

InforMEA

Report of the 13th Steering Committee Meeting

Hybrid | 11-13 October 2022

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The 13th InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) was held in a hybrid format from 11-13 October 2022. Participants convened both virtually and in-person to deliberate on a range of issues to exchange experiences, and to decide on a series of recommendations to guide the work of InforMEA over the next year, as the Program approaches completion of its third project phase.

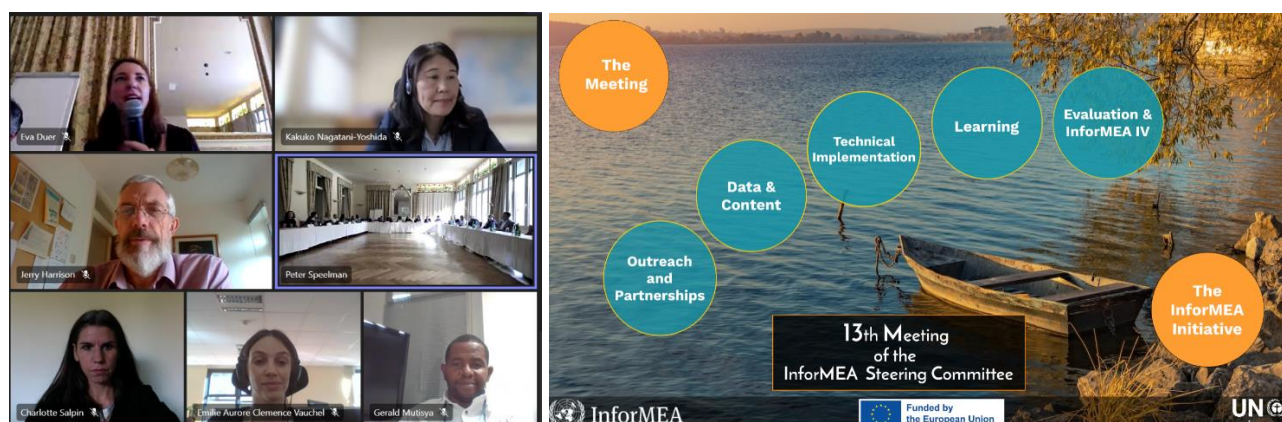
The meeting was structured around 2 workstreams: (I) **Technical Implementation** and (II) **Joint Issues**. The workstreams convened during scheduled breakout sessions on the first two days of the meeting, holding separate deliberations. The outcomes and recommendations of these workstreams were presented for endorsement by all participants on the final day of the meeting.

I. Background

UNEP has supported the InforMEA Program since 2010. InforMEA currently brings together 60 global and regional legally binding treaties from 26 secretariats, hosted by five UN organizations and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). InforMEA is also open to partners and observers.



In-person and virtual participants, and the overarching meeting [presentation](#)¹



The InforMEA Program is committed to knowledge sharing and harnessing technological advances to support MEAs and their Parties, with the current phase titled “Collective Intelligence for Environmental Governance.” It has been supported by the European Union since 2014, and benefits from an ever-growing membership.

The purpose of the meeting was to obtain the MEA members’ guidance on the Program’s priorities and further development. The program, the decision-making quality of the meeting, and the respective MEA network especially benefit from the input of the diverse expertise and knowledge held by the designated MEA representatives to the InforMEA Initiative.

II. Opening

The 13th InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting was opened by the co-Chairs, **Ms. Patricia Kameri-Mbote**, Director of UNEP Law Division and **Ms. Ivonne Higuero**, Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), who welcomed all participants, both in-person and online.

Ms. Mbote congratulated the Minamata Convention for winning the UNEP Kipepeo Award in October 2022, which was awarded to them for successfully spearheading the running of fully hybrid COPs with the assistance and expertise of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions ([view address](#)²)

¹ <https://prezi.com/view/IIc8xTKiNwV2inh92LdD/>

² <https://youtu.be/wEkMfNk9exQ>



The Law Division director started her remarks by congratulating the InforMEA Initiative for having persevered and remained an active community of practice through a period of isolation and online meetings by tapping into the resourcefulness of its members and for truly championing the principles of the SDGs Data Strategy and the Digital Transformation Process. InforMEA had been a catalyst of many developments such as UNEPs Law and Environment Assistance Platform (LEAP) and the Judicial Portal, already catering for over 100,000 monthly users.

With Knowledge Management gaining broader recognition the InforMEA partnership continued to lead in the field, capitalizing on cutting-edge technology to organize and add value to document collections, reaching more and more learners around the world through its ever-expanding e-learning platform, and championing UN-wide standards like Akoma Ntoso with a view of better supporting data-informed decision-making through tools such as dashboards. She considered that the encouraging Mid-term Evaluation findings provided a solid basis for further work and expressed UNEP's deep gratitude to the Directorate for the Environment of the European Commission for the generous funding support to the InforMEA Initiative and the InforMEA Program.

