

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING

27 February 2009

WTO Headquarters, Geneva

Adoption of Agenda

1. Mr Clem Boonekamp, Director of the Agriculture and Commodities Division of the WTO, informed the Working Group of the departure of Mr Michael Roberts as Secretary of the STDF to become WTO's new Aid for Trade Coordinator. A vacancy notice for the position of STDF Secretary had officially been issued and he assured the Working Group that the WTO would proceed with the recruitment process expeditiously. The Working Group collectively praised Michael Roberts for the work he had done and expressed gratitude for all his efforts to turn STDF into a successful and well-performing partnership and coordination mechanism.
2. The STDF Secretariat introduced Ms Sofie H. Flensburg (Permanent Mission of Denmark) as the new Chair of the Working Group for the year 2009.
3. The agenda was adopted with two amendments. The Secretariat requested the addition of two projects (STDF 79 and 246) under agenda item 4. A list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

Election of Vice-Chair

4. The Secretariat recalled that the position of Vice-Chair was still vacant. There had been discussions among members of the Working Group but no concrete proposal had been made. Members agreed to continue to consult each other on possible candidates and to postpone the election to the next Working Group meeting in June.

Overview of Operation of the Facility (STDF 290 and G/SPS/GEN/902)

Issues for consideration related to STDF evaluation (STDF 248) and the Policy Committee meeting

5. The Secretariat highlighted the main changes in the revised Operational Rules (STDF 139 Rev. 2) as agreed by the Policy Committee in December 2008 and following the recommendations of the STDF evaluation (STDF 248). These included, *inter alia*, the addition of a separate section on coordination and information dissemination, revised criteria for the review and evaluation of funding applications, and linkage to the OECD DAC Official Development Assistance (ODA) list. It was agreed that the information and promotion materials of the STDF should be revised accordingly. Members were requested to ensure that the information disseminated about the STDF is up-to-date.
6. The Secretariat introduced the new log frame matrix in the revised application form for projects. Clarification was sought on the difference between results and outputs and on the absence of impact indicators. The World Bank recalled that there is a profusion of existing documentation on log frames. The FAO requested more time to check the compatibility of the proposed log frame matrix with the one used by FAO. The WTO suggested that members check whether the information required by their procedures is adequately captured in the log frame matrix. The Working Group agreed to allow two weeks for further comments.
7. The Secretariat introduced the new templates for reviewing projects and project preparation grants (PPGs). The EC sought further clarification on the proper inclusion of the Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness, mainly in relation to national appropriation and local capacity to implement projects, and informed the Secretariat that it would forward its comments and suggestions in writing.

It was suggested to replace the yes/no answers by a ranking and to add a column for comments. The Working Group agreed to allow two weeks for further comments.

8. The Secretariat also highlighted the main changes made in the updated Operating Plan for 2009 (STDF 198 Add.1) including, *inter alia*, references to new work on development of impact indicators, linkages between SPS and trade facilitation, consideration of one additional regional Aid for Trade consultation and the fruit fly work in West Africa.

Implementation of the Operating Plan 2009 (STDF 198 Add.1)

9. The Secretariat recalled that several new STDF publications had been issued, including the booklet "SPS-Related Capacity Evaluation Tools: An Overview of Tools Developed by International Organizations", the STDF Briefing N°1 on "Good Practice in SPS Technical Cooperation" as well as the fourth STDF Newsletter.

10. The Working Group was briefed on the progress being made in the production of the DVD, which included three case studies (fruit fly in Belize, shrimp export in Benin and Avian Influenza in Thailand and Vietnam). Filming had been completed in Belize; filming in Thailand/Vietnam and in Benin would take place in March/April. Filming had also been carried out during the SPS Committee and Working Group meetings. The DVD would be shown to the Working Group at the next meeting in June. The importance of media communication to disseminate accurate information and to counter misleading and malicious propaganda was highlighted by a Working Group member. It was also suggested that the STDF should make the DVD available on its website.

11. The Working Group was informed about STDF participation in the Trade Standards Practitioners Network (TSPN) meeting on 9 and 10 December 2008. The meeting was timely, given the recommendation of the STDF evaluation to liaise and collaborate with the TSPN, and given the planned work on cost-benefit analysis. The STDF had requested membership in the TSPN to ensure synergies and proper collaboration. The OIE pointed out that TSPN work on cost-benefit analysis seemed to deal with private standards while the STDF work focused primarily on official standards. Other members noted that STDF would benefit from a further exchange of experiences with the TSPN on methodologies and approaches used for cost-benefit analysis and that participation of the TSPN in the upcoming cost-benefit analysis workshop should be considered.

