Report of the Meeting of the ephyto steering group (ESG) and

Project Technical Committee (PTC)

World Trade Organization, Geneva, Switzerland

13-17 March 2017

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# Participants

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Simon Padilla, STDF

Shashank Rai, UNICC

Shane Sela, IPPC

Josiah Syanda, KE (Africa)

Venkatram Venkateswaran, UNICC

# Welcome and introductions

The IPPC Secretariat opened the meeting. He thanked the meeting participants and the United International Computing Centre (UNICC) for attending. He noted that the meeting participants had to travel significant distances to attend and were strongly committed to advancing the ePhyto Solution. The IPPC Secretariat thanked the host, the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF) for the commitment to participating in the meeting and for arranging the meeting location.

The Chair remarked that this was the first in person meeting of the Project Technical Committee (PTC) and the ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) in 2017 and that there was a lot of work to complete in getting the required technical information finalized for advancing the development of the ePhyto Solution. He also noted that the work plan of the PTC/ESG needed to be thoroughly worked through to allow the members to more easily identify their workloads given that much of the work is completed on the sides of their desks.

# Selection of rapporteur

Mr. Nico Horn was acclaimed as rapporteur. The members and the Secretariat thanked Mr. Horn for stepping forward.

# Adoption of the agenda

The members reviewed the agenda (Annex 1). They agreed to adjust timing of several agenda items to permit the UNICC staff and members of the STDF to attend other meetings.

# Review of documents

The documents list was reviewed. Most documents had been posted to the work area of the PTC, but several additional documents were provided by members in the week prior to the meeting and these had been circulated to members but had not been posted. The additional documents would be posted to the work area by the end of the meeting.

# Terms of reference (ESG/PTC)

The members reviewed the Terms of Reference (ToR) of both the PTC and ESG. The IPPC Secretariat reported that the ESG ToR had been reviewed by the Commission of Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) Bureau, several changes had been suggested and the ToR adjusted accordingly.

The members recognized that the CPM Bureau member of the ESG is unable to participate frequently. It was recognized that this member had a number of other important priorities in relation to the operation of the Bureau and the CPM. The members felt that it was still important that the Bureau be represented during meetings to provide both advice and governance to the ESG. The members proposed that the Secretariat raise the participation of the Bureau to the Bureau members during its next meeting in Incheon.

The IPPC Secretariat indicated that the ToR of the PTC had not been changed since previously being reviewed by the membership in 2016. The tasks of the PTC were still in keeping with providing technical advice and guidance to advancing the ePhyto Project supported by the STDF and other partners.

The Chair noted that other related committees and groups are also elements to the development of the project and he was unclear how the advice of the various groups would fit in with the timely development of the project. The IPPC Secretariat noted that the Secretariat is responsible for the project’s development and that the project will be advanced through gathering advice in reasonable timeframes from the various committees based upon their roles and responsibilities. In some cases, the purpose of including other committees in the development of the project was not just for advice related to project development but also in sharing advances in development with members of other organizations undertaking similar work. Although such a structure has been one factor in slowing the advancement of the ePhyto Solution, it is also recognized that the Solution will be capable of greater international integration with other paperless initiatives which is important for countries undertaking business process changes to implement these paperless systems within national initiatives.

The members agreed that the IPPC Secretariat should continue to act as the key liaison point with other international organizations. They also proposed that the ESG IPPC Secretariat should continue to invite members of these other international organizations in PTC/ESG meetings to share information as appropriate with the responsibilities of the committee/group, as appropriate

The members reviewed the participation of UN/CEFACT on the PTC. The STDF noted that there had been a number of issues in developing harmonized lists and codes which may have been more effectively addressed if a UN/CEFACT member could have advocated the changes required in the schema in the relevant UN/CEFACT working group on behalf of the IPPC. The members agreed that the participation of a UN/CEFACT representative would be beneficial for some discussions related to issues with the schema. However it was also noted that many of the discussions of the group were related to other technical and capacity development topics which are not relevant to the UN/CEFACT. Some members had consulted with UN/CEFACT representatives and proposed contacting an appropriate representative from the Agriculture Domain of UN/CEFACT to participate in meetings of the PTC as is required. Recognizing the limited funding available to the project, the IPPC Secretariat suggested that participation of a UN/CEFACT representative should only be pursed when required by specific topic discussions to avoid supporting their attendance at the meetings where they may not be able to contribute broadly to the topics on the agenda. The IPPC Secretariat indicated that they will attend the next UN/CEFACT Forum in Geneva to understand UN/CEFACT processes for standard setting and to maintain representation of the Secretariat on UN/CEFACT. Additionally, the Secretariat could bring up any issues raised by the PTC/ESG and in future address and specific issues related to the schema and its use in phytosanitary certification.

