Report of the meeting of the members of the ePhyto Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and the ePhyto Project Technical Committee (PTC)

Geneva, CH

29 June 2016

# Participants

**Project Advisory Group**

Maame Agyeben, The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Salma Ben Haji, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

Erik Boskers, Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs

Barbara Cooper, CODEX Alimentarius

Craig Fedchock, International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) Secretariat

Bill Gain, World Bank Group

Nico Horn, NVWA (PTC Chair)

Tomoko Ishibashi, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

Francis Lopez, Intercommerce Inc.

Markus Pikart, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) / United Nations Economic Commisssion for Europe (UNECE)

Shane Sela, IPPC Secretariat

**Project Technical Committee**

Christian Dellis, United States Department of Agriculture, Plant Protection and Quarantine (USDA, PPQ)

Josiah Syanda, Kenya Plant Health Inspection Service (KEPHIS)

Venkatram, Venkateswaran, United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)

Shashank Rai, UNICC

**Observers**

Sue Heinen, United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (USFAS)

Kenza Le Mentec, Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF)

Michael Perry, USDA PPQ

# Detailed overview of the project components and the project work plan

Mr. Nico Horn, Chair of the ePhyto Project Technical Committee (PTC) reviewed project development and provided the technical specifications for the Solution. He provided an overview of the differences between the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) and the PTC. A detailed project technical standard has been developed initially by the ESG and finalized by the PTC. This document outlines the general operation of the hub and generic national system.

Mr. Horn also outlined the work currently being undertaken by the members of the PTC in evaluating country capacities to implement the generic national system and in supporting the development of capacity building tools based upon these assessments. The PTC members using business change assessment tools developed by various international agencies (e.g. United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific [UNNExT], etc.) and those developed by the Australian government have commenced evaluating the capacities of several countries proposed as initial participants in using the generic national system.

# Discussion and decision by PAC Members on PAC's operational procedures

The IPPC Secretariat noted that the role of the PAC is to advise the PTC on design and development issues and to review reporting obligations. As such the PAC should be led by the membership and that the Secretariat can provide logistical and administrative support.

Ms. Barbara Cooper was acclaimed as Chair. She noted that she would need to obtain her organizations approval before fully accepting the position.

Mr. Christian Dellis agreed to act as rapporteur for the meeting.

Members agreed to review the Terms of Reference for the PAC and to advise the ePhyto Project Manager of comments or proposed changes.

# Electronic certification – challenges and recommendations

The development of effective instruments for implementing technical and business change was highlighted by participants. PAC members noted that the project should use train-the- trainer approaches with easily understood guides and support documents. Training of industry components may also be required and support agencies should also be included in discussions on business change and in training sessions (e.g. customs and third party inspection agencies, etc.). PAC members agreed to review the documents being used by the PTC in evaluating country preparedness for implementation and to provide advice in improving these documents.

Several members highlighted the need to fully understand the legal implications of data moving through or being held by (e.g. in the case of data stored by the generic national system) servers located and owned by an international agency (united Nations International Computing Centre) and on foreign soil. Several members noted that countries have established legislation to prevent data from being held off-shore. The Secretariat noted that users of both the generic national system and hub will be required to agree to “electronic use policies” and in keeping with international legislation on electronic transactions (e.g. the Electronic Communications Convention, etc.). Members noted that there is experience in other areas in dealing with the legal requirements for data and agreed to share the information. Furthermore members also proposed that the project should develop a business practices guide for countries which outlines the implications (risks and benefits) of use of the Solution.

The IPPC Secretariat noted that increasing outreach to the regulatory community on ePhyto is a key part of both implementing a successful Solution which realizes maximum benefits to the members of the IPPC and in developing a self-sustaining business model. Members noted that there is some international funding available to support trade facilitation efforts and they can assist in leveraging this funding to support outreach.

The PAC agreed that participation of the IAG in the earlier session was very welcome and that their comments and observations were very useful in understanding stakeholder concerns with implementing systems for electronic certification. The PAC recommended that all governance bodies should be open to the participation of ad hoc experts which facilitates the exchange of views and ideas.

The members noted that the PAC consists primarily of international organizations. Given that the target of the project is trade facilitation in developing countries, the inclusion of developing country representation would support the project objectives. Members noted that Mr. Francis Lopez has significant experience in working with developing countries and has strong linkages to many developing countries in Asia. His inclusion in the PAC will provide an important link to developing country views. Additionally, ad hoc experts may be invited to discussions as appropriate.

The members recognized that the funding provided for the project would not facilitate ongoing in-country implementation support. The members proposed that a further project may be required to assist countries with implementing ePhyto beyond the life of this project. However, the members noted that the project design should focus on developing tools that can be used by countries to deliver further internal training (e.g. of in-country officials, etc.) once focused training has been provided. Ms. Ben Haji reported that in deploying ASYCER (which was developed for electronic phytosanitary certification to be used in conjunction with ASYCUDA, the customs single window platform widely used in developing countries) training is provided to a limited number of country contacts, who once trained provide further training in-country and carry out training in neighbouring countries.

# Close of the meeting

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair. A next meeting date and location was not established but would be determined by way of electronic communication.