

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING
15-16 OCTOBER 2013
WTO, GENEVA**

1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. The meeting was chaired by Mr Lars Børresen, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Norway to the WTO. The agenda was adopted with one amendment. A request for a 12-month, no-cost extension to complete project activities was added to Table 1 in document [STDF/WG/Oct13/Overview](#) under agenda item 6(c) (project STDF/PG/321).

2. The Secretariat introduced Ms Serra Ayrál and Ms Ajantha Ranajeewa, replacing Ms Marlynn Hopper and Ms Paola Michelutti, respectively, who are both on maternity leave. The Secretariat also introduced Ms Roshan Khan, STDF intern, to the Working Group. A list of participants in the Working Group is provided in **Annex 1**.

2. OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

(a) Selection of new vice-chairperson (2014) of the Working Group

3. The Secretariat recalled that Mr Craig Fedchock from the IPPC Secretariat (the current vice-chair) was selected in March as chairperson of the Working Group in 2014. The Secretariat welcomed expressions of interest from members for the position of vice-chairperson of the Working Group next year (and hence chairperson in 2015).

(b) Selection of new developing country experts (2014-2015)

4. The Secretariat reminded members that in May 2013 the Working Group agreed to introduce a rotation mechanism for developing country experts in the STDF to strengthen the continuity of their participation in the Facility. Under this mechanism, three experts (i.e. one expert each from Africa, Asia/Pacific and the Americas) will be replaced each year, rather than replacing all six experts at once at the end of their two-year term. To introduce this mechanism, the following experts agreed to continue serving the STDF for one additional year (i.e. 2014):

- Martha Byanyima – Uganda
- Delilah Cabb – Belize
- Sidney Suma – Papua New Guinea

5. The Secretariat welcomed members to submit suggestions for new developing country expert candidates, including their contact details and Curriculum Vitae where possible, for inclusion on STDF's roster and selection by the - incoming - Working Group chairperson. The deadline for submission was set on Friday 1 November 2013. The FAO informed that it will use its network and roster to provide names to the Secretariat by the indicated date.

(c) Mid-term review of the STDF

6. The Secretariat informed members about the on-going STDF mid-term review (MTR) and the selection (following WTO's procurement process) of Saana Consulting for this assignment. The company's first visit to the Secretariat took place in July 2013, followed by a second visit - including face-to-face interviews with members and observer organizations - during the SPS Committee/STDF Working Group week. The MTR process was proceeding as planned. A first draft of the report would be ready in November 2013. This draft would be shared with the Working Group for comments, and then shared with the STDF Policy Committee.

(d) Policy Committee

7. Members agreed to the proposed draft agenda for the upcoming STDF Policy Committee¹, which was circulated for consideration prior to the Working Group. The main item on the agenda is a presentation and discussion on the conclusions and recommendations of the STDF mid-term review, which includes a review of the funding and staffing levels of the STDF. The Secretariat also recalled that donors will be represented in the Policy Committee by the European Commission, Japan and the United States. In addition, the following three developing country experts will participate:

- Davinio Catbagan- Philippines
- Guilherme Antonio da Costa Junior- Brazil
- Nagat El Tayeb- Sudan

(e) Financial situation

8. The Secretariat reported on the financial situation of the Facility and commented on the information and figures in the annotated agenda ([STDF/WG/Oct13/Annotated agenda](#)). Since the Working Group meeting in March 2013, additional contributions were received from the European Commission, Germany, Ireland, Japan Sweden and Chinese Taipei.² Total contributions to the STDF in 2013 amounted to US\$ 2,905,635, i.e. short of STDF's annual funding target level of US\$ five million. The Facility currently showed a negative balance of US\$241,906.

9. The Secretariat noted that The Netherlands announced a new four-year contribution to the STDF during the Global Aid for Trade Review in July 2013. The contribution agreement with the WTO had not yet been signed. Norway recently signed an agreement with the WTO for a renewed contribution to the STDF for 2013-2014 (1.5 million NOK per year). This contribution was expected shortly. Also Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and the United States (USDA) had shown continued interest in the Facility. Initial discussions were also held earlier this year on funding opportunities with the US Food and Drugs Administration (FDA). In light of these developments the financial situation of the STDF was not directly alarming but additional contributions (preferably in the form multi-annual contributions) would be required to implement future STDF work plans and approve new projects/PPGs.

10. The Secretariat informed members that STDF/PPG/379 had been contracted and that STDF/PPG/392 and STDF/PPG/404 would be contracted in the week following the Working Group meeting. An extension was sought to finalize contracting arrangements for STDF/PPG/432 and STDF/PPG/401 (under agenda item 5(c)).

