

**STDF WORKING GROUP  
13-15 OCTOBER 2020  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

## **1 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

1. The STDF Working Group met virtually on 13, 14 and 15 October from 14.00 to 17.00 (Geneva time), using Zoom. The meeting was chaired by Ms Julie Emond, First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the WTO.

2. She welcomed participants, explained the modalities of the meeting and encouraged to intervene and interact as much as possible to recreate the spirit of a presential Working Group. She informed members that ITC, CABI, UNIDO, IICA, COLEACP, OIRSA, EIF, Food Industry Asia and Michigan State University were attending the meeting as observers. Finally, she presented the agenda, which was adopted by members without amendments.

3. [All presentations](#) and an [overview of relevant COVID-19 activities and initiatives](#) from the STDF partnership is available on the STDF website. A list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

## **2 OPERATION OF THE FACILITY**

### **2.1 Selection of vice-chairperson (2021) of STDF Working Group**

4. The chairperson informed members of the proposed deadline of 30 October 2020 to submit expressions of interest for the position of vice-chairperson of the Working Group in 2021 (and hence chairperson in 2022). She also reminded that Mr Tom Heilandt from the Codex Secretariat will become chairperson of the Working Group in 2021.

### **2.2 Selection of new SPS experts from developing countries (2021-2022)**

5. The chairperson informed that the term of three developing country experts (i.e. Dr Sanjay Dave, Mr Rogério Pereira Da Silva and Dr Ameha Sebsibe Woldemariam) who served the STDF in 2019-2020 was coming to an end. She reminded that the new chairperson of the Working Group will select three new experts to serve the STDF in 2021-2022, in accordance with the procedure laid out in the STDF Operational Rules.

6. The Secretariat invited members to submit their recommendations until 30 October 2020 and encouraged to submit candidates who have the nationality of a Least Developed Country (LDC) or Other Low-Income Country (OLIC).

### **2.3 STDF Policy Committee – next meeting and selection of donor representatives**

7. The chairperson invited the Working Group to consider organizing a meeting of the STDF Policy Committee. Members tasked the Secretariat to organize a virtual meeting in the first quarter of 2021, in accordance with STDF's 2020-2021 Work Plan (para. 4.2).

8. The chairperson reminded donors to inform the Secretariat which donors will serve as representatives in the STDF Policy Committee in 2021-2022. Members agreed on a deadline of 30 October 2020 to inform the Secretariat.

### **2.4 2019 Annual Report**

9. The chairperson referred to the STDF webinar held on 11 June 2020 to launch the [STDF 2019 Annual Report](#). The Working Group formally adopted the Annual Report, in accordance with the Operational Rules.

10. The Secretariat responded, through the chat modality, to Sweden's comment on the inclusion of project implementing organizations and budget information in the report, clarifying that this information was included on pages 8-9 of the report.

## 2.5 Staffing and financial situation

11. The Secretariat summarized the financial situation of the STDF, reminding members of the STDF Trust Fund's negative balance of US\$784,726. The Secretariat also clarified that additional contributions, totalling US\$2,190,000, are still expected in 2020 under existing contribution agreements. Practically, this meant that the Working Group had approximately US\$1.4 million available to allocate to new projects and PPGs under agenda item 4.

12. The Secretariat alerted members that total expected contributions in 2020 currently amount to US\$4,758,215 (or 68% of STDF's target level of funding of US\$7 million in the new STDF Strategy), and that additional resources will be needed to fully implement the new Strategy and 2020-2021 Work Plan. The Secretariat was actively following up with donors regarding new, increased and ideally multi-annual contributions to the STDF trust fund.

13. The Secretariat explained the STDF staffing situation, reminding members that in June 2019 the Policy Committee agreed for the WTO to recruit two new staff, e.g. a COMMS and a MEL officer. In view of the financial situation, the Secretariat informed members that the recruitment process was put on hold for the time being, until new financial contributions would become available. It also alerted members that a lack of resources in the areas of COMMS and MEL would make it difficult to fully implement the STDF Strategy and Work Plan (see also the Risk Matrix in the Strategy).

