

## MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING 16 January 2024 (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 December.
- [4] The list of participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).
- [5] Regarding the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, and after having addressed one comment from the participants, the ESG:
- (1) *approved* the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held on 12 December 2023.

### 4. IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (2024-2030) review

- [6] Following the discussions on this topic at the previous December ESG meeting, the Secretariat shared, on 13 December 2023, with ESG members and the Chair of the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) the draft of the 2024-2030 ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP). Subsequently, the Secretariat received comments from ESG members and the IAG chair and shared them with all ESG members.
- [7] The ESG reviewed and addressed all these comments during the meeting. Main discussions are detailed below.
- [8] At first, and following a comment from the Europe representative, there was a discussion on the definition of “ePhyto” as different words in the SIP document seem to be used for “ePhyto”. Indeed, as reminded by the Near East representative, the latest version of ISPM 5 provides the definition of “**phytosanitary certificate**”<sup>1</sup> but does not define the term “ePhyto”.
- [9] Therefore, the ESG:
- (2) *recommended* the Technical Panel for the Glossary of phytosanitary terms to add “ePhyto” definition to the Glossary.
- [10] Moreover, the Europe representative emphasized the fact that the IPPC ePhyto Hub does not exchange certificates but data. Therefore, “electronic phytosanitary certificate” has no meaning. Indeed, from a European Union (EU) perspective, paperless certification means “electronically signed phytosanitary certificates”. So, the members wondered what “electronic phytosanitary certificate” means, and the question is whether it is about data or electronically signed phytosanitary certificate. It should also be noted that ISPM 5 definition on phytosanitary certificate refers to “electronic equivalent”.

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<sup>1</sup> **Phytosanitary certificate**: An **official** paper document or its **official** electronic equivalent, consistent with the model certificates of the **IPPC**, attesting that a **consignment** meets **phytosanitary import requirements** [FAO, 1990; revised CPM, 2012]

- [11] The UNICC representative added that the wording of the functionalities of the Hub should be standardized and that it may be appropriate to mention “exchange of data” instead of “exchange of electronic phytosanitary certificate”. Nevertheless, the standardized wording should consider the perspective of all countries in addition to the EU one.
- [12] The Chair indicated that the problem is that historically the term “electronic phytosanitary certificate” encompasses everything, including the exchange and the data, although the ePhyto itself is just the data. The term should be “electronic phytosanitary exchange” instead of “electronic phytosanitary certificate”.
- [13] At the end of the discussion on the “ePhyto” term definition, the ESG:
- (3) *invited* the Secretariat to make the SIP document as consistent as possible regarding the terminology used, pending further discussion from ESG on the definition.
- [14] As regards ePhyto budget-related comments from the Chair including costs of ePhyto Solution uptake and of organizing a Symposium, and after discussion, the ESG removed the proposed table with detailed budget and instead mentioned in the text the following: “the expected annual cost of the ePhyto Solution through 2030 is approximately USD 933,000 to 1,263,000 and varies depending on how many activities are carried out beyond the UNICC operation and maintenance costs and IPPC staffing.” This is in conformity with what was noted by CPM-17 (2023) and will allow to consider the increasing UNICC operation and maintenance costs (up to USD 600,000/year) as explained by the UNICC representative.
- [15] As regards another comment from the Europe representative on one sentence, the text was adjusted<sup>2</sup> to specify that guides to implement the Hub and GeNS should be updated by the IPPC/UNICC/ESG as necessary, especially to ensure compliance with the agreed format and content of XML messages.
- [16] As regards IAG comments ([Appendix 3](#)), the ESG addressed and considered them as follows:
- IAG comments “5. Performance Metrics and Monitoring”, “7. Stakeholder Engagement Plan” and “9. Feedback and Revision Mechanism” were considered and included in “Governance” of the SIP. As regards comment 9, the ESG highlighted that concerns from national systems’ users should be routed initially through the NPPOs, the latter then reporting to the IPPC/UNICC as necessary. The ESG also reminded that collection of concerns from NPPOs already exists and is reviewed/analyzed by IPPC/UNICC and ESG.
- IAG comments “1. Clarity on Technological Scalability” and “2. Risk Management and Contingency Planning” were considered and consequently two paragraphs were included in “Operations” of the SIP.
  - IAG comments “3. Assessment of Country-Specific Challenges:”, “4. User Training and Support” and “8. Legal and Regulatory Considerations” were considered in “Country implementation” of the SIP. Thus, one paragraph was inserted, indicating that support required can vary from country to country and the existence of the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation with two modules, among others, on national legislation and export certification to assess the specific situation of each country, upon their request.
  - IAG comment “6. Environmental Sustainability Considerations” was discussed and the ESG concluded that this topic should be further documented before communicating on it and considering also there is no need to be too specific on ePhyto benefits in a strategic plan.
- [17] Lastly, and as suggested by the Chair, the Secretariat adjusted the key milestones in Appendix 1 of the draft SIP. In particular, the number of new countries connected to the hub every year has been removed

