77th Working Group Meeting of the MEA IKM Initiative

Thursday, August 29, 2024, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM GMT+3

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

Report

Meeting Participants

BRS –Claire MOREL
Barcelona Convention – Ihab TAREK
CBD – Frederic VOGEL *(emailed update)*
CITES –Salehin KHAN, Shashika SEDARA-HETTIGE,
IPBES – Benedict Aboki OMARE
UNECE – Maryna YANUSH
The Convention on Wetlands – Edmund JENNINGS
UNFCCC - Jingwen YANG
UNEP Digital Transformation – David JENSEN
UN-ECLAC – David Barrio LAMARCHE *(emailed update)*

KM Team

Eva DUER, Angela KARIUKI, Andrew RAINE, Raluca CRUCERU, Lillian ONYANGO, Peter SPEELMAN, Catherine AYRES, Katherine WOOD

Welcoming new members to the InforMEA Team

The Deputy Director of UNEP Law Divison, Mr. Andrew Raine acknowledged the outstanding contribution to the InforMEA Project by Ms. Eva DUER, complimenting her work and leadership on the program over the years,citing that InforMEA is an important project for UNEP. Ms. Duer is taking a two-year sabatical, and will be temporarily replaced by Ms. Angela Kariuki, a Lawyer and long standing colleague of the Law Division. Ms. Kariuki was previously based in Nairobi before moving to New York, and is currently based in New York as an Intergovernmental Affairs Officer.

Ms. Raluca Cruceru has joined the InforMEA team as an Information Systems Officer. She has previously worked at *Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire,* also known as CERN, as a Software Engineer, and is looking foward to making meaningful contributions to the InforMEA project. She is an internal resource who will oversee the work of the InforMEA System Contract holders and follow up on work being carried out by InforMEA Project Implementing Partners on the technological deliverables.

Updates from MEAs and participants on issues pertaining to the Initiative

The UNFCCC Secretariat expressed appreciation for the leadership of Ms. Eva Duer on all fronts of the InforMEA project from inception to date. The Secretariat is in the process of migrating to Drupal 10 from Drupal 8 through Drupal 9. They are also testing the Drupal APIs for harvesting information to the InforMEA platform. They plan to discuss how to get more of the UNFCCC Secretariat information on the InforMEA Portal, and the feasibility of doing this.

The Convention on Wetlands thanked the InforMEA team and Eau de Web for re-working the API following their recent website migration. They are currently testing the country pages and the links to the Convention content and other content on the country pages.

The UNECE Secretariat hopes to get some updates on the SDG 16 course, using in-house expertise for translations. On GMO scores, the Secretariat is discussing with CBD options to either have a stand-alone course or to update one of the existing courses. On the document schema for case law, they need to have further discussions to see if further interoperability can happen between the platforms. The Secretariat has started including events manually into the InforMEA calendar and will soon embark on using APIs for automated updates. They are developing their website further to use document schemas. On Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Secretariat has noted the increased involvement of children and youth in their activities and those of other MEAs, thus highlighting the need for adopting material suitable for children and youth. This can be done by potentially having AI translate all the Secretariat text into children- and user-friendly formats, suggesting the development of language models that could help automate this task.

The IPBES Secretariat will undertake a 3-year assessment on the nexus of food, water and energy; on transformative change and biodiversity; on business and biodiversity; and an additional one on monitoring assessment which is currently being established, and involves multiple workshops. The Secretariat is keen on deploying Akoma Ntoso, especially now that it has a module in Drupal, to allow people to tag, comment directly on documents and to compile them easily, while zooming into the paragraphs to see all the comments. In terms of the next steps, IPBES plans to support the security review of that module and to test it on their website. The Secretariat is preparing for the 11th session of the IPBES Plenary, taking place from 10 to 16 December 2024, in Windhoek, Namibia. The Secretariat is keen on exposing their meeting documents and confirmed that they have had the API enabled for two years. They will also follow up on the deployment of PoolParty.

Action points:

- IPBES Secretariat (Benjamin Aboki) to get in touch with the InforMEA team Raluca Cruceru to sort out the API issues.

The Barcelona Convention had proposed during the InforMEA Steering Committee meeting in June 2024 in Montreux, to upgrade their current module of training on the Barcelona Convention. The Convention is ready to share all the relevant information and data with the MEAs. The Secretariat would also like to work to enhance the visibility of their legal instrument and judicial decisions through the InforMEA platform.

The BRS Conventions will soon launch 4 new e-Learning courses. The Secretariat is moving towards OData version 4. On Maps, the BRS Secretariat is working on a new web map service that will enhance the way Maps is exposed, allowing users to zoom into more granular levels.

