the Working Group by Ms. Duer. Regional Seas is quite new to the InforMEA discussions and they plan to see how they can learn and benefit especially from the InforMEA experience of 10 years.

Ms. Maryna Yanush (**UNECE**) informed the meeting that they appreciate the fact that the SDG 16 course was launched and for the opportunity to have the course translated into other languages. The course is now on their website, including the capacity building material on the Aarhus Clearing House. They will continue to promote the SDG 16 course.

UNECE are currently working on improving the UNECE environmental information system promoting interoperability based on open data and the government frameworks – with Akomo Ntoso as a standard that they recommend national governments to use. It would be an important to know for example how the information using the Akoma Ntoso standard can be presented in Drupal. She recommended that the new group should address this.

UNECE agreed with the proposed approach on having an online Steering Committee meeting, to keep it short but result oriented and only to focus on the key topics that are not very technical but require more executive decisions in the area.

Ms. Paola Sentinelli of the **IPPC** Secretariat reported that they had migrated to a new Amazon Cloud Server, which has resulted in improved services. In September 2020, they plan to start working on the import of IPPC data to the InforMEA portal. They referred to the DaRT project as very interesting approach to look across clusters to consider if we can use such an approach to extract relevant information from reports or use it to bring data together.

Ms. Haruko Okusu (**CITES**) informed the participants that CITES Secretariat is proceeding with the development of a compliance related information data base using the information that is already available on their website while completing the move from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8. In parallel to that, they are working also to move to the Amazon Cloud Server that is also serviced by ICC. By doing that, they will hopefully be able to restart work with opening the interoperability with the InforMEA system of the information that they have on their website.

CITES has been contacted by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Secretariat because of discussions on how best to conduct their virtual meetings. Because of that, they have started engaging with their ICT/Knowledge Management focal point for IWC Secretariat, who is curious about processes involving document management in meeting document management and post meeting document management. They might therefore be interested in joining the InforMEA group. It was agreed that

Ms. Okusu will introduce the IWC focal point to the InforMEA Secretariat to explore this further. Regarding the Steering Committee Meeting, CITES supported the proposal of having a combination of preparatory sessions and a high-level presentation session best kept between 2-3 hours.

Mr. Aydin Bahramlouian (**CMS**) informed they were interested in the Cartography department because they are also looking at standardizing their maps especially in relation to migratory species. They are also in the process of trying to explore to see how they can make use of the two way use of the InforMEA API. On E-Learning, CMS requested for statistics from the e-learning platforms especially for the CMS related courses so that they can see how to improve their content.

Ms. Jingwen Yang (**UNFCCC**) informed the group that the UNFCCC COP 26 and other meetings have been postponed until 2021 due to the global COVID pandemic. Meanwhile, the Secretariat had a total of 103 virtual meetings in June 2020, with majority of the meetings taking place via MS Teams, but also voice, the Skype broadcaster and also via the Zoom platform. Since UNFCCC is fully committed to the Microsoft technology, they are starting a big project called Modern Digital Workplace that is integrating different databases or technology and the platform to the Microsoft 365. About the Steering Committee Meeting, Ms. Yang suggested that it be organised like the Working Group meetings, not in parallel though, but one after another to give everyone the opportunity to attend the different working group meetings and to contribute to the different working streams.

Mr. Osmany Pereira (**BRS**) reported that the issue of marine plastics litter is drawing more attention to the Basel Convention as a legally binding instrument providing solutions to this issue. BRS will create a platform for monitoring and sharing information on regional and national initiatives on marine litter not unlike a clearing house mechanism on plastics. This three year project has been graciously funded by the Government of Norway. BRS was also exploring alternatives to face to face meetings in response to requests from Parties to hold meetings online. A first technical meeting will take place in September which seeks to prepare the technical decisions for the COPs scheduled for 2021. BRS will be testing a platform called Interprefy and seeks to establish new procedures to host meetings online.

On Tagging, Mr. Pereira reiterated that the consultant with InforMEA and BRS has developed a tool known as InforMEA PoolParty Tagging Assessment Dashboard, which is a very simple and effective tool for the tagging process. The user gets a screen in their browser where they can choose which Thesaurus from the drop-down box, and basically be able to choose any of the available Thesaurus in the InforMEA PoolParty development server which includes among others the BRS Thesaurus, CBD Thesaurus, CMS terminology, ECOLEX, EROL, GEMET, IPBES, Ramsar, the Judicial Portal, and the LEO Thesaurus. From there, one can choose the Thesaurus that they want to tag against, then choose the language, and then choose the files that you want to tag. When the files are selected by clicking on them, you get your hard disk and then you can choose one file or multiple files that you want to get suggestions for tagging from PoolParty based on that particular Thesaurus that one has selected. On selection, suggestions are available in the form of a table with all of the suggestions from the Thesaurus or the terminology that had been designed from that Thesaurus, a score based on the score given by PoolParty, the occurrences and alternative terms that can be used. This is still in the testing version and once complete will be made available for the whole InforMEA community.

Mr. Gerald Mutisya (**Ozone Secretariat**) updated the meeting participants that they expect some changes in the Ozone Secretariat as the current Executive Secretary will be leaving the organization in September 2020.

Action points agreed upon:

- Work on the proposed scenario for the 11th InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting with a series of working group meetings ahead of a high level 2-3-hour session.
- The InforMEA team to reach out to all the working group members about setting up a meeting with their Management on priorities that prepare the SCM.
- Statistics from the e-learning platform to be shared with the individual MEAs.