

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STDF WORKING GROUP MEETING
24-25 MARCH 2015
WTO, GENEVA**

I. REGULAR WORKING GROUP MEETING

1 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

1. The meeting was chaired by Dr Kazuaki Miyagishima (WHO). He welcomed three new developing country experts in the Facility: Ms Maputa Agnes Kamulete, Ms Lissette Gomez Rodriguez and Ms Talei Jacinta Fidow-Moors. Members were reminded of the reception for members and SPS delegates to celebrate STDF's 10th anniversary on 25 March at 18:00.

2. The IPPC Secretariat requested removal of the agenda item entitled "Implementation of SPS Measures to Facilitate Safe Trade, including research report on Southern Africa". It cited a lack of time to review the final draft report and requested to postpone this item to the next meeting in October. Members noted that it could be useful to have an initial discussion at this meeting but agreed that no decisions on this report would be made until the meeting in October. The Chairperson maintained the item on the agenda and requested the Secretariat to insert the item on the draft agenda of the October meeting.

3. The agenda was adopted. A list of participants is attached to this report.

2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY

(a) Update on Policy committee meeting (12 February 2015)

4. The Secretariat informed members about the results of the STDF Policy Committee meeting on 12 February 2015 at OIE Headquarters. Following the inclusion of some minor amendments, the Policy Committee adopted the revised STDF strategy (2015-2019) and STDF's new Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework. Both documents were available on the STDF website.¹ The Policy Committee also discussed progress made in the ongoing review of STDF's Operational Rules. The summary report of the meeting was available on the STDF website.²

(b) Implementation of Action Plan to implement recommendations of STDF mid-term review

5. The Secretariat reported on progress made to date in the implementation of the recommendations of the STDF Mid-Term Review (MTR) report, as further outlined in the separate Action Plan. The three main recommendations included: (i) strengthening STDF's Results-Based Management (RBM) framework; (ii) increased and improved cooperation with global and regional players; and (iii) strengthening the Secretariat's capacity.

6. The Secretariat noted that the first recommendation was almost implemented, following the Policy Committee's adoption of the new M&E Framework. A considerable number of actions under the second recommendation were also implemented. One recommended action entailed consideration of an African continental-wide plan to control and manage fruit fly. Following consultation with the IPPC Secretariat, this action was put on hold. Members were informed that the African Union Inter-African Phytosanitary Council, with support from FAO, had recently developed a ten-year strategy to build plant health capacity in Africa. This strategy lists fruit fly as the most hazardous crop pest in Africa.

7. Identification of a speaker to make a presentation on "One Health" in the Working Group, a task of FAO, OIE and WHO, was also still outstanding. The Secretariat noted that there may be an opportunity at the next meeting in October. The survey of STDF's Virtual Library user data was also outstanding because the new STDF website only became operational in August 2014.

¹ See: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/key-documents>

² See: http://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Summary_Report_PC_120215_FINAL.pdf

8. The European Commission sought clarification on implementation of recommendation 3.2³ of the MTR. The new M&E Framework does not fully take into account the recommended distinction between ex-post and final evaluations. The Secretariat noted that this issue is currently being discussed in the context of the revision of STDF's Operational Rules. The M&E Framework is a "living" document and could be further updated, following a revision of the Rules.

9. The Chairperson concluded that implementation of the recommendations of the MTR was generally on track, with a few recommendations still outstanding. He invited FAO, OIE and WHO to identify a speaker to make a presentation on One Health.

(c) Draft STDF Annual Report 2014

10. The Secretariat briefly introduced the draft 2014 STDF Annual Report, which follows the structure of previous annual reports and is aligned with the three strategic results areas of the STDF. A first effort was made to highlight case stories which capture STDF's impact. These efforts will be further pursued in 2015. In 2014, two STDF projects were completed.

11. In 2014, ten donors contributed to the STDF for a total amount of USD 4.5 million. STDF's expenditures in 2014 slightly exceeded total contributions, resulting in a negative balance of approximately USD 600,000 (by 31 December 2014). Additional contributions will be necessary to continue implementing future STDF work plans.