14. The Secretariat recognized the excellent work of the entire STDF team during the pandemic and thanked Ms Elena Immambocus (STDF communications consultant), whose contract with the STDF was coming to an end, for her excellent support to the Facility over the years.

15. Sweden informed members that SIDA is in the final stages of assessing a renewal of its contribution to the STDF Trust Fund for the period 2021-2024 and will inform the STDF of its decision soon.

## 2.6 COVID-19 pandemic - STDF response

16. The Secretariat provided an update on STDF's response to manage the risks related to COVID-19, noting that an updated version of the [STDF risk management report](#) would be issued in November. While risk mitigation measures have been taken within projects and PPGs, some delays on delivery and disbursements are expected in 2020. In addition to responding to specific challenges faced in some projects (e.g. web access, connection difficulties, challenges to carry out lab training remotely), other projects identified new opportunities linked to the pandemic and cost-savings on travel. Examples included development of new online training resources to enhance reach, results and sustainability, and development of online tools for M&E, including baseline data collection.

## 2.7 Implementation of recommendations of the External Evaluation (Action Plan)

17. The Secretariat reminded members that in November 2019 the Working Group approved an Action Plan to implement 16 recommendations of the External Evaluation accepted by the Policy Committee. Members at the time also agreed that this Action Plan should be a "living" document to monitor progress in implementation in future Working Group meetings. Due to time constraints, the Working Group was not able to review progress in April 2020 and decided to postpone this item to the meeting in October.

18. The Secretariat updated members on each recommendation's implementation status. Out of 16 recommendations, five were reported as implemented, nine as ongoing, while implementation of two recommendations had not yet started. The Secretariat reminded members that several actions to implement recommendations can only be fully implemented with new COMMS and MEL resources. Attention was drawn particularly to implementation of recommendations 3(iii), 4(i), 4(ii), and 4(v), which is the responsibility of the Working Group.

19. Members focused the discussion on implementation of recommendation 4(v) and how to increase participation of developing countries in the STDF Working Group. Based on comments

received (including from Ireland, FAO and The Netherlands), members tasked the Secretariat to prepare a short background paper on participation of developing countries and regional organizations and networks in the STDF for discussion at a targeted Working Group meeting in December 2020. The Secretariat indicated that it can circulate this paper by the end of November.

## **2.8 Communications (COMMS)**

### ***Overview of COMMS activities***

20. The Secretariat updated members on the latest activities, including: (i) a short survey to the Working Group in July covering visibility, quality and usefulness of STDF's communications efforts; (ii) STDF webinars and other events; (iii) news updates via #STDF on WTO social media, as well as STDF news items; and (iv) the 2019 Annual Report, reflecting STDF's refreshed brand. The report, published on STDF's website on 11 June 2020, featured in STDF and WTO news items and was shared widely on social media and via members' networks. A new STDF film highlighting the importance of investing in safe trade for developing countries is under production and will be launched by the end of 2020.

### ***Update of STDF COMMS Plan***

21. Ms Elena Immambocus (STDF communications consultant) presented the proposed STDF COMMS Plan, which provides a foundation for members to consolidate progress already made and expand on key recommendations of the External Evaluation. The new COMMS Plan builds on the previous plan (2016) and supports the delivery of the new STDF Strategy and MEL Framework. The new plan aims to raise the awareness of STDF's global partnership, promote uptake of STDF knowledge products and project support in developing countries, with a greater focus on gender equality. It includes the latest guidelines on STDF branding and project communications, a toolkit to help beneficiaries to understand what STDF offers on knowledge work and funding, and a forward-looking calendar to enhance members' engagement. An informal STDF communications group is proposed to support STDF's communications work and help leverage resources within the partnership. Finally, Ms Immambocus took the opportunity to thank members for the time working together in the STDF.

22. The chairperson and members shared their appreciation for her excellent work in improving communications within the STDF partnership. The Working Group approved the STDF COMMS Plan, taking into account a few minor changes proposed by members. The Secretariat indicated it will finalize the COMMS Plan in the coming weeks for publication on the STDF website.