# Legal framework for the operation of the hub and GeNS

The IPPC Secretariat has contacted the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Legal Office regarding defining the appropriate legal framework for the operation of the Solution. The FAO Legal Office has reviewed sample agreements provided by members and suggested that it will develop agreements outlining the terms and obligations of using the Hub and Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS). Countries would be required to sign these agreements as part of an on-boarding process.

Members noted that currently some countries also require a service agreement between countries to confirm the operational parameters of the service. Countries would most likely still require such an agreement to confirm the operational parameters of the hub service. The UNICC noted that the Hub is operated by the UNICC as service provider to the IPPC Secretariat and the UNICC will have a service agreement with the IPPC secretariat. Therefore such any agreement on service operation should be between the IPPC Secretariat and the country. However, recognizing that the operating parameters for the hub are being established by the UNICC, the UNICC agreed to develop a short guidance document based upon the agreement templates provided by members that could be revised to form the framework for an agreement between the IPPC and countries. Members felt that countries may still require slight country-specific adjustments to the service agreement to address specific country-based needs.

The IPPC Secretariat agreed to continue to consult with the FAO Legal Office to finalize both the obligations and responsibilities agreements as well as the service agreement outlining the operational parameters of the hub so that these documents may be tested for use during the piloting phase.

# STDF Project Plan

The IPPC Secretariat confirmed that the project plan had been approved in December and that the project funds had been transferred to FAO. Although the funds have not been deposited in a specific account, the spending of both funds provided by STDF and by donor members are being tracked separately and spending reports can be presented to CPM or CPM Bureau. Donor funding provided by the United States in early 2016, for example, was used to pay for the drafting work in defining the specifications for the hub and GeNS undertaken by the UNICC.

# CPM

The IPPC Secretariat has drafted a paper for presentation to CPM-12. The members had reviewed the paper. One member noted that the revised ToR of the ESG was not included in the paper and proposed that perhaps CPM should endorse the revised ToR. The Secretariat noted that the paper did request that CPM continue to support the ESG and that the process for revision of the ToR is included in point 7 of the paper. The Secretariat agreed to further discuss the need for including the specific revised ToR at CPM-12 with the CPM Bureau at its April meeting.

The Secretariat noted that it will be developing a presentation reporting on developments in ePhyto for presentation to CPM-12. The Secretariat agreed to share the presentation with members for comment.

The Secretariat also reported that a one hour side session on ePhyto is planned for CPM-12. The STDF and the IPPC Secretariat have proposed that the side session focuses on providing NPPOs with an understanding of trade facilitation (TF) organizations which operate in countries and which may be used to support ePhyto adoption by leveraging government TF policies. Members agreed that such a session would be very useful for countries and would provide more relevant information than repeating information on the operation of the ePhyto Solution which has been presented previously. However, members cautioned that a presentation would have to provide specific information on how NPPOs could engage with TF and government policy organizations to advance a national ePhyto implementation agenda. Recognizing the time constraints for the session, members agreed to develop and present some ideas for a presentation.

# Update on IPPC/UNICC contractual arrangements

The UNICC reported that an agreement to support the development and operation of the hub had been presented to the IPPC Secretariat. The agreement had been reviewed by the Secretariat and has been forwarded to the FAO Information Technology Office (CIO). The CIO is responsible for information technology (IT) service agreements and has been requested to sign the agreement so that work can commence. It is expected that the agreement should be signed within a few weeks.

The agreement spells out the project costs of establishing the system and operating it for a two year period. The projected costs are similar to those identified in the project budget. It is clear from these however, that the project funds will not support operation of the system until a self-sustaining funding model has been adopted and operationalized by CPM. The members noted that CPM has to be made aware that bridge funding will be required to sustain the system until funding model is operating. The Secretariat should once again raise during its presentation to CPM the need to obtain donor funding to support operation.