3. ENHANCED COLLABORATION IN SPS-RELATED TECHNICAL COOPERATION

(a) International Trade and Invasive Alien Species

11. The Secretariat informed the Working Group on completion of the background study on International Trade and Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in June 2013 (circulated prior to the meeting and available on the website: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/en/TAIAS.htm>). It also briefed members on the activities undertaken by the Secretariat since then, including:

- a side-event organized for delegates to the SPS Committee in June 2013;
- translations initiated in Spanish and French (to be finalized in December 2013);

¹ On 1 November, the WTO decided to postpone the Policy Committee from 12 December 2013 to 23 January 2014, due to the preparations for the WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali on 3-6 December, and the expected follow-up to this meeting.

² Chinese Taipei is a WTO Member in application of Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement (1994). WTO membership has no implication regarding the sovereignty of the Member pursuant to international law.

- dissemination of the study to STDF partners and other relevant organizations, including the CBD (which included a web-link and presented copies of the study at its Invasive Species stand at the meeting of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SDSTTA));
- participation in a workshop (EPPO/IUCN) in October 2013 on methods of risk communication related to invasive plants and pests; workshop participants expressed appreciation for the study, including its usefulness for quarantine service providers to understand the broader picture of invasive species with regard to the provision 8(h) of the CBD;

12. The Secretariat further noted the coverage of IAS under the SPS Agreement and mentioned that the feedback received on the study to date was very positive. The timeliness of the study was also highlighted, notably in view of the two parallel streams of work on IAS that are observed, i.e. in environmental agencies and in quarantine offices related to plant and animal health. Connecting these two different "worlds", and encouraging the use of existing quarantine and inspection systems, would not be easy - but it was hoped that the STDF study could provide a useful contribution in this regard. Hope was also expressed that the study could over time contribute to additional resource mobilization to strengthen quarantine and inspection services in the animal and plant health area.

13. The IPPC Secretariat informed members that the CBD secretariat had awarded the IPPC the status of a biodiversity convention. The IPPC noted that this would positively impact the interaction of the IPPC and CBD. The IPPC Secretariat also informed the Working Group that a side-event on IAS would be organized on the margins of its next annual meeting in 2014.

14. The Secretariat encouraged members to further disseminate the STDF work on IAS, where appropriate, and welcomed further information regarding platforms where links to the study could be posted.

(b) STDF work on SPS and Trade Facilitation

15. The Secretariat briefed the Working Group on progress made in implementing this STDF work. Recalling the discussions at the previous meeting, the Secretariat noted that the work was carried out in the context of Article 8 and Annex C of the SPS Agreement and includes regional research in selected countries in Africa and Asia to examine: (i) SPS measures applied to selected products by particular exporting and importing countries, how they are implemented in practice (including the extent to which they are justified/necessary and/or least-trade restrictive from an SPS perspective); and (ii) on-going initiatives to improve SPS protection and reduce trade transaction costs.

16. The Secretariat informed members that this work will be carried out in three stages: (i) preparatory phase that describes the products to be considered during the regional research, the countries concerned and methodology; (ii) in-country research work and validation work to share findings at a national level; and (iii) documentation and dissemination of the findings, experiences and recommendations. Reports were expected in the first quarter of 2014. The Secretariat also informed Members that it had contracted Kees van der Meer as the consultant for the work in Asia (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Philippines and Thailand), and Rob Black for the work in Africa (Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The work in Africa would be implemented in close collaboration with TradeMark Southern Africa (which offered additional resources to support this work) and COMESA.

17. The Secretariat also noted that the Inter-American Bank (IDB) had launched research work in 2012 focusing on quarantine control in Latin America. The report was being finalized and would be available in English and Spanish in January 2014. The Secretariat suggested the Working Group to consider Trade Facilitation as a special theme for its next meeting in March 2014. This could include presentations and a discussion of the work in the African, Asian and Latin American regions, and reflections on potential follow-up work.

18. The WTO informed the Working Group that the STDF work on Trade Facilitation coincided with national WTO training workshops in the Philippines. Initial reactions and responses received at

these workshops were very positive and useful. It also highlighted the negotiations in the WTO on trade facilitation (leading up to the WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali in December 2013) and the on-going needs assessments carried out in this area, in which SPS border control and quarantine agencies should engage more to ensure that products continue to be traded safely. Trade facilitation should not lead to an increase in risks of a sanitary and/or phytosanitary nature.

19. The developing country expert from Sudan sought explanation on the selection of the countries for this work. The Secretariat responded that the selection was made on the basis of expressions of interest received from members, either directly and/or through COMESA and TradeMark Southern Africa. The developing country expert from Uganda informed members that the STDF work had been shared with the African Development Bank, which expressed interest and enthusiasm for this work. Several members, including the FAO and IPPC Secretariat, supported the suggestion that the STDF Secretariat engage increasingly with regional donors and development banks. The IPPC Secretariat also expressed concerns over some recent studies undertaken by the World Bank on trade facilitation and non-tariff barriers at regional levels.

20. The developing country expert from the Philippines expressed appreciation for the STDF work and looked forward to the recommendations. The developing country expert from Papua New Guinea suggested that the proposed session on trade facilitation could include a focus on environmental issues.