## **2.9 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)**

### ***Ex-post evaluation of STDF projects***

23. The Secretariat informed members on the status of ex-post evaluations of STDF projects. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, evaluations are undertaken remotely. The evaluation of the PCE facilitators project ([STDF/PG/401](#)) is ongoing. Two evaluations are being contracted and will start shortly: (i) Regional feed and food safety programme in Latin America ([STDF/PG/345](#)); and (ii) Strengthening the SPS system in Comoros ([STDF/PG/242](#)). In April 2020, the Working Group agreed to evaluate two additional projects, namely: (i) Improving compliance with SPS measures to boost oilseed exports in Myanmar ([STDF/PG/486](#)); and (ii) Rolling out phytosanitary measures to expand market access for the COSAVE region ([STDF/PG/502](#)). The Secretariat will contact the Working Group in the coming weeks to identify suitable candidates for these evaluations.

### ***In-depth assessment on cross cutting issue (2021)***

24. The Secretariat reminded members that the 2020-2021 Work Plan includes provision and budget (US\$50,000) for an in-depth study on one cross-cutting issue relevant for STDF's knowledge work and projects. The STDF meta-evaluation of STDF projects (2018) proposed a study to deepen analysis and dissemination of lessons learned and good practice within specific themes (e.g. gender, poverty reduction). The External Evaluation (2019) proposed additional work on climate change and environment, as well as gender. Some donors had previously suggested to undertake an in-depth analysis of gender mainstreaming across STDF's workstreams, linked to the Australia-funded study on SPS issues, gender and trade by Spencer Henson.

25. Several members (i.e. Sweden, WTO, Sanjay Dave, EC, UK, WBG and FAO) supported the Secretariat's proposal to undertake a study on gender in 2021. The Secretariat agreed to share draft terms of reference for the proposed study with the Working Group for comments. Some members recommended that climate change and environment should be considered as topics in the future as well.

### **New STDF MEL Framework**

26. The chairperson provided some background on the development of the new MEL Framework, and thanked members of the small MEL group (FAO, OIE, IPPC, Canada, UK/SITFA, ITC and Sanjay Dave) who had contributed their time and expertise to the process. She noted that over 45 participants attended a virtual meeting to discuss the draft MEL Framework on 24 September 2020, with valuable feedback and comments received.

27. The Secretariat thanked members for their comments during the meeting on 24 September and referred to the Secretariat's compilation document, with all comments received and responses. The Secretariat presented the key components of the new MEL Framework, which builds on the new STDF Strategy and recommendations of the External Evaluation. The purpose of the MEL Framework is to ensure accountability, improve operations and promote learning. It includes a Results Matrix (a living Excel chart), which includes the essential elements of the logical framework and the detail (indicators, measurement frequency, responsibilities, targets, definitions, etc.) needed to operationalize MEL. The Secretariat explained how improved data management processes are essential to rolling out the MEL Framework.

28. Several members (i.e. Canada, EU, FAO, WTO, WBG, Sweden, OIRSA, the Netherlands and the United States) commended the work on the MEL Framework and agreed with the Secretariat that a digital MEL companion tool would be valuable to improve reporting and transparency on STDF workstreams. The WBG shared experiences on how software for its Trade Facilitation Support Programme (TFSP) works in practice and emphasized it is a valuable tool for M&E.

29. The Working Group approved the MEL Framework and approved an additional budget to procure an off-the-shelf (customizable) cloud-based digital MEL companion tool to deliver innovation and improvements in capturing, managing and reporting data, and information on progress, results and lessons, across STDF's workstreams. The approved budget will cover the development and testing of the new MEL tool in 2021, as well as operational and maintenance costs from 2022 to 2024. The Secretariat indicated that the new MEL Framework will be finalized and formatted and published on the STDF website in the coming weeks.

## **3 KNOWLEDGE WORK**

### **3.1 Public Private Partnerships**

30. The Secretariat briefed members on the ongoing PPP work. Building on recommendations of the External Evaluation, a PPP Practitioner Group was established to support and improve the planning, delivery and dissemination of STDF's work on PPPs across relevant knowledge and project work, and to strengthen linkages and synergies with members' work, and benefit from their expertise. The first meeting of the group was held virtually on 30 September 2020, during which the Secretariat introduced a concept note. Up to 26 participants joined the group and welcomed the opportunity to share experiences. They agreed that future meetings could start with a targeted presentation. The second meeting of the PPP group will be scheduled in November and the OIE will make a keynote presentation on its ongoing work on PPPs.

