

## **Categories of IABIN Participation**

Discussion Paper Number 2 for the 4<sup>th</sup> IABIN Council Meeting  
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### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The IABIN Secretariat was given the mandate to prepare a background paper to help define categories of IABIN participation. This document will serve as the basis for a discussion and recommendations by the IABIN Council at its Fourth Council Meeting on 6 – 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2005.

IABIN documents use the following terms:

- Focal Point
- Member
- Cooperator
- Participant
- Node
- Data and information processors, network infrastructure developers.
- Technical Member
- Hub
- Co-financing Institutions
- The IABIN Executive Committee
- Council Member vs. Council Meeting Attendee
- Consensus vs. voting
- Organizations that provide financial support

There is a need to define further some of these terms as well as the functions and responsibilities of each of these roles within IABIN. The discussions will seek to clarify the meaning of each one of the terms.

### **2 PARTICIPATION CATEGORIES: THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

This section presents how each of these terms is currently defined in IABIN's Rules of Procedures, and proposes discussion items and recommendations.

#### **2.1 Focal Point**

As the IABIN Rules of Procedure (RoP) state, any government of the Organization of American States (OAS) can appoint an IABIN Focal Point who will then automatically become a member of the IABIN Council if the country agrees to adhere to the IABIN Rules of Procedure. The roles and responsibilities of the FP are addressed in a separate discussion document at the 4<sup>th</sup> IABIN Council Meeting.

## 2.2 Member

The term member is used to refer to Council members. These include the National Focal Points (NFPs). In addition to National Focal Points other bodies are also part of the Council as described in the following excerpt from the IABIN Rules of Procedure for the Operation of IABIN (see Annex 1):

### 1.1.01 *Membership in the IABIN Council*

*Membership in the IABIN Council differs from technical participation in IABIN through the Working Groups or projects. Membership of the Council comprises:*

1. *Officially designated National Focal Points;*
2. *Representatives from approved organizations, centers, institutions or initiatives of hemispheric or international scope which meet established criteria (see Annex 1 of IABIN Rules of Procedure for a list of criteria – Annex 2 of this document); and*
3. *A representative of the Diplomatic host organization.*
4. *The size of the Council will, for practical purposes, not exceed 50 members.*

### 1.1.02 *Admission of new members*

*Any government of the OAS can appoint an IABIN Focal Point who will then automatically become a member of the IABIN Council if the country agrees to adhere to the IABIN Rules of Procedure. By invitation of the Council after following application procedures determined by the Council, any other institution or agency may become an IABIN member if they sign a cooperation agreement and agree to commit to the IABIN Rules of Procedure.*

**For Discussion:** Review of the Established Criteria for Membership of Non-Governmental, International and Regional Organizations in the IABIN Council (Annex 1 of IABIN's Rules of Procedure – Annex 2 of this document) and establish how an organization, center, institution or initiative of hemispheric or international scope will be accepted into the IABIN Council.

**For Discussion:** Whether Non-Governmental International and Regional Organizations, center, institution or initiative of hemispheric or international scope, once accepted to the IABIN Council, will have vote or only voice.

### **Recommendations:**

- The term Member should be used only to describe the members of the Council, which are the OAS-designated Focal Points and other invited organizations. It could be further divided into Voting Member and Associate Member
- Any organization, center, institution or initiative of hemispheric or international scope accepted to IABIN Council will have voice but no vote in the IABIN Council (and will be called an Associate Member).

- These organizations, centers, institutions or initiatives could join together to form a coalition and designate a representative. This representative would have voice and could vote in the IABIN Council in representation of the coalition. This voting member would be called a Voting Representative of.....(e.g. International Cooperating Institutions).