21. The Working Group agreed that STDF would organize a thematic session on SPS and Trade Facilitation during its next meeting. The consultants and also the IDB would be invited for this session to make presentations and act as resource persons. The WTO suggested opening up this session to other SPS delegates and observer organizations interested in the issue, to which members agreed. Further information on the STDF work on SPS and Trade Facilitation is available on the STDF website: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/en/TATradeFacilitation.htm>.

(c) Follow up on MCDA Workshop (June 2013)

22. The Secretariat introduced a short background document on this topic, including the summary report of the workshop (circulated prior to the meeting). The workshop was successful and attended by partners, donors, developing country experts and beneficiary representatives who had used the tool in various countries (including with support from COMESA and USDA/USIAD) and shared their experiences. Participants generally highlighted the usefulness of the MCDA tool to prioritize SPS capacity building needs, notably with a focus on market access. Members noted that the MCDA tool also contributes significantly to: (i) enhancing dialogue between and among public and private sectors and increasing transparency; and (ii) raising awareness about the importance of making additional investments to build and strengthen SPS capacity.

23. In light of the workshop findings and the recommendations of participants, the Secretariat proposed to revise and finalize the current MCDA user guide to clarify its scope and put it into a more user friendly format (to be implemented as part of the STDF 2014 Work Plan). This work would be supported by the creation of a peer review group of developing country experts with experience in the application of MCDA who could provide valuable inputs. These activities would be within the limits of STDF's capacity and resources in 2014.

24. The WTO commented that it would be useful if the Secretariat could finalize the current MCDA guide into a practical easy-to-use tool. It referred to the WTO workshop on Market Access, held on 14 October 2013, where developing country SPS delegates had shown a great deal of interest in the MCDA tool. The IPPC Secretariat thanked the Secretariat on the update provided and emphasized that the MCDA guide is a prioritization tool and not a capacity building tool. It noted that MCDA is a priority assessment tool for export prioritization and does not address other areas, and its main focus is on market access.

25. Finland suggested developing one holistic tool with several modules to replace application of PCE, PVS, and also MCDA. The IPPC Secretariat responded that each of these tools differs in nature and that it would not be opportune to develop one single tool. The Secretariat added that the various capacity evaluation tools and MCDA, which focuses on priority setting for SPS investment options with a focus on market access, are structurally different. The MCDA tool complements and supports the application of the capacity evaluation tools as a first step, and is not a substitute for the capacity evaluation tools of the three sisters.

26. The developing country expert from Uganda shared information on collaboration among COMESA, EAC and SADC (Tripartite), including identification of institutions and instances where the MCDA tool could be employed. This regional collaboration is significant as it covers nearly half of the African continent. Under this collaboration, it was decided that each regional economic community will identify an institution where the MCDA approach can be institutionalized. Such institutions include economic and agriculture policy research institutes, which advise governments on policy matters and investments. She acknowledged and stressed the usefulness of a revised MCDA guide for this purpose.

27. The Working Group agreed on the activities proposed by the Secretariat as part of the STDF 2014 Work Plan. Further information on the MCDA work, including country reports, is available here: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/en/TAEcoAnalysis.htm>.

(d) STDF side-event at 4th Global Aid for Trade Review

28. The Secretariat informed Members that 60 participants attended the 2-hour STDF side-event on Public Private Partnerships to Build SPS Capacity at the 4th Global Aid for Trade Review in July 2013. The side-event was used, *inter alia*, to present the work done by the STDF and the Canadian North South Institute on this topic. More information of the side-event, including the programme, the presentations and an overview of the various speakers can be found here: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/en/TAAidForTrade4GR.htm>

(e) Information dissemination

(i) Presentation of new STDF website

29. The Secretariat informed the Working Group on progress made in re-designing the STDF website. With support from the IT Division of the WTO, terms of reference to re-design the website were prepared by the Secretariat in March 2013. The Secretariat received offers from five different companies, out of which Appnovation was selected for having the strongest technical and lowest priced proposal.

30. It was explained that the current STDF website has compatibility problems with various internet browsers and cannot be viewed on wide screen monitors. In conjunction with WTO's IT Division, Drupal content management was chosen as the most suitable for the new STDF website. The Secretariat presented a prototype and several sample pages. The new website will feature significant improvements notably enhanced search facilities for project grants, holistic integration with the Virtual Library and a more interactive interface. The Secretariat also informed members that the new website will feature Google analytics which will be useful in receiving constant feedback on the new website. Links to partner organizations will be created on the homepage.

31. Members expressed appreciation for the work done on the new STDF website and welcomed a further presentation on the new website at the next Working Group in March 2014. The Secretariat informed that the launch of the new STDF website is expected in January/February 2014.

