**REFLECTION ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE SPG**

*Discussion paper presented by Canada*

*(supported by Australia, New Zealand and the United States)*

**BACKGROUND**

1. Canada considers the SPG to be an effective and vital forum in which to analyse, discuss and make recommendations on strategic priorities and approaches for the IPPC. It forms a logical supporting body to the Bureau and ultimately the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) (it is considered a subsidiary body to the CPM under the Rules of Procedure adopted at CPM-8 in 2013). However, given some recent recommendations on the value of the SPG, and the continuing, clear need for robust strategic planning work for the IPPC immediately and on an ongoing basis, Canada has prepared this paper to express its views on the value of the SPG and the need to maintain its annual meeting format until at least 2020.
2. The current SPG evolved from the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance (SPTA) that was established by the Second Session of the Interim Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (ICPM-2, 1999). The original purpose of the SPTA was to develop a strategic plan for the IPPC. Over time, this evolved to include development of a business plan and to undertake specific activities related to planning and prioritizing elements of the IPPC work programme, including: technical assistance, information exchange, prioritizing topics for standards, funding issues, and decisions regarding liaising with international, regional or other organizations (e.g., research).
3. At their October 2011 meeting, the SPTA discussed the need to re-evaluate the mandate and scope of this group. A discussion paper on the subject had been submitted by Australia[[1]](#footnote-1) in advance of the meeting. While proposing a review of the continuing use of the SPTA, the Australian paper also noted that a lack of capacity existed for the Bureau to undertake long term strategic planning and that there was a need for a dedicated strategic support group. In this regard, the Bureau had in 2010 indicated that the Bureau’s responsibilities would be short term planning and operational issues and that the Bureau was best placed to assist the Secretariat with budgeting, short-term planning and monitoring, and follow-up activities from CPM meetings. Furthermore, the Bureau indicated that it could not undertake all long term strategic planning in addition to these tasks and that focus groups could be established where necessary in pursuit of implementing the strategic plan(s). Canada understands that, despite its enlargement, the Bureau’s capacity to undertake a more long term strategic role has not changed and, therefore, an ongoing source of effective strategic analyses, advice and recommendations to inform the Bureau remains vital.
4. The SPTA thoroughly discussed the issue and the participants agreed that the role of the SPTA as it relates to developing strategies for the CPM is important. The SPG agreed to request that the CPM consider changing the name of the CPM informal working group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance to the Ad-hoc Group on Strategic Planning. According to the Rules of Procedures for the SPG which were adopted by the CPM-8 in 2013 (annex 1), the SPG has the mandate to formulate recommendations to the CPM or its Subsidiary Bodies in the areas covered by its scope and to advise the CPM on issues referred to it.
5. Subsequently, the IPPC Secretariat Enhancement Evaluation, which was developed by a team of evaluation experts in collaboration with the FAO Office of Evaluation and published in February 2015, aimed to identify how to strengthen the IPPC Secretariat’s performance in view of emerging challenges. To this effect, the evaluation report includes a number of recommendations and suggestions for enhancing the Secretariat’s capacity to facilitate, coordinate, support, and advance the CPM’s strategic goals and annual work program.
6. In their review of the IPPC’s governance, the evaluation team commented with the aim of streamlining both governance and management that *"the SPG should be abolished and its function fully integrated in the mandate of the Bureau; the Bureau should call on CPs to participate in extended Bureau meeting, while addressing particular strategic issues in order to benefit from a broader input"*. Canada agrees that the Bureau’s mandate and Functions (Annex 2) should be strengthened to reflect a stronger strategic leadership role for the IPPC and CPM, rather than an administratively focused role; a strong supporting body will facilitate this. However, the recommendation to abolish the SPG did not appear fully to take into account the factors outlined below.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Canada considers that abolishing the SPG would have significantly negative repercussions and would in fact work against the IPPC evaluation report’s combined proposed measures that are intended to improve the efficiency of the IPPC Secretariat. With the upcoming organizational and other changes resulting from the Secretariat Evaluation and the need for renewal of the IPPC Strategic Framework, it seems clear that the SPG has a major role to play and before making significant adjustments to the SPG, we should carefully analyse the pros and cons of maintaining the SPG.
2. We are now approximately mid-way through the period covered by the IPPC Strategic Framework 2012-2019. It is essential that work on developing the next framework be under way now in order that a new framework and/or plan can be carefully developed and prepared for adoption by the CPM and implementation commencing in 2020. Furthermore, no strategic framework should remain entirely static as the external environment continues to change, and so it is also crucial that a dedicated body reviews the external environment on a continual basis and considers recommendations for responses to these both in the short term and in preparation of the next framework. In extreme circumstances it may even be necessary to discontinue use of an established framework in order to respond to the external environment, but this can only occur with a dedicated strategic group to support the Bureau and the CPM.
3. Canada anticipates that abolishing the SPG would reduce the effectiveness of the entire IPPC and impede its progress at a crucial time in the organisation’s ongoing development, a time when in-depth strategic analysis and development of associated recommendations seem to be critically important. The work of the SPG is fundamental to the ongoing strategic positioning and development of the IPPC as it represents an invaluable forum within which strategic issues can be discussed in an open manner, benefiting from a diverse range of viewpoints resulting in well thought out strategic insights for the CPM Bureau.