31. The Secretariat invited members to share additional examples of PPPs that strengthen SPS capacity to facilitate safe trade through a [call for case studies](#), which had been issued in July 2020 through a questionnaire and online (Survey Monkey). The survey can still be accessed and completed via the [STDF PPP webpage](#). Additional cases will be collected through the network of the PPP Practitioner Group.

32. The Secretariat also drew attention to another survey, issued in collaboration with UNIDO and IICA in February 2020, focused on the use of voluntary Third-Party Assurance programmes (vTPAs) in the food safety area. This survey is based on ongoing work on a draft guidance document on vTPAs in Codex (CCFICS), as well as a previous academic survey on this topic by Mrs Tetty Havinga

for GFSI and is linked to the regional STDF pilot projects on vTPA in West Africa and Central America. The Secretariat is working with UNIDO to report on 64 responses received to this survey, including a data story to present the key findings. Initial findings will be presented at the thematic session on vTPAs in the margins of the upcoming WTO SPS Committee meeting (3 November).

33. The IPPC Secretariat informed members on ongoing work related to vTPAs in the phytosanitary area and invited members to participate in an [IPPC webinar](#) on 20 October 2020 on Authorization of Entities to Perform Phytosanitary Actions.

### 3.2 P-IMA framework

34. The Secretariat introduced STDF's framework on [Prioritizing SPS Investments for Market Access](#) and briefed members on work carried out by a consultant (Spencer Henson) to develop online modules to support training on the P-IMA framework. In light of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, the Secretariat underscored the importance of equipping interested countries to receive training on P-IMA in a virtual format. This is also expected to lower the cost involved with P-IMA's in-country application.

35. The Secretariat provided an update on an STDF project which rolls out the P-IMA framework in five COMESA member countries, with training being provided to regional facilitators. Country reports for Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya were completed and awaiting validation by national authorities. The Bahamas recently completed a virtual training on P-IMA, funded by the Bahamas Agriculture, Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA). Reportedly, it will use the results to inform development of an SPS strategy for the country. The application is expected to feed into a PPG, requested by CAHFSA, to support rolling out the P-IMA framework in the Caribbean.

36. The Secretariat will organize the first meeting of the P-IMA Practitioners Group on 11 November 2020. Upon Sweden's request, the Secretariat clarified that the aim of this group will be to share results and experiences and identify opportunities to collaborate around the framework. Several members (i.e. Mirian Bueno, Rogerio Pereira da Silva and USDA) voiced their support and shared positive feedback related to the P-IMA framework. The IPPC Secretariat highlighted the [complementarity between the Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation \(PCE\) and P-IMA](#) and encouraged countries that have successfully implemented the PCE tool to make use of P-IMA.

### 3.3 Good Regulatory Practice

37. The Secretariat reported briefly on ongoing work related to Good Regulatory Practice (GRP). A revised version of the GRP guidance document will be shared with the GRP peer review group (OIE, FAO, WBG, IFC, WTO, US, OECD and ISO) for feedback and comments in the coming weeks. Other members with an interest to be involved in the work of this group were requested to contact the Secretariat. The Secretariat aims to convene the group towards the end of 2020 to discuss the document for finalization in early 2021. An STDF event on GRP will be scheduled in 2021, in accordance with the 2020-2021 Work Plan.

### 3.4 SPS electronic certification

38. The Secretariat provided information on STDF's work on SPS eCert, which has gained additional momentum in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and keeping agri-food products moving across borders and global supply chains. On 24 June, the Secretariat organized and chaired a second meeting of the [Electronic Certification Advisory Committee \(ECAC\)](#), attended by 21 participants from nine international organizations (including STDF partners). A keynote presentation was provided by Mr Philippe Loopuyt from the European Commission on the newly established connection between the ePhyto system and the EU Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES). Key points discussed related to: (i) existing capacity and experiences of countries currently using the ePhyto Solution for electronic certification in other SPS areas; and (ii) compatibility and interoperability between different systems.

