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INTERIM COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Sixth Session

Rome, 29 March – 2 April 2004

Role and Functions of the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance

Agenda Item 8.10 of the Provisional Agenda

1. Since its establishment at ICPM-2 in 1999 the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA) has been operating as an informal open-ended working group. Established as a working group to develop a strategic plan and to develop the PCE, its role and functions have changed considerably over the years (see Annex I). Although some components of the work of the SPTA have been ongoing (strategic plan, work programme, budget review, standard setting priorities) most of the activities of the SPTA have been of an *ad hoc* nature assigned by the ICPM or the ICPM Bureau. The ICPM Bureau regards the SPTA as the most important group assisting it in administrative tasks. The Bureau decided that a discussion on the role, structure and functions of the SPTA should be held in order to analyse the current situation and investigate possible improvements to the present system.
2. The SPTA discussed its long term role and composition at its meeting in October 2003. The SPTA recalled the work done by this group over the years, and in particular the development of the strategic and business plans. It recognized the impact that these plans had in relation to an increased level of FAO funding.
3. The SPTA discussed a number of issues identified by the ICPM and Bureau in relation to the operation of the SPTA.
4. These included:
 1. The SPTA does not always have enough time to address technical issues on technical assistance.
 2. Does not have formal terms of reference.
 3. Its structure is unbalanced, with an insufficient representation from developing countries.
 4. Continuity of membership is a problem particularly for developing country attendees.
5. The SPTA discussed a range of possible options to address these issues including separating administrative matters from technical assistance matters and extending the duration of SPTA meetings, so that technical assistance matters could be addressed adequately.

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6. The SPTA had mixed views on the establishment of formal separate (subsidiary) bodies on strategic planning and on technical assistance. While not dismissing this idea completely there were uncertainties on costing, mode of operation, determining membership etc. The SPTA did not agree to recommend formalization of the administrative structures of the ICPM in advance of the coming into force of the revised text of the IPPC.

7. The SPTA:

1. Recognized the very important role the SPTA has played and its contribution to increasing the profile of and the funding for the IPPC.
2. Recognized that the linkage between Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance is important.
3. Recognized that the open-ended nature of the working group has allowed the input of those particularly interested in this subject and has allowed flexibility.
4. Noted that there are some shortcomings in the current operation of the SPTA.
5. Recommended that a sound structure be developed in the future when the revised text of the IPPC comes into force.
6. Recommended, as an interim measure, that the Secretariat seeks to facilitate the participation of two representatives from developing countries per FAO Region at the next SPTA..
7. Noted that an Expert Working Group is to be convened to consider technical assistance.
8. Recommended that the SPTA should maintain overall administrative and financial oversight of technical assistance matters.

8. The ICPM is invited to:

1. *Consider and comment* on the role and structure of SPTA.
2. *Adopt* the recommendations made by the SPTA on its long term role and composition.

Annex I**Functions and Tasks assigned by the ICPM to the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance****2nd Meeting of the ICPM : October 1999**

1. ICPM 2 established an open-ended working group under the chairmanship of the Chair of the ICPM to assist the Secretariat in drafting the strategic plan.
2. The ICPM 2 decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on Technical Assistance with the charge to:
 1. Define possible coordinating roles for the ICPM.
 2. Review the results of the New Zealand pilot project, and
 3. Based on the results of this review, recommend future activities of the ICPM in technical assistance.

3rd Meeting of the ICPM : April 2001

3. ICPM 3 decided that the informal open-ended working group on strategic planning and technical assistance shall:
 1. Further develop specific procedures for identifying topics and setting priorities for standards.
 2. Examine the possible resources from World Bank, Regional Banks and the UNDP available to support the work programme of the ICPM, including technical assistance.
 3. Clarify the purpose of and develop draft rules and a framework for a voluntary trust fund, and a trust fund with voluntary assessed contributions, taking into account other existing trust fund mechanisms and considering mechanisms for budget transparency, and
 4. Develop rules for sponsorship of standards which would guarantee transparency of the process and participation of developing countries in the drafting of the standard;

4th Meeting of the ICPM : March 2002

4. The fourth meeting of the ICPM:
 1. Agreed that the SPTA would examine the meaning of transparency in the context of the budget of the IPPC and the need for procedures for planning, reviewing and the evaluation of budget procedures.
 2. Recommended that the SPTA develop a plan of action for linkages with research and educational institutions for consideration at the Fifth Session of the ICPM.
 3. Agreed that the SPTA would discuss and develop a programme to assist members in obtaining greater funding for the IPPC from the FAO Regular Programme.
 4. Agreed that the SPTA develop guidelines on the composition, and organization of expert WG meetings in the ICPM framework.
 5. Recommended that SPTA carries out an analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of a trust fund.
 6. Endorsed the use of the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA) as the ad hoc Working Group on Technical Assistance recognizing the need for certain aspects of technical assistance to be handled by experts.
 7. Decided that the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance reviews submissions for new topics for standards and recommends strategic priorities for new standards, for which drafts have not yet been considered by the Standards Committee.

5th Meeting of the ICPM : April 2003

- 5 The Fifth meeting of the ICPM:
1. Agreed that the SPTA consider a procedure for dealing with the review of scientific data and amendment of ISPMs for presentation at the sixth session of the ICPM.
 2. Agreed that the procedure developed by the Focus group on Standard Setting, and the comments from the 15th TC on the procedure, would be reviewed by the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA).
 3. Decided that the SPTA reviews the programme budget provided by the Secretariat and recommends adjustments as appropriate [and submits it to the ICPM Bureau]. The SPTA also recommends a new work programme for one year ahead.