(ii) Update on the Virtual Library

32. The Secretariat informed the Working Group on the status of the STDF Virtual Library and provided a brief overview of 28 new documents added to the system since March 2013. The Secretariat also introduced a discussion note on the STDF Virtual Library (circulated prior to the meeting). The Secretariat emphasized the library's role as a documentation system and in facilitating the sharing of experiences and lessons and reducing gaps/overlaps. Documents being sought for inclusion in the Library include in particular SPS project documents (including final reports documenting results achieved), SPS needs assessments, final and impact evaluation reports, cost-benefit analysis studies, as well as other research papers and articles.

33. Several members commented that they see the Virtual Library as a valuable resource. Switzerland suggested inclusion of an option that would allow members to recommend publications for inclusion in the Virtual Library. The European Commission expressed support for the Virtual

Library and indicated that it would submit documents on a case-by-case basis. Members agreed on the following actions:

- promote the STDF Virtual Library internally and externally and encourage other organizations, technical assistance providers, research institutions, etc. to submit relevant documentation to the STDF Secretariat (all members);
- prepare a two-page STDF briefing note on the Virtual Library, containing information on the purpose of the system, types of information available, how to submit documentation, and focusing on its usefulness and benefits for SPS capacity building (Secretariat), for wider distribution by members;
- include relevant documentation generated through future applications of the MCDA tool (Secretariat);
- search documentation related to SPS projects or activities reported to the WTO-SPS Committee by WTO members through general information documents (G/SPS/GEN/#), and, if needed, contact the relevant member to request additional documentation (Secretariat, if resources are available).

(iii) Secretariat participation in external events

34. The Secretariat referred to the Annex to the Annotated Agenda (STDF/WG/Mar13/Annotated agenda), which provided a brief overview of the external events and meetings it had participated in since March 2013.

(iv) Dissemination of experiences and good practices

- Presentation by the World Bank on its Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA)" – focus on development of indicators on agricultural trade and SPS regulations

35. The World Bank (Ms Tea Trumbic) presented its "Benchmarking the Business of Agriculture (BBA)" project, which mirrors the existing Doing Business project at the World Bank, however with a focus on agriculture, and including market access. The Bank highlighted several indicators to be used in the project, including: (i) time-and-motion, which examines the procedures and costs of doing business; (ii) legal indicators, which look at SPS requirements and how they are communicated; and (iii) transparency indicators. The World Bank highlighted in particular the importance of standards compliance, including the way standards requirements are communicated to farmers. The project aims to contribute to identifying key issues in accessing regional and international markets at three stages: before, at and after border post. Information obtained would be linked with SPS requirements that countries have to comply with.

36. The World Bank explained the criteria for pilot country selection, representing all regions and income levels. The project would be up-scaled to 80 countries over three years. It was noted that the BBA project aims to build partnerships with data users and stakeholders, including governments, development agencies, international institutions, non-profit organizations, research institutions, private sector and farmers. The project adopts an integrated approach with the objective of leveraging positive policy change for a stronger commercial agriculture sector.

37. The Secretariat noted the complementarities between the on-going STDF work on SPS and trade facilitation and the BBA project, as well as with the ITC Non-Tariff Measures (NTM) Programme. The World Bank was grateful for the links provided to the STDF consultants (Kees van der Meer and Rob Black), and hoped to share more information, build on their initial work, and that of the ITC, and coordinate on any pilot countries in common. The World Bank also clarified that under the BBA project government requirements will be examined on the import and export side. The Bank added that this research project will generate new and important data, with the bulk of the information to be provided by the private sector.

38. The IPPC Secretariat commented that the BBA project could negatively reinforce the issue of standards compliance in selected countries. The World Bank responded that contrary to the

IPPC's concerns the project aims to identify the process through which important standards are communicated and the degree to which the private sector is informed about them. The developing country expert from Uganda reminded participants about the potential usefulness and relevance of the NTM reporting mechanism under the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite agreement.

39. The World Bank concluded by stressing that the BBA is envisioned as a three-year project, currently funded by five donors: USAID, Denmark, Netherlands, the Gates Foundation and DFID. Consideration would be given, if successful, to run the project independently in the World Bank in the future. The World Bank noted that there is demand from donors to include a livestock component, however currently the focus of the project is limited to grains, vegetables and fruits. Lastly, the World Bank clarified that, unlike the World Bank's Doing Business Project, an aggregate ranking methodology will not be adopted. The World Bank presentation can be viewed at: http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/DocsWG/WB_Presentation_Oct-13.pdf.

- Presentation by the International Trade Centre (ITC) on its NTM Programme

40. The ITC (Ms Poonam Mohun) presented the ITC programme on Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and the main results achieved to date. The main objective of the NTM program is ensuring awareness among stakeholders in beneficiary countries about NTMs and other obstacles affecting their trade. Under this program the ITC carries out surveys to capture the obstacles to trade that exporters and importers (i.e. the private sector) in developing countries experience. To date, surveys for 23 countries had been completed, based on the international NTM classification, which includes well-defined categories for Technical Measures and Non-Technical Measures. Surveys are conducted via telephone interviews, followed by face to face interviews with exporters and importers. The ITC shared information on the findings of completed projects in various countries and informed members that the final reports could be easily accessed on the ITC website.