39. The Secretariat briefed members on [STDF's webinar](#) on "ePhyto: Solutions on Safe Trade in Plants and Plant Products" on 23 September 2020, attended by over 260 participants. Panelists agreed on the need for: (i) further harmonization, particularly also for food safety and veterinary certificates; (ii) integration with other electronic systems, such as Single Window, Customs,

Blockchains, etc; and (iii) further collaboration between the international standard settings bodies and with other international agencies active in the area of trade-related electronic certification.

40. The IPPC Secretariat and WBG underscored the importance of enhancing synergies and collaboration to reduce trade cost and avoid duplication, by further building on STDF's investment in the ePhyto system. They highlighted that the STDF is an excellent platform to promote such collaboration, bringing together the standard-setting bodies, donors and other SPS organizations.

### 3.5 Information exchange

#### ***Impact of COVID-19 on SPS capacity development***

41. The Secretariat recalled the [STDF webinar](#) on 26 May 2020 on COVID-19 responses of STDF partners and invited members to share new information on their COVID-19 experiences as well as opportunities, particularly for SPS capacity development. The Secretariat also referred to the [STDF COVID-19 response webpage](#), which includes useful links to COVID-related work across STDF's network.

42. The WBG informed members of funding made available by the organization to respond to COVID-19 and facilitate recovery in developing countries. It highlighted the role of trade facilitation and electronic certification as critical for free movement of medical and food products across borders. Under the STDF umbrella, the WBG also collaborates with the IPPC Secretariat in transforming the PCE tool into a virtual device, including through a pilot project in Nepal. The WBG welcomed opportunities to engage the Secretariat and explore similar collaboration for the P-IMA tool.

43. The IPPC Secretariat concurred with the WBG and noted that it is exploring the possibility to link the virtual PCE tool to the ePhyto system, hosted by UNICC. It mentioned that in response to COVID-19 all IPPC meetings are held virtually, including capacity development workshops. Within projects, it is re-allocating travel budget lines towards the development of eLearning modules. The IPPC is also exploring virtual meetings in the area of standards development and may hold the next CPM meeting in 2021 virtually. The IPPC is working on guidelines on protection of plant health inspectors during the COVID-19 crisis. More information is available on the [IPPC Secretariat COVID-19 page](#).

44. The FAO noted it had moved all meetings to electronic platforms. With regard to project implementation, projects with strong local partners were proving to be more resilient and continued to perform relatively well. The FAO underscored that there is no evidence of COVID-19 being transmitted through food and food trade. It reminded members of joined policy briefs and other guidance materials produced in partnership with the WHO and encouraged members to further disseminate these materials widely. More information is available on FAO's dedicated [webpage](#).

45. The Codex Secretariat noted that the Codex Alimentarius Commission is currently being held virtually. Discussions on how to ensure continuity of Codex's normative work and meetings in 2021 is ongoing, in close consultation with FAO and WHO legal departments. Although no official Codex meetings were held in 2020, electronic working groups established by technical committees are currently working on technical documents. More information is available on Codex's dedicated [COVID-19 webpage](#).

46. The United States (USDA) highlighted opportunities in terms of increased availability of experts and officials to provide virtual training and noted an increased interest in its SPS-related eLearning modules. Virtual trainings allowed more participants to benefit. While the United States observed challenges to ensure safety on the ground for food business operators, it also noted an increased interest in the topic of food safety more generally since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

47. The WHO drew attention to its [COVID-19 dedicated webpage](#), which included tools and other information on nutrition and food safety.

48. The WTO highlighted its [COVID-19 and world trade webpage](#). While some WTO Members imposed restrictive measures at the start of the pandemic, currently members mainly notify trade facilitating measures, including related to electronic certification, flexibility on packaging and labelling, etc. The WTO also mentioned it is updating a paper on SPS and TBT COVID-19 related measures, which was previously issued in May 2020.

49. The ITC briefed members on initiatives monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs and noted response measures in planned and ongoing training activities (video conferences, webinars and eLearning). A joint ISO-ITC webinar on COVID-19 was held in June 2020 and both organizations are currently developing a Q&A booklet to address the 800+ questions that were raised during the webinar. ITC also shared a link to its [COVID-19 dedicated page](#) and to its [Action Plan to support SMEs during the crisis](#).