12. Members adopted the 2014 Annual Report on an ad-referendum basis, with a two-week period until 10 April 2015 to provide comments.⁴

(d) Draft STDF Work Plan 2015-2016

13. The Secretariat presented the draft Work Plan for 2015-2016, which follows the structure of the revised STDF strategy and includes a new M&E plan. Activities were grouped under the four outputs of the strategy: (i) Information among providers of SPS capacity building exchanged and dialogue among relevant stakeholders promoted; (ii) Good practice to support SPS Capacity Building identified and disseminated; (iii) Needs assessments, feasibility studies and project proposals related to SPS capacity building produced; and (iv) SPS capacity building projects in specific areas supported. The Chairperson welcomed specific comments from members on the proposed activities under each of the outputs.

- **Output I**

14. In response to a question from Sweden, the Secretariat clarified that paragraph 3 of the Work Plan referred to a total of four Working Group meetings over two years, i.e. two meetings per year. More generally, Sweden commented that it would be useful to dedicate at least one Working Group meeting per year to adoption of the STDF Work Plan and Annual Report. This would facilitate the conclusion of a new multi-year contribution agreement on the STDF between Sweden and the WTO.

- **Output II**

15. Members requested more information on the proposal to update STDF's publication on SPS-related capacity evaluation tools. The Secretariat explained the background to this publication and noted that progress in this activity will be subject to information provided by STDF partners, notably on the new FAO/WHO Food Safety tool. FAO informed members about ongoing field work to inform the final version of the tool. The World Bank and IICA commented that it could be premature to include the new tool in the publication, prior to its wide application. The Secretariat

³ Recommendation 3.2 of the MTR: The STDF should distinguish clearly between final independent and "ex-post" evaluations or impact evaluations. Final evaluations should be carried out at the same rate as currently: 50 percent of completed projects selected at random. They should be carried out just before the projects are scheduled to complete. Ex-post or impact evaluations should be carried out on selected projects from 3-5 years after completion. The projects for impact evaluations shall be proposed by the STDF Secretariat and approved by the STDF WG. Ex-post evaluations shall cover up to 25 percent of the total projects completed.

⁴ The 2014 Annual Report can be viewed and downloaded here: <http://www.standardsfacility.org/stdf-annual-reports>

proposed to commence work on updating the publication in 2015 and, based on the availability of information, finalize the work in 2016.

16. Members discussed the proposal to prepare a two-page briefing note on the ongoing research on "Implementation of SPS Measures to Facilitate Safe Trade".⁵ The IPPC Secretariat considered that the Working Group should first complete its discussion on this topic, and then accordingly take a decision on preparation of a briefing note. The OIE concurred and suggested redrafting the text in the final Work Plan. Following discussion, members agreed that the text in the final Work Plan should read: "to facilitate this proposal, the Working Group will give consideration to prepare a two-page STDF Briefing Note for wider dissemination."

17. No comments were made on Outputs 3 and 4.

- **General comments**

18. The Chairperson welcomed general comments on the draft Work Plan. Sweden informed members that it had started an internal appraisal process to continue its support to the STDF. It noted that the draft Work Plan is lacking a section on risk assessment and mitigation and recommended that this section be added. The Secretariat drew attention to the risks identified in the revised STDF strategy, which are also applicable to the Work Plan.

19. The World Bank requested clarity on the budgeting of costs associated with implementation of the M&E Framework. The Secretariat clarified that further assistance from the STDF consultant – Mr Jens Andersson – is foreseen on an as needed basis in 2015-2016 to help implement the Framework. A small budget was included in this regard. The next independent evaluation of the Facility is scheduled in 2018 and hence the Plan does not include a budget line for this.

20. Other members noted that it would be useful to further address identified risks in the Work Plan. The Chairperson sought feedback on whether members would prefer adding a column dedicated to risk identification to Annex I in the Work Plan or a brief paragraph in the main body of the text. Sweden noted its flexibility on the format and emphasized that it is important to analyse and self-identify risks on an annual basis.

21. Members approved the Work Plan, with the understanding that the Secretariat would add a risk assumption and mitigation part to the document.

(e) Selection of new Working Group vice-chairperson (2015)

22. The Chairperson welcomed an expression of interest from Ms Sun Hydén Biney (Sweden) to become the vice-chairperson of the Working Group in 2015 (and hence chairperson in 2016). Ms Biney noted that she would be able to confirm her availability only after receiving official approval from capital. In light of this, members agreed to formally appoint the new vice-chairperson at the next meeting in October.