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<sup>2</sup> The IPPC Secretariat with the support of UNICC and ESG members have produced guidance for implementing the hub and GeNS. These guides should continue to be considered by countries implementing the system and updated by the IPPC/UNICC/ESG, as necessary, to ensure they remain effective.

as it is beyond IPPC control. Likewise, references made to World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) and Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) were removed as it is beyond IPPC control too.

[18] At the end of the discussions on this item on the SIP review, and after having integrated the comments made by participants, the ESG:

(4) *invited* the Secretariat to share the SIP document with CPM-Bureau members for their comments.

[19] Then and due to lack of time, the Chairman, in agreement with the participants, decided that the ESG will address the other agenda items at the February meeting.

## 5. Any other business

[20] There was no other business.

## 6. Date of the next meeting

[21] An *ad hoc* meeting on the ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan should be scheduled at the end of January 2024 if comments from the CPM Bureau members need to be addressed.

[22] The next ESG monthly meeting is scheduled on 6 February at 2.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+1).

## 7. Close of the meeting

[23] The Chairperson thanked the participants for their active participation and wished an happy new year to everyone.

### Action List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
1. Share with the CPM-Bureau the draft of the 2024-2030 ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), as discussed at the ESG Meeting	Secretariat	17 January 2024
2. Request the Standards Committee (SC) to consider the ESG recommendation on adding “ePhyto” definition in the Glossary of phytosanitary terms (ISPM 5)	Secretariat	31 March 2024

**Appendix 1****AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING****16 January 2024, 17:00–18:00 Rome Time (UTC+1)**

<b>Agenda Item</b>		<b>Document No.</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Opening of the Meeting</b>		IPPC Secretariat
<b>2.</b>	<b>Meeting Arrangements</b>		
2.1	Adoption of the Agenda	2024-01_ESG_01_Agenda	Chairperson
<b>3.</b>	<b>Administrative Matters</b>		
3.1	Review of meeting documents		IPPC Secretariat
3.2	Meeting Participants	<a href="#">ESG Membership list</a>	IPPC Secretariat
3.3	Approval of minutes of previous meeting	2023-12_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
<b>4.</b>	<b>IPPC Secretariat updates</b>		
4.1	IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (2024-2030) review		IPPC Secretariat
4.2	Connection to digital platforms		IPPC Secretariat
4.3	Non-compliant ePhytos with the XML mapping		IPPC Secretariat
4.4	Other updates		IPPC Secretariat
<b>5.</b>	<b>Regional updates</b>		
	Updates of activities in the FAO Regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Africa</li> <li>- Asia</li> <li>- Europe</li> <li>- Latin America and Carribean</li> <li>- Near East</li> <li>- North America</li> <li>- Southwest Pacific</li> </ul>		Regional representatives
<b>6.</b>	<b>UNICC updates</b>		UNICC
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>		Chairperson
<b>8.</b>	<b>Date of the next meeting</b>		IPPC Secretariat
<b>9.</b>	<b>Close of the Meeting</b>		Chairperson