50. COLEACP highlighted activities to support market access and food safety compliance in the private sector. This included raising awareness on how to mitigate risks related to COVID-19 and training on food safety management using eLearning modules. It noted a shift towards electronic certification and export documentation and highlighted the increased relevance of the ePhyto Solution. COLEACP also provides support to alleviate the economic impact of COVID-19 on businesses, including through cash and business management. More examples of COLEACP support can be found on its dedicated [website](#).

51. Through the chat modality, OIRSA informed that its [website](#) includes good practice guidelines in different areas for SPS authorities and producers to prevent COVID-19 transmission in work areas.

### ***New/emerging SPS initiatives/issues***

52. The chairperson noted that several members had already shared information on new and emerging initiatives under the previous item.

53. Both FAO and WHO referred to their [joint Food Control System Assessment Tool](#), which is now available in most UN languages. Through the chat modality, FAO also shared a link to a [new study](#) on international harmonization of pesticide residue limits with Codex standards (Case Study on Rice). The FAO noted that its Committee on Agriculture had approved the development of a new FAO food safety strategy.

54. Through the chat modality, the Secretariat announced its participation in the SPS Committee thematic session on vTPA programmes on 3 November. It also informed members that it was organizing a series of STDF outreach webinars for beneficiaries in Africa, Asia/Pacific and Latin America/Caribbean, involving STDF's current and former developing country experts in these regions.

### **3.6 Topics for future STDF work**

55. The Secretariat reminded members that given its limited resources and heavy workload additional thematic work is currently not considered feasible. The annotated agenda captured all the topics previously raised by members that could be further discussed in the future, if resources would become available.

56. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat also requested feedback from members on eligibility of funding applications focused on antimicrobial resistance (AMR), as it had recently received questions from potential applicants in Belize and Brazil. Several members voiced their support for AMR-linked initiatives, noting that it would be a forward-looking topic, but also considered that future projects should include a trade link for the STDF to be able to fund an application. At this stage, it was not clear whether Belize was planning to export poultry to markets that would require AMR surveillance in the near future. IICA mentioned that it supports countries in the development and implementation of AMR surveillance plans. Canada suggested for Belize to contact IICA to explore this issue at a regional level. Mirian Bueno (developing country expert) noted that AMR was currently being discussed in Codex's AMR Task Force and that codes and guidance were under development. The Codex Secretariat suggested that Belize participate in its AMR Task Force.

## **4 PPGS AND PROJECTS**

### **4.1 Overview of ongoing and completed projects and PPGs**

57. The chairperson referred to document STDF/WG/Oct20/Overview, which provides an overview of the implementation status of ongoing projects and PPGs. Members raised no questions or comments.

## 4.2 Overview of new project and PPG applications not tabled for consideration

58. The Secretariat briefly introduced document STDF/WG/Oct20/Review, which includes (in Tables 2 and 3) the applications not tabled for consideration at this meeting (and the reasons for not tabling them). Members raised no further questions or comments.

59. The IPPC Secretariat, supported by Sweden, highlighted a possible situation of conflict of interest, namely when an organization reviews a project or PPG for which it is also proposed as the implementing entity. In response, the Secretariat drew attention to para. 83 of the STDF Operational Rules, which stipulates that "members shall declare conflicts of interest and shall not review, approve or prioritize applications for which such conflicts exist." In addition, "conflict of interest shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the chairperson of the Working Group". In practice, the chairperson always indicates if a conflict of interest exists - before consideration of specific projects or PPGs in the Working Group.

60. Besides these rules, the involvement of STDF partners is generally considered fundamental to the conception, development and implementation of projects (as stipulated in para. 39 of the Operational Rules).

## 4.3 Consideration of PPG applications

61. The chairperson clarified that she will identify conflicts of interest, prior to considering PPGs and projects, where appropriate, and request the relevant organization(s) not to intervene in the discussion. She requested the Secretariat to provide brief introductions on comments received in writing from members prior to the meeting, before "opening the floor".