(f) Staffing and financial situation

23. The Secretariat reminded members of the vacancy for the one-year post (at Grade 6, entry level) that was issued by the WTO in August 2014. The first selection among 299 candidates was done in October/November. A panel was established in December 2014 and interviews were held in January 2015. Upon completion of the process, Ms Roshan Khan had recently been selected for the post.

24. The Secretariat reported on the financial situation of the Facility. Taking into account contracted and un-contracted commitments, the trust fund showed a negative balance of US\$1.4 million.

25. France confirmed support to the STDF for 2015 and indicated that it plans to proceed with continued annual support. Germany also confirmed a new contribution. Sweden re-iterated that it was in the process of assessing a new multi-annual contribution to the STDF. The European

⁵ Paragraph 11 of the draft STDF Work Plan (2015-16) reads as: "To facilitate this process the Secretariat will prepare a two-page STDF Briefing Note for wider dissemination".

Commission informed members that it is working on renewed multi-annual support for the STDF for 2015-2020.

26. The Secretariat informed members about a new multi-annual agreement on STDF support between the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the WTO, covering the period 2014-2018. Accessing these funds had been challenging for the WTO thus far. The US noted that it would work actively with the WTO towards resolving the impasse.

27. The Secretariat thanked existing donors for their generous support. It also reminded members that additional funds will be necessary to continue approving and implementing projects. The Secretariat in particular welcomed multi-year commitments.

(g) STDF strategy – discussion on indicator(s), including for Output 1

28. A rich discussion ensued under this agenda item, which members agreed to continue in a smaller dedicated group, on the margins of day 1 of the Working Group meeting, with the following tasks: (i) to find specific and measurable indicators for output 1⁶; and (ii) recommend additional indicators which in general may be useful to the STDF.

29. Based on the recommendations of the smaller group, Members subsequently agreed to the following indicators for output 1: (i) total number and type of participants in the Working Group; and (ii) number and type of presentations made in Working Group meetings (including activities reported by partners, donors, observer organizations and beneficiaries).

3 ENHANCED COLLABORATION IN SPS-RELATED TECHNICAL COOPERATION

(a) Joint presentation by ITC/UNCTAD about Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) and ITC's Market Access Map

30. Mr Christian Knebel (UNCTAD) and Ms Olga Solleder (ITC) presented UNCTAD's activities on NTM data collection and research, and ITC's related capacity building activities. UNCTAD's NTM Programme has a significant focus on transparency, data collection and research. Data collection is complementary to WTO's notification mechanism, and focuses on a complete stock of measures at a given time in a country. The programme is based on a comprehensive classification of NTMs. For instance, the chapter pertaining to SPS measures can be disaggregated into about 40 different types of measures. The classification is built on a country's laws and legislation. Provisions from relevant laws are converted into codes and classified, along with their relevant Harmonized System (HS) codes. Members were informed that UNCTAD, in partnership with the World Bank, had begun a project to collect data for the 25 biggest economies in the world to cover approximately 90-95 per cent of world Trade. Data collected by UNCTAD is available for free at: <http://wits.worldbank.org>; and as part of ITC's Market Access Map (MacMap).

31. Ms Solleder presented ITC's work in the area of NTMs and SPS measures and gave a live demonstration of ITC's MacMap tool. She explained the process on harvesting data from UNCTAD's NTM Program. The MacMap tool provides a detailed overview of data related to SPS measures in different countries. The tool also contains information of tariff, quotas and trade remedies, import and export flows. The tool's simple interface allows non-experienced users to retrieve complete and update information easily. A key feature of the tool is that it allows existing and potential exporters to access data related to requirements for existing and new markets. This allows for comparison of products with requirements imposed by new markets, which in turn allows exporters to assess if their products are compliant. In total, ITC has three tools which provide information related to standards and SPS regulations.⁷

32. In the ensuing discussion the FAO noted that it is important to distinguish between the requirements imposed by SPS measures and countries' inability to apply these measures. Members

⁶ Output 1: Information among providers of SPS capacity building exchanged and dialogue among relevant stakeholders promoted.

