

MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING 12 December 2023 (17.00-18.00, Rome Time UTC+1)

1. Opening of the Meeting

- [1] The IPPC Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the “Secretariat”) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

2. Meeting arrangements

- [2] There were no comments from the participants on the proposed agenda of the meeting ([Appendix 1](#)).

3. Administrative matters

- [3] The Secretariat introduced the two meeting documents: the agenda and the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held in November.
- [4] The list of participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).
- [5] Regarding the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, there were no comments from the participants and therefore the ESG:
- (1) *approved* the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held on 07 November 2023.

4. IPPC Secretariat updates

4.1 IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (2024-2030)

- [6] Following the discussions on this topic at the previous November ESG meeting, the Secretariat has drafted an ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the upcoming period 2024-2030. The purpose is to submit this SIP for approval at the next Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) meeting to be held in April 2024.
- [7] To draft this SIP, the Secretariat has not reinvented the wheel; this is an update of the current one for the period 2019-2023. It is in alignment with the IPPC Strategic Framework 2020-2030 and more specifically with one of its eight Development Agenda Items (DAIs) namely “Harmonization of electronic data exchange”. It also considers the stage of implementation of the IPPC ePhyto solution at the end of 2023, the DAIs overarching Implementation Plan endorsed at CPM-17 (2023) and CPM recommendations made since 2019.
- [8] The Secretariat mentioned that the process to prepare the SIP 2024-2030 was presented at the CPM Bureau meeting held on 5 December 2023 and noted by the latter. The procedure is now to submit the draft SIP for comments to the ESG and the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group (IAG).
- [9] After discussion and considering the short time frame, the ESG:
- (2) *invited* the Secretariat to share the draft SIP 2024-2030 with both the ESG and the IAG with comments due back on 5 January 2024, so that they can be reviewed at the next ESG meeting scheduled on 9 January 2024.

4.2 Other updates

4.2.1 Enhancements of the GeNS

- [10] The Secretariat reminded having received in August a request from the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus Organization (<https://pacerplus.org/>) on improvements in the use of the Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS). Since that time, the ESG Chair, the UNICC and the Secretariat had several calls with this organization. PACER Plus Organization requested some improvements to existing functionalities of the GeNS such as the registration of users (growers for instance), the process to issue non-commercial ePhytos for passengers and on reporting. In addition, there is a possibility for New Zealand (Ministry for Primary Industries -MPI) to fund these improvements to be developed by UNICC. In addition to the 12 countries currently using the GeNS in the Pacific Region, those improvements will benefit the 50 countries using the GeNS on all continents.
- [11] The UNICC representative indicated that he is currently having technical exchanges with the MPI and PACER Plus Organization to prepare a Business Requirements Document for the scope of GeNS improvements within available budget from New Zealand. This document should be finalized by mid-January next year to be shared with the ESG.
- [12] The Chair indicated that those GeNS improvements, without using IPPC resources, will benefit beyond Pacific countries and in the past some other countries had similar requests especially in the Caribbean.
- [13] The ESG:
- (3) *noted and appreciated* the proposal made by New Zealand to fund those improvements that will benefit to all countries using the GeNS.

4.2.2 Connection to digital platforms

- [14] As a follow-up of the November ESG meeting on this topic, the ESG chair, the UNICC and the Secretariat had two calls in November and early December with a company managing a digital platform transferring electronic trade documents, namely the WaveBL company.
- [15] In this regard, the Chair indicated that the company would retrieve documents only and it would purely be up to the exporter to use any system to select them as a recipient. The company could not send anything to the IPPC ePhyto Hub; it could only retrieve copies of the certificates if the exporter has made that choice. He also added this is a request of the private sector to have all paperless trade documents on one platform only instead of dealing with each individual country. WaveBL is the first company to come along but many other companies raised this issue historically. This project would be another mechanism that could get funding to the IPPC Secretariat to keep the ePhyto Solution up and running. First estimates by UNICC are about 15,000 USD to ensure this connection, but those companies have to realize there is an annual operating cost for keeping this up and running.
- [16] Responding to the Europe representative for clarification on how the system would work, the UNICC representative shared on the screen the following slide:

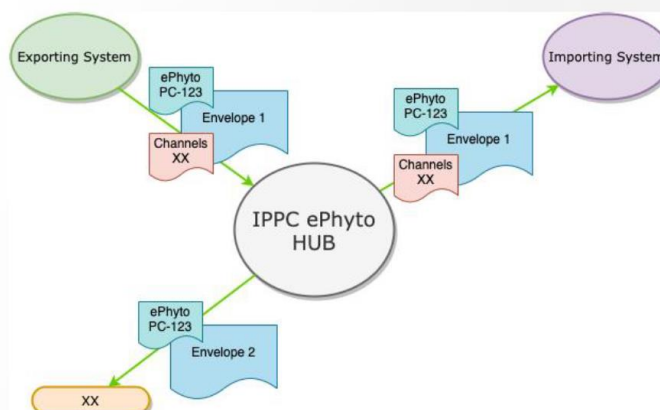
Channel Forwarding

The exporting system will be able to specify multiple forwarding recipients on the ePhyto envelope while sending it to the destination country.