### ***STDF/PPG/753 – Latin American Residue Mitigation through the Promotion of Biopesticides***

62. The Working Group approved this PPG application, subject to some revisions. Members concurred with the Secretariat's review and acknowledged the multi-stakeholder, interdisciplinary and regional approach of the project, as well as the potential for synergies with the STDF ongoing projects on biopesticides in Asia and Africa. Members also provided several recommendations to strengthen the work under this PPG, notably in terms of: (i) clarifying the language and definitions used in the proposal regarding the different types of pesticides; (ii) including more information on ongoing regional work; (iii) references to relevant ISPMs; and (iv) budget review. The resultant project should define and provide more detail on the goal, objective, outputs and activities.

### ***STDF/PPG/755 - Enhancing seed trade in the Asia Pacific region through phytosanitary compliance and public private partnerships***

63. The Working Group approved this PPG application, subject to some revisions. Members acknowledged the multi-stakeholder and regional approach of the proposal and welcomed the public-private collaboration approach envisaged. Members recommended the applicant to strengthen the application, including by: (i) clarifying the language and definitions used regarding the type of seeds traded; (ii) providing detail on relevant work in the region; and (iii) making reference to relevant ISPMs. More specific comments were received related to particular activities, which the Secretariat will communicate directly to the applicant.

### ***STDF/PPG/764 – Diagnostic study of phytosanitary challenges in regional horticulture value chains in Africa***

64. The Working Group did not approve this PPG application. While members noted that the PPG is worthwhile and interesting, they considered that the application should focus primarily on building capacity to meet relevant ISPMs in the horticulture sector. They also noted that the application should further explain how the results of the PCE tool in Kenya, and of other on-going and completed development projects, will be reflected. In conclusion, the Working Group recommended that the application be revised and resubmitted. Before submission, applicants are encouraged to further discuss the concept with relevant development partners, including COLEACP.



***STDF/PPG/765 – An ISO 17025 accredited mobile laboratory for food safety testing in the SADC region***

65. The Working Group approved this application, subject to the submission of letters of support from Eswatini and Lesotho. It agreed to fund only one 3D printed model instead of two, so that the budget would remain under the US\$ 50,000 limit. By removing the expense linked to the second 3D model, the total estimated cost of the PPG would be US\$ 49,069. In general, members agreed with the Secretariat's review, noting that this was an interesting and innovative concept. The Secretariat explained that the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) was a government entity, based in Pretoria, which had received funding from bilateral donors and international agencies such as the Government of Finland and UNIDO. In response to a question from Sweden, the Secretariat noted that it would request further evidence of CSIR's record of financial probity before contracting this PPG. The WBG voiced its support, while noting that alternative options in providing regulatory controls, such as field test kits or expanding public or private lab capacity, should also be assessed. Sanjay Dave (developing country expert) noted that India had found it very helpful and cost-effective to do preliminary screenings with mobile laboratories before sending samples to a traditional laboratory for detailed analysis. India was currently exploring a special scheme with a simpler procedural format in order to obtain ISO-17025 accreditation for these types of labs.

***STDF/PPG/767 – Feasibility study on implementation of zoning as means to control infectious diseases in aquaculture in Peru***

66. The Working Group approved this PPG application, subject to revisions. Members agreed with the Secretariat's review and recommended that work under the PPG should: (i) provide more detail on the trade-related SPS issues to be addressed; (ii) review the species and diseases to be addressed; and (iii) review the key tasks foreseen and the estimated budget. The Secretariat will take these recommendations into account in formulating the PPG's terms of reference.

***STDF/PPG/773 – SPS needs assessment for private and public actors in the Burundian horticultural sector***

67. The Working Group did not approve this PPG application and invited the applicant to revise and resubmit the application. Although several members supported the application, it lacked necessary support from the relevant public sector stakeholders, which demonstrated a lack of ownership and dialogue. According to the IPPC Secretariat, Burundi has an outdated plant health legal framework and the FAO legal office could potentially assist in this regard. The United States viewed that the PPG should focus primarily on compliance with international standards rather than specific EU requirements. COLEACP explained how its own assessment tool provides a consultative process and quick assessment of priority needs, which could be applied prior to resubmission. The Secretariat will explore interest in organizing a short webinar for members on COLEACP's assessment tool.