⁷ ITC's Market Analysis Tools include: Market Access Map (www.macmap.org); Standards Map (www.standardsmap.org) and Trade Obstacles Alert (<http://www.tradeobstacles.org>)

thanked Mr Knebel and Ms Solleder for their informative and engaging presentations. Both presentations can be viewed on the STDF website.⁸

(b) Relevant SPS activities and initiatives of partners, donors and observer organizations – exchange of information

33. The IPPC Secretariat reported on activities under project STDF/PG/401 entitled "Training of Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) Facilitators". Up to 80 candidates had been selected to participate in the training under the project. It also informed members that under project STDF/PG/350 ("Phytosanitary Manuals, Standard Operating Procedures and Training Kits") several technical materials were produced and made available to IPPC contracting parties. Under the same project, a photo contest entitled "Pests Without Borders" was launched. Members were informed that pictures would be exhibited during the STDF reception and SPS Committee meeting.

34. The FAO reported that work was ongoing on development of various guidance materials, including the new FAO/WHO Food Safety Assessment tool. A new area of work was early warning and data collection on upcoming food safety issues. Work to develop guidance materials for food safety managers is underway. This work will examine, *inter alia*, ways to balance health and trade perspectives when making food safety decisions. Discussions on redefining the next Codex Trust Fund were ongoing.

35. The OIE drew attention to the upcoming OIE General Session in May 2015, during which a new OIE Director General will be selected, and the sixth OIE Strategic Plan is expected to be adopted. Normative work on standards development was on-going, with proposed revised chapters on Food and Mouth Disease (FMD), classification of BSE risk and revision of African swine fever virus foreseen.

36. The Codex Secretariat updated members on the meeting of the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems. This Committee, in coordination with FAO, has started work on monitoring the efficiency of food safety systems.

37. The WTO provided information on SPS training activities planned in 2015, including three regional SPS seminars in November for: (i) Asia (with TBT, and co-organized with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific); (ii) Arab Countries (co-organized with IMF-Middle East Centre for Economics and Finance); and (iii) the Caribbean (in collaboration with CARICOM). At the request of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the WTO will organize an SPS/TBT regional workshop for IGAD members in May 2015. The annual advanced course on the SPS Agreement is scheduled for October 2015 (in English). National SPS seminars (sometimes in tandem with TBT) were requested for 2015 by Algeria, Azerbaijan, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Mozambique, Oman, Paraguay, Sudan, Chinese Taipei⁹ and Uganda. Document WTO/G/SPS/997/Rev5 provided information on all technical activities in the SPS area in 2015, including on how to apply.¹⁰

38. The World Bank reported on the status of the Global Food Safety Partnership (GFSP), which is currently in the process of revisiting its strategy. A consultative meeting with GFSP partners was planned for June 2015. OIRSA provided an update on progress made under project STDF/PG/358 entitled "Regional Veterinary Legislation Project for OIRSA member countries".

39. CABI reported on several STDF projects that it is implementing. Under project STDF/PG/355 entitled "Strengthening Phytosanitary Controls in the Floriculture Sector in Uganda" a public-private partnership was set-up to effectively address phytosanitary issues related to exports to Europe. Members were also informed about the establishment of a new Australia-Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership, a capacity building and individual training program for Eastern and Southern Africa. IICA reported on progress made in project STDF/PG/344 entitled "Establishment of a Regional Virtual Food Inspector School".

⁸ <http://www.standardsfacility.org/working-group-documents>

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ See the SPS technical assistance gateway:
https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/events_e.htm

40. Finland noted that the IPPC's Commission on Phytosanitary Measures (CPM) had proposed to mark 2020 as the year of plant health, which would raise public and political awareness on plant health issues. The EC provided members with relevant information on the Europe Aid Programming Period (2015-2020). At least 24 developing countries had retained SPS-related interventions in their programmes. In addition, the African Union had tasked AU-IBAR to establish a Pan-African Food Safety Authority. A task force, consisting of FAO, WHO and UNIDO was currently working together with the EC towards this goal. The EC suggested that this work would benefit from advice and support from the STDF.

41. The WHO reminded participants that 7 April 2015 will be food safety day. In May 2015, the World Health Assembly is expected to adopt a global action plan for anti-microbial resistance.

(c) STDF Participation in external events

42. The Secretariat drew attention to its participation in selected external events and meetings since the last Working Group meeting in October 2014. An overview of events was attached to the annotated agenda (STDF/WG/Mar15/Annotated agenda).

