

MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING 4 June 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)

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: (1) the agenda and (2) the draft minutes of the ESG meeting held in May 2024.
- [4] The Near East and Bureau representatives apologized for being unable to attend the meeting. The list of participants is provided in [Appendix 2](#).
- [5] Regarding the adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting, and after having addressed some comments the ESG:
- (1) *approved* the draft minutes of the ESG Meeting held on 7 May 2024.

4. IPPC Secretariat updates

4.1 FAO/UNICC Service Delivery Agreements for Hub and GeNS: cost revisions

- [6] The Secretariat first reminded the background of this item. Indeed, there are currently two Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) between FAO and UNICC for operating and maintaining the Hub and GeNS, with a total amount of USD 410,844/year. The SDAs describe the recurring activities required to deliver the service within the bound of scope, quality and service level defined therein.

A. SDA IPPC ePhyto Hub Service (FAO-P-D06-R):

- signed in April 2017
- USD 165,096/year
- Current contract end date: 30-Sep-2024
- Tacitly renewed each year

B. SDA IPPC GeNS (FAO-P-D08-R):

- Signed in January 2018
- USD 245,748/year
- Current contract end date: 30-June-2024
- Tacitly renewed each year

- [7] The Secretariat then indicated the FAO and UNICC were in the process of renewing the contracts for ePhyto (FAO-P-D06-R) and GeNS (FAO-P-D08-R) with a request from UNICC to review the costs to cover the increase in usage of the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

- [8] The UNICC representative then reminded that UNICC was a non-profit organization with cost recovery and indicated that costs of the two SDAs were based on what was needed at the time they were signed in 2017 and 2018 including developments of the IPPC ePhyto Solution from resources saved. Indeed, the remaining budgets could be further utilized or returned to FAO after each biennium. But the initial savings have now been used.
- [9] He informed the ESG of the increased number of countries registered including in the User Acceptance Test (UAT) environment, with also more and more countries using the GeNS. The increased features that were added into the initial platform and have made the success of the IPPC ePhyto Solutions need also to be taken into consideration such as the validation tool totally funded by the SDAs, the landing page of the ephytoexchange.org website, the hub channels, some elements of the digital signature, the GeNS translation, the GeNS offline commodities, etc. He added that the roadmap included more enhancements like the review of the global delivery model and disaster recovery, improvement of the additional declaration section in the GeNS, collaboration tool enhancements, mixed commodities, multiple inspections (GeNS), among others.
- [10] He then made a comparison between the current SDAs and the proposed ones for both the Hub and the GeNS. The new contracts need more specifications and some levels to be reviewed. For instance, today there is a maximum of 150,000 messages per month through the Hub while this would need to be expanded to 300,000 per month and seven years of audit logs retention in the current contract may be replaced by six months of audit logs retention. Similarly, the initial contract was signed with nine countries using the GeNS while now more than 30 use the GeNS and the storage of data with the GeNS may need also to be discussed and the number of months of retention of logs as well.
- [11] The UNICC representative concluded that the main points to discuss are the retention period of data, the level of security required for the system and whether support should include developments/enhancements of the system as has been the case so far. Following a question from the ESG Chair to know whether the current contracts with a total amount of USD 411,000/year were dedicated to basically maintaining the system and new features requested had to be funded separately, the UNICC representative responded it depends on the request. If the demand requires few resources and savings from previous years are available, then it is possible to develop enhancements, otherwise a Business Change Request (BCR) will be needed for funding and developing new features.
- [12] The UNICC representative also confirmed that SDAs were implicitly renewed without cancellation so services would not be interrupted and that the pressure was from the fact that today they were in deficit and therefore it may be difficult to renew contracts of staff if funds are not there. Thus, the pressure is more from the latter perspective with the risk of losing any of the personnel that have all this experience working on the IPPC ePhyto Solution the past few years. In addition, the ESG Chair indicated that costs may have increased in the last 6/7 years, the funding model foresaw an annual inflation of operating costs and UNICC contributed to support countries for onboarding and training on the use of the GeNS. The Secretariat also indicated that out of a total amount of USD 1,263,000/year, the funding model anticipated costs for UNICC Hub and GeNS Operations plus further enhancements and development as of USD 613,000/year by 2026.
- [13] Following discussions, the ESG:
- (2) *invited* the UNICC to calculate costs with various options including different periods of retention or storage of data and attachments (3 months, 6 months, 12 months) and indicate key elements including security having an impact on costs.
 - (3) *noted* that costs have increased considering extension of the IPPC ePhyto Solution usage and the inflation.
 - (4) *noted* that the UNICC, beyond maintaining and enhancing the IPPC ePhyto Solution, contributes to support countries for its uptake.

- (5) *noted* that decisions on new SDAs had to be made as soon as possible in order not to lose experienced staff.

4.2 Other updates

- [14] Due to lack of time, the other updates were deferred to the next ESG meeting.

5. Regional updates

- [15] The Europe representative shared an issue they have with some countries attaching to the ePhyto a scan copy of it, not to mention that in some cases an original paper phytosanitary certificate could also be submitted at the border and emphasized that these duplications were misleading. The reason for this may be the EU requirement of an electronic signature of the NPPO (e-seal) as some countries cannot sign electronically their ePhytos and still must send a paper certificate. At the end of the discussion, the ESG:

- (6) *invited* the Europe representative to prepare a clear message explaining that it is not necessary to issue a scan copy and/or a paper certificate in addition of the ePhytos, excepted if electronic signature is still not available on the ePhyto for destination countries being part of the EU.
- (7) *invited* the UNICC representative to post the above message on the collaboration tool.

- [16] Due to lack of time, the other regional updates were deferred to the next ESG meeting.

6. UNICC updates

- [17] Due to lack of time, UNICC agenda items were deferred to a next ESG meeting.

7. Any other business

- [18] N/A

8. Date of the next meeting

- [19] The next ESG meeting is scheduled for 2 July 2024 at 2.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+2).

9. Close of the meeting

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

Action List

Action	Responsible	Deadline
1. Calculate costs of FAO/UNICC Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) with various options including different periods of storage of data and attachments and security.	UNICC representative	11 June 2024
2. Prepare a clear message explaining that it is not necessary to issue a scan copy and/or a paper certificate in addition of the ePhytos; to be then posted on the collaboration tool.	Europe representative and UNICC representative	02 July 2024

Appendix 1**AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING****4 June 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)**

	Agenda Item	Document No.	Presenter
1.	Opening of the Meeting		IPPC Secretariat
2.	Meeting Arrangements		
2.1	Adoption of the Agenda	2024-06_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	2024-05_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
4.	IPPC Secretariat updates		
4.1	FAO/UNICC Service Delivery Agreements for Hub and GeNS: cost revisions		IPPC Secretariat/ UNICC
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
6.1	Discuss Hub/Infographics on ephytoexchange.org website [Deferred]		UNICC
6.2	Handling envelope duplicates [Deferred]		UNICC
6.3	Distinguish commercial <i>versus</i> non-commercial ePhytos in XML mapping [Deferred]		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****4 June 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+2)**

Region / Role	Name / Organization	Email address
Asia Member	Mr Bojun ZHANG Department of General Operation General Administration of China Customs	509249093@qq.com
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@usda.gov
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