# HUB development

The UNICC presented the revised hub specification. They noted that most of the changes made to the document following comments from the PTC were editorial although a few were substantial and suggested that the members review them during the meeting. The members reviewed these elements as follows:

1. *Certificates issued for commodities in-transit to a third country* - The members agreed that the electronic certificate needs to meet the requirements of both the destination country and the transit country and therefore it is appropriate that the certificate issued should meet both countries requirements and the same certificate would be placed in different envelopes issued to each country.
2. *Codes used for the status of the certificate* – the members concluded that the codes: issued, approved, withdrawn and rejected are the only ones required to complete all transactions associated with exchange of certificates. Furthermore, the members agreed that during the pilot only the codes for issued and withdrawn would be used.
3. *Reporting requirements –* after considering whether the system should provide detailed reporting, the members concluded that the most effective solution that allows the greatest flexibility is to provide countries with access to the exchange data in the form of a downloadable file which could be edited and analysed (e.g. by using Microsoft Excel, etc.).

Some other minor changes were discussed and included in the document. The specification was then approved by the members and finalized to prevent any further changes until after development.

The members then reviewed the WSDL document as follows:

1. *Maximum size of files to be exchanged* – the members agreed that the only attachments to be included should be those which support re-export phytosanitary certification (e.g. original phytosanitary certificate). They also expressed the need to limit volumes being sent to reduce server costs. However they concluded that no specific limitation should be applied but the volumes of the transactions should be monitored during the pilot to determine if large volume files are being exchanged.
2. *Terminology used in the WSDL description -* they made a number of requests to clarify the text of the WSDL so that it could be easily understood by national plant protection organizations (NPPOs) while recognizing that real intent of the document is for IT specialists.
3. *Review of the use of ISO country codes on the envelope -* the members noted that some NPPOs represent areas not internationally recognized as countries. To ensure consistency in the terminology the system should only recognize transactions using the ISO two letter code since these are available for most locations with an NPPO, without the system recognizing a location as a country.
4. *Communication of approval of certificates by the importing country* – members noted that approval of certificates is not undertaken when certificates are issued in paper format. Hence a requirement that a receiving country notify the exporting country that a certificate has been accepted ads a new requirement. The members also noted that the scope of service is only the exchange of a certificate from the exporting country to the importing country without the communication of the certificate status by the importing country to the exporting country. However bilaterally countries could agree upon messages being returned through the hub to verify the status of the consignment. For example, country A could agree with country B to provide an envelope with a status code: “approved” to verify that the certificate was accepted by the importing country. However, the members noted that harmonisation of such transactions is complicated given that countries would need to determine what terms such as “approved” confirms (e.g. release of the goods, approval of the certificate as meeting import requirements, etc.).

Other minor adjustments to the document were also discussed by the members and the document approved.

The UNICC agreed to revise the hub and WSDL documents by 27th March 2017 at which time both documents would be considered finalised until after development and piloting of the hub.

The UNICC indicated that the system should be ready for piloting in late July or early August. A service level guide will also be developed by the UNICC to describe the service operation details including contact information, how service issues will be addressed, etc.

The members noted that there is also a need for additional guidance documents to assist countries with implementing exchange through the hub. For example, countries will require guidance on connecting to the hub. UNICC agreed that these documents will be produced as part of the development and implementation of the hub, once the FAO-UNICC agreement is finalized.

The UNICC indicated that during the development of the hub, some testing will be required prior to the pilot. This is to test the environment, rather than the exchange, with ‘empty envelopes’. This includes testing the API, for example. The members of the PTC/ESG will provide expertise through their in-house information technology staff to undertake this testing. The UNICC indicated that they will establish an electronic collaboration platform where test countries can carry out mock exchanges. With respect to the test environment, the UNICC reported that they will be developing a test plan which may be reviewed by the PTC.

The additional components required for implementing the pilot, including the legal documents, pilot testing requirements, business modelling requirements, etc. is likely to require significantly longer development time. Furthermore countries will require time to establish requests for change, etc. As a result, the commencement of the pilot is likely to start later in 2017.

The members noted that countries have not received much information regarding the developments in ePhyto since early-2016, they felt that an update on the potential requirements for implementing the hub service would ensure that countries that are preparing to implement systems can be ready to implement at the appropriate time.

The members reviewed the timeline for the development of the hub and GeNS. They noted that the GeNS would require significantly more time for development, given that an evaluation of the ASYCER system will initially need to be undertaken. They concluded that this divergence in development timeframes should not slow testing of the hub. They proposed that testing of the hub by countries with existing national systems should proceed independently of the testing of the GeNS. This approach would therefore result in two separate pilots.

They then considered the criteria required for the evaluation of the hub pilot. They developed some detailed suggestions on what criteria could be used. The details are appended as Annex 2. The general considerations included: the simplicity of operation; the appropriateness of the test plan; the clarity and completeness of the on-boarding process; the appropriateness of the legal framework for operation; whether the technical details included on the envelope were sufficient; etc.