## 2.3 Cooperator

Related to the above, the term **cooperator** is used to refer to Non-governmental, International and Regional Organizations who may be data providers or not. Regarding cooperators, Annex 1 of the IABIN Rules of Procedure for Governance (see Annex 2 of this document) state the following:

*At the Technical Workshop for the Establishment of IABIN, held in Brasilia in April 1999, a working group focused on how to identify and build relationships with key cooperators in the IABIN implementation process. One way is to include representatives of appropriate non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and sub-regional, regional and global initiatives (referred to as "cooperators") which deal with biodiversity information on the IABIN Council.*

It is not clear in the Rules of Procedure if **cooperators** will have vote or only voice in the IABIN Council.

The term Cooperator should be further clarified to include international NGOs that deal with biodiversity information (instead of calling them “appropriate” NGOs as is currently the case in the RoPs) since a national or local NGO can already be included in the terms mentioned in the bullet points below. It should be made clear that the main role of these cooperators is to give access to their data and information.

**For Discussion:** Adopting the name “International Cooperating Institution” to identify international and hemispheric NGOs that contribute biodiversity information to IABIN.

For Discussion: The main role of the International and Hemispheric NGOs in IABIN. They could contribute biodiversity data and information.

**For Discussion:** Whether International Cooperating Institutions, once accepted to the IABIN Council, will have vote or only voice.

### Recommendations:

- IABIN adopts the name “International Cooperating Institution” to identify international and hemispheric NGOs that contribute biodiversity data and information to IABIN.
- These International Cooperating Institutions could be invited to become Council Members as discussed in Section B above.
- Any International Cooperating Institution accepted to IABIN Council will have voice but no vote in the IABIN Council.

- These International Cooperating Institutions could join together to form a coalition and designate a representative. This representative would have voice and could vote in the IABIN Council in representation of the coalition.

## 2.4 Participant

The term **participant** is used to encompass almost anyone, as can be seen in the following paragraph from the Rules of Procedure (RoP):

*Participation*

*IABIN promotes broad participation from all sectors of society, including government, academia, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.*

*Participation can be by institution, organization or individual.*

*Participants include (among others) original data providers, data and information processors, network infrastructure developers, and end users of data and information products and services, as well as those who participate directly in any of the IABIN governance bodies (Council, Technical Working Groups, committees, etc.).*

Thus, a participant can also be a **member** in some instances.

### **Recommendation:**

Continue to use broadly the term participant for both individuals and organizations.

## 2.5 Node

The term Node, as used in IABIN documents, seems to describe a national data provider.

*Nodes (from the RoP):*

*IABIN will operate with institutions that own databases on biodiversity and natural resources in the Western hemisphere. These constitute the nodes, and their researchers or experts are responsible for the information.*

*Nodes are institutions that maintain or generate data on biodiversity and that agree to make them available to the general public, based on their policy related to intellectual property rights and quality control standards.*

*The person in charge of the Node is the formal representative of the institution where the node is located. He acts as the liaison of the institution with IABIN.*

It is not clear if a **node** can also be a **member**.

There is also need to differentiate the national organizations, centers, institutions or initiatives at the national level from those whose scope is hemispheric or global.

**For Discussion:** Deletion of the phrase “where the node is located” in the paragraph above.

**For Discussion:** Replace “Node” with “National Cooperating Institution.”

For Discussion: Whether a National Cooperating Institution can be a Member. If so, then whether the same criteria will be used for selection as is used for International Cooperating Institutions.

**Recommendations:**

- Adopt the name “National Cooperating Institution” instead of “Node”.
- These National Cooperating Institutions could be invited to become Council Members as discussed in Section B above.
- Any National Cooperating Institution accepted to IABIN Council will have voice but no vote in the IABIN Council.
- These National Cooperating Institutions could join together to form a coalition and designate a representative. This representative would have voice and could vote in the IABIN Council in representation of the coalition.
- It should also be noted that Nodes can apply to become a Coordinating Institution for a Thematic Network and/or apply for a matching grant under Component 2.

## **2.6 Data and information processors, network infrastructure developers**

These should be only institutions, organizations or agencies, not individuals. Their role should be to provide data and/or infrastructure to the IABIN network, since they qualify as “Nodes” under Section E above. In addition, it should be noted that these technical partners could apply to become a Coordinating Institution for a Thematic Network and/or apply for a matching grant under Component 2.