12. The Secretariat informed the Working Group on the planned expert meeting on SPS and climate change. Discussions were ongoing with the World Bank to organize an event in Washington involving its Development Research Division (DEC) to present the work undertaken, *inter alia*, by STDF partners (notably FAO and OIE) on climate change implications on SPS issues. The World Development Report 2010 would focus on climate change and development. The event was tentatively planned for September 2009, but further discussion would be needed with the World Bank to define its purpose and scope. The Secretariat agreed to draft and finalize a concept note (STDF 292) for comments by the Working Group at the next meeting in June.

13. The initiative was welcomed by the Working Group. FAO mentioned that further work would be needed to update its reports on the topic. OIE highlighted that climate change had been chosen as one thematic issue for discussion at the OIE General Session in May and a *rapporteur* had been designated for this work. In addition, a special issue of the "*Revue Scientifique et Technique*" had been issued on the topic and could be ordered from http://www.oie.int/boutique/index.php?page=ficprod&id_produit=115&fichrech=1&lang=en. Organization of the climate change event later in 2009 would enable partners to incorporate the findings of ongoing work. The World Bank clarified that there is a distinction between the impact of climate change on agricultural health aspects and on particular SPS issues and suggested to further discuss these technical aspects in upcoming preparatory meetings for the meeting.

14. The Secretariat introduced the concept paper on the planned cost-benefit analysis workshop (STDF 291). OECD suggested that the scope and purpose of the workshop needed further clarification. If the objective was to influence decision-makers, the audience should be selected on that basis (and not necessarily directed to SPS Committee delegates). FAO highlighted the importance of collaboration with FAO and WHO as costs and benefits related to public health are often difficult to measure. The World Bank also highlighted work that had been done on cost-benefit analysis in relation to food and agricultural health. In addition, it would collaborate with FAO to update the biosecurity toolkit to include a cost-benefit analysis component. Discussions had also started between the World Bank and WHO to undertake research work on foodborne diseases. The Working Group observed that the value added of the workshop should lie in providing practical information and that the workshop should therefore focus on practical case studies rather than theoretical discussions on the methodology. Regulators, for instance, could present how they used cost benefit analysis to make decisions on issuing regulations or making policies. There was also a suggestion to use the work of Belize as a case study. IICA suggested exploring the possibility of using information of a World Bank funded project on cost-benefit analysis and Avian Influenza in 17 Latin American countries and agreed to provide further information on the project status. The OIE made reference to some pertinent studies¹ that had been published and could be accessed on the OIE internet site at:

http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/en_Global_Animal_Health_Initiative.htm

15. The Working Group considered that it would be difficult to finalize all preparations for the workshop by June, and agreed to re-schedule the workshop on 30 October 2009 (back-to-back with the SPS Committee meeting). The STDF Working Group planned for October was re-scheduled for later in the year. The Secretariat subsequently identified 2 December as a tentative date for the meeting. This meeting would be immediately followed by the annual STDF Policy Committee meeting to be hosted by the World Bank in Geneva.

16. Professor Spencer Henson presented the findings of the ex-post evaluation of project STDF 20 (aiming at developing methodologies for cost-benefit analysis). It was concluded that the outputs from the project were probably reasonable given the time and resources available, but that the need for more work was evident, building on the work being done under the project. Alternative approaches to be considered included cost-effectiveness and multiple-criteria decision analysis. The project was additionally successful in supporting the development of a national action plan for SPS capacity-development in Peru. Follow-up was given by STDF through a national Aid for Trade event in Peru in March 2009, at which a balance sheet of outstanding SPS needs and a list of concrete technical assistance activities of interest would be presented.