The group agreed that the hub pilot should be limited to 120 days followed by an evaluation completed in 30 days.

The UNICC also explained their service warranty. They indicated that they provide an unlimited service warranty following production. However following production any changes in service operation or routine maintenance will be factored into the operating costs of the system.

# GeNS development

The members reviewed the specifications based upon the changes made by UNICC in response to comments from the PTC/ESG resulting from its meeting in Argentina and proposed the following:

* *NPPO administrators* – they emphasized the need to have at least two NPPO administrators identified so that a contact point is always available. The administrator should be able to assign administrator rights to others in the NPPO operation and change the status of NPPO roles. This option should allow the NPPO to consistently maintain administrators. The UNICC agreed to administratively maintain an up to date contact point in the country by requiring the NPPO to update the listing of the NPPO administrators on a routine basis.
* *Offline access* – the members noted that in some developing countries access to the internet may be interrupted or network connections may be weak. The UNICC agreed to identify separately the cost of developing an offline module. The offline component would be centrally managed to ensure consistency between the overall system and the offline data entry.
* *Administrator’s ability to configure the system –* Although the members did not propose that administrator should have broad abilities to configure the system, they felt that administrators should be clear on what features could be configured. The members noted that this should be clear in the training of countries.
* *Withdrawal of certificates and/or replacement of certificates –* the members clarified the workflow related to the withdrawal or replacement of certificates. They noted that the workflows were combined, but that in many cases a company may request withdrawal of the certificate without requiring a replacement certificate. While in other cases they may request that the original certificate be replaced with a new certificate. The withdrawal process may be summarized as the issuance of a withdrawal request envelope, while the replacement process is “withdrawal” followed by the request “create new certificate”
* *Copy of certificates for repeated certificate requests –* the members considered the work flow of certificates being issued for repeat consignments and for shipments that are split following issuance of a certificate. The work flows introduce the need to copy and edit information. However, the members agreed that the copy of information should be simple and not introduce complexities in managing and securing of the information. The members agreed that the copy function initiates a new request and should allow users to edit the fields as required. The members also noted that the copy function should be available for certificate requests, for issued certificates and for certificates in the queue for issuance.
* *Issuance of Phytosanitary Certificates for Re-export* – the members reviewed the workflow of issuance of certificates for re-export developed by UNICC and appropriately revised it to reflect the process of certification. The members noted that some countries have requirements inconsistent with ISPM 12 (e.g. requirements for issuing re-export certificates for commodities that are at first import not accompanied by Phytosanitary Certificates) and this should not be accounted for in the workflow.
* *Validation of exchanges* – The members noted that importing countries should have access to validate any certificate. The validation should provide the complete details of the certificate to allow NPPOs to verify that the certificate was legitimately issued and contains only original data. The members noted that exposing the data to access introduces new legal risks which also must be addressed by the IPPC Secretariat. The members agreed that some information on the certificate should be redacted to prevent exposing trade data (e.g. name and address of exporter, name and address of importer, etc.).
* *In country storage of data* - the members concluded that countries should comply with the general scope of the system which includes central data storage and should obtain the required legislation to support use of the system. It was also noted that countries will be able to store PDF copies of issued and received certificates fulfilling any obligations to access certificates in-country.
* *Change requests* - The members also considered the process for dealing with requests for changes to the operation of the GeNS received during the piloting. The PTC/ESG agreed that changes only be made where required during the pilot. Requests should be catalogued. Any urgent requests should be triaged and addressed. Following the pilot, all other requested changes could then be evaluated and adopted if appropriate.

UNICC agreed to revise the GeNS document by mid-April and to recirculate it to the PTC/ESG for final review.

Should UNICC be selected to develop and deploy the GeNS, the UNICC indicated that it will develop user guides and other technical documents required for deployment in parallel with the development of the system. The IPPC and UNICC would then conduct training in countries which focuses on adjusting business processes, aligning work flows with system work flows, determining country needs for capacity development The UNICC would also then conduct training in the technical operation of the system. The members also suggested that IPPC Secretariat should establish some electronic training tools that can be distributed to countries.

UNICC will also develop a survey to find out the IT capacities of countries, e.g. the availability of scanners, storage facilities and kind and version of office IT in use in the country. Such a survey was already conducted in Sri Lanka and Samoa.