(d) Implementation of SPS measures to facilitate safe trade, including draft research report on Southern Africa- discussion

43. The Secretariat briefly introduced this work focused on Southern Africa (notably South Africa, Malawi and Zambia). The work had experienced delays, in part due to the unexpected closure of TradeMark Southern Africa, following which Ms Jennifer Rathebe was contracted to finalize the study. The work was implemented in close collaboration with the COMESA Secretariat. The draft report was circulated to the countries concerned in January 2015. Comments were received from all countries through their focal points for this research. Simultaneously, the draft report was circulated to STDF partners (as well as Codex and IPPC Secretariats) for their technical comments and input. Comments were received from WTO and (after the deadline) FAO, World Bank and the IPPC Secretariat. For this reason, the final draft report had been circulated to the Working Group at a later date than planned. The Secretariat noted that some work, including on the executive summary, is still outstanding. The aim was to finalize the study, based on discussions in the Working Group, in May/June 2015.

44. The Chairperson welcomed comments on: (i) process and methodology; and (ii) substance/content of the report. On process, the IPPC Secretariat expressed reservations regarding the consultations undertaken with National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPO) of the countries involved. It commented that two countries had communicated to the Secretariat their discomfort with the consultation process. According the IPPC Secretariat, it was unclear which authorities were consulted.

45. The Secretariat informed Members that all three countries had commented on the draft report through their country focal points for this research. The focal point in Zambia was the NPPO. In South Africa, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (which includes the NPPO within its structure) had provided comments. For Malawi, comments were received through the Ministry of Trade. In the revised final report, which was circulated to the Working Group, the consultant had mentioned that all comments were taken into account, where appropriate. The Secretariat also reminded members that the report captures both public and private sector perspectives on SPS measure and trade facilitation, which may not always be aligned.

46. On substance, some members expressed concern on a reference to private standards in a recommendation of the report. The FAO noted that the report raises a number of important issues related to border control and cross-border issues. However, the report lacked balance as its focus is on achieving efficiency and cost effectiveness. The report should give adequate consideration to requirements to protect food safety, plant and animal health.

47. The WTO noted that the study comes at an opportune moment. Due to the new WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, there is renewed interest in border management. It reminded members that this study is an independent report and reflected the views of the consultant. Regarding the inclusion of private standards in the report, it suggested that the consultant be asked to clarify this recommendation.

48. The OIE endorsed the concept of the study, but noted that several inaccuracies should be rectified. The World Bank concurred on the need to make factual corrections. It had provided comments and requested the inclusion of these comments in the next iteration of the report. It also requested a more detailed discussion of the study and its findings at the next Working Group meeting.

49. The Chairperson concluded that the report is work in progress and that a good range of comments were received. As next steps, members agreed that the Secretariat should submit all the comments received to the consultant to: (i) ensure accuracy of facts; and (ii) achieve balance in the structure of the report, including an executive summary. Members requested the Secretariat to circulate a final revised report well in advance of the next Working Group meeting to allow ample time for review.

(e) 5th Aid for Trade Global Review (30 June- 2 July 2015) - STDF side event

50. The Secretariat informed that the 5th Global Aid for Trade Review will be held at the WTO from 30 June to 2 July 2015, with a focus on "Reducing Trade Costs for Inclusive Sustainable Growth."¹¹ Rather than an STDF side-event, as originally planned, the WTO had agreed to include a plenary session on "Facilitating Safe Trade". This would ensure higher-level attention for the debate. The IPPC Secretariat proposed organizing presentations to highlight how international standards facilitate trade.

(f) Status of work – new STDF film

51. The Secretariat informed members about preparations for the new STDF film. In selecting the film company ("Comsocial"), the Secretariat had followed WTO's procurement process. The Secretariat recalled that in previous Working Group meetings several potential topics were identified. This should result in a series of short films that could potentially be united into a longer film.

(g) Presentation by Mr Hugo Byrnes (Ahold) on the Global Food Safety Initiative

52. Mr Hugo Byrnes (Ahold) presented the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). The GFSI is a global multi-stakeholder network which gathers food industry members (including members from retail, manufacturing and food service industry) worldwide to work on food safety issues that affect the entire supply chain. GFSI benchmarks food safety management schemes against a set of requirements established by its stakeholders. Mr Byrnes explained how GFSI conducts its benchmarking process. In essence, GFSI is a management tool, based on Codex standards.

