IPPC General Update

Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat

Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide an update from the Secretariat primarily on those issues not covered under other agenda items for the SPG. Overall, the IPPC Secretariat has had a fairly successful year – capacity development and standard setting activities have proceeded as usual. In addition, a new initiative came up with a focus on implementation. This will be covered elsewhere in the SPG discussions, but it has the potential of changing the approach to the work of the IPPC. There is also a renewed emphasis on national reporting obligations, including additional personnel on the Secretariat staff dedicated to that effort. At the same time, a few familiar faces left the Secretariat, with the capacity development side being particularly hard hit losing two staff members. The process to replace them is well along, but regrettably is taking longer than anticipated.

FAO work planning and other Institutional issues in the organization

1. Following the official transition of the IPPC Secretariat to the Office of the Assistant Director General in January 2014, the IPPC has been participating in regular discussions and staff meetings at the departmental level. There is still a lot more to be done to raise the profile of the IPPC both within the FAO as well as outside, especially for resource mobilization, but the Secretariat is taking the necessary initial steps.
2. The turmoil and additional workload experienced during the previous year related to the IPPC’s participation in the development of the new FAO Strategic Objectives has been less problematic so far this year. The IPPC Secretariat remains ready for what new tasks may be forthcoming as related to monitoring and reporting activities.
3. The FAO evaluation for governance reform is ongoing. As a part of the evaluation, the IPPC Secretariat recently responded to a questionnaire on statutory body issues (i.e. “Article XIV body” issues) which is intended to follow up earlier work done by the FAO legal department. There have been some positive changes, but there are still a number of issues to be addressed. In particular, the use of the IPPC logo (and other logos used by other semi-independent bodies) was brought into question recently by the FAO. The Secretariat believes that this issue has been resolved, but it is emblematic of the awareness raising that still must be done within FAO regarding the IPPC, and the statutory bodies in general.

Strategic nature of the SPG

1. The Secretariat continues to focus on developing the SPG into a broader forum for the discussion of strategic issues related to the Convention, in addition to looking at some of the more complicated issues facing the CPM. In response to a requirement for short papers by SPG participants on the topic of “The IPPC in 20 Years”, the Secretariat has received 12 papers (as of 30 September), which should be considered an initial success and lead to fruitful discussions. It is hoped that this subject will provide the occasion for countries to more actively identify and contribute to discussions on strategic issues and will stay as a standing agenda item.

Biodiversity-related Convention

1. As announced earlier, the IPPC became the seventh member to the Biodiversity-related Convention Liaison Group (BLG). The BLG is made up of seven international conventions which focus on biodiversity issues: the Convention on Biological Diversity (year of entry into force: 1993), the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1975), the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2004), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971), the World Heritage Convention (1972) and the International Plant Protection Convention (1952).  This is a significant milestone following the inclusion by the CPM of protection of the environment as one of the four Strategic Objectives of the IPPC Strategic Framework. A number of actions to follow up this recognition are taking place to ensure the maximum use of this opportunity to raise awareness about the IPPC. This includes the participation of the Secretariat at the upcoming Conference of the Parties of the CBD in Korea, as well as a planned teleconference with the CBD Secretariat to reactivate a thorough review and update of the Joint Work Programme.

Standard setting

1. For the standard setting area, meeting reports for all standard setting activities and related documents and presentations are posted on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP). CPM-9 (2014)did adopt three ISPMs , and a diagnostic protocol on *Tilletia indica* Mitra was adopted by the Standards Committee on behalf of CPM. Of particular interest this year, formal objections were received on the draft ISPM on the *Determination of host status of fruit to fruit fly* (Tephritidae)(2006-031) and on seven draft phytosanitary treatments. The next meeting of the standards committee will be taking place during the week of 10-14 November in Rome. The provisional agenda has been posted on the IPP ([www.ippc.int](http://www.ippc.int)).
2. Due to some needed changes, the Online Commenting System (OCS) will be substantially revised in the near future. The IPPC Secretariat has been discussing how to address this issue with the CODEX Secretariat as the two Secretariats are sharing the cost for development of maintenance of the OCS. The current intention is to move forward with a new system that will meet the needs of both organizations for as long into the future as possible.