A member raised the issue of the naming of the generic ePhyto national system. The members again noted that the term “generic” has been misinterpreted by some countries. Some countries perceive the term generic as referring to some system that links national systems to the hub. The members also noted that much of the confusion is related to the fact that the documentation describing the GeNS is in English and is therefore misinterpreted by countries using other languages. The members proposed that many of the factsheets developed should be translated.

# Assessment of ASYCER for use as the GeNS

The members requested an update on the review of ASYCER as a potential option for the GeNS. The Secretariat noted that United Nations Centre for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) were presented with the specifications in January 2017 with the expectation that they would provide a proposal for using the ASYCER system as the basis of the GeNS. UNCTAD has responded with some comments on the specification and has requested some additional information regarding the data required for the system. The IPPC Secretariat met with UNCTAD to discuss the operation of the system. UNCTAD has agreed to develop a proposal for use of ASYCER as an option for the GeNS by 15 April 2017.

Members felt that ASYCER is unlikely to meet the specification and noted that the system is currently unused. They noted that although the system had been set up in Ethiopia for use in exchanging certificates between Ethiopia and the Netherlands the systems use has been discontinued. The IPPC Secretariat reported that some international organizations have expressed concern regarding the use of ASYCER.

The members discussed the process associated with evaluation of the ASYCER system. They proposed that the process should be:

* Establishment of technical criteria by UNICC
* Establishment of additional business criteria by the IPPC and ESG/PTC
* Receipt of the submission by UNCTAD
* Evaluation of submission against the technical and business criteria by IPPC, PTC/ESG and UNICC
* Submission of a report for review by the ePhyto Project Advisory Council (and perhaps by the Industry Advisory Group)

The members proposed some key criteria that should be considered which is included as Annex 3.

Should ASYCER prove to be an unworkable option, UNICC will lead the assessment and selection of other existing software that may be reconfigured for use as GeNS. UNICC may issue a call for tenders or develop a proposal in-house.

# Harmonisation of phytosanitary data elements

Mr. Dellis noted that he and Mr. Alessandrini had made some minor changes to complete the lists with respect to the narrowing the items of internationally agreed extensive lists to identify only those required on a Phytosanitary Certificate. They requested that IPPC Secretariat begin to populate the translations of the terms identified in the limited lists.

The members noted that there were several elements of the schema that have been established at the wrong level which creates some practical difficulties in issuing the certificate. Furthermore, the group identified some specific areas of the schema that do not include sufficient elements or is missing language options for certifying in additional languages. Mssrs. Dellis and Alessandrini have distilled some of the lists, but have noted that some lists are incomplete. The members proposed that with the GeNS there is an opportunity to collect data on the missing information by collecting information entered as free text by countries particularly during the piloting phase.

The members also noted that the SPS schema does not accurately align with phytosanitary terminology (e.g. the term “processing” has been used to refer to treatments). The group proposed that once the GeNS has been built and tested, the Secretariat should engage UN/CEFACT in developing or adjusting the schema to fit phytosanitary needs.

Mr. Horn presented the product description document that had been developed following a meeting with the Technical Panel for the Glossary (TPG). The group recognized that advancing the harmonization of terminology related to product description is really a role for the Technical Panel for the Glossary. The PTC/ESG has expertise to address the technical aspects of the Solution, but advancing consistency of terminology is outside of their expertise and scope of the working group. The members concluded that the easiest way to address the product classifications was to define them independently as plant product types, intended use types and processing types. They suggested that in this way the certifying authority and the importing NPPO could identify the plant product with where appropriate the intended use and the level of processing (as required by import requirements or clarity in defining the commodity). A notation in the guidance would indicate that NPPOs should avoid combining types where they are inconsistent with defined terms.

Mr. Horn agreed to revise the proposal to reflect this suggestion. The proposal would be reviewed and then forwarded by the Chair of the PTC/ESG to the TPG for review. The group also proposed that the approach should be field tested during the pilot. Mr. Horn noted that the TPG had proposed that all changes to product descriptions should be approved by the Standards Committee. The members noted that such a process would unnecessarily delay the introduction of new terms and would create difficulties for NPPOs in meeting export demands. The IPPC Secretariat agreed to discuss the oversight role of the Standards Committee in validating changes to product descriptions, this process should be one that is sufficiently responsive to the needs of countries that require changes efficiently to permit trade and to the flexibility of the ePhyto system.

