

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING**28 March 2011****WTO Headquarters, Geneva****1. Adoption of Agenda**

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr Thomas Westcot from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

2. The Secretariat referred to project STDF/PG/351, and indicated that the reasons for this application not being accepted for consideration were included in the Review document for this meeting (STDF/WG/Mar11/Review). Since there were no longer any outstanding issues associated with STDF/PPG/329, it was suggested to remove this issue for discussion under agenda item 5.

3. The Secretariat indicated that three additional documents had been circulated for discussion at the meeting: (i) Compilation of SPS information received (STDF/WG/Mar11/Compilation) – for discussion under agenda item 4; (ii) Business Case for the Development of the STDF Virtual Library – for discussion under item 3; and (iii) handouts of the presentations to be made under item 4.

4. The Secretariat welcomed the new developing country representative from Asia, Mr Davinio Catbagan from the Philippines. Apologies were also tendered for the absence of the developing country representative from Africa, Mr Washington Otieno from Kenya. The agenda was adopted with one amendment (STDF/PPG/329, see above). A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

2. Election of vice-chairperson

5. The Working Group elected the OIE as the new vice-chair of the Working Group.

3. Overview of operation of the Facility

6. The Secretariat introduced document **G/SPS/GEN/1075** and provided an overview on the operation of the STDF.

Staffing issues

7. The Secretariat briefed the Working Group on the recruitment process to fill the current vacancy (following the departure of Mr Panos Antonakakis). Of the 236 applications received, six candidates were shortlisted and interviewed in February 2011. A report was sent to WTO's Appointment and Promotion Board in March 2011 for approval. This would be followed by final approval from WTO's Director General. Pending this procedure, the Secretariat was considering extending the temporary contract of Ms Anneke Hamilton. The Secretariat also informed the Working Group about the arrival of an intern from Duke University to work with the STDF Secretariat, from mid-May to mid-August 2011.

Report on the Policy Committee

8. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the Policy Committee meeting of 3 December 2010, in which the Secretariat reported on STDF's operations in 2010. The Policy Committee also approved a revised Operating Plan for 2011 and held preliminary discussions on the preparation of a new STDF strategy and work programme. The summary of the meeting is available on the STDF website (http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/DocsPC/Report_STDFPolicyCommittee_Dec-10.pdf).

STDF Annual Report 2010

9. The Secretariat reminded the Working Group of the new format of the STDF Annual Report 2010, which is structured along the five key output areas of its work programme: (i) development of high-quality tools and information resources to support SPS capacity building for use by beneficiaries, donors and other organizations; (ii) dissemination of experiences and good practices in SPS capacity building; (iii) SPS issues and priorities addressed by other trade capacity building programmes at the country level; (iv) improved capacity of beneficiaries of STDF projects to analyse and implement international SPS requirements; and (v) improved capacity of beneficiaries to identify SPS needs and formulate project proposals. STDF's activities in 2010 were reported in terms of their contribution to achieving these outputs.

10. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of the Annual Report, highlighting that the STDF is largely on track in achieving the five outputs of its work programme. The Annual Report is available at: http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/KeyDocs/STDF_342_AnnualReport2010.pdf

11. In response to a query on project funding, the Secretariat clarified that the financial expenditure in 2010 (as presented in Annex VI of the Annual Report), represented expenditure on a backlog of projects approved in 2009 (but not contracted) and indicated that the target is to have six projects approved each year, at a total of US\$ 2.4 million. The Secretariat suggested that a breakdown of donor contributions could be added to the Annual Report for 2011.

12. Some members expressed concerns related to geographic balance (increasing the STDF focus on the Latin American and South Pacific region) in STDF projects. The Secretariat reminded the Working Group of the 40% target level of funding to LDCs and OLICs, which are mainly located in Africa, and encouraged the submission of projects from other regions. Partners, donors and beneficiary representatives had a role to play in this, too.

Ongoing/planned STDF meetings and activities

Desk study on PPPs in support of SPS capacity

13. The Secretariat briefed the Working Group on the status of the desk study on PPPs. Following the workshop held in The Hague in 2010, the Secretariat provided extensive comments on the two drafts of the desk study that were prepared by Dr Marian Garcia. The Secretariat reported that the desk study will be ready for circulation at the next meeting.

Pilot testing work on the development and use of the MCDA methodology

14. The Secretariat provided an explanation of the MCDA methodology and background information to this work. A draft methodology to guide MDCA pilot testing was developed by Spencer Henson. Pilot testing activities were scheduled to begin in Mozambique (mid-April) and Zambia (June). The Secretariat indicated that USAID had offered funding support for the participation of Malawi in the pilot testing activities. Selection of countries from Latin America (possibly Peru) and Asia would be done at a later stage.

