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# COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

## Sixteenth Session

**Virtual Meeting, 5, 7 and 21 April 2022**

**Report from Strategic Planning Group**

**Agenda item 08.1**

**Prepared by the Vice-Chair of the CPM**

*John Greifer, Vice Chair of the CPM*

1. Due to the ongoing pandemic and associated travel and meeting restrictions, the SPG was held in a virtual format on 19 and 21 October 2021. Despite this change in meeting circumstances, the SPG had a record level participation of national and regional plant protection organizations (NPPOs and RPPOs). A total number of 64 contracting parties (individual countries) attended the meeting.
2. The virtual event allowed all NPPOs to include more members of their staff to observe and learn about IPPC's ongoing work. This, I believe, was good exposure for the newer and younger personnel from our respective NPPOs who may one day become more involved in IPPC related matters.
3. I will not summarize all the issues covered in the SPG meeting because a detailed record of that meeting is available for all (please see the posted SPG Report). However, I will highlight some of the strategically important issues addressed by the SPG.
4. First, it is important to underscore the point that the SPG continues to be an important forum for advancing the IPPC core objectives, discussing emerging plant health policy issues, testing and exchanging ideas, and developing recommendations and strategic options for the CPM to consider in responding to significant issues and challenges confronting the plant health community.
5. Accordingly, the format for the SPG agenda comprised of three key components, including:
  - 1) Reviewing the implementation of the strategic framework, particularly operational plans being prepared for each of the development agenda items.
  - 2) Taking up other significant emerging plant issues which contracting parties wish to present to the SPG for in-depth discussion and debate.

- 3) Giving the Secretariat the opportunity to bring up issues they feel merit some strategic analysis and discussion by the SPG.

6. With regard to the strategic framework, Mr Peter Thomson updated the SPG on the work of the Focus Group on Implementation of the Strategic Framework and Development Agenda. As Chair, Mr Thomson discussed some of the elements and general structure for a comprehensive implementation plan and roadmap. However, he indicated that more time would be needed to develop this plan, given the inputs needed from the Secretariat as well as operational details needed from the various focus groups, which are working on the specific development agenda items. The agreed goal is to have a proposed implementation plan for the strategic framework submitted to the CPM-17 (2023) for approval.

7. The SPG supported the direction being taken on developing this implementation plan, but also reiterated some key points that need to drive the drafting of the plan. These include the need to sequence and prioritize the implementation of the development agenda items to avoid overwhelming the Secretariat, as well as guidance in the plan for identifying resources and potential partner organizations and entities, which may be willing to support and fund the implementation of some of the development agenda initiatives. We need to thank Peter and the Focus Group for their efforts thus far.

8. With regard to specific issues, I will highlight some of topics which are of priority interest to the CPM.

9. **Pest outbreak and response:** Ms Mirelle Marcotte, the Focus Group Chair, described the current thinking and proposals, including the establishment of a new permanent standing body dedicated to overseeing a pest alert and response system, as well as the creation of a special emergency trust fund for pest emergency activities. Some SPG members expressed concerns about the IPPC getting too involved in operational activity on the ground, particularly related to control or eradication response actions. Some suggested again that response actions be handled by the FAO, RPPOs, and perhaps other relevant organizations. Also, instead of a new subsidiary body, some SPG members suggested that a “steering group” be considered at a future stage. Such a steering group could develop specific pest alert or response plans (including the needed resources) that can then be used to approach potential donor organizations. SPG reactions and comments were taken back to the Focus Group to revise their draft proposals to the CPM.

10. **Climate Change:** Mr Christopher Dale, Chair of the Focus Group on Climate Change and Phytosanitary Issues, briefed the SPG., He provided an update on the initial meetings of the FG, and noted it was too early for substantive discussions at the SPG.– However, the SPG appreciated that the work on climate change was now well underway and that a draft action plan would be prepared in time for the CPM-16 (2022) to review.