41. The ITC highlighted that the underlying aim behind the survey was to bring together the government, policy makers and various national stake holders, who with the help of other institutions would work together to eliminate barriers to trade. The ITC noted that for each country, once data has been gathered and the assessment completed, a one-day stakeholders' meeting was held to present and validate results and discuss further development of strategies to eliminate or reduce barriers to trade. In Sri Lanka, this had led to an STDF-funded project to improve the safety and quality product of exported fruits and vegetables. In Mauritius, the stakeholder workshop had led to the elimination of certain barriers that importers and exporters were previously facing. Morocco had requested assistance to create a steering committee at national level to address the obstacles that were identified in the survey. Recent requests to ITC for follow-up support after implementation of the NTM programme had been received from, *inter alia*, Bangladesh, Colombia and the Philippines.

42. The IPPC Secretariat queried whether ITC had differentiated between legitimate and non-legitimate non-tariff measures under the NTM programme. The ITC responded that it was not its role to distinguish between legitimate and non-legitimate NTMS. It had adopted the widely accepted international NTM classification. The ITC conducts interviews in each country and gathers data on the obstacles and hindrances encountered by the private sector while exporting and importing. Its mandate is to work with and help the private sector, especially small and medium sized enterprises in developing countries. The IPPC Secretariat expressed some concern on the lack of participation of the relevant SPS authorities in the surveys. The ITC reiterated that the surveys were conducted in the private sector though the views of public sector organizations were also taken into consideration especially when discussing follow up actions to reduce barriers to trade.

43. Other members including WTO, Finland and the developing country expert from Belize expressed appreciation for the study. Finland highlighted the importance of informing and consulting producers about activities of the official authorities, and the way this could strengthen public-private partnerships. The World Bank informed members that ITC's project would greatly facilitate the data collection process for the BBA project and mentioned that a follow-up meeting between the World Bank and the ITC was already scheduled to discuss collaboration and synergies.

44. The ITC further explained that to participate in the survey, countries are required to make an official request to participate and benefit from the ITC programme. Surveys could be repeated

in countries where they had previously been undertaken, however, this would be subject to the availability of additional donor funds. Moreover, in response to questions from members, it clarified that this program was initiated to better understand which factors cause certain measures to be burdensome. The ITC noted that due to the lack of knowledge and information, the rationale behind legitimate measures is frequently not well understood by exporters.

45. The Secretariat highlighted the work on SPS and Trade Facilitation, notably in relation to Article 8 and Annex C of the SPS Agreement. This includes surveys in the private sector and the STDF thanked the ITC for sharing several of its draft reports. The Secretariat also concurred with FAO comments on the important linkages with the World Bank's BBA project. The Secretariat reminded members of an early STDF project (STDF/PG/19), which examined the importance of having good SPS information systems at different government levels, and the importance of a good flow of SPS information between the public and private sector.

46. The developing country expert from Uganda shared Uganda's experience with the Tripartite NTM reporting mechanism. Under this mechanism, each member state allocates an NTB focal point for the business community. The mechanism contains provisions for the SPS authorities to respond and explain the rationale behind specific NTMs.

47. In response to further questions, ITC commented that reports under the NTM programme aim to capture the nature of problems faced by the business sector in their daily activities. The usual time taken to complete a survey in a single country ranges from six months to one year. Reports are validated by policy makers in the countries and then published. ITC's presentation, including the links to the NTM programme on ITC's website, can be viewed at: http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/DocsWG/ITC_Presentation_Oct-13.pdf.

48. The ITC also informed members on other on-going SPS-related activities and STDF-funded projects including work in the Gambia to address technical barriers in exports, setting up processing sites for Shea Butter in Nigeria and the Sri Lanka project on fruits and vegetables.

- Other information from partners, donors, developing country experts and observers

49. The African Union briefed the Working Group on the establishment of a continental SPS committee in the broader context of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). Members were reminded that in 2012 a one-day SPS consultative meeting was held at the margins of a WTO regional SPS training workshop in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), funded by the STDF, where participants had agreed on the importance of forming a continental committee. TORs were being developed highlighting the purpose and scope of the continental committee, its responsibilities, composition, core membership, observers. The AU Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture will serve as the Secretariat to the continental committee.

49. IICA informed Members that it had concluded an agreement in September 2013 with the EU under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), under which it will provide SPS support to CARICOM member states. The specific objectives of the SPS program are to increase production and trade in agriculture and fisheries while meeting international standards and protecting plant, animal and human health and the environment. In the implementation, IICA will collaborate with the CARICOM secretariat, the Caribbean regional fisheries mechanism and the SPS committee of the Dominican Republic. The total budget of the project is 11.7 million Euros and is expected to run for 42 months.