17. The presentation was followed by a general discussion in the Working Group on the scope and usefulness of cost benefit analysis as well as the limitations of the methodology. The importance of taking into account other aspects related to food and agricultural health not captured by country

¹ World Bank/OIE (2007) “*Prevention and control of animal diseases worldwide*”: “*Economic analysis*”

(i) “*Part I - Prevention versus outbreak costs*”, prepared by Agra CEAS Consulting ([http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20-%20CostBenefit%20Analysis%20\(Part%20I\).pdf](http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20-%20CostBenefit%20Analysis%20(Part%20I).pdf))

(ii) “*Part II - Feasibility study – A global fund for emergency response in developing countries*”, prepared by Civic Consulting ([http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20%20Global%20Fund%20\(Part%20II\).pdf](http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20%20Global%20Fund%20(Part%20II).pdf)); and

(iii) “*Part III - Pre-feasibility study – Supporting insurance of disease losses*”, prepared by Civic Consulting ([http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20-%20Insurance%20products%20\(Part%20III\).pdf](http://www.oie.int/eng/OIE-WB_Conference_1007/OIE%20Economic%20Studies/OIE%20-%20Insurance%20products%20(Part%20III).pdf))

exports was highlighted. One member suggested looking at SPS impacts in terms of trade first, and only secondarily at other potential costs and benefits. The difficulty of evaluating and costing human life and health aspects was discussed, as well as the use of cost benefit analysis in risk analysis. It was noted that in many instances, even if cost-benefit analysis were not used for decision-making as such, it might facilitate stakeholder dialogue.

18. The Secretariat introduced the concept note on research on impact and development of indicators (STDF 293). It mentioned that the Working Group had to discuss first what STDF's level of ambition in this complex area should be, i.e. to approach the research at a project or programme level, or to work on the topic at a more aggregate - Aid for Trade - level. Members seemed to agree that STDF should focus its work on using existing indicators and not on developing new ones. DFID suggested that STDF could undertake work using a similar approach as had been used in the research work on good practice, i.e. identify common benchmarks. The World Bank informed that it has a system of indicators that is applied in agricultural health to assess aid effectiveness, although these do not specifically examine the SPS component. FAO suggested that STDF should not evaluate project impacts but rather liaise with other organizations using a good practice identification perspective. It was suggested that STDF could review projects which have impact indicators embedded in them and identify the most pertinent ones. The Secretariat agreed to revise and further clarify the concept note based on the discussions for consideration at the next meeting of the Working Group.

19. The WTO SPS Secretariat provided a brief overview on the organization's work on trade facilitation. The Working Group decided to discuss this issue further at its next meeting.

20. The Working Group discussed the options in evaluating the regional Aid for Trade workshops in Central America, East Africa and the Greater Mekong Delta Sub-region, and considered the organization of another regional consultation. It was decided that the Secretariat would prepare a background paper for the next Working Group meeting - highlighting the lessons learned and documenting impacts where possible. The EC suggested that members could further assist the Secretariat by providing specific information and feedback in relevant developments in the countries since this regional work had been done.

21. The Secretariat summarized the purpose and the scope of the regional coordination work on fruit fly in West Africa and underscored that the organization of the proposed stakeholder meeting (June 2009) was conditional on progress made in the costing of the EC scoping study and concomitant action plan. The terms of reference for the consultant to undertake the costing exercise had been finalized and the cost of this activity (approximately US\$40,000) would be covered by the World Bank's All ACP Trust Fund. The Working Group was requested to provide the Secretariat with suggestions for consultants who might be able to undertake the costing exercise. IPPC stated that it might be able to identify suitable candidates but also highlighted the importance of using the experience available in Eastern Africa on the topic of fruit fly. It also mentioned that a study was undertaken for the SADC region highlighting the need for a regional action plan for SADC countries to fight fruit fly. The food safety beneficiary representative from Africa agreed to provide the name of the consultant who had undertaken this study.

22. The Secretariat reported on its participation in the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the EC-funded PAN-SPSO (Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard-setting Organizations) programme in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2009. The PAN-SPSO programme is managed by AU-IBAR and AU-IAPSC and further implemented by seven regional economic communities (RECs). The objective is to increase the effective participation of African countries in the activities of Codex, OIE and IPPC during the formulation of international standards on food safety, animal and plant health. The Working Group was informed that under the PAN-SPSO project, a sub-grant of €300,000 was allocated to STDF. It was agreed to use the sub-grant for the following activities:

- Two regional one-week SPS seminars (train-the-trainers approach, one in English, one in French, in July 2009) for relevant officials of the RECs and a number of selected African SPS experts, with staff from WTO, STDF, Codex, OIE and IPPC acting as trainers.
- Consultant analysis of existing SPS coordination mechanisms (terms of reference, mandate, membership, etc.) to inform the proposed establishment of such mechanisms in African ACP countries.
- Participation of relevant officials from RECs in meetings of the SPS Committee, Codex, OIE and IPPC. Given the increasing role of the RECs in SPS and standard-setting issues, it was recommended that they request observer status in the aforementioned bodies. If granted, STDF funding would be available to fund their initial participation.