53. He also explained in detail GFSI's capacity building initiative, the Global Markets Program. The objective of this Program is to provide a route for small and less developed businesses to achieve accredited certification and improve market access opportunities for small suppliers operating locally. The GFSI has developed two case studies to highlight the work of this Program. In response to questions, Mr Byrnes noted that the Program is online and open to anyone.

54. Several members commented that this presentation was extremely useful and informative and that the Program has significant implications for capacity building in the food industry.

(h) Status of STDF work: Joint EIF/STDF analysis on SPS issues in DTIS studies

55. The Secretariat reported that since the last meeting in October 2014 little progress was made. The consultant hired to conduct the study was unable to finalize the work on account of personal reasons. A second consultant was identified to finalize the work and will be contracted in May 2015. The study should be completed by August 2015, in time for discussion at the next meeting.

(i) Possible future STDF work – discussion

56. The Chairperson recalled that in October 2014 members had started to identify new topics for future STDF thematic work in 2016 and beyond. He referred to the summary report of that meeting. A list of topics identified was available in the annotated agenda

¹¹ See: details at http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/devel_e/a4t_e/a4tmonit_e.htm

(STDF/WG/Mar15/Annotated Agenda). As new work is unlikely to start before the end of 2015, some members noted that there was no urgent need to make a decision at this meeting. However, reducing the list would be helpful at this stage.

57. Ms Carmela Castillo (Developing Country Expert) pleaded for a study on "Implementing SPS Measures to Facilitate Safe Trade" for Latin America and the Caribbean. Previous work in this regard undertaken by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) was focused specifically on quarantine offices. The approach taken by the STDF in the study for Southern Africa would be very useful for the region. In addition, she felt that more work to raise awareness at political levels should be given consideration. An STDF information session could be held during the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference.

58. Finland considered that work on E-certification is SPS-wide, involving plant health, food safety and veterinary certification. It is a key component of the single window approach and trade facilitation. The STDF should look carefully into this and identify challenges related to capacity building and development of international systems for E-certification. In future, all trade will be paperless. Finland also noted that benefits of standard harmonization/implementation is an important topic. Ms Stella Oraka (Developing Country Expert) concurred with Finland's suggestions on E-certification.

59. The ITC recalled that it had circulated a concept paper on identification of new and alternative ways to finance SPS capacity building. Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) often face inadequate financing to build SPS capacity. This work could consider how to involve the private sector in SPS capacity building and investments. Members were asked to reflect further on the note and provide comments.

60. The European Commission suggested three topics: (i) benefits of standards harmonization/implementation; (ii) good regulatory practice in the SPS area; and (iii) identification of SPS constraints and challenges. Work should be implemented with a focus on Africa.

61. The IPPC Secretariat expressed support for work on the benefits of standard harmonization/implementation and requested more information on the scope of ITC's concept note. The FAO commented that several suggested topics are important. It welcomed work on identification of good regulatory practice and noted that STDF partners could contribute significantly to this area of discussion. Work on the benefits of standards harmonization, with a focus on market access, would also be useful. The FAO highlighted traceability as another cross-cutting area. It suggested that the Secretariat could prepare a short brief on each of the topics proposed.

62. Concurring with Ms Carmela Castillo, several members highlighted the importance of raising awareness and advocacy of SPS capacity building at higher levels. The US noted that work on good regulatory practice in the SPS area has a very wide ambit. It referred to a concept note (G/SPS/GEN/1401) that it had tabled in the SPS Committee. This note looked at risk analysis which could be a potential sub-component of work on good regulatory practice. IICA supported work on benefits of standard harmonization/implementation and work on E-certification. SPS financing and good regulatory practice may cut across the topic of standard harmonization/implementation.

63. The World Bank commented that work on the benefits of standard harmonization/implementation could be linked to the outcomes in STDF's new M&E framework.

64. Members agreed on E-certification and benefits of standards harmonization/implementation as potential areas of future work. The Chairperson also noted broad agreement on awareness raising activities and advocacy related to SPS capacity building. This topic could be added to the list. Members were encouraged to table proposals related to the topics identified so far for further review and discussion in the October Working Group.

4 IMPROVED CAPACITY OF BENEFICIARIES TO IDENTIFY NEEDS AND FORMULATE PROJECTS

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

65. The Secretariat introduced the project and PPG applications 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/Mar15/Review.