4. DISCUSSION ON STDF'S 2014 WORK PLAN

50. The Secretariat presented the main elements of the draft STDF 2014 Work Plan (circulated prior to the meeting) for discussion and approval by members. Apart from continuing and/or finalizing work in all three strategic results areas (i.e. coordination, project development and implementation, it was noted that there would be room to initiate/implement one additional activity in 2014. The Secretariat encouraged members to propose topics and outlined four options identified by the Secretariat in the draft Work Plan (see Chapter II, under sections D, E, F and G), for discussion in the Working Group.

51. Members agreed on the importance of the proposed study on International Trade and Domestic Food Safety - but recognized that in order to maintain this activity in the new work plan and initiate its implementation in 2014 significant input from partners and donors would be required. Members also agreed on the importance of updating STDF's publication on SPS capacity evaluation tools but recognized that this activity would be more useful when work on the new FAO food safety evaluation tool would be completed. This could be pursued in 2015, and other formats online formats for this STDF publication should be considered. Various members were interested in organizing a seminar on Good Regulatory Practice in the SPS area - but throughout the discussions it became clear that several members needed more time to collect their thoughts on this topic.

52. Following extensive discussions, the Working Group decided that it would be useful if the STDF would initiate the development of a new STDF video. The WTO noted that the current STDF video "Trading Safely: Protecting Health, Promoting Development", developed in 2009, was generally regarded as one of STDF's most successful products. The video was also translated and produced in Arabic, Chinese and Russian and helped in increasing the visibility of the STDF. It was widely distributed and shown at numerous workshops, training courses and other events. Several members, including FAO and the IPPC Secretariat, concurred with this view. A new video could tell specific case stories, highlight the results of STDF projects, or link to other thematic work (public-private partnerships, trade facilitation, invasive species, etc.).

53. The Secretariat added that the current video was still widely distributed, helped creating and enhancing public awareness as to why it is important in STDF matters, and also contributed in terms of mobilizing more resources for the STDF. It noted that a first proposal and background note for a new STDF video for discussion in the Working Group would be tabled in October 2014.

54. The Working Group approved the 2014 Work Plan. At Sweden's suggestion, it was also decided to include an additional budget item to cover possible follow-up activities related to the STDF mid-term review.

5. IMPROVED CAPACITY OF BENEFICIARIES TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND FORMULATE PROJECTS

(a) Discussion on the PPG review process

55. The Secretariat informed members that no specific proposals were received from members on how to improve the PPG review process and highlighted the on-going STDF mid-term review.

56. The European Commission viewed that members should work towards developing mechanisms to enhance SPS collaboration, rather than re-examine the PPG review process. Finland observed that discussions related to PPGs were mostly held among partners and the Secretariat and suggested that these discussions be held prior to the Working Group meeting. The Secretariat recalled that the Working Group is a meeting at a technical level and also acts as a forum to discuss new projects and ideas. The Secretariat reviews of PPGs are posted on the STDF password protected website one month in advance of the Working Group meeting to facilitate the technical review by partners.

(b) Presentation of project and PPG applications not accepted for consideration

57. The Secretariat gave a brief overview of the PG and PPG applications that were not tabled for consideration by the Working Group. These applications and the reasons for not tabling them were listed in Tables 2 and 3 in document [STDF/WG/Oct13/Review](#).

58. The developing country expert from Papua New Guinea briefed members that he had been following developments on STDF/PPG/461 and would assist the applicant in resubmitting this PPG to the STDF.

(c) Discussion of PPG applications

STDF/PPG/428- Trade and Improved Livelihoods in Aquatic Production in Africa

59. The proposal received specific support from the OIE and was approved by the Working Group. The developing country expert from Uganda noted that aquaculture in Africa is growing rapidly and that many of the issues concerning fish health are not being addressed in a coherent manner. As such, this initiative was timely and received her support.

STDF/PPG/431 – Preliminary analysis of the issues relating to mycotoxin contamination of agri-food commodities and consequent international trade barriers in Pakistan

60. The Working Group did not approve this PPG request and recommended that the request be revised and re-submitted for consideration at its next meeting. Members noted that the application required further clarification on the suggested approach as well as further elaboration on the proposed activities. Questions were raised on the actual need to hold a large stakeholder meeting to take account of key issues leading to agri-food trade barriers due to mycotoxin contamination. If the problem is well-known, some members argued that it may be better to directly apply for a project rather than a PPG. Questions were also raised on the reasons for including rice and other commodities in the analysis, given that no evidence was provided on trade-related barriers from mycotoxin contamination in these products. The Working Group requested evidence that the UK's Food and Environment Research Group (Fera) would be committed to administer the PPG funds on behalf of the applicant.

STDF/PPG/435 – Strengthening SPS compliance of sesame production in Sudan for enhanced access to international markets

61. The Working Group approved this PPG request. Members recognized the seriousness of the problem (i.e. chemical residues) that is currently affecting the exports of sesame and other agricultural crops from Sudan, as well as the appropriateness of the methodology proposed, starting with an assessment of the current situation and a gap analysis of best practices.