23. The Secretariat informed the Working Group about its participation in two other donor initiatives, i.e. the EC-funded Better Training For Safer Food Initiative and a standards programme funded by DFID and implemented by the UK Natural Resources Institute (NRI). The Secretariat also reported on its collaboration with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Secretariat, notably possible involvement in the update of some of the Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS). However, this activity was unlikely to take place before the second half of the year.

24. The Working Group was briefed about STDF's involvement in an Aid for Trade activity in Peru, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, aimed at examining the need for and provision of SPS-related technical cooperation. In February 2009, the STDF participated in a series of meetings with government officials and private sector representatives to validate a preliminary balance sheet on outstanding SPS needs and a list of priority needs and concrete projects. A detailed report, which included the main SPS issues identified and a list of specific training activities and projects developed by the National Agricultural Health Department of Peru (SENASA), was circulated at the Working Group. The report would be further presented to donors at a national Aid for Trade event in Lima on 3 March 2009.

Funding Situation

25. The Secretariat gave an overview of the funding situation and informed the Working Group about a shortfall of funds of CHF 1,043,717. However, it was pointed out that this should not prevent the Working Group from approving projects and PPGs because further contributions would be received in 2009. Japan confirmed that it would make a contribution to STDF in 2009, totalling approximately US\$250,000. Discussions with other key donors, notably Sweden, are ongoing. The WTO noted that its in-kind contribution to the STDF consisting of the position of STDF Secretary had been further expanded with one additional position of Economic Affairs Officer.

Overview of implementation of on-going projects and PPGs (STDF 295)

26. The Secretariat reported on progress made in the implementation of projects and project preparation grants. Seven specific issues were discussed. An extension of six months was granted to STDF 69 (Yemen) to give the implementing agency sufficient time to complete project activities and identify additional funding to secure project sustainability.

27. A final extension until the end of June 2009 was granted to STDF 79 (International Portal), since the project encountered many IT problems during test phases. A final report will be submitted in June and, if further work is required, it will be carried out by the implementing agencies outside the scope of the project. In response to a comment from the OIE that it has already started conducting a series of workshops on communication for OIE national Delegates, IICA expressed an interest in future collaboration on this topic.

28. The representative of IICA made a presentation on STDF 108 (Latin America), focusing on the progress made, highlighting the reasons for delay and requesting an extension of 14 months until end of April 2010 to conduct the regional capacity building activities identified during phase 1 of the project. Four regional project concept notes were presented as part of the progress report. The Working Group agreed to grant the extension. OIE and FAO expressed an interest in collaborating in the implementation of the regional activities.

29. The Secretariat introduced a request received from Michigan State University for additional time and funds for STDF project 145 (Rwanda). The request for extension was to implement additional activities not directly related to the original project objectives. In addition, the relationship with existing projects and programmes was not clear. The Working Group decided not to grant the request. The Secretariat agreed to request the applicant to submit a final project report by the end of April and to also provide advice on other possible sources of funding for the new activities.

30. The Working Group also approved a request for an extension of six months for STDF project 146 (Mali) to complete reporting and project activities.

31. Project STDF 285 (Guatemala) was approved in June 2008, subject to receipt of letters of support from collaborating agencies, specification of funding contribution from the applicant and clarification regarding possible intersection of the proposed activities and those implemented by the United States. The applicant had provided clarifications and additional documentation to the Secretariat. Hence, the Working Group instructed the Secretariat to move ahead and contract the project. It was also suggested that the United States work closely with the applicant to address any remaining concerns.

32. Project STDF 246 (Cambodia) was approved in June 2008, but contracting had been problematic because of unclear institutional set-up and responsibilities at national level. FAO was designated as the implementing agency and assured the Working Group that it was undertaking every possible effort to get the project contracted before the deadline, i.e. June 2009. The Secretariat recalled that a WTO regional SPS seminar was planned in Cambodia in July 2009 and that links should be sought once the project was contracted.