# Inter-agency collaboration

Mr. Erik Bosker, representative of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems (CCFICS) joined the meeting and provided a short summary of progress in exchanging electronic veterinary certificates. He noted that the Netherlands is exchanging food-related certificates with Russia and China. He suggested that to verify that certificates have reached the receiving authority they use the confirmation provided by the web service. He stated that the use of status codes does not necessarily confirm the arrival of the certificate at its destination. The members of the PTC/ESG noted that the status codes are used to communicate the type of certificate not to confirm arrival of the shipment. Furthermore in the proposed system, communication of approval of the certificate by the NPPO of the importing country is only envisioned as a component to be added in the future. Countries will be able to verify delivery of certificates by the hub.

Mr. Bosker also provided a presentation of the work being done with respect to work on developing e-certification for CODEX. Mr. Bosker noted that the standard for electronic exchange is only a guidance document (although WTO recognizes these documents as standards). He noted that CCFICS Forum is meeting in May 2017 to advance discussions on the scope of CODEX involvement in electronic certification. He noted that the IPPC has chosen to both establish standards and to provide the technical tools to facilitate the exchange. He suggested that this would be beyond the current scope of CODEX work, but added that the CCFICS would welcome participation by IPPC Secretariat at the Forum to provide an update on the strategic considerations for ePhyto.

Marcos Silva joined the group to talk about the development initiatives in the Amazon region under the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). Mr. Silva indicated that he is working on a project to better manage trade in protected plants and animals. The project is focused on improving capacity in the region in CITES using improved electronic technologies. One element of this effort is focused on improved electronic permitting. In addition there are a number of initiatives to advance electronic traceability, interoperability of data systems, etc.

The ESG agreed to continue to collaborate with both groups through the Secretariat and encouraged the Secretariat to engage with other international organizations involved in electronic exchange.

# Development of the funding strategy

The members reviewed the proposed ToR for a consultant to undertake an analysis of potential business models for funding and recommend an approach which may be used to support the long term operation of ePhyto. The members felt that the scope of analysis repeated some existing work which had been done by the ePhyto Steering Group. They noted that the ESG had considered carefully the application of a “per transaction fee” which they had discounted for a number of reasons including that:

* the cost of administering the fund is more than for alternative approaches;
* determining who should pay is complex (e.g. NPPO of importing countries, NPPO of exporting countries, etc.);
* CPM members had indicated that developing countries cannot be asked to support the system at the same level as developed countries;
* the application of uniform transactional costs does not consider the cost recovery approaches of countries which may in some cases result in greater impacts to agricultural producers;
* It is difficult to adjust transaction based fees to support increases in demand, particularly since the operational costs of the Solution is step-wise (i.e. increase in servers may not be required until a certain use limit is achieved at which time costs would increase step-wise)

The members also concluded that the task of establishing a funding strategy should be split; focussing first on making an inventory of existing approaches for recovery and only later, when the costs of operation are more clear, work on possible cost recovery options for ePhyto.

# 2017 - Year of Trade Facilitation

Mr. Alessandrini reported that a workshop on ePhyto is planned for Brazil in October. The workshop is intended as an outreach opportunity and is being supported by Comite de Sanidad Vegetal (COSAVE), Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA) and Comunidad Andina (CA). The purpose of the workshop is to advance understanding of the proposed ePhyto Solution and to demonstrate the systems.

Mr. Neimanis also noted that Asia and Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC) has allocated US $40, 000 to host a Global ePhyto Symposium in November 2017. The intent of the symposium is to link to the annual theme of the IPPC, “Plant Health and Trade Facilitation”. The intent of the symposium is to improve the capacity of countries in implementing ePhyto. He noted that Australia is also looking to contribute funds to support this symposium and will at least provide organisational support.

The members noted that with these symposia occurring in November and that the hub and GeNS pilots are also expected to have commenced close to this timing, participation in the sessions will be challenging. It could be considered to hold the South American regional workshop in Brazil later, e.g. early 2018. An ePhyto workshop proposed for the African region is dependent on the Secretariat obtaining funds to support the workshop.

# Forward work plan – 2017/18

The members identified a detailed workplan (Annex 4).

# PTC/ESG meetings

The members proposed an in-person meeting for September or October to review progress on the development of the Solution. The exact details are to be worked out by email. The members agreed to continue with virtual meetings on a monthly basis as coordinated by the Secretariat.