**Appendix 2****EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING PARTICIPANT LIST****16 January 2024, 17:00–18:00 Rome Time (UTC+1)**

<b>Region / Role</b>	<b>Name / Organization</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Europe Member	<b>Ms Helene KLEIN</b> Directorate SANTE.DDG2.G (Crisis management in food, animals and plants) European Commission DG Health and Food Safety	<a href="mailto:Helene.KLEIN@ec.europa.eu">Helene.KLEIN@ec.europa.eu</a>
Latin America and Caribbean Member	<b>Mr Rodrigo ROBLES</b> Electronic Certification eCert SAG, Ministry of Agriculture Chile	<a href="mailto:rodrigo.robles@sag.gob.cl">rodrigo.robles@sag.gob.cl</a>
Near East Member	<b>Mr Islam ABOELELA</b> Central Administration of Plant Quarantine The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation Egypt	<a href="mailto:islam.gene@gmail.com">islam.gene@gmail.com</a>
North America Member ( <b>ESG Chairperson</b> )	<b>Mr Christian B DELLIS</b> United States Department of Agriculture, Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine	<a href="mailto:christian.b.dellis@usda.gov">christian.b.dellis@usda.gov</a>
UNICC	<b>Mr Gianluca NUZZO</b> Solutions Delivery Manager Digital Business Solutions Section (DDD)	<a href="mailto:nuzzo@unicc.org">nuzzo@unicc.org</a>
	<b>Mr Dominique MENON</b> IPPC Secretariat / IFU ePhyto Programme Officer	<a href="mailto:dominique.menon@fao.org">dominique.menon@fao.org</a>

## Appendix 3

### **IAG comments on the draft ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan (2024-2030)**

(Word version 2023-12-06)

Upon reviewing the "IPPC ePhyto Strategic Implementation Plan 2024-2030," here are some potential areas for feedback or further consideration:

1. **Clarity on Technological Scalability:** While the plan outlines the current technological infrastructure, it might benefit from a more detailed explanation of how this infrastructure will scale to accommodate increasing global usage over time, especially considering technological advancements and evolving cybersecurity threats.
2. **Risk Management and Contingency Planning:** The document could include more detailed risk management strategies, particularly addressing potential technical failures, data breaches, or disruptions in service. Contingency plans in case of major disruptions would strengthen the implementation plan.
3. **Assessment of Country-Specific Challenges:** The plan mentions support for countries in implementing the ePhyto Solution, but a more in-depth analysis of specific challenges faced by different countries (especially developing nations) and tailored strategies to address these could be beneficial.
4. **User Training and Support:** Detailed strategies for training and ongoing support for end-users in different countries would be helpful. This includes language barriers, technical literacy, and access to necessary technology.
5. **Performance Metrics and Monitoring:** The document could elaborate on the specific performance metrics and monitoring processes that will be used to evaluate the success and efficiency of the ePhyto Solution.
6. **Environmental Sustainability Considerations:** Given the increasing global focus on environmental sustainability, the plan could benefit from a section discussing how the ePhyto Solution aligns with environmental goals, such as reducing paper usage and carbon footprint.
7. **Stakeholder Engagement Plan:** A more detailed stakeholder engagement plan, including how to address the concerns and needs of various stakeholders would be valuable.
8. **Legal and Regulatory Considerations:** The document might include a more comprehensive review of legal and regulatory considerations across different jurisdictions, particularly in terms of data protection and privacy laws.
9. **Feedback and Revision Mechanism:** The plan could outline a mechanism for collecting feedback from users and stakeholders, and how this feedback will be used to continuously improve the ePhyto Solution.