15. An overview of the steps involved in the pilot testing was outlined: (i) drafting the MCDA guide; (ii) compilation of a dossier on information to inform definition of SPS priorities; and (iii) organizing a one-day national stakeholder meeting to gather substantive inputs to the priority-setting process. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that a regional workshop is being planned from 15-17 August 2011 in Johannesburg to present the findings, conclusions and experiences of the pilot testing work to a larger group of SPS stakeholders and decision makers in the region.

16. A briefing session on the findings and conclusions of the MCDA application for development partners and donors was currently being considered for Mozambique. In response to a

query on the added benefit of organizing this meeting, the Secretariat clarified that the national stakeholder meeting would not involve donors and instead their participation would be sought for the briefing session.

17. The IPPC Secretariat expressed some technical concerns in relation to compliance indicators, preference and indifference threshold presented in the MDCA document. The Secretariat indicated that this would be clarified with Spencer Henson. In response to a query on the budget, the Secretariat clarified that US\$353,000 had been approved for this activity in the STDF work programme.

18. Members were also informed that FAO is at an early stage of undertaking a similar project and the Secretariat indicated that results of its pilot testing activities would be disseminated. The Working Group expressed its support for the pilot testing activities. Members indicated that they would provide information to the Secretariat on complementary activities in the pilot testing countries, as well as relevant data.

Pilot testing work on SPS indicators

19. The Secretariat provided an update on the ongoing work on SPS indicators. The technical working paper had been revised to reflect discussions at the technical working meeting, as well as other comments received, and is available at <http://www.standardsfacility.org/TASPSIndicators.htm>. Meetings with partners will be organized after the summer to discuss how to link this work to their work on capacity evaluation and to prepare a detailed work plan to further advance this work in 2011-12.

20. The Secretariat also informed the Working Group that UNIDO, which has been working on compliance indicators, was invited to make a presentation to the Working Group on its recently issued "Trade and Compliance" report at the next meeting in June 2011.

Joint STDF/EIF training on project design

21. The Secretariat reported on the first training workshop in Nepal in March 2011 for a group of selected trade and SPS public and private sector officials, held in collaboration with the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) at the University of Wolverhampton. The Working Group was informed of the positive feedback received from the training in Nepal. A project is currently being developed for submission to the STDF.

22. The EIF is planning additional training workshops in selected countries in 2011, in which the STDF could participate. The Working Group encouraged the Secretariat to continue its participation in these workshops if: (i) SPS issues are a clear priority in the recipient countries; and (ii) links can be established with the STDF work programme, for instance through PPGs. The Secretariat highlighted that the purpose of this joint EIF/STDF activity is to prepare training materials and tools on project design for use by the STDF, its partners, donors and beneficiaries in developing countries.

STDF study on national SPS coordination mechanisms in Africa

23. The Secretariat reported on the progress of the STDF scoping study, indicating that two drafts had been received from the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) and that comments were due to be submitted by the Secretariat on the second draft. The final copy of the study would be ready for the Working Group meeting in June. The study, as well as the previous STDF study on regional SPS frameworks and strategies in Africa, would be presented at the WTO workshop on national and regional SPS coordination planned on the margins of the SPS Committee meeting in October 2011 (see also document G/SPS/GEN/1067). The European Union suggested that possible linkages and coordination with AU-IBAR activities should be explored.

Planned event on international trade and invasive species (2012)

24. The Secretariat informed the Working Group of its participation in the 2nd meeting of the Inter-agency Liaison Group on Invasive Alien Species, held at the WTO in February 2011. The STDF briefed the Group on previous ideas to organize and facilitate a seminar on international trade and invasive species (to be held back-to-back with an SPS Committee meeting in 2012). In October 2010, the Working Group had questioned the appropriateness for the STDF to organize an event on this topic - as it would fall under the mandate of the Inter-agency Liaison Group. At the meeting in February, the Group was enthusiastic about the idea and encouraged the STDF to pursue the organization of this seminar, in close collaboration with members of the Group.

25. The Secretariat proposed to further revise its draft concept note on this topic, in close collaboration with the OIE and IPPC Secretariats, after which the revised note would be shared with the Inter-agency Liaison Group for further comments and suggestions. The Secretariat further proposed to table the final draft concept note for discussion and approval by the STDF Working Group in June, with the view to initiating preparations for the seminar during the second half of 2011. Comments on the validity of the project and proposed approach were requested from the Working Group.