**Recommendation:**

Data and information processors, network infrastructure developers who contribute data, information and/or infrastructure to IABIN should be called National Cooperating Institutions.

## 2.7 Technical Member

The term **technical member** describes the individuals who make up the Technical Working Groups who, according to IABIN Rules of Procedure, do not need to belong to any organization associated with IABIN:

*Technical Working Groups (from Rules of Procedure)*

*In order to accomplish the technical work of IABIN, Technical Working Groups (TWG) will be established as needed and for specific tasks and of specific duration. Any IABIN member can propose a TWG to the Executive Committee that will have the authority to recognize it and ask the Hub to assist in supporting its formation. The Technical Working Group Chair will be selected by the Executive Committee based on technical competence and need not be associated with an IABIN member organization. In this way, broad expert participation can be encouraged. Similarly, the composition of the TWG will also be at the discretion of the Executive Committee.*

Technical Member, as used to describe individuals who make up the Technical Working Groups, could be changed to Technical Contributor (in order to use the term Member to refer exclusively to participants in the Council) and be extended to cover individuals participating in committees.

**For Discussion:** Whether a member of a Technical Working Group must be a participant in IABIN or if, as the Rules of Procedure currently say, the person does not need to be associated with an IABIN member. Decision could be to delete the phrase "...and need not be associated with an IABIN member."

**For Discussion:** Whether to replace the term "Technical Member" with "Technical Contributor".

### **Recommendations:**

- Replace the term "Technical Member" with "Technical Contributor".
- Delete the phrase "...and need not be associated with an IABIN member."
- If it is felt by the Council that Technical Members must belong to an organization participating in IABIN, then add a phrase to that effect to the Rules of Procedure.

## 2.8 Hub

The term Hub is used throughout IABIN documents, including the GEF Project Implementation Plan, as a synonym to the term Secretariat, and this is confusing.

### **Recommendation:**

Adopt the term Secretariat and use it consistently, deleting the term Hub.

## 2.9 Co-Financing Institutions

The term Co-financing Institutions is used by IABIN to refer to the organizations (governmental, non-governmental, academic, private) that pledged funds to IABIN during the process of developing the GEF project proposal. Although most of the co-financing institutions also have a role in providing access to biodiversity data and information, they have made a commitment to do so using their own resources and this should be recognized.

### Recommendation:

Maintain the term Co-financing institution to refer to these organizations, to distinguish them as funding partners of IABIN.

## 2.10 The IABIN Executive Committee

The IABIN's Rules of Procedure say the following:

### *Officers of the Council*

*The Council will have a Chair and a Vice Chair.*

*The Chair shall preside over the Council and is responsible for the overall direction of IABIN and the proper implementation of these Rules of Procedure.*

*The Vice-Chair shall assist the Chair as requested and shall act for the Chair in his/her absence at Council meetings. Officers are elected for three-year terms by a 2/3 vote of the voting Council members.*

*The Rules of Procedure also describe the IEC and how its members are selected:*

*The Executive Committee will consist of nine voting members, including:*

- *The Council Chair;*
- *The Council Vice-Chair; and*
- *Seven members elected at large according to the following criteria:*
  - *Governmental geographical representation;*
  - *Inclusion of up to two non-governmental representatives; and*
  - *Interest and commitment.*

*An OAS representative and the Executive Secretary of the IABIN Hub shall be ex officio members of the Executive Committee, ex officio, with voice but no vote.*

*The Chair of the IABIN Council shall be the Chair of the Executive Committee.*

*Members of the Executive Committee shall have three-year terms, staggered on a rotational basis with some members changing each year.*

### ***Selection of IEC Members***

*The Chair of the Council shall appoint an ad hoc nominations committee, consisting of at least three members, which shall suggest nominees for seats on the Executive Committee. These nominees shall be voted upon at the annual IABIN Council meeting. Selection shall be made by majority of those voting.*

What the Rules of Procedure do not say is whether only voting Council Members can be elected to the IEC

For Discussion: Who can belong to the IEC?