**4.4 Consideration of PG applications*****STDF/PG/694 – Enhancing Trade Through Regulatory Harmonisation and Biopesticide-Based Residue Mitigation in the SADC Region***

68. The Working Group endorsed this application, recognizing its multi-stakeholder, interdisciplinary and regional approach, and its potential to develop synergies with STDF's ongoing projects on biopesticides in Asia and Latin America. Recommendations to further strengthen the project included clarifying the type of production being promoted, inclusion of a definition of biopesticides and highlighting the importance of science-based regulation in the project. Some members suggested revisions to the project's M&E framework and to clarify linkages to relevant ISPMs.

***STDF/PG/577 – Improving coordination to support management of cadmium levels in cocoa in Latin America and the Caribbean***

69. The Working Group endorsed this application, which addresses a sensitive issue gaining increasing attention at the international level, including in Codex, and calls for a coordinated regional solution. Members recommended the applicant to: (i) confirm how participation of Trinidad & Tobago in the project will be financed; (ii) provide letters of support from all the relevant stakeholders; (iii) revise the logical framework and include measurable indicators at purpose and output level; (iv) provide more detail on some budget lines (such as "Project Coordination, Monitoring and

Evaluation"); and (v) provide more clarity on the proposed implementation modalities. They also recommended that the project: (i) develops guidance on how information among project partners will be shared; (ii) builds communication channels between research institutes and food safety authorities; (iii) considers developing standardized protocols for laboratory capacity; and (iv) includes a plan for coordination and communication with existing donor-supported initiatives. Before contracting the proposal, the Secretariat will work with the applicant to finalize the project document, taking into the recommendations above.

#### **STDF/PG/754 – Piloting the use of Third-Party Assurance (TPA) Programme in Viet Nam**

70. The Working Group did not endorse this application. While members noted that the idea behind the project is worthwhile and timely, linking to CCFICS work and the vTPA pilots in Central America and West Africa, they raised substantial concerns over project development, lack of ownership and complementarity to other larger food safety projects in Vietnam (i.e. SAFEGRO and IFC's project). In revising and resubmitting the application, members recommended the applicant, inter alia, to: (i) explain how Viet Nam's food safety authorities have been involved in project development and how they will be engaged in implementation; (ii) explain how the project complements and builds on other relevant projects in the country; (iii) review the budget which is considered very high; (iv) provide further detail on COVID-19 risk mitigation measures; and (v) provide more detail on the commodities and regions in Vietnam that will be covered.

#### **4.5 Decision on prioritization and funding of new project applications**

71. The Secretariat clarified that the STDF has sufficient resources to fund the two projects endorsed, and that no prioritization was needed.

### **5 OTHER BUSINESS**

72. The chairperson thanked the three outgoing developing country experts (Dr Sanjay Dave, Mr Rogério Pereira Da Silva and Dr Ameha Sebsibe Woldemariam) for their excellent work and support to the STDF in 2019-2020.

73. The Secretariat reminded members of the deadline of 30 October 2020 for: (i) members' submission of recommendations for the selection of three new developing country experts; (ii) expressions of interest from members for the position of vice-chairperson of the Working Group; and (iii) donors to inform the Secretariat on representation in the Policy Committee. The Secretariat also reminded that it will format and finalize the approved COMMS Plan and MEL Framework for publication on the STDF website in December 2020. As a first activity under the new MEL Framework, a survey on the Working Group will be circulated next week. The Secretariat will continue to update the Action Plan on Implementation of Recommendations from the External Evaluation and prepare a short background note on participation of developing countries in the Working Group. It expected this note to be circulated by the end of November for discussion by members in a targeted meeting in December 2020.

74. The Secretariat informed members that the meetings of the Working Group in 2021 will take place on 30-31 March/1 April and on 19-21 October. Finally, the Secretariat expressed its deep appreciation for the work of the outgoing developing country experts, and thanked Ms Julie Emond, on behalf of all members, for effectively chairing the virtual STDF Working Group meetings in 2020.

### **6 CLOSURE**

75. The chairperson thanked participants for their engagement and closed at 16:56.

**ANNEX 1**  
**STDF WORKING GROUP**  
**13-15 OCTOER 2020**  
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