Ms. Mbote concluded by expressing by thanking the joint Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions for their visionary, unbureaucratic support in hosting InforMEA, and committed to matching this generosity to ensure adequate resources within the Law Division to achieve more in terms of the InforMEA Program. She further emphasized her commitment to strengthening the strategic integration within the division and invited guidance from MEAs on the interface of Science and Policy and a related tracker monitoring the impact of environmental policy in shaping environmental actions. She called on the support of InforMEA MEAs towards the continued promotion of the Portal to MEA focal points, the key beneficiaries of this process.

Ms. Ivonne Higuero, Secretary- General CITES, co-chair of the InforMEA Steering Committee, welcomed the meeting participants and thanked UNEP and the InforMEA team for supporting this important community of practice for the MEAs over a decade and noted hybrid meetings as one

example of innovation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the values of a solid knowledge management system an important aspect for Secretariat and Parties.

The co-chair emphasized the CITES Secretariat's ongoing strive to improve and fully integrate its web-based resources including the CITES virtual college, and its ever-expanding resources including on CITES e-permitting and trade systems. She concluded by inviting the meeting to reflect on all related developments mentioned and reiterated the ongoing commitment of the CITES Secretariat to working with all the MEAs through InforMEA.

III. Tour the table and Presentation by the UNEP Chief Scientist



Ms. Andrea Hinwood, Chief Scientist, UNEP, spoke via video link about the Science Policy Interface (SPI) and the work that has arisen from UNEP @ 50, where strengthening the science-policy interface was discussed.

The Chief Scientist gave a comprehensive overview with a focus on the MEAs, stating that there is a role for the MEAs in the work that they do in terms of data, information, and knowledge that feeds a strengthened SPI. She added that during the UNEP @ 50 session, (a special session that convened after the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly held on 3-4 March 2022 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of UNEP), the team undertook a review of some of the arising issues with the science-policy interface, and what could be done to improve the uptake of science, policy, and having that seamless process between science and policy inclusive of implementation.

Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention, expressed her keen interest in enhancing digital transformation through InforMEA and thanked participants for the good wishes on their winning the [UNEP Kipepeo awards](#) in the innovation category, for spear heading organizing COPs under the constraints of COVID-19. She showed great expertise and interest in the field of knowledge management and technological evolution and throughout the meeting provided visionary leadership and inspiration to the group.

Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) relayed her address through Mr. Erie Tamale. Being airborne as the SCM was opening, she expressed her continued encouragement for InforMEA as it provided great value to members and Parties. She welcomed the recommendations from the Mid-Term evaluation, noting the need to improve communication and outreach between the InforMEA program and Parties' National Focal Points, including through interlinkages with the new version of the CBD Clearing-House Mechanism. She welcomed the opportunity of InforMEA hosting multiple CBD courses, and the global MEA calendar that gathers all MEAs' events on a single web page. Ms. Mrema referred to the CBD's evolving "[Digital and Knowledge Management Strategy 2022-2024](#)", providing for an ambitious biodiversity data pool in support of partnerships with relevant stakeholders and biodiversity knowledge management initiatives including InforMEA. She concluded by expressing her continued commitment to the success of the InforMEA program and its role of facilitating the implementation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework due to be adopted at COP 15 in Montreal ([Link to statement](#)).

Mr. Sajal Mathur, Counselor, Trade and Environment Division, World Trade Organization (WTO) mentioned the strong partnership that has been developed between WTO and InforMEA, revolving around the WTO MEA Matrix which is essentially about collecting and centralizing trade provisions from the MEAs, including various decisions taken at COPs and MOPs and E-Learning.

Ms. Maryna Yanush, Environmental Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), provided an update including on new online reporting systems for UNECE Conventions and expressed appreciation to UNEP and its InforMEA secretariat for their continued promotion of the InforMEA course dedicated to SDG16, the Aarhus Convention and the Escazu Agreement and the UNCCC.

Ms. Charlotte Salpin, Senior Legal Officer, Division for Ocean Affairs, and the Law of the Sea – (DOALOS) looked forward to more entry points for UNCLOS to strengthen their engagement with InforMEA, focusing particularly on e-learning and on the Science Policy Interface.

Mr. David Barrio Lamarche, Environmental Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic Commission

for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), shared the developments from the Escazu Secretariat since the last InforMEA Steering Committee Meeting, mentioning the first COP and the upcoming first regional forum on environmental human rights defenders. The Secretariat expressed its interest in e-learning and collaboration areas in reporting, data mining, and dashboards.

Ms. Kakuko Nagatani, Global Coordinator of Chemicals and Pollution Action, represented UNEPs Economy division, which is the lead technical division for the Pollution Free Planet, and Chemical and Pollution sub-program area to represent their focus on how to strategically reduce overall pollution.

UNEP Consultant, **Mr. Eric Wiedmer**, provided a brief presentation of the recent developments of the Data Reporting Tool for MEAs, providing a brief overview of their activities in 2022.