26. The Working Group agreed to move forward with the process as suggested by the Secretariat and highlighted specific areas to be addressed: (i) definition of invasive species; (ii) applicable conventions for invasive species; and (iii) challenges faced by developing countries in addressing this issue.

3rd Global Aid for Trade Review

27. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that a large number of SPS-related case stories were submitted to the WTO and that some of these stories were reviewed (to identify good practice and lessons learned). The possibility of presenting the main findings, in addition to highlight SPS as an important supply side constraint, on the margins of the 3rd Global Review of Aid for Trade in July 2011 was currently explored. The Working Group suggested that the Secretariat, notably in light of time and resource constraints, should not prioritize this activity and suggested to carry out this work in the future.

Report on (planned) STDF participation in other organizations and initiatives

28. The Secretariat provided a brief overview of its engagement with and participation in other SPS-related organizations and initiatives since the previous meeting of the Working Group on 18 October 2010. The Working Group suggested the Secretariat to develop criteria to assist in deciding whether to accept or decline invitations for future events. The Secretariat informed that decisions were normally made on the basis of relevance to the STDF work programme and the availability of resources. The Secretariat agreed to present a list of criteria to the Working Group in June and highlighted that decisions are ultimately taken on a case-by-case basis. The Secretariat also reminded members to represent/promote the STDF, as well as circulate STDF material, at events in which they participate.

Information dissemination activities

29. The Secretariat informed members on progress made in revising a previous STDF publication on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools, which was initially published in February 2009. Inputs had been received from all the relevant organizations and the Secretariat was in the process of finalizing the second edition of this publication. Further to the OIE's suggestion, the Secretariat will circulate the final document to the relevant organizations before publication.

30. The Secretariat also informed the Working Group on the new STDF website, which would be available in French and Spanish in the following weeks. Most technical issues had been fully addressed and further comments and suggestions made by Working Group members had been incorporated. Donors and partners would be contacted shortly to identify contact persons and links to relevant SPS-related webpages.

31. The Secretariat reported on its initiative to develop an online library containing SPS-related electronic documentation, including needs assessments, technical assistance and meeting reports, research papers and articles from various publishers and sources, which can be accessed by public users at no cost. This "STDF Virtual Library" will contain only publications already available in the public domain, including full text documents, and also links to SPS-related electronic publications of partner/stakeholder organizations. A draft business case was prepared and sent for WTO internal approval. Once approved, a timeframe of six months for implementation was envisaged.

32. The Secretariat also informed the Working Group that minor corrections were being made to finalize the Arabic, Chinese and Russian versions of the STDF film. The Secretariat indicated that the final product would be available in a few weeks. Input was sought from the Working Group on channels of distribution for the STDF film in the three new languages.

Funding situation

33. The Secretariat reported on the STDF funding situation and commented on the information and figures in the annotated agenda (STDF/WG/Mar11/Annotated agenda). One member mentioned that fewer projects may be funded in the future and requested information on the possible impact of this possible trend on the budget. It was agreed to deal with strategy and subsequent budgetary and financial implications in the Working Group meeting on strategy development on Friday morning. In response to a query, the Secretariat also reminded the Working Group that only two projects completed in 2010 would be evaluated, in addition to four projects completed in 2009.

4. Information exchange on SPS-related initiatives (STDF/WG/Mar11/Compilation)

34. Two presentations were held:

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) - STDF/PG/108

35. Dr Ricardo Molins, Head of the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Department at the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), made a presentation on a recently concluded regional SPS programme in 28 countries in the Americas. The objectives of this programme, which was funded by the STDF, were to: (i) promote a common vision on SPS issues within (public and private sector) and among the participating countries; (ii) develop capacity to participate more actively and effectively in the SPS Committee and international standard-setting bodies (ISSBs); and (iii) promote technical cooperation between countries as an exchange mechanism on technical assistance and support to special and differential treatment.

36. Some members suggested IICA seeking ways to further use the results of this project in the context of other initiatives and programmes aiming at developing capacity to participate effectively in the work of international standard-setting bodies and the SPS Committee, such as the African "PAN-SPSO" programme funded by the EU.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Use of the Randomized Evaluation Methodology in SPS Projects

37. Mr Vincent Pons from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology introduced the concept of randomized evaluations in the context of SPS-related projects. This triggered a lively debate on issues such as the costs, which are significant, as well as the time and support that would be required

during project design to enable applicants to incorporate this methodology. Members generally viewed that STDF projects may not be suitable to pilot test this methodology in the SPS area, as these projects are often small in size and focused on institutional capacity building issues. However, where projects are directly targeted at large groups such as small-scale farmers, application of the methodology could be explored on a case-by-case basis. Donor members were particularly encouraged to explore the use of this methodology in their larger bilateral SPS programmes.