4. In the last few years it is notable that the SPG has played a crucial role in leading the development of major strategic IPPC initiatives, including the development of the IPPC Strategic Framework 2012-2019 and the elaboration of a process for developing and adopting CPM Recommendations. The work most recently conducted by the SPG around “The IPPC in 20 years”, which allowed for the identification of long-term key challenges and opportunities for the IPPC, is an excellent example that demonstrates what the SPG can and should do, and the strategic input that this group can provide to the IPPC to support its strategic development. Indeed, by implementing the decision of CPM-8 which resulted in a body focused completely on strategic issues and work, the SPG has matured and its value to the IPPC is clear. The IPPC must capitalise on this situation, given the challenges and uncertainties being faced in its short and long term future. A careful analysis of working approaches and outcomes since the SPG became more strategically focused should confirm that this evolution of the SPG has significantly increased its utility and value. Losing this value at this key stage could be extremely damaging to the IPPC.
5. The strategic objectives for the IPPC in the next few years make the current role of the SPG vital to realising success in these endeavours. These include the IPPC’s ambitious plans for an FAO International Year in Plant Health (IYPH), a Ministerial CPM in 2020, the adoption of a sustainable funding basis for the IPPC, and the development and adoption of a new strategic framework. This is, therefore, a crucial time in which to maintain and build on the strategic role and outputs of the SPG. Indeed, having recognised the importance of the SPG and noting that significant strategic work is required in the next few years, and the need to dedicate Secretariat resources to support its work, the absence of which was impeding its outputs, Canada has provided in-kind support that is specifically dedicated to the IPPC's strategic work and to supporting the SPG. In this way, Canada is taking steps to ensure that the required resources can be bolstered, to support both the Secretariat and the SPG, to the benefit of the IPPC.
6. The 2011 Focus Group on improving the standard setting process recommended that the SPTA would no longer have a role in standard setting and the establishment of priorities for draft standards. By removing this activity from the SPG, the strategic focus of the SPG was improved and the value of its work increased. Based on its recent effectiveness, experience shows that this recommendation has strengthened the rationale for maintaining the SPG.
7. Some core rationale as to why the SPG in its current form is an ideal vehicle to advance strategic work for the IPPC includes:
8. For the development of general strategic initiatives, the CPM Bureau does not have the capacity, depth, breadth or time fully to analyze future challenges and develop strategic initiatives, such as the IPPC in 20 Years work. Therefore, the Bureau needs a dedicated, dynamic and broad group for this, and the SPG serves this role well having evolved directly in relation to Bureau recommendations and working on a predictable, continual basis;
* The purpose and functions of the SPG (Annex 1) imply that in-depth and focused strategic analysis that includes consideration of a diverse range of viewpoints be sustained during a dedicated meeting in order that appropriate plans, recommendations and observations can be developed. The Bureau is based on a restricted, defined membership and its limited meetings must also encompass a wide range of issues (including financial and operational management) that prevent a complete focus on strategic planning. In this way, the SPG provides a dedicated strategic forum in which a range of purely strategic issues can be explored at length with key outcomes being communicated to the Bureau. This allows the Bureau to fulfil its purpose and to base its strategic direction on the outputs of the SPG;
* The IPPC cannot realistically achieve all its ambitious strategic objectives, e.g., implementing the communication strategy, garnering support for the IYPH initiative, preparing for the Ministerial CPM in 2020, e-phyto, etc., without having a dedicated strategic planning group that understands the incentives for these initiatives and has the experience and maturity to advance them in the short time frames available.
1. To avoid duplication in the functions of the CPM Bureau and the SPG, the functions of the SPG could be revised and its mandate streamlined to focus even more on strategic issues. In this regard and considering the remaining duration of the current Strategic Framework, its role to lead the development of the next Strategic Framework should be mandated more clearly. In relation to the rationale above, its role to support the Bureau’s strategic discussions could also be made clearer.
2. The 2014 SPG discussion on *The IPPC in 20 years*, is an excellent example of a successful discussion which took place at the SPG and demonstrates its value. In preparation for this discussion, participants were asked to prepare a discussion paper illustrating their views on the topic, in order to facilitate the discussion at the meeting and provide concrete results and outcomes. The 2014 SPG was also successful in bringing together countries of various status (i.e., along the range of economic development), which resulted in dynamic discussion reflecting a variety of point of views and realities.
3. Historically, travel assistance has not been offered to eligible contracting parties to attend to the SPG. This practice prompted recent concerns that the SPG was unbalanced and could lead to an unintentional bias to the discussion and outcomes. Following the provision of travel assistance for developing country participation in the 2014 SPG, and the beneficial outcomes, guidelines should be developed to consider this option again for future meetings.
4. Based on the current strategic issues and ambitious plans for 2020, Canada foresees a clear need to hold annual meetings of the SPG until at least 2020. At that point, assuming that a new Strategic Framework is adopted and all other strategic plans implemented, the situation can be reviewed. A further review could then be undertaken at the mid-way point of the new Strategic Framework.