The sender will add the forwarding channel codes (identifying the countries or registered entities) on the envelope header of the ePhyto.

The HUB on receiving the envelope will copy the incoming for the specified additional receiving entity system.

The forwarding information is kept in the envelope so that the importing system can use the information



[17] He added that this would be operated first with the GeNS as a pilot phase so that all countries using the GeNS would have the option to select such a company as a recipient of an ePhyto issued. The development would need to be done for the GeNS only as the feature is already there for the Hub.

[18] At the end of the discussion and considering that only half of the ESG members are present to agree on this issue, the ESG:

- (4) *decided* to have this item on the agenda of the next January ESG meeting to further discuss and agree.

4.2.3 Update on the CPM Focus Group on Sustainable Funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution

[19] The Secretariat informed that the CPM Focus Group (FG) on ePhyto sustainable funding met on 23 November to review the draft document on the funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution to be presented at CPM in 2024. Following this meeting, UNICC and the Secretariat had also a call on 7 November with Mr. Peter Thomson, Bureau representative in this FG, to have a clear description of what exchanges through the IPPC ePhyto Hub will and will not be counted in the funding model.

[20] According to the discussion, it appears that ePhytos that are **Delivered** and **Delivered With Warnings** should be counted. Instead, although there is a processing cost, those **Not Delivered** or **Not Readable** as they are not used, should not be counted to avoid any misunderstanding during CPM. In addition, ePhytos forwarded to third parties, such as single windows (channel forwarding), should not be taken into consideration too at this stage, nor should duplicate ePhytos or other types of messages other than ePhytos (Acknowledgement messages, etc.).

[21] UNICC will produce in early 2024 the figures on ePhytos exchanged in 2023 by countries using the IPPC ePhyto Hub so that the FG can integrate them in the funding model to be proposed at CPM-18 in April 2024.

5. Regional updates

Europe

[22] The Europe representative informed that they are still testing with Ecuador and Pakistan. With Brazil, all tests have been finalized but they have not moved to production yet.

Latin America and Caribbean

- [23] The Latin America and Caribbean representative informed that Bolivia is now ready to go paperless in production and the connection between Peru and Argentina is also operational, starting this week. In addition, Nicaragua has sent the required information to register to the Hub with the GeNS.

North America

- [24] The Chair informed that, due to big trade with Canada, the latter plans to send ePhytos to the United States from next January.

6. Any other business

- [25] There was no other business.

7. Date of the next meeting

- [26] The next ESG meeting is scheduled on 9 January 2024 at 5.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+1).

8. Close of the meeting

- [27] The Chairperson thanked the participants for their active participation.

Action List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
1. Share with ESG and IAG the draft SIP 2024-2030	Secretariat	13 December 2023

Appendix 1**AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING****12 December 2023, 17:00–18:00 Rome Time (UTC+1)**

	Agenda Item	Document No.	Presenter
1.	Opening of the Meeting		IPPC Secretariat
2.	Meeting Arrangements		
2.1	Adoption of the Agenda	2023-12_ESG_01_Agenda	Chairperson
3.	Administrative Matters		
3.1	Review of meeting documents		IPPC Secretariat
3.2	Meeting Participants	ESG Membership list	IPPC Secretariat
3.3	Approval of minutes of previous meeting	2023-11_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
4.	IPPC Secretariat updates		
4.1	IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (2024-2030) revision		IPPC Secretariat
4.2	Other updates		IPPC Secretariat
5.	Regional updates		
	Updates of activities in the FAO Regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Africa - Asia - Europe - Latin America and Carribean - Near East - North America - Southwest Pacific 		Regional representatives
6.	UNICC updates		UNICC
7.	Any other business		Chairperson
8.	Date of the next meeting		IPPC Secretariat
9.	Close of the Meeting		Chairperson

Appendix 2**EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST****12 December 2023, 17:00–18:00 Rome Time (UTC+1)**

Region / Role	Name / Organization	Email address
Europe Member	Ms Helene KLEIN Directorate SANTE.DDG2.G (Crisis management in food, animals and plants) European Commission DG Health and Food Safety	Helene.KLEIN@ec.europa.eu
Latin America and Caribbean Member	Mr Rodrigo ROBLES Electronic Certification eCert SAG, Ministry of Agriculture Chile	rodrigo.robles@sag.gob.cl
North America Member (ESG Chairperson)	Mr Christian B DELLIS United States Department of Agriculture, Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine	christian.b.dellis@aphis.usda.gov
Southwest Pacific Member	Mr Piriariki MAAO Biosecurity Service Ministry of Agriculture Cook Islands	piriariki.maa@cookislands.gov.ck
UNICC	Mr Gianluca NUZZO Solutions Delivery Manager Digital Business Solutions Section (DDD)	nuzzo@unicc.org
	Mr Dominique MENON IPPC Secretariat / IFU ePhyto Programme Officer	dominique.menon@fao.org