# Annex 1 – Meeting agenda

**ePhyto Steering Group (ESG) and**

**Project Technical Committee (PTC) Meeting**

**World Trade Organization, Centre William Rappard,**

**Rue de Lausanne 154, Ch-1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland**

**13-17 March 2017**

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|  | Update on IPPC/UNICC contractual arrangements |  |
|  | HUB development | 6 | UNICC |
| * Finalisation of requirements
 |
| * WSDL and ‘how to connect to HUB’ document
 |
| * HUB build timeframes
 |
|  | GeNS development | 7 |
| * Finalisation of requirements – walk through workflows
 |
| * Minimum IT requirements for countries
 |
| * Central/stand-alone options for GeNS
 |
| * Discussions with UNCTAD
 | IPPC Secretariat |
| * GeNS build timeframes
 | UNICC |
|  | Harmonisation |  |  |
| * Mapping document
 | 8, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 | Dellis/ Allesandrini |
| * Code sets
 |
| * Level of mapping (certificate v line level)
 |
| * Changes to UN/CEFACT schema to support harmonization
 | 23, 24 |
| * Product description, list, how to update and involvement glossary panel
 | 10 | Horn |
|  | Pilot  |  |  |
| * On boarding of pilot countries
 |  | UNICC |
| * + Security agreements/sign on agreements
 |  | IPPC Secretariat |
| * Approach, tools identification, etc.
 |  | All |
| * Measure pilot outcomes/success
 |  |
| * + Establishing KPIs
 | 11 |
| * + Setting benchmarks and measuring outcomes
 |  |
| * Decision to ‘go live’
 |  |  |
|  | Pilot countries |  |  |
| * Business process analysis and work planning
 |  | All |
| * Current preparedness of Sri Lanka, Samoa, Ghana
 | 26 |
| * Next meetings/workshops
 |  |
| * Readiness analysis of countries with national systems
 |  |
|  | Inter-agency collaboration |  |  |
| * Current/future work & collaboration opportunities
 | 15 | CODEX, CITES |
| * Innovative Use of New Technologies and Information to Enhance the Implementation of CITES in the Amazon Region
 | 25 |
|  | Capacity development |  | IPPC Secretariat/ STDF |
| * Existing business tools
 |  |
| * Future development
 |  |
| * Collaboration with CITES and UNESCAP
 |  |
|  | Development of the funding strategy  |  |
| * Consultancy
 | 12 | IPPC Secretariat/ STDF |
| * Analysis of costs and options
 |  |
| * Expert meeting
 |  |
| * Output and next step
 |  |
|  | 2017 - Year of Trade Facilitation  |  | All |
| * WTO collaboration and stakeholder engagement
 |  |
| * Potential workshops/symposia - Africa, South America and International
 |  |
|  | Forward work plan – 2017/18 |  |
| * PTC work plan
 |  |
| PAC/ISG work/meetings |  |
| * Teleconference schedule
 |  |
| * Next face-to-face meeting
 |  |
|  | Other issues |  |

# Annex 2 – Hub Evaluation Criteria

The pilot of the HUB is anticipated to commence from Q3 2017. System testing will occur prior to the 120-day pilot phase.

Prior to making the HUB available to additional countries, the pilot phase will be evaluated to ensure it is meeting intended technical functionality from a client (country) perspective. The pilot phase will be evaluated within one month of the pilot ending.

The PTC will evaluate the responses from the pilot countries.

Depending on the results of the evaluation, system enhancements may be required prior to general availability use of the HUB and additional countries on-boarding in Q1 2018.

Evaluation of the pilot phase will be based on the following criteria.

On-boarding process

* Time frame to reconfigure of existing national system to pilot in the HUB
* User guides – were they easy to understand? Did they cover all functions?
* On-line resources. Code sets, technical data
* Lesson learnt

System function – technical testing of the hub

* Schema able to be met and processed
* Envelope header
* Issued and withdrawal work flows are working
* WSDL
* Support level from technical help desk
* UI functionality for transaction log, admin portal
* Import and/or export usage

Configuration of HUB functions (eg. Number of certificates)

Appropriateness of test plan

* Envelope header appropriate for IPPC to evaluate the HUB
* Number of certificates
* Status of certificates
* Number of countries exchanging
* Number of countries exporting/importing

Transaction log

Compliance of HUB with requirements

* Bug/Issue identification
* Issue triage
* Issue fix, traceability

Decision on potential changes to HUB requirements

Expected timeframes to use both imports/exports

Evaluation of the operation of the agreement between UNICC and IPPC

Subsequent to the pilot phase, confirmation of participation will be required from countries. Internal approval processes will cover

1. Financial
2. Project closure. Internal sign off that country will use HUB system
3. Legal framework document (agreement with the IPPC)