**PROPOSAL**

1. It is proposed that an in-depth discussion on the future of the SPG, recognizing the evolving nature of this group, be carried out among the SPG participants.
2. The 2015 SPG is invited to reflect on the following elements:
* Are there ways in which the strategic work of the SPG could be further strengthened, to the benefit of the IPPC?
* Could the current mandate and outputs of the SPG be accomplished by following the evaluation report’s recommendations relating to the Bureau and the SPG?
* How could the SPG be improved to better suit the needs of the Bureau and the CPM and be efficient and cost effective?
* What is the process for defining the SPG’s work program? Should it be directed solely from the CPM, via the Bureau, or can the SPG pursue certain strategic analysis and develop associated recommendations based on its annual review of the external environment and other strategic factors?

Based on their discussion, the SPG is invited to prepare a paper for presentation to CPM-11 (2016).

**ANNEX 1**

**Draft Rules of Procedure for the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) as presented to CPM-8 (2013) for adoption**

\* The final RoP for the SPG adopted at CPM-8 (2013) with modifications could not be found prior to the preparation of this document

**Rule 1. Purpose**

The purpose of the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) is to provide strategic perspective to the work of the IPPC and to support improvement through the provision of recommendations and advice to the CPM on any issues which have been referred.

**Rule 2**. **Functions**

The SPG will meet its objectives through carrying out the following functions:

1. provide periodic review of the IPPC strategic framework; and
2. provide strategic perspective to the following specific issues:
	* implementation of the International Plant Protection Convention;
	* capacity development;
	* information exchange;
	* standards development;
	* review of plant protection;
	* resource mobilization and finance;
	* communication issues;
	* procedural issues;
	* operational issues; and
	* any other activity referred by the CPM.

**Rule 3**. **Membership**

The SPG will consist of:

* the members of the CPM Bureau ;
* the Chairpersons of the Subsidiary Body on Dispute Settlement, the Standards Committee and the Capacity Development Committee;
* other interested persons representing Contracting Parties.

**Rule 4**. **Meetings**

The SPG will meet at least once a year and no less than four months prior to the CPM meeting, to allow the report preparation and the undertaking of specified activities before the CPM meeting.

The Vice-chairperson of the CPM Bureau or in his/her absence another member of the CPM Bureau will chair the meetings of the SPG.

Interested persons from Contracting Parties should indicate their intent to participate in a meeting of the SPG no less than 45 days prior to the beginning of the meeting. Wherever possible, members of the SPG will fund their own travel and daily subsistence to attend the meetings. Members of the CPM Bureau and the Chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies may request financial assistance from FAO for meetings, with the understanding that priority for financial assistance, if available, is given to participants from developing countries.

**Rule 5. Recommendations**

The SPG strives for consensus on all issues in providing recommendations and advice to the CPM. Where no consensus can be reached, the CPM will be informed of the situation.

**Rule 6. Documentation, records and reports**

The Secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson and the Vice-chairperson of the CPM will prepare a provisional agenda and make it available to the members of the SPG no less than 45 days prior to the relevant SPG meeting.

Other meeting documents will be made available as soon as possible after the preparation of the provisional agenda and preferably no less than 14 days prior to the meeting.