Capacity development

1. IPPC Capacity Development continues to make positive strides, and a large part of this development has been the hard work of the Capacity Development Committee (CDC). Regrettably, however, the review of the CDC is taking longer than expected. This is unfortunate in view of the need for clarity of mission and purpose that the results of the review are intended to provide with regard to the CDC. In addition, the loss of capacity development personnel has necessitated action on the part of the Capacity Development officer to undertake personnel actions to find replacements. As usual, these replacements are funded only through trust fund resources and do not constitute an increase in staff for capacity development. Unfortunately this process is taking a longer to complete than hoped.
2. New members of the CDC have been nominated and a selection will be made by the Bureau during the week of 6 October. In addition, the IPPC Secretariat, with financial support from the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), has started a project to develop a pool of qualified experts to serve as facilitators of the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool. Applications are due through submission of the online form available on the IPP by **31 October 2014**.
3. By now, the phytosanitary technical resources web page ([www.phytosanitary.info](http://www.phytosanitary.info)) should be quite familiar, and it was also improved this year. The new version of the page was re-launched in March 2014, including a virtual tool on CPM preparation and the Pest Risk Analysis Awareness Raising materials. New materials such as Market access manual, Transit manual and dielectric heating treatment factsheet that were developed under the auspice of the IPPC Secretariat under the direction of the CDC have been posted on the web page.

IPPC regional workshops

1. Several Secretariat staff members have travelled to the first set of IPPC regional workshops and additional workshops will be taking place toward the end of October. This year’s workshops have had a broader perspective which has included an exercise in resource mobilization, as well as a look at other IPPC-related topics. Thus far, the workshops have been positively received with good participation from attendees in all facets of the program.

TC-RPPOs

1. In the past years, the Technical Consultation among Regional Plant Protection Organizations (TC-RPPOs) took place before the SPG meeting, but this year the 26th TC- RPPOs are planned in December. This will be again an important occasion for the RPPOs to discuss various issues among the different regions.

Dispute settlement

1. Regarding Dispute Settlement, a formal request reached the IPPC Secretariat to form an expert panel to review an issue between the Republic of South Africa and the European Union. The Secretariat is actively engaged in moving forward as quickly as possible to establish a panel to review the particulars of the matter, and a call has gone out for experts to serve on the panel. There have been recent discussions to review the current situation of the SBDS and consider how best the subsidiary body should work in the coming years.

ISPM15 symbol registration

1. As you may recall, there is no case requiring the renewal of the registration in 2014, and the tasks are new registrations of the ISPM 15 symbol, which are in progress as planned. With the budget allocated to the tasks, the FAO Legal Office has been taking the leading role closely working with the IPPC Secretariat. Even though there have been a couple of cases where the process needs additional works to smoothen the registration, unexpected hurdles (such as potential legal conflicts) are not too many and stay within the manageable range. In 2014, ISPM 15 symbol registration is initiated in 19 countries: China (Macao SAR), Costa Rica, D.R. of Congo, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Myanmar, Panama, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, Angola, Belize, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan and South Africa. 66 remaining countries will receive ISPM 15 registration in the next 4 years.

WTO issues

1. As is well known, the Secretariat regularly attends the WTO SPS Committee as an international standard setting organization and an observer. As one of the three standards setting bodies for sanitary and phytosanitary matters related to trade, the Secretariat, along with the OIE and Codex have a unique opportunity to update the Committee with information on IPPC activities beyond regular observer reports.
2. A big topic of discussion earlier this year, the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (ATF), did not get finalized as expected and is now in abeyance. The ATF was originally planned to begin the national ratification process this summer. For the moment, the IPPC can only observe and be ready for what will come next. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the situation did not come from the text of the draft agreement. This means that once the core issue is addressed, the process will go ahead as originally planned and the interests and concerns will stay as they were. The Secretariat continues to monitor this issue closely.
3. The Secretariat also is deeply engaged in the activities of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF). The IPPC Coordinator is currently the Chairperson of the STDF Expert Working Group. The Expert Working Group reviews the project proposals presented for possible funding by the STDF. In addition, this year the IPPC was one of the voices pushing for a review of the STDF operational rules. This effort was successful and is currently ongoing.

Communication

1. Communications remains a weak area for the Secretariat, but improvements are being made. Following the development of the Phytosanitary Resources page ([www.phytosanitary.info](http://www.phytosanitary.info)), it was decided to revamp and modernize the look and feel of the main IPPC web page ([www.ippc.int](http://www.ippc.int)). While some additional testing and review remains to be completed, it is anticipated that the functionality of the site will be markedly improved.
2. The Secretariat has also engaged a professional communications firm to finalize the IPPC communications workplan, prepare the 2014 IPPC annual report, and direct the IPPC communications effort. This new development, along with an increased focus on resource mobilization and membership in the Biodiversity Liaison Group should provide a good springboard for resource mobilization in 2015.