62. Members agreed that the application required revision in order to refine its focus and the resultant project, and there was general agreement that this could be done before contracting this PPG and during the needs assessment and gap analysis. The findings and recommendations of the assessment will determine if and how a project proposal will be formulated. The need to actively consult all relevant development partners and potential donors from the outset was emphasized.

63. The FAO and the developing country expert from Sudan kindly offered to assist in revising and finalizing the application.

STDF/PPG/453 – Building capacity and facilitating enabling mechanisms for harmonizing Aquaculture Certification among the ASEAN

64. The Working Group approved this PPG request. The OIE noted that the success in implementing this public certification system would depend on good governance in the public sector which relates to the OIE standards on veterinary and aquatic health services governance. The IPPC advised that aquatic plants (e.g. seaweed) should not be included in these certification schemes.

65. The developing country representative from Uganda highlighted that there is complementarity between this PPG and STDF/PPG/428 (TILAPIA) and hoped that experiences could be shared between these two initiatives. The Secretariat noted that FAO is involved in both initiatives and that this would assist in creating synergies.

STDF/PPG/460 – Implementation of ISPM 15: an empirical analysis of how the regulation affects the economic growth of a group of countries in Africa

66. The Working Group did not approve this PPG request. Members noted that the proposal currently constitutes pure empirical research and stressed that the findings of the resulting study would seem to be more informative for standard setting than for standard implementation. Members agreed that the proposed application does not fall within STDF's criteria for a PPG. There was general agreement that the application does not demonstrate how the study would assist developing countries in the implementation of ISPM 15.

67. The Working Group suggested that the applicant should consider re-submitting the application in the form of a project grant taking into account aspects related to adjustment of the budget, timeline, etc. A revised application should also provide convincing evidence of the collaboration of the national plant protection authorities, including in sharing and implementing possible results. Consideration could be given to include one or more workshops to this end.

STDF/PPG/462 – Operationalization of the Scientific Affairs and Food Control Directorates of the newly established Food Safety and Quality authority of the Gambia

68. The Working Group approved this PPG request. The FAO signalled its willingness to implement this PPG and noted that it would likely have to modify certain items in the budget and could potentially supplement this PPG with funds from its own budget. The Secretariat supported FAO's proposal and noted that it would consult with the beneficiary to determine whether it agrees with FAO being the implementing agency.

(d) Overview of implementation of on-going PPGs

69. The Secretariat noted document [STDF/WG/Oct13/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all on-going PPGs. Relevant PPG documents (reports, etc.) can be accessed on the STDF website.

70. The Secretariat drew attention to the work undertaken under STDF/PPG/400 (Capacity building for Aflatoxin management and control in groundnuts in Malawi). The Secretariat noted that this PPG had not developed into a project document, but instead had taken the shape of a comprehensive report and programme on Aflatoxin Control for the Malawi government. The Secretariat also intended to share the report with regional and international stakeholders, including the Global Food Safety Partnership, the Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA), and other relevant organizations. The report can be viewed at http://www.standardsfacility.org/Files/Project_documents/Project_Preparation_Grants/STDF_PPG_400_FinalReport_Sep-13.pdf

71. Members approved an extension to the contracting period until March 2014 to allow the Secretariat to finalize contracting arrangements for STDF/PPG/432 (Information systems for surveillance and pest reporting in Asia/Pacific countries).

5. IMPROVED CAPACITY OF BENEFICIARIES OF STDF PROJECTS

(a) Discussion of project applications

STDF/PG/316 – Strengthening pre-border plant quarantine inspection and diagnostic services in Azerbaijan

73. The Working Group approved this project request subject to two conditions: (i) receipt of official translations into English of the two letters from the State Customs Committee (SCC), addressed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the FAO Sub-regional office for Central Asia, confirming SCC's active participation and willingness to collaborate with the State Phytosanitary Control Service (SPCS) in project implementation activities; and (ii) receipt of a copy of the World Bank Agriculture Competitiveness and Improvement Project (ACIP) document, which should refer to and clearly indicate complementarity with the STDF project and avoid overlap of activities and duplication of budget allocations.

74. The Working Group unanimously agreed on the importance and relevance of this project for the country and the appropriateness of the approach, which promotes in-country collaboration and partnership.

STDF/PG/463 – Strengthening production and export capacity for mango, avocado and blackberries in Cundinamarca

75. The Working Group did not approve this proposal. It agreed with the Secretariat's review that the application does not include clear evidence of prior consultation with the SPS authorities and that the application also suffered from shortcomings in terms of formulation, implementation methodology, sustainability and budget.

(b) Decisions on financing and prioritization

76. The Secretariat reported that no decision on prioritization was required at this stage - but highlighted that additional contributions will be necessary to implement the projects approved and to approve new projects in March 2014.