The SPG will elect a rapporteur for each meeting from among the participants. The IPPC Secretariat will keep the records of the SPG meetings and prepare a report for the CPM no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the meeting.

**Rule 7**. **IPPC Secretariat**

The IPPC Secretariat will provide administrative, technical and editorial support as it may be required by the SPG.

**Rule 8. Language**

The business of the SPG should be conducted in English.

**Rule 9. Amendment**

Amendments to these rules of procedure for the SPG will be made by the CPM as required.

**Annex 2**

**RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE BUREAU OF THE COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

**Rule 1. Purpose of the Bureau**

The purpose of the Bureau is to provide guidance to the CPM on the strategic direction, financial and operational management of its activities in cooperation with others as approved by CPM.

As appropriate, members of the Bureau will also assist the CPM in its administrative and operational duties. The Bureau provides continuity in the management of the CPM and, through representation of all FAO regions, facilitates the expression of all viewpoints on strategic, administrative and procedural matters on an ongoing basis.

**Rule 2. Functions of the Bureau**

(1) The Bureau shall have the following functions:

(2) Ensuring the efficient implementation of the CPM work programme in coordination with the Secretariat.

(3) Making recommendations to improve CPM management and delivery of strategic directions, financial and operational activities.

(4) Assisting with the administrative, and operational duties of the CPM in areas such as:

(5) delivery of the IPPC Strategic Framework

(6) financial planning and management

(7) Providing advice, guidance and strategic direction to subsidiary and other bodies in between plenary sessions of the CPM, in accordance with CPM decisions.

(8) Addressing specific issues assigned to it by the CPM.

**Rule 3. Membership**

The members of the Bureau shall be elected by the CPM as per Rule II of the Rules of Procedure of the CPM.

FAO regions select their candidates for membership of the Bureau on the basis of the procedures agreed within each region.

**Rule 4. Replacement of members**

FAO regions shall nominate replacements for members of the Bureau and submit them to the CPM for election. Replacements should be eligible to be members as set forth in these Rules. Each FAO region shall select a maximum of two replacements for CPM election. If a member of the Bureau, other than the Chairperson, becomes unavailable for a meeting their respective replacement may substitute them during that specific meeting. If a member of the Bureau becomes unavailable on a long term basis, for unavoidable reasons, resigns or no longer meets the qualifications required for being member of the Bureau, the replacement will substitute the member of the Bureau for the remainder of the term of office for which he/she has been elected. The replacement should be from the same region as the member of the Bureau being replaced.

**Rule 5. Chairperson**

The Chairperson of the CPM shall be the Chairperson of the Bureau.

**Rule 6. Meetings**

Bureau meetings shall be convened by the IPPC Secretary. Four members of the Bureau shall constitute a quorum. The Bureau shall meet at least twice a year. The IPPC Secretary may also convene meetings of the Bureau as necessary to enable any outstanding specific activities to be undertaken before the following CPM session or scheduled Bureau meeting.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson will chair the meeting.

Meetings of the Bureau shall be closed unless otherwise determined by the Bureau. The Bureau may invite experts to provide advice or information on specific matters. The IPPC Secretary or a representative designated by him/her shall attend the meetings of the Bureau.

**Rule 7. Decision making**

Decisions will be made by consensus. Situations where consensus cannot be reached shall be described in the meeting reports detailing all positions maintained and presented to the CPM for guidance and appropriate action.

**Rule 8. Documentation, records and reports**

The Secretariat is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Bureau and providing administrative, technical and editorial support, as required by the Bureau.

The Secretary, in consultation with the Chairperson of the CPM, shall prepare a provisional agenda for the Bureau meetings and make it available to members of the Bureau preferably four weeks prior to the beginning of each meeting.

The Secretariat shall make meeting documents available to Bureau members as soon as possible after the preparation of the provisional agenda.

The Secretariat shall keep the records of the Bureau and minutes of the Bureau meetings. A report should be available within one month after each meeting and posted on the International Phytosanitary Portal.

The Chairperson shall submit a yearly report to the CPM on the activities of the Bureau.

**Rule 9. Language**

The business of the Bureau shall be conducted in English, unless otherwise decided by the Bureau.

**Rule 10. Amendment**

These Rules and amendments or additions thereto shall be adopted by two thirds majority of the members of the Commission present and voting, provided that not less than 24 hour notice of the proposal for the amendment or addition has been given

1. SPTA 2011/17 Discussion paper from Australia – Future of the Informal Working Group on Strategic Planning and Technical Assistance [↑](#footnote-ref-1)