# Annex 3 – Criteria for the evaluation of ASYCER

**Evaluation of ASCYER as GeNS**

The IPPC assessment of the UNCTAD system called ASCYER to be suitable for rebuilt to suit the use as GeNS. The assessment will be conducted in two stages – 1. Technical and 2. Business

1. **Technical assessment** based on assessment criteria and analysis by UNICC and IPPC (through the PTC).
* Proposal able to satisfy GeNS specifications
	+ Web based
	+ Central hosting
	+ ISPM 12 compliant
	+ Ability to connect to the HUB (WSDL compliant)
	+ Compliant with specified ~~(issuing, re-exporting and replace)~~ workflows
	+ User management
	+ Security of system
	+ 24/7 availability and down time expectation
	+ Privacy of data by user role
	+ Password policy
	+ Future needs for mobile usage
	+ Arrangements of system ownership and hosting
* Supplier competence
	+ Depth of skills and experience of project staff
	+ Readiness to commence
* Alignment with industry best practises and standards (eg. IT, ISO standards, etc)
	+ User interface
		1. appropriate to end users
		2. Simple
		3. Intuitive
	+ Technology stack
		1. Hardware
		2. Software
		3. Speed of scalability
	+ Quality system for deliverables
		1. Certification
		2. Documented system
* Support for multi-tenanted environment and growing partnerships/usage
	+ Test and production environment
	+ On-boarding process for new countries
	+ Potential for additional organisations joining the system
* Consistent global service delivery with options for local resources
1. **Business assessment** criteria to be conducted by the IPPC
	* Contractual arrangement
		1. Efficient administrative procedure and costs related with establishment, operations and maintenance of system
		2. Timeframes for contract of engagement
		3. Readiness of resources to commence
		4. Ownership of system code and data
		5. Flexibility to accommodate change without penalties
		6. Warranty (eg. Production bug fixes within agreed time)
	* Capacity and capability to perform the work within the IPPC timeframe
		1. Timeframes for build, testing and implementation
	* Past performance
		1. Experience in the IT industry
		2. Experience with centralised web based systems; producing, sending and receiving electronic certificates; and issuing paper certificates
		3. Global inter-agency collaboration experience
		4. Range of managed services aligned to IPPC business needs
		5. Customer recommendation
	* Experience in Training
		1. Development of user manuals
		2. Delivery of end user training
		3. On-going maintenance of training modules and delivery
	* Client support services
		1. Customer service policy and practise
		2. Surveys for customer feedback
		3. change management
		4. initial implementation
		5. level of on-going support
		6. scalability
	* Political neutrality
		1. Location and regulatory capacity of servers
	* Financial considerations
		1. Build price
		2. Operations and maintenance costs (considering countries coming on line)
		3. Price breaks and quantity discounts (economy of scale)
		4. Satisfies best value analysis

# Annex 4 – Work plan

| **Action Item** | **Lead** | **Due Date** **(2017)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Revise harmonisation of product description proposal | Horn | 31 March |
| Finalise hub specification and WSDL document | UNICC | 27 March  |
| Update Global ePhyto and Trade Facilitation Symposium (GeTCS) paper  | Neimanis | 30 March  |
| Feedback on consultancy Terms of Reference  | PTC | 31 March  |
| Finalize mapping and code sets  | Allesandrini/ Dellis/Kabbab | 15 April  |
| Proposal for ASYCER for GeNS provided to IPPC Secretariat  | UNCTAD | 15 April  |
| Finalise consultancy service agreement  | IPPC Secretariat | 15 April |
| Review, respond and update product description proposal  | PTC | 24 April |
| Paper on schema and coding issues  | Allesandrini/ Dellis/Kabbab | 30 April  |
| Paper on ‘principles ‘for cost recovery  | Dellis | 30 April  |
| Assessment of ASYCER proposal  | UNICC/IPPC Secretariat/PTC  | 15 May  |
| Post product description onto IPPC website | IPPC Secretariat | 15 May  |
| Seek input on type of reports from GeNS pilot countries (for imports and exports) | Neimanis | End of May  |
| Finalise assessment criteria for evaluation of ASYCER  | IPPC Secretariat | End of May  |
| Develop and circulate invitation to pilot countries to participate in the hub development pre-pilot testing | IPPC Secretariat | May  |
| Finalise GeNS requirements | UNICC | May  |
| Finalise the ‘how to connect’ to the HUB document | UNICC | June  |
| HUB test plan | UNICC  | June  |
| Finalize paper on procedure for updating product descriptions  | Horn | 30 June  |
| Paper on schema issues to UNCEFACT  | IPPC Secretariat | Post pilot |