

**The First Meeting of the Asian Consortium for
the Conservation and Sustainable Use of
Microbial Resources (ACM)**

(Summary)

Date: 9 October 2004

Venue: Room 101, Epochal Tsukuba, Tsukuba

Agenda

9 October 2004

1. Welcome Remarks (Mr. Koichi Saito, President of NITE)
2. Selection of Chair
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Establishment of the Administrative rules of ACM
5. Task Force on Asian BRC Network
6. Task Force on Human Resource Development

After selecting Dr. Katsumi Isono to serve as the chairperson, the First ACM Meeting started with the selection of agenda.

A: Establishment of the Administrative Rules of ACM

The first item on the agenda was to establish the Administrative Rules of ACM. Some of the items were explained to have been modified from the original one that was distributed before the meeting, including the matter concerning vice-chairperson(s), since several delegates had proposed to include this issue. Several suggestions were made such as to select vice-chairperson(s) by taking regional balancing etc into consideration. In the end an agreement was reached that the vice-chairperson(s) shall have the same term of office as the chairperson and that the representative(s) of the countries to host next meeting(s) shall be elected. Consequently, the decision on this issue was postponed until the concluding General Assembly meeting scheduled to be held on Friday 15th October. The chairperson Isono asked all the delegates to discuss the matters individually with other delegates during the ICC-10 sessions.

Individual points discussed are as follows:

1. The participants agreed on the name "Asian Consortium for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Microbial Resources" and its abbreviation ACM.
2. After extensive discussions, the participants agreed that the objective of ACM shall be stated as follows: "The objective of the Consortium is to promote collaboration among government or public organizations in Asian countries for the purposes of enhancing conservation and sustainable use of microbial resources in Asia".
3. With respect to the Activities, the participants agreed on "3.1 Development of human resources". As for item 3.2, a long discussion was made on various parts of its context and finally, the consensus was obtained to modify 3.2 as follows: "Promotion of research and development on microbial resources and their application in industrial and other uses".
4. With regard to 3.3, it was noted that "Biological Resources Center (BRC)" should be changed into "biological resource centers (BRCs)". This opinion was adopted and, consequently, 3.3 was agreed to state: "Collaboration through the network of biological resource centers".

5. The item 3.4 was suggested to be modified into "Exchange of views and information" and this modification was adopted.

6. As for 3.5, various modifications were proposed and by taking them into consideration, 3.5 was modified to state: "To enhance public awareness on the Consortium's activities for the conservation and sustainable use of microbial resources".

7. The item 3.6 was also extensively discussed to clarify the Consortium's objective and activities. Finally, it was agreed to state: "To organize scientific meetings (seminars, workshops, etc.)".

Lunch

8. The afternoon session started with item 4. Consensus was reached for 4.1 and 4.2. As for 4.2, a general agreement was obtained that the General Assembly will in principle be held every year, but of course the date may be subject to the situation of the host country.

9. With regard to items 4.3 and 4.4, extensive discussion was made as partly described at the top of this summary. As far as the term of office of the chairperson and vice-chairperson(s) is concerned, an agreement was reached to make it for one year, i.e. until a new chairperson and vice-chairperson(s) are elected in the next General Assembly. Election of vice-chairperson(s) was postponed until Friday, 15th October.

10. With regard to item 4.5, it was confirmed that decisions will be made on a consensus basis to avoid any sort of conflicts, since to promote collaboration among the ACM members is most important.

11. Moving on to the Task Force issue, the participants agreed on 5.1 and 5.2 (changed into 7.1 and 7.2, respectively; see below), i.e. to establish the task forces on Asian BRC Network and on Human Resource Development. During the course of discussion on this issue, a proposal was made with respect to the order of items, namely, to change the order into: 5. Secretariat, 6. Membership, 7. Task Force, and 8. Amendment of the Rules. This proposal was discussed and adopted.

12. Regarding the Secretariat issue of items 5.1 and 5.2 (changed from 6.1 and 6.2), a proposal was made that the first Secretariat of ACM should be someone from NITE whose term will last for approximately five years. NITE-DOB offered to serve as the Secretariat for the first few years (understood as three to five years). After discussion, this offer of NITE-DOB was accepted. Subsequently, item 5.2 was discussed and a consensus was reached to change 5.2 to read: "The Secretariat shall be responsible to the Chairperson".

13. Moving on to 5.3 (6.3), the statement "The Secretariat shall conduct correspondence related to the Consortium, record the minutes of the General Assembly, and support Consortium activities" was agreed.

14. With respect to the Membership issue, the participants debated on how countries should be referred to. Several proposals were made such as "ASEAN and Northeast Asian countries". After intensive discussion, the statement: "The members of the Consortium shall be government or public institutes, or universities *in Asia* actively engaged in promoting conservation and sustainable use of microbial resources as listed in the attached Members' List" was agreed on the premise that a members' list is attached to the Rules as stated.

15. Moving on to 6.2 (7.2), a consensus was reached that it is to state: "