11. **Sea Containers:** Mr Greg Wolff, Chair of the current Sea Container Task Force, briefed the SPG on proposals to create a Focus Group as a successor to the Task Force and the planning of an international workshop in late 2022. A workshop planning committee has been established to begin planning this workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to draw lessons learned and provide recommendations to the CPM for longer term options and approaches to managing the phytosanitary threats associated with sea containers. The SPG discussed the Terms of Reference for the new Focus Group and –provided input on issues about timelines, expertise needed, industry participation, risk assessment vs\_ risk management expertise needed, new supply chain issues that need to be considered, etc. The next step is for the CPM-16 (2022) to approve the formation of this Focus Group, which would carry on this sea containers work through an international workshop and generating a long term solution or approach for addressing the global sea container challenge.

12. **e-Phyto:** The IPPC Secretariat informed the SPG about the call for experts for the new Focus Group on e-Phyto Sustainable Funding. The Focus Group has not yet met, so it was too early to have substantive discussion at the SPG about e-Phyto funding strategies.

13. **One Health:** The Secretariat provided an update on the One Health discussions within the FAO and its efforts to keep the plant health component alive in the context of those discussions. The SPG discussed three papers on the subject submitted by SPG members. The SPG agreed that plant health contributes directly to issues including environmental health, food security, and nutrition. Generally, the SPG agreed: 1) there is inter-connectivity of plant health to human and environmental health; 2) IPPC already has and will continue to directly contribute to the One Health concept; 3) agree that the IPPC Secretariat should be at the table at the FAO to monitor and report back on the ongoing one health planning and discussions and to promote IPPC work and its relevance; and, 4) we have a limited role in one health as its currently defined in largely zoonotic terms among public health and veterinary officials. Overall, it seemed to me as Chair that the SPG remains cautious about diving headlong into this One Health concept.

14. **Dispute Settlement:** The SPG reviewed and approved the revised dispute settlement procedure (DSP). These procedures had contained some internal inconsistencies, which were clarified and corrected by FAO Legal. These revised procedures will be presented to the CPM-16 (2022) for approval. An important change, suggested by some SPG members, was to shift oversight of the DSP to the Bureau rather than have the Implementation Committee (IC) oversee dispute settlement functions. The SPG agreed that the “dispute avoidance” activity should remain under the remit of the IC as a training matter (e.g. developing guidance material for enhancing contracting parties’ understanding and capacity to implement ISPMs and thereby avoid disputes). However, the SPG agreed that the DSP be shifted to the Bureau where it can discuss the practical question of who and how assistance will be provided when parties reach out to the IPPC Secretariat to consider services and options for resolving a phytosanitary dispute (e.g. mediation, arbitration, good offices, expert panel).

15. **Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool:** Australia and New Zealand tabled a paper proposing that a simplified, easy-to-use version of the PCE tool be developed. Others supported the proposal. The current tool is comprehensive and must be administered by a trained PCE facilitator and requires significant investment of time and funds. The SPG requested the Secretariat to follow up with Australia to ensure that the Terms of Reference for an evaluation that is underway of the PCE tool include the Australia and New Zealand ideas for a “PCE Lite” version.

16. The SPG addressed a number of other issues beyond the ones noted above. You can see a record of those discussions in the official meeting report.

17. Going forward, I believe we need to continue to look to the SPG as a tool to routinely keep our new Strategic Framework under review, ensure that we are taking steps necessary to implement the priorities in that strategic plan, and create the space and time needed for members to identify and bring up other emerging issues or challenges that require a critical review and a strategic response by the IPPC community.

18. In all of this, we need to continue to be mindful of the resource implications of the activities, services, and products we as an IPPC community wish to pursue and secure. Regular program and extra-budgetary resources are limited. The SPG is a useful forum for debating our collective priorities and trying to reach consensus on how best to allocate CPM’s limited funds. This ongoing question of resources reveals an increasing reliance on voluntary contributions to support and advance various important CPM initiatives. How to establish a more robust, permanent and sustainable funding base for IPPC operations continues to be difficult strategic challenge.

19. I will close by thanking all the participants who joined us from your distant remote offices and homes to be part of this two-day virtual SPG meeting, to all of you who are contributing to the work of the various focus groups and committees, and the Secretariat for organizing and supporting this effective virtual event.