Ms. Anna Garcia Sans (Minamata Convention on Mercury) introduced their national reporting online system and dashboards. She outlined the background information on how the reporting cycle works for the Minamata Convention, noting that 90% of reporting rate for the 2021 cycle has been achieved. She then detailed how the fully-fledged online reporting tool (integrated with the website) works. It allows access and filling in all 6 UN languages and parties to access the previous reports. She also showed how automated dashboards are implemented for performance and quantitative responses.

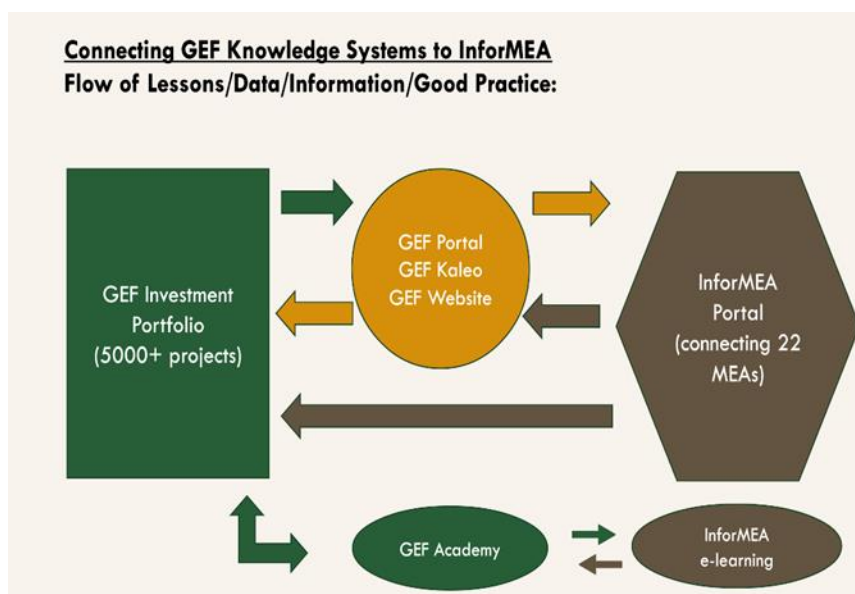
Mr. Benedict Aboki Omare from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) presented on how Akoma Ntoso could be applied to the United Nations. He used the Montreal Protocol on Substances that deplete the Ozone layer as a case study. His presentation discussed the importance of semantic interoperability and taxonomies and how they could be connected to Pool Party for searchability. He also talked about how treaties could be translated into paragraphs.

Ms. Jingwen Yang, UNFCCC, showed the approaches to web archiving that UNFCCC is carrying out. She outlined the mandate of archiving websites according to policies, in order to preserve the work we do for the benefit of future generations.

IV. Welcoming of GEF as an Observer to the InforMEA Initiative

Ms. Yasemin Biro Kirtman, Knowledge, and Learning Coordinator at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) presented GEF-8 strategy and programming directions in relation to the potential cooperation of the GEF with InforMEA. Further to the presentation by GEF and upon the suggestion

of the CITES Secretary-General and co-chair, the meeting welcomed the GEF as an observer to the initiative.



V. InforMEA Annual Report

The InforMEA team presented their Progress Report on InforMEA Phase III and inter-sessional work, including the Mid-Term Review audit report recommendations, highlighting the importance of targeting national focal points for outreach activities, the idea of a negotiators section and partnership strengthening, amongst others.

The upcoming Phase IV was introduced with follow-up questions from participants.

VI. Deliberations

The workstreams work was introduced in plenary by several presentation on the main topics to be covered during the discussions. Then, the MEAs met for the first two days in the two workstreams (technical and joint issues) and discussed next steps in the context of the main areas of work, including technical interoperability, semantic indexing and tagging, e-learning, outreach, reports, and dashboards, as well as joint issues such as web archiving and project data and interoperability. Groups worked well into the night, exchanging ideas, and identifying the joint way forward.

The technical working group was co-chaired by Frederic Vogel (CBD) and Benedict Aboki Omare (IPBES), and the Joint Issues group was co-chaired by Haruko Okusu (CITES) and Anna Garcia (Minamata Convention on Mercury).



VII. Outcomes

Each of the workstreams drafted a set of Recommendations which were then endorsed by the Steering Committee meeting. They are included in Annex I of this document.

VIII. Conclusion

After the endorsement of the outcome of the meeting, the Co-chairs CITES Secretary-General Ivonne Higuero and UNEP Law Division Director Patricia Kameri-Mbote concluded the meeting, thanking participants for their hard work, with some of them deliberating deep into the night on technical knowledge exchange issues.

IX. Annexes

Annex I	-	Recommendations ³
Annex II	-	Agenda ⁴ and Participants List ⁵
Annex III	-	Background Documents ⁶
Annex IV	-	Presentations ⁷

³ <https://bit.ly/3FahFA9>

⁴ <https://bit.ly/3D4O3Bw>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3TR3hBe>

⁶ <https://bit.ly/3eWTwm2>

⁷ <https://bit.ly/3MY7nVG>