Other initiatives of partners, donors and observers

38. The Secretariat introduced the Compilation document (STDF/WG/Mar/11/Compilation) with information on ongoing and planned SPS-related capacity building activities submitted by members and observer organizations. Attention was drawn to several events that aimed at establishing an African Partnership for Aflatoxin Control (PACA), initiated by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Secretariat had participated in these events through tele- and videoconference. The goals of the PACA would be to reduce the incidence of aflatoxin in food, improve public health, increase trade, augment smallholder income and enhance food security in Africa. Most recently, the development of a working group on SPS and aflatoxin issues had been discussed in the context of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development programme (CAADP). The World Bank briefed the Working Group in more detail on this event.

5. Overview of implementation of ongoing projects and PPGs (STDF/WG/Mar11/Overview)

39. The Secretariat reported that the STDF has devoted 51 per cent of its project resources to LDCs and OLICs. An overview of the implementation status of all projects was available in the document previously circulated (STDF/WG/Mar11/Overview). The Working Group was reminded that STDF/PPG/329 had been removed from the agenda under agenda item 1.

40. The Secretariat reminded that candidates were sought for the evaluation of a number of completed STDF projects and invited the Working Group to make suggestions. One member suggested to evaluate project STDF/PG/146 (Strengthening phytosanitary controls in Mali - focus on mango exports) as part of a larger meta-evaluation of all mango-related projects that have been implemented in Mali over the last decade. The Secretariat agreed to prepare a proposal in this regard for consideration by the Working Group in June.

Presentation of issues arising by Secretariat

STDF/PG/126 – Establishment of the Horticulture Development Council of Tanzania

41. The Secretariat informed the Working Group about the request received from the Tanzania Horticultural Association for an extension of four months to complete project STDF/PG/126, at no additional cost. The ITC, which is supervising the implementation of the project, presented the achievements to date. The Working Group decided to grant a six-month extension to the project to ensure that sufficient time would be available to successfully complete the remaining activities.

STDF/PG/116 - Traceability system in the livestock sector in Costa Rica

42. The Secretariat informed the Working Group about a request received from IICA (Costa Rica), on behalf of the beneficiary (SENASA), to extend project STDF/PG/116 with four months, at no additional cost. Additional time was needed to finalize the implementation of some project activities and to develop one additional software application for individual traceability, using unspent funds (US\$50,000), which would complement project activities and use the same platform already developed. Funds had been saved because of the use of local instead of foreign companies to develop IT applications. It was decided to grant a six-month extension to the project as requested to ensure that sufficient time would be available to successfully complete the remaining activities.

8. Review of applications received (STDF/WG/Mar11/Review)

43. The Secretariat briefly introduced the project that was not tabled for consideration by the Working Group.

STDF/PG/351– Support for the development of an SPS information system in Benin – Phase II

44. The main concerns raised by the Secretariat regarding this application were presented. They related to the lack of proper consultation of stakeholders involved in project STDF/PG/127 and the absence of an underlying strategy behind the request. It was underscored by FAO that further assistance could be useful in building on the results of project STDF/PG/127 but noted that the submitted proposal was poorly formulated. FAO concluded that the proposal should be revised and could be re-submitted for consideration.

STDF/PG/320 - Development and Dissemination of Training Materials for Enhancing Biosecurity in Aquaculture Operations to meet SPS standards in Low Income Economies in the Zambezi River Basin

45. The Secretariat noted that the applicant had taken steps to address issues identified during the previous review (July 2010) and that letters of support had now been received from Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Uganda. Based on the involvement of FAO and OIE, the Secretariat recommended approving the application on the condition that: (i) the implementing team actively consult and engage a core group of representatives from the beneficiary countries in project implementation and management, from inception onwards; and (ii) other issues (e.g. training needs assessment) raised in this review are addressed.

46. FAO raised questions about: (i) the trade aspects of the proposal; (ii) the human health aspects; and (iii) the scope and target audience of the training and how awareness building and training could in reality address the problem without accompanying technical support and resources to strengthen the delivery of aquatic animal health services in general. Based on the Secretariat's review, the Working Group decided to approve the project, subject to FAO and OIE's agreement in response to the key issues raised. On the basis of further detailed discussion (on 31 April), FAO and OIE decided to withdraw their support for this application, pending a thorough review of the means to secure engagement of governments with the OIE PVS Pathway for strengthening aquatic animal health services. The application was not therefore approved.