Review of applications received (STDF 288)

Projects not considered for funding by the STDF

33. The Secretariat provided an overview of its evaluation of those projects which were not accepted for consideration at the STDF Working Group. Projects were reviewed on the basis of the previous "old" eligibility criteria. Future applications would be reviewed in accordance with the revised Operational Rules (STDF 139 Rev.2) adopted in December 2008.

34. Application STDF 282 (Establishing and harmonizing regional standards and regulations for micronutrient food fortification in West Africa) was highlighted as a well-written and coherent project - but it did not meet the STDF eligibility criteria. Partners and donors were encouraged to seek other ways to fund this project.

Project requests resubmitted from previous Working Groups

STDF 262: Renforcement du contrôle des maladies animales et préparation à l'accès des viandes sahéniennes aux marchés des pays de l'Afrique du Nord

35. The Working Group agreed that the revised application met the requirements set by the Working Group during its meeting in October 2008 and approved the PPG for funding. FAO and

OIE supported the request and suggested that emphasis should be placed on the entire production chain for meat, including slaughter houses, cold chain, packaging, etc. This should be included in the PPG's terms of reference.

STDF 267: Devising a National GAP Programme and a Commercial GAP Standard in the Philippines

36. The Working Group agreed that the applicant took into consideration the suggestions made by the Working Group in October 2008. Some members, however, raised concerns regarding the type of GAP scheme involved and the capacity building component. The Working Group decided to approve the project for funding - subject to written confirmation that another donor would fund the complementary capacity building component, as well as receipt of one letter of support that seemed to be still missing. The Secretariat recalled that contracting had to take place within one year following approval by the Working Group.

Requests for project preparation grants (PPGs)

STDF 286: Accessing new markets by reducing phytosanitary risk through participatory research and expansion: the Clean Stock Program in ornamental plants in Costa Rica

37. The Working Group approved the PPG for funding with inclusion of the identification of possible donors for the resultant project in the PPG terms of reference. According to the revised STDF Operational Rules, the resultant project would only be able to receive up to 40% of STDF funding because Costa Rica is considered as an Upper Middle Income Country.

Requests for project grants

STDF 287: Information sharing initiative on the actions to control fruit flies in Sub-Saharan Africa: publication of a newsletter (COLEACP)

38. The Working Group agreed to fund the project but raised some concerns regarding its sustainability. It was recommended to include a project component looking at the mobilization of local stakeholder funds to contribute to a greater level of sustainability.

Decisions on financing and prioritization

39. Of ten funding applications received, only four were put forward by the Secretariat for consideration at the meeting; the other six needed further improvement or did not meet the eligibility criteria. All four proposals were approved for funding, and the Secretariat reiterated that before projects could be contracted, additional funds needed to be obtained from donors. The Chair recalled the general rule on prioritization of resources as established in paragraph 75 of the Operational Rules.

Exchange of information on SPS-related initiatives

40. Argentina had expressed interest in becoming more involved in STDF work and was therefore invited to participate as an observer in the Working Group meeting. The delegate from Argentina gave a brief overview of the work of the Argentinean Fund for horizontal cooperation in the SPS area and highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation and the sharing of lessons and experiences between developing countries. Argentina had participated actively in giving assistance to other developing countries through different types of cooperation.

41. Various ways of involving emerging developing countries more generally in STDF work were identified, including: (i) information sharing in the Working Group regarding their SPS-related

activities; (ii) acting as implementers or supervisors of STDF projects; and (iii) making contributions to the STDF trust fund. It was suggested that an unofficial list of countries providing SPS assistance could be developed, constituting the basis for greater involvement of these countries in STDF projects.

42. The WTO presented an overview of its SPS-related technical assistance, comprising of regional and sub-regional workshops, national seminars, specialized courses, e-training courses, as well as participation in other courses organized by different organizations. The WTO underlined that the scope of its technical assistance is focused on explaining the SPS Agreement and the mandate and discussions in the SPS Committee. The WTO includes references and presentations on the STDF in all its activities, with the aim of informing participants about the Facility.