66. In relation to STDF/PPG/499 entitled "Capacity Building for the Burundi Bureau of Standards (BBN)", the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) informed members that it had provided technical assistance to strengthen several SPS national authorities and enquiry points in Eastern Africa. In 2015, with support from USAID, USDA intends to expand this effort to Burundi and Uganda. In this regard, USDA will coordinate with the applicant of the PPG.

67. With respect to STDF/PPG/512 entitled "Harmonization of SPS Measures in the EAC", USDA informed members on a cooperation agreement with the EAC on SPS Measures and Trade Facilitation. Under this agreement, support will be provided to develop a work plan prioritizing areas of work to implement the SPS Agreement. Several Members provided comments on this PPG and noted that the applicant should be encouraged to revise it, taking into consideration relevant on-going and future initiatives led by various STDF partners.

68. The OIE provided comments on STDF/PG/516 entitled "An Integrated Approach for Capacity Building to Control Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) towards the Establishment of an FMD-Free Zone in Tanzania". It encouraged Tanzania to pursue the Secretariat's suggestion to apply for a PPG and offered to collaborate closely with the applicant.

(b) Discussion of PPG applications

STDF/PPG/447 – Development of a project proposal to address SPS capacity needs focusing on the national food safety system in Tajikistan

69. The Working Group approved this PPG subject to fulfilment of a few conditions. It recommended that close coordination amongst all relevant national agencies, mainly Ministries responsible for Agriculture, Health and Trade, should be pursued during implementation of the PPG. In addition, the international organizations active in Tajikistan in the area of food safety should be consulted to avoid duplication of efforts. The resultant proposal should complement and build on past, on-going and planned food safety initiatives in the country. The Working Group also requested the applicant to explain the reference to the IPPC in the application, despite its apparent focus on food safety issues. Finally, it suggested that the applicant should consider implementation by an international organization. The FAO was suggested as a potential implementing agency, given its leading role in food safety capacity building. Alternatively, ITC was proposed, given its involvement in the development of the National Food Safety Strategy.

STDF/PPG/498 – Support for the implementation of SPS measures for agricultural exports of the Republic of Guinea

70. The Working Group noted that problem identification in this PPG is not sufficiently clear. It was difficult to understand whether the PPG aims to address only food safety or plant health or both areas. Existing evaluations/assessments of needs were unclear as well as the scope of the assessment planned. It was unclear which would be the targeted value chains. The Working Group recommended the applicant to revise and resubmit the application, taking into account the issues mentioned above, for consideration by the STDF at a future meeting.

5 IMPROVED CAPACITY OF BENEFICIARIES OF STDF PROJECTS

(a) Discussion of project applications

STDF/PG/495 – Regional project for the accreditation of laboratory diagnostic tests for animal diseases

71. The Working Group decided not to support this application, based on comments provided by the OIE at the meeting. The Working Group acknowledged that the project can contribute to improving market access for live animals and animal products within and outside the region, but decided that the project document would benefit from some further clarifications in order for the Working Group to so consider the application favourably.

72. In particular, a revised application should consider/review: (i) additional details regarding the current status of national quality management systems (in each beneficiary country); (ii) more information on how the certification process will be performed in each country; (iii) the amount requested for the purchase of minor laboratory materials, which should not exceed 10% of the total amount requested from the STDF; and (iv) the possibility of establishing a project steering committee including participation of FAO, OIE and PAHO.

STDF/PG/462 – Operationalization of the Scientific Affairs and Food Control Directorates of the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) of the Gambia

73. The Working Group did not approve this project application for funding by the STDF. Members noted that the direct link between the operationalization of the Scientific Affairs and Food Control Directorate and its potential impact on market access for Gambian exports was not particularly strong in the proposal. Additionally, some members cautioned that the project was overly ambitious in its objective. The Working Group suggested that the applicant contact FAO to explore either re-scoping the project in order to comply with STDF grant criteria or to seek alternative funding opportunities with other agencies/donors.

STDF/PG/504 – Global electronic trade facilitation: Enhancing safe trade in plants and plant products through innovation

74. The Working Group expressed support for this project in general, but decided to defer it to an "ad referendum" approval of members, after the IPPC Secretariat provides clarifications on the issues and comments raised by members. These issues included: (i) if and how the project is distinct from IPPC's core activities; in this regard some members referred to paragraph 39 of the STDF Operational Rules, (ii) the cost recovery mechanism of the system once operational; and (iii) how the proposed E-certification system will fit with other electronic certification systems and how compatibility with other systems can be ensured.