### **Recommendation:**

Only Voting Members can be elected to the IEC.

## **2.11 Council Member vs. Council Meeting Attendee.**

There is need, too, to clarify the difference between a Council Meeting Attendee versus a Council Member, and the roles and responsibilities of Attendees (e.g. only Council Members can participate in certain meetings, etc.).

**For Discussion:** Roles of Council Meeting Attendees.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Focal Point is the Council Member as discussed under Section A above. The Rules of Procedure state that each Focal Point will designate an alternate to take her/his place when the designated Focal Point is unable to attend a Council Meeting. This alternate is, in effect, the Focal Point for all intents and purposes when that person participates in a Council Meeting, having the same roles and responsibilities as the designated Focal Point (voice and vote).
- The other Council Members (e.g. International and National Cooperating Institutions, Benefactors and Financing Institutions), will also designate both an alternate when electing who will represent them in the IABIN Council. This alternate will also have the same roles and responsibilities as the main designated person when attending a Council Meeting in place of the main person.
- People who make part of a country's delegation, or who are associated with one of the organizations, centers, institutions, initiatives, and Technical Cooperators, will be able to present their opinions and contribute to any plenary discussion but will have not vote.

## 2.12 Consensus vs. voting.

So far all IABIN decisions have been made by consensus, and although we should strive for this to continue, there may be a time when there will be need for voting. The IABIN Rules of Procedure only mention voting in regards to election of Officers of the Council, saying that "Officers are elected for three-year terms by a 2/3 vote of the voting Council Members." In regards to election of IEC Members, the RoP say these Members will be selected by majority of those voting, but do not describe clearly what a "majority" means as the following paragraph shows (from the Rules of Procedure):

*The Chair of the Council shall appoint an ad hoc nominations committee, consisting of at least three members, which shall suggest nominees for seats on the Executive Committee. These nominees shall be voted upon at the annual IABIN Council meeting. Selection shall be made by majority of those voting.*

In addition, the Rules of Procedure do not say anything regarding how other decisions will be made if there is no consensus,

**For Discussion:** How decisions will be made by the Council through voting and what constitutes "a majority".

**Ford Discussion:** Are all Council Members required to vote in order to make a decision, or only those Council Members present at the Council Meeting?

### **Recommendation:**

- Ratify that decisions will be made by majority vote.
- All Council Members must vote, even if not participating in the meeting, particularly for elections of Officers of the Council and IEC Members. Those Council Members who, for whatever reason, cannot attend the meeting, should send their vote. This, of course, means that the candidates for the positions have to be known in advance.
- Majority means 2/3 of the voting members in favor.

## 2.13 Other Organizations that provide financial support.

A new term could be designated for organizations and/or individuals who provide financial support, other than the Co-financing institutions. Once the fund raising efforts of the Secretariat and others start to bear fruit, there will be donors who should be acknowledged. The term Benefactor could be used for individual donors and the term Financing Organization for co-financing institutions.

For Discussion: Adding these two new terms – Benefactor (for individuals) and Financing Organization (for institutions) – to describe donors.

For Discussion: Donors are not to be themselves members of the Council but they could form a group and designate a representative to the Council who would have voice and vote.

### **3 PROCESS TO BE FOLLOWED FOR THE DISCUSSION AND ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

An ad-hoc committee will be designated at the 4th IABIN Council Meeting with the mandate to discuss the points highlighted in this document and come up with recommendations for adoption by the IABIN Council in plenary.

Each IABIN Focal Point and other Council Members, as well as all IABIN interested participants should read this document carefully and discuss it with the appropriate people in their organizations and agencies and with other people and organizations in their respective country who are interested in bioinformatics, in order to present their recommendations to the ad-hoc committee during the 4th IABIN Council Meeting.