43. The EC provided information about its 2009-2010 programme entitled "Better Training for Safer Food in Africa". The aim of the initiative is to strengthen the SPS capacity of African countries. The EC had allocated €10 million to this programme and was currently coordinating, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the implementation of six capacity building activities. The OIE informed that it is involved in the delivery of this programme focusing on strengthening governance and infrastructure of veterinary services and applying its PVS tool and associated initiatives in African countries. Separately, the EC agreed to provide an overview of its SPS assistance at the next Working Group meeting in June.

44. The World Bank made an intervention on the issue of "minor use pesticides", i.e. important for specific, often "niche" crops but producing little profit for manufacturers, who may refuse to cover the cost of their continued registration. It also drew attention to the "land grab" phenomenon due to recent increases in prices of major commodities, biofuels, etc., which has resulted in the development of new agricultural/food production zones tied to specific markets by large players without knowledge of SPS issues. A new policy position in this area will soon be adopted by the Bank.

45. On the issue of "minor use pesticides", the EC indicated that it would prefer to tackle the issue at bilateral level. Codex referred to the Global Minor Use Summit organized in 2007 at FAO, in collaboration with USDA, aimed at raising awareness on the issue. The Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues had established a Working Group to see what types of actions could be taken. Codex also referred to the data requirement to allow the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR) to conduct risk assessment on a given pesticide/crop combination. The OECD reported about its work on "minor crop" issues.

46. UNIDO referred to the UNIDO-WTO Framework Agreement on STDF cooperation signed in November 2008, and provided a briefing on the implementation of three projects that resulted from STDF PPGs. In Malawi, a first UNIDO expert mission had taken place in January 2009 and a report providing detailed information about next steps had been prepared. In Zambia, a project document had been approved by UNIDO and Norad, and, upon receipt of project funds, the activities were expected to start in April 2009. In Burundi, UNIDO, in cooperation with BBN and local stakeholders, was updating and formulating the full-fledged project document. UNIDO also provided an overview of some past and on-going activities such as the International Conference on Sharing Innovative Agribusiness Solutions, held in Cairo in November 2008, with participation of the STDF, as well as the "Support to the National Programme for Prevention of Ochratoxin. A Contamination in Coffee and Cocoa" in Cote d'Ivoire.

47. ITC informed the Working Group on three Export Quality Bulletins. The Directory of Marks and Labels related to Food Safety, Environmental Integrity and Social Equity ([EQM 86](#) and An Introduction to ISO 22000 - Food Safety Management System ([EQM 85](#)) will be available in French and Spanish in the first half of 2009. A revised version of Exporting Seafood to the European Union ([EQM 84](#)) in English, French and Spanish, was available at www.intracen.org/eqm. ITC also

reported on its Quality Support Programme in Bangladesh; two projects, financed by the Government of Switzerland, dealing with trade promotion in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; as well as its programme to implement Food Safety Management Systems based on ISO 22000.

48. The IPPC thanked the STDF and the OIE for their contribution to the Open Ended Working Group to develop a comprehensive phytosanitary capacity building strategy held in Rome in December 2008. IPPC informed the Working Group on its upcoming events: a PRA workshop to be held in Bangkok from 9 to 21 March 2009 for plant health officials from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand; the informal working group on PCE that will meet in Rome from 17 to 27 March 2009; the fourth session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM4) scheduled to take place in Rome from 30 March to 03 April 2009; and a workshop on import regulation and selected ISPMs for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that is anticipated in June 2009.

49. UNCTAD provided a brief overview of its recently launched dialogue on merits for matching protocols for organic standards and some other activities and publications on harmonization and equivalence of organic standards.

50. The OIE paper (G/SPS/GEN/905) providing an update on the OIE key capacity building activities was noted by participants.

STDF website

51. The Secretariat informed the Working Group that the STDF team had updated the STDF website and proposed to send the members a "trial link". The Working Group was invited to provide comments and suggestions on the website, and discussions would take place at the next Working Group meeting in June on possible further work in terms of the design and application of specific tools that may be required to make the website more "user-friendly" and useful for the exchange of SPS information.

Other business

52. A participant drew the attention of the Working Group to the provision in the Operating Rules addressing conflict of interest. When examining project applications, the Operating Rules do not allow partner organizations to even "review" projects in which they have interest. To be in line with this spirit, other members and observers should refrain from making a case for applications they have interest in, with a view to avoiding undue influence on decisions taken by the Working Group.

53. There was no other business and the meeting was closed at 5 p.m.

Annex 1

List of Participants

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