75. The World Bank also made several comments in an effort to further strengthen the proposal based on its experience in a similar project in Central America (which aims at simplification of formalities for import/export). It suggested that the project team in Central America could share its experiences with the IPPC Secretariat, mainly in view of implementation of the "E-phyto pilot" in Central America. In addition to reiterating the above-mentioned issues, the World Bank highlighted the importance of inclusiveness and a wide representation in the E-Phyto technical groups at national level, including not only representatives of ministries of Agriculture, but also those from the Single Window agencies.

76. The Chairperson concluded that members expect from the IPPC Secretariat either a revised proposal or an addendum to the standing proposal, which includes the requested clarifications. The Secretariat will circulate a revised proposal/addendum, providing a one-month comment period. If no objections are received by the deadline, the project would be considered approved. Alternatively, in the event that objections are received, the IPPC Secretariat would be invited to resubmit the proposal for discussion in the Working Group in October 2015.

STDF/PG/496 – National phytosanitary service enhancement project in Armenia

77. The Working Group did not approve this application. Members noted in particular that it would benefit from an update to reflect relevant recent changes in the national regulatory framework in Armenia, which affect the status and the scope of Armenia's State Service for Food Safety (i.e. the applicant). The Working Group welcomed a revised application with updated information on the national regulatory framework for consideration at the next Working Group in October 2015.

STDF/PG/502 – COSAVE: Regional Strengthening for the Implementation of Phytosanitary Measures and Market Access

78. The Working Group welcomed and approved this project, subject to a revision of its logical framework (in particular in terms of expected results and specific activities to achieve each result). Measurable indicators, appropriate to monitor and evaluate results achieved at country and regional levels, should be further defined, prior to commencement of the project. In addition, risks and assumptions should be further elaborated.

STDF/PG/515 - Honey Chain Traceability in Guatemala

79. The Working Group recognized that the application responds to a specific need and that it could be replicated for other products, and in other countries, and decided to approve this project for funding subject to: (i) further detail regarding the in-kind contribution; (ii) small adjustments in the logical framework; and (iii) submission of a short document on current work in Guatemala on implementation of general and/or specific traceability systems.

80. The Working Group also recommended exploring whether Farmforce¹², an integrated mobile platform created and developed by the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, could be used/customized for the project, instead of developing a new software package for electronic traceability.

(b) Decisions on financing and prioritization

81. No decision on prioritization was required.

(c) Overview of implementation of on-going projects

82. The Secretariat referred to document STDF/WG/Mar15/Overview, which contains an overview of the implementation status of all on-going projects. The Working Group approved no cost extensions for the following projects: STDF/PG/242 (twelve months), STDF/PG/321 (six months), and STDF/PG/337 (twelve months).

83. The Working Group agreed to evaluate project STDF/PG/328 entitled "Beyond Compliance: Integrated Systems Approach for Pest Risk Management in Southeast Asia".

6 OTHER BUSINESS

84. The Secretariat reminded members of the half-day meeting on the review of STDF's Operational Rules (members only) at 15:00.

85. The meeting was closed at 13:30.

II. MEETING ON REVISION OF STDF OPERATIONAL RULES

86. The Secretariat summarized the activities to date. It referred to the discussions in the STDF Policy Committee, which had agreed to continue the review process of the STDF Operational Rules with an informal meeting on 23 March (among those members who had initially provided comments, i.e. FAO, OIE, WTO, EC and USA), and subsequently in a targeted Working Group meeting (members only) in the afternoon of 25 March 2015.

87. Members engaged in a rich discussion on the need to revise the STDF Operational Rules, after which the Chairperson identified three areas for further discussion: (i) roles and responsibilities of the Policy Committee and Working Group; (ii) procedure and criteria for the review of projects; and (iii) distinction between ex-post impact and final evaluations.

88. Members agreed to establish an e-working group. This group was tasked to reach consensus on these areas and to circulate a consolidated draft text prior to the next meeting in October for consideration by the entire Working Group (members only). Members wishing to be part of the e-working group were requested to inform the Secretariat by the deadline of 10 April 2015. The Secretariat would subsequently inform members about the composition of the group.

89. The meeting was closed at 17:45.

¹² <http://www.farmforce.com>

**STDF WORKING GROUP
24-25 MARCH 2015**

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