

## MINUTES OF THE IPPC EPHYTO STEERING GROUP (ESG) VIRTUAL MEETING

6 August 2024, 14.00-15.00, 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 Meetings held in July 2024.
- [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 2 July 2024.

### 4. IPPC Secretariat updates

#### 4.1 ePhyto Africa Initiative update

- [6] The Secretariat updated the ESG on the ePhyto Africa Initiative. Indeed, several partners are keen to work together with the Secretariat to support ePhyto implementation at country level in Africa. Those partners are the AfCFTA, AU-IAPSC, GATF, IAG, STDF, TMA and UNICC<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this initiative is to have more African countries adopting and implementing the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

Following the initial workshop held on 22-23 February 2024 in FAO Headquarters and subsequent calls, this consortium of stakeholders has prepared a project logframe that provides activities for this project and defines the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders for those activities. The **objective of the project is to have a minimum of 70% of all African countries exchanging ePhytos within the upcoming 36 months**.

In addition, on May 11<sup>th</sup>, the IPPC Secretary sent a letter to 39 National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) of Africa that are not exchanging ePhytos namely having one of the following ePhyto status: Testing, Registered or Unregistered. This letter was a call for expression of interest in the ePhyto initiative for Africa. To date, the Secretariat has received responses from 32 countries expressing their interest in ePhyto and their willingness to commit to its adoption and implementation.

- [7] A subgroup on communication has also been set up to prepare a communication plan and a common branding for the Initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> AfCFTA: African Continental Free Trade Area – AU-IAPSC: Inter-African Phytosanitary Council of the African Union – GATF: Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation – IAG: ePhyto Industry Advisory Group – STDF: Standards and Trade Development Facility – TMA: TradeMark Africa – UNICC: United Nations International Computing Centre.

- [8] Moreover, the stakeholders are in the process of drafting Term of Reference (ToR) for establishing a working group. Its purpose is to coordinate, oversee and monitor the delivery of the ePhyto Africa Initiative. As far as membership of this working group is concerned, the Secretariat suggested that one ESG member be included.
- [9] After discussion, the ESG:
- (2) *agreed* one ESG member and more specifically the Africa representative to be part of the ePhyto Africa Initiative Working Group;
  - (3) *expressed* its willingness to provide its expertise to the ePhyto Africa Initiative including the support from other ESG members.

## 4.2 Other updates

**CEFTA<sup>2</sup> countries.** On July 25<sup>th</sup> the representative of the CEFTA Project SEED+ (Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data) informed the UNICC/IPPC that they were ready to send data in production environment from North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.

**Funding of the IPPC ePhyto Solution.** The Chair mentioned the current status of ePhyto funding and that as a result UNICC is not in a position to address certain developments concerning the Hub and GeNS. In addition, the Chair suggested adding one functionality within the IPPC ePhyto Solution for the participating NPPOs to generate the invoice that would categorize how much money they would owe if they do want to pay. That will remove some of the administrative burden from the Secretariat to implement the ePhyto funding model endorsed at CPM-18 (2024). The Secretariat then indicated that a call of the Focus Group on ePhyto sustainable funding should be scheduled by the end of September/beginning of October.

## 5. Regional updates

### *Africa*

The Africa representative informed that Ethiopia and Mozambique were building their own system to exchange ePhytos, with the support of TradeMark Africa (TMA). In addition, Kenya is willing to conduct tests with the European Union to move paperless with them very soon, hopefully.

Regarding the ePhyto Africa Initiative, he also echoed the Chair's comments that if countries use their own system, this is a completely different type of support from that given to those countries using the GeNS. Indeed, when it comes to a national system, governments often want to make it interoperable and integrate it into a single window, whereas with GeNS it is more a question of implementation and training.

### *Latin America and Caribbean*

- [10] The Latin America and Caribbean representative informed that Ecuador is currently working to ensure connection with the European Union.
- [11] He also indicated that the Inter-American Coordinating Group in Plant Protection (GICSV - *Grupo Interamericano de Coordinación en Sanidad Vegetal*) had finalized a contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification. After discussion the ESG:
- (4) *invited* the Secretariat on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean representative to share with ESG members the last version of the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary

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<sup>2</sup> Central European Free Trade Agreement. CEFTA's member countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) on behalf of Kosovo.

certification to review it at the next ESG meeting in view of expanding it to all NPPOs using the IPPC ePhyto Solution.

### ***North America***

- [12] The Chair informed that the USA have just started to send ePhytos to French Polynesia and the Cayman Islands. In addition, Canada is sending to the USA more and more ePhytos.

### ***Southwest Pacific***

- [13] The Southwest Pacific representative informed that the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus Organization (<https://pacerplus.org/>) had published a vacancy announcement for technical support on ePhyto implementation among its ten member states. Nevertheless, this leaves non-PACER Plus member countries in the Pacific region without support where needed.

## **6. UNICC updates**

- [14] N/A

## **7. Any other business**

- [15] There was no other business.

## **8. Date of the next meeting**

- [16] The next ESG meeting is scheduled on 10 September 2024 at 2.00 pm, Rome Time (UTC+2).

## **9. Close of the meeting**

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

### **Action List**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1. Share with ESG Members the GICSV contingency plan for electronic phytosanitary certification	Secretariat, on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean representative	3 September 2024

**Appendix 1****AGENDA OF THE EPHYTO STEERING GROUP MEETING****6 August 2024, 14.00-15.00, 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	2024-08_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	2024-07_ESG_Meeting_Minutes_Draft	IPPC Secretariat
<b>4.</b>	<b>IPPC Secretariat updates</b>		
4.1	ePhyto Africa Initiative update		IPPC Secretariat
4.2	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****6 August 2024, 14.00-15.00, Rome Time (UTC+1)**

<b>Region / Role</b>	<b>Name / Organization</b>	<b>Email address</b>
Africa Member	<b>Mr Josiah Musili SYANDA</b> Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS)	<a href="mailto:jsyanda@kephis.org">jsyanda@kephis.org</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>
North America Member (ESG Chairperson)	<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>
Southwest Pacific Member	<b>Mr Piriariki MAAO</b> Biosecurity Service Ministry of Agriculture Cook Islands	<a href="mailto:piriariki.maao@cookislands.gov.ck">piriariki.maao@cookislands.gov.ck</a>
	<b>Mr Dominique MENON</b> IPPC Secretariat / IFU ePhyto Programme Officer	<a href="mailto:dominique.menon@fao.org">dominique.menon@fao.org</a>