The CITES Secretariat in conjunction with Zoi Environment Network has more than two new e-Learning Courses ready, moving towards eight courses that will soon be finalised in terms of content. They plan to translate the new courses as soon as they are ready in early 2025. The Secretariat has received requests from various Parties for some of their old courses, with one of the most requested courses being the Introduction to CITES course for Custom Officers.. The Secretariat is planning for the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee in Geneva from 3 to 8 February 2025, and for the 20th meeting of

the Conference of the Parties (CoP20) that will take place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from late November to early December in 2025. On technical matters, the CITES Secretariat has been running Drupal version 10 for a long time. Version 11 was recently released in August 2024, with a new features list that is inclusive of support for API integration. In terms of the API, they have only exposed contacts and meeting information. They are working on releasing the document information and some legislation related information on the toolkit. On PoolParty, the connection that they have at the moment through BRS Secretariat is the staging server and will move to the production server when the time comes.

The UN-ECLAC Secretariat fully endorses the SC14 recommendations adopted in Montreux, with particular emphasis on the following items: (I) Updating current e-learning courses (SDG 16) and developing new content (cross-cutting themes such as Indigenous Peoples, scientific bodies and corporate services for MEA Secretariats) (II) Outreach: in particular, academia and promoting InforMEA at each of the COPs (III) Explore the possibility of establishing an informal group/community of practice on compliance mechanisms. Now that the UN-ECLAC Committee to support Implementation and Compliance is fully operational and is starting to receive requests from States and the public, they would value a space to exchange information and good practices on Secretariat functions, IT tools, case management, archiving, follow-up, impact measurement, analytics, etc.

The CBD Secretariat updated on e-learning that they have several ongoing projects, with one additional project that will be piloted in Q3-Q4 2024. More information will be given after the upcoming CBD COP 16, which convened in Cali, Colombia on 21 October- 1 November 2024.

Mr David Jensen of the UNEP Digital Transformation team informed the working group that significant barriers remain in leveraging environmental data for decision-making due to ecosystem fragmentation, lack of interoperability, and access limitations. To address these, the United Nations Environmental Assembly adopted resolution 4/23 and Ministerial declaration, calling on UNEP to develop and prioritize the Global Environmental Data Strategy (GEDS) for the harmonization, quality control and access to environmental data. UNEP's Chief Digital Officer has been mandated to lead the global multistakeholder consultations to develop the strategy. GEDS is expected to contribute to the Impact Initiative 8 of the Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability. Based on the initial research and consultations, and the gaps and challenges identified, UNEP proposed a framework for the Global Environmental Data Strategy with five key focus areas: (I) To enhance data quality and authenticity (II) To improve data governance (III) To promote data interoperability (IV) To promote inclusive data access and affordability and (IV) To facilitate capacity building. For the next 12 months, the digital transformation team will undertake a global stakeholder consultation process to bring the global environmental strategy together. The team will be looking at best practices and standards, platforms and tools, among others. They are currently consolidating a consultation process involving all stakeholders and will eventually consult with the MEAs to ensure that all their experiences and best practices are reflected in the document. Upon adoption of the strategy by Member States, the hope is that it will be recognized through the various convention processes. A list of the data focal points in MEAs had been requested from the InforMEA team by the Digital Transformation team. The focal points will be approached for the required information via deep-dive interviews and try to systematically document their lessons, tools and standards.

Update on AI/UNCTs

On Tuesday 27 August 2024 a meeting had been convened to discuss the UNCT figma and plans to submit a proposal to the digital transformation platform. The proposal included external and internal functions and sought to link different processes in UNEP to make it more interesting for funding consideration. One idea was to implement this particular UNCT application in the context of two countries that are rolling out CCAs. AI was also considered in the proposal in a manner that would enable easier summarising of documents.

New Goals Page and Semantic developments

The new Goals section on the InforMEA Portal is now live and intuitively shows the linkages between the Sustainable Development Goals, the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and MEA Strategic Plans and policies. At a later stage, the Global Framework on Chemicals will also be incorported into the revamped page. The new Goals page on the InforMEA Portal is an improvement of the previous page, with major developments on the visualization, where one clicks on either the SDG or GBF where the major new linkages were made, all done through PoolParty. Everything has eventually been brought together in one place in the enhanced page.

The new section entitled 'Global Goals and MEA Strategic Plans - Mapping Linkages' is now available here: https://www.informea.org/en/goalsThe section enables users to search by the InforMEA Law and Environment Ontology keywords to see relevant goals and targets. In the next phase, semantic keyword alignments and auto-tagging to present InforMEA content (including national plans and reports) most relevant to a specific goal or target will be used. More information about the sources and methodology for the new section can be seen here.

The MEA focal points were urged to explore the new section and to share widely amongst their networks. The InforMEA team would be delighted to receive your feedback as we work to develop and improve the section further over the coming months.

AOB

- Ms. Eva Duer called upon the InforMEA Technical experts to avail themselves to review the ToRs for an upcoming solicitation submission for the next InforMEA Systems Contract. She also called upon the MEAs that may have some specific interest in using the contract to participate in the technical review to ensure that specific requirements are included.

- Ms. Eva Duer thanked the InforMEA Working Group team for their great support and enthusiasm and hoped to see them again in the near future.