(c) Overview of implementation of on-going projects

77. The Secretariat introduced document [STDF/WG/Oct13/Overview](#), which provides an overview of the implementation status of all on-going projects. The Working group approved a one-year no cost extension to FAO/IPPC Secretariat to implement project STDF/PG/350 (Global Phytosanitary Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures and Training Kits) and a one-year-and-six-months extension (at no additional cost) to FAO to implement project STDF/PG/321 (Building trade capacity of small-scale shrimp and prawn farmers in Bangladesh – Investing in the Bottom of the Pyramid Approach).

78. The Working Group also approved an extension to the contracting period until March 2014 to allow the Secretariat to finalize contracting arrangements for STDF/PG/401 (Training of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Facilitators) with the FAO/IPPC Secretariat.

(d) Selection of projects for external evaluations

79. The Secretariat reminded members that they had agreed in March 2013 to decide on the evaluation of new projects (i.e. those completed in 2012) at the meeting in October. The Working Group decided (through random selection by the chairperson) that the following two projects be evaluated: (i) STDF/PG/155 (Market oriented SPS training services in Nicaragua); and (ii) STDF/PG/283 (Support for SPS risk assessment in the mango export sector in Mali).

80. The Working Group agreed that the evaluation of project STDF/PG/283 could possibly be combined with three other projects that still have to be evaluated. These include: (i) STDF/PG/313 (Continuation of the West African Fruit Fly Initiative); (ii) STDF/PG/255 (Regional initiative on the fight against fruit flies in West Africa); and (iii) STDF/PG/287 (Information sharing initiative on the actions to control fruit flies in Sub-Saharan Africa).

(e) Presentation of project evaluation reports

STDF/PG/116- Costa Rica

81. The Secretariat introduced the key findings and conclusions the external evaluation of the project entitled "Movement Control System for Cattle in Costa Rica" (STDF/PG/116). This report was circulated prior to the meeting. The Secretariat noted that the evaluation concluded that the project was run successfully, completed within time and budget, and had met its overall objective. The Government of Costa Rica had been a major driving force behind this project. The report recommended that final project publications be disseminated widely to raise awareness and thereby ensure project sustainability. It made the recommendation to IICA to disseminate the publication within the region. Key lessons included: (i) alignment with national long term strategy (national priority) was key to the success of the project; (ii) the project was tailor made to country conditions, requirements and resources, which was fundamental for its success; and (iii) private sector participation and cooperation was important and key in terms of capacity enhancement. Lastly the report concluded that the project inherently contained flexibility in project development and implementation which contributed to its success. The Secretariat indicated that the report would be made available on the STDF website soon.

STDF/PG/134- West African fisheries

83. The Secretariat presented the results and recommendations of the evaluation of the project "Capacity Building to improve fish trade from Benin, The Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone" (STDF/PG/134). This report was circulated prior to the meeting in French. According to the field survey, the project yielded positive outcomes. Beneficiaries considered that it was instrumental in assisting their countries to get approved/re-approved as fish exporter to the EU (except for Sierra Leone). Several good practices were highlighted including: (i) the re-assessment of training needs during the inception phase of the project which helped in designing tailor-made trainings and taking into account the evolution of needs between project formulation and implementation; and (ii) the use of local trainers which was appreciated by participants. The evaluation made recommendations for future projects based on the findings of the survey. The Secretariat will publish the report in French shortly and will also have the report translated into English.

STDF/PG/246- Cambodia

84. The Secretariat shared the main findings and recommendations of the project evaluation report on "Developing an action plan to improve SPS capacity in Cambodia" (STDF/PG/246). The evaluator of the project concluded that the project, which had been implemented by FAO and delivered on time and within budget, proposed a robust and useful action plan with policy options, priorities, and indicative costs for suggested projects. However, although the action plan had been submitted in July 2010 and endorsed by the Ministry of Commerce in January 2011, no specific follow up actions had been taken subsequently, possibly due to some institutional issues as well as overlap with another major SPS project funded by the ADB. The evaluator recommended that for future SPS action planning projects, a prior commitment be obtained from the host government to give formal consideration to implementing the action plan, once it had been completed. He also underlined the importance of on-going coordination with donors in developing the action plan and encouraging them to build the plan into their forward budgeting to facilitate funding for follow up actions. In addition, he suggested that SPS action plans be accompanied by detailed project proposals for specific investments to address the highest priorities identified. If budgeted project proposals were not presented simultaneously with action plans, donor interest, as well as the relevance of the plan itself, was likely to progressively fade over time.

85. The EIF Secretariat informed Members that Cambodia has recently updated its DTIS and developed a new trade road map outlining priorities from 2013 to 2018. The EIF Secretariat suggested incorporating the findings of the evaluation into the road map and DTIS follow up work where feasible.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

86. The Secretariat thanked Mr Lars Børresen for applying his excellent skills in chairing the Working Group in 2012-2013. The Secretariat also thanked the outgoing developing country experts for their active participation in the Working Group and their valuable contribution to the work of the STDF.

87. The Secretariat reminded members of the deadline of 1 November 2013 for submitting suggestions for candidates for three new developing country experts in the STDF for the period 2014-2015.

88. The meeting closed at 13:05.

ANNEX 1

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