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INTERIM COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Sixth Session

Rome, 29 March – 2 April 2004

Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance

Agenda Item 8.2 of the Provisional Agenda

1. The 5th meeting of the ICPM Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA) was convened in Rome, 13-17 October 2003. This report provides a brief summary of the major topics. Items requiring decisions by the ICPM are dealt with in separate agenda papers.
2. The Secretariat presented the paper on budget-related issues. Resources for the Secretariat functions are provided by FAO's Regular Programme, through contributions of its member countries. It was noted that the budget for the next biennium (2004-2005) will be decided at the forthcoming meeting of the FAO Conference in November-December 2003. The budget is dealt with under a separate agenda item.
3. The SPTA discussed the report of the Focus Group (FG) and the draft recommendations made by the 15th Technical Consultation (TC) of Regional Plant Protection Organizations (RPPOs). The SPTA recalled that the Focus Group had identified 4 steps in the standard setting process. ICPM 5 had agreed that the guidelines on the development and revision of standards would be developed, and a fifth step (Review of standards) could have been added to the procedure. The SPTA developed recommendations to the ICPM on all of the Focus Group recommendations. These are dealt with under a separate agenda item.
4. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan were considered in detail. The SPTA recommended that both Plans be redrafted next year as part of a general review of the work programme, the Business Plan and the Strategic Plan. See separate agenda item on this topic.
5. The SPTA discussed the role that the RPPOs could play particularly in regard to the implementation of International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs). The SPTA considered it would be useful to convene a focus group to consider the role of RPPOs. Recommendations on this topic are dealt with as a separate agenda item.

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6. The SPTA considered a status report on the work programme provided by the Secretariat. It was noted that there were a number of draft standards under development that may require Expert Working Groups in 2004. In developing recommendations on possible topics for standards development in 2004 the SPTA noted that the work programme would be influenced by decisions made by ICPM on the standard setting process. SPTA recommendations on topics for standards development were considered by Standards Committee (SC). This issue is dealt with under a separate agenda item.

7. The SPTA recognized the importance of liaison with research and teaching organizations, with the aims of:

1. reviewing the state of plant protection in the world,
2. having better information on the state of research on different aspects,
3. having information on what is being done and avoid duplication of work.

8. However, the SPTA noted that this was a huge area of work, which could be broadly subdivided into three components: research; education and standard setting activities (identify existing standards and develop policies for their use). Given the magnitude of the task it may be better as a first step, any activities should target specific areas, such as research on nematode identification, fruit fly identification and training on pest risk analysis.

9. The SPTA noted that ICPM-5 had defined the tasks for an Informal Working Group on Research and Educational Liaison, and recommended that this group should consider:

1. the development of an information package,
2. other ways of increasing liaison and how can other organizations be involved in the work of the IPPC,
3. Identification of specific target areas for initial work.
4. The 4 subject areas on standard setting (from point 4.2.1 of the report of the Focus Group on Standard Setting, 2003) and advise the SPTA of their relevance:
 - a) the need to provide specific recognition in standards of collaborators,
 - b) legal issues related to the use of other standards – recognition/copyright/ownership (the SPTA noted that this item should be submitted to a legal review),
 - c) any potential contractual arrangements with experts,
 - d) the possibility of ICPM recognising other standards directly

10. The Secretariat would ensure that these recommendations are included in the Terms of Reference of the Informal Working Group.

11. The SPTA considered a proposal for the establishment of a formal (subsidiary) body for technical assistance. This issue is dealt with in separate agenda item on the role and function of the SPTA.

12. The SPTA considered the need for explanatory documents, manuals etc to help countries implement ISPMs. Recommendations on a policy for producing these types of documents are provided under a separate agenda item.

13. ICPM 5 agreed to the Secretariat seeking an agreement with the International Forest Quarantine Research Group and the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation to utilize their expertise to review scientific data on treatments of wood and treatments using irradiation, respectively. The SPTA acknowledged that these groups were not ICPM bodies and had a wider scope than the review of ISPM annexes. However, these groups would be well placed to work on these technical annexes, and could be envisaged as possible Technical Panels if this concept was agreed at ICPM-6. In any case, there was a need to ensure transparency. The SPTA recommended that the IPPC Secretariat: contact these groups and obtain their authorization to publish their membership on the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP). The SPTA also recommended that these groups be transformed into Technical Panels if the ICPM agreed to the formation of Technical Panels.

14. The SPTA considered a report on the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) and discussed the role of the SPTA in regard to PCE activities. It requested that a comprehensive analysis of the results of the application of the PCE should be included as a regular item in the report presented to the ICPM on PCE. It was noted that the analysis could only be presented in aggregate form due to the need to respect the confidentiality provisions of the use of the PCE.
15. The SPTA considered a brief report on the IPP presented by the Secretariat. It was acknowledged that the IPP had undergone substantial development over this year and was now a very useful site. The SPTA recommended that further work on the IPP should concentrate on helping contracting parties meet their information sharing obligations under the IPPC. The SPTA noted that the next meeting of the IPP support group would concentrate on this aspect.
16. It was recommended that the IPP should incorporate a flagging system for new information posted on the IPP, especially when countries would start linking to their web sites and would post new information on these.
17. The long term role and composition of the SPTA was considered. Recommendations on this issue are dealt with under a separate agenda item.
18. Several SPTA members noted difficulties in the practical operation of the SC-20 and SC-7 (timing of nominations for the SC-7, replacement of members). The SPTA agreed these difficulties should be kept under review but did not consider it was appropriate to recommend any changes in the SC system at this time. The SPTA noted that the Secretariat is working with the SC to ensure that these difficulties do not interfere with the efficiency of the operation of the Committee.
19. The STPA held a general discussion on issues relating to the suspension of ISPM No 15 due to difficulties with the mark. Questions were raised regarding a previous recommendation to contracting parties from the Secretariat that ISPM No15 be suspended, due to intrinsic barriers to the use of the mark. The SPTA noted that the FAO Legal Service would provide a paper to the next ICPM on this issue.
20. A presentation on some practical problems faced by industry in the implementation of ISPM No. 15 was made. This issue is dealt with as a separate agenda item.
21. The SPTA noted that point 3.2 of the Focus Group Report on the standard setting process implied that Technical Panels would be established under the Terms of Reference Section 4 of the SC, i.e. with the same regional representation as the SC. This is a drafting mistake. Technical Panels would be formed following the same rules as Expert Working Groups under Terms of Reference Section 5 of the Standards Committee.
22. The ICPM is:

Invited to note the report of the SPTA