STDF/PPG/343 - Establishment of a National Cinnamon Training Academy (NCTA) for Cinnamon Processors in the Southern Province (Sri Lanka)

47. The Working Group raised concerns regarding the need to establish a specific training academy for cinnamon, as many initiatives had already created a sufficient pool of service providers in the area of quality assurance. In particular, the GMP centres developed with GIZ (former GTZ) assistance and the existing training and certification schemes supported by UNIDO were mentioned. In addition, it was noted that the application failed to document the specific sanitary issues caused by the mishandling of the cinnamon during the peeling process and the losses resulting thereof. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the cinnamon sector in Sri Lanka may not need further support owing to Sri Lanka's export leading position in cinnamon, with about 90 per cent of global export volume.

48. The Working Group approved the PPG on the condition that implementation is carried out using a two-step approach. The first step would consist of a thorough analysis of market dimensions (mainly given the limited growth potential of international cinnamon demand), including the collection of documented contamination cases or rejection incidents in order to clearly establish the need for capacity building in the sector. Following consultation of the Secretariat, the second step

could consider the need for further support for the training of cinnamon peelers given the recent activities noted above.

STDF/PPG/344 - Establishment of a Regional Food Inspectors School in Central America

49. The Secretariat noted that this request was innovative and sought to address the regional challenges associated with food inspection. The Working Group was invited to consider whether additional letters of support should be submitted prior to funding this PPG – or whether additional regional support should be generated during the project development phase. The Working Group approved the PPG request, subject to letters of regional support being submitted to the Secretariat. It was also indicated that the following issues should be addressed during implementation: (i) sustainability of the school; (ii) incorporation of hands-on training in the curriculum; (iii) the role of the Consortium of Universities; and (iv) collaboration with existing programmes of international organizations (e.g. FAO).

STDF/PPG/345 - Feed & Food Security Program Latin America

50. The Working Group approved this PPG giving due consideration to its regional and participatory approach (private and public sector) and its expected impact on extra- and intra-regional trade. Some members raised concerns related to the capacity of the Latin America and Caribbean Feed Industry Association (FEEDLATINA) to cover the cost of project development. It was agreed to raise the issue of exploring other sources of funding, external to the STDF, with the applicant before and during the elaboration of the proposal.

STDF/PPG/353 - Establishing sustainable institutional capability to meet SPS standards to safeguard public health and market access in St. Lucia

51. The Secretariat outlined its concerns with respect to: (i) the scope of operations of the proposed "coordinating mechanism", including its envisaged structure (single agency or a mechanism with its institutional home in one of the existing Ministries); (ii) clarification of the role of the National Agricultural Health, Food Safety and Standards Committee and its intended engagement in establishing the coordinating mechanism. In addition letters of support were not submitted by the relevant government ministries (Commerce, External Affairs and Health) or private sector stakeholders mentioned in the application.

52. In addition, comments from the Working Group focused on: (i) the need to include a more regional approach; (ii) the lack of a clear signal of interest from the national authorities in St. Lucia; (iii) the lack of clarity in the phytosanitary issues to be addressed; and (iv) the need for greater detail in the type of capacity to be addressed across the three areas of food safety, plant and animal health. The Working Group agreed with the Secretariat's recommendation to improve the PPG, with assistance from the Secretariat and IICA, with a view to resubmit the PPG for consideration at a next meeting.

STDF/PG/328 - Beyond Compliance: Integrated Systems Approach for Pest Risk Management in Southeast Asia

53. This project application – submitted by the NPPOs of Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, The Philippines and Indonesia and developed through an STDF PPG – was approved for funding. The Working Group noted that CABI-SEA and other partners in the project organized a well-received information session on the proposed project at the recent session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures in Rome. It was further noted that the decision-support tool to be developed under this project would be of interest and use to other countries and regions. In this context, some members of the Working Group recommended that one of the planned case studies consider exports from South America (reference was made to Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia) to Southeast Asia, and specifically phytosanitary risks related to fungal leaf blight.

STDF/PG/350 - Global Phytosanitary Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures and Training Kits

54. The Secretariat emphasized the large support generated by this project among national and regional plant protection organizations. The Working Group approved the project with the recommendation that the logical framework and the budget of the project be improved. In addition, it was highlighted by some members that due attention should be paid to collecting all existing materials and to creating ownership among national and regional plant protection organizations of the documents to be produced.

7. Decisions on Financing and Prioritizing

The Secretariat reported that no decision on prioritization was required.

8. Other business

55. The WTO Representative reminded the Working Group about a presentation to be held on the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act on 29 March 2011 at 10 a.m. at the CICG.

56. The meeting closed at 6 p.m.

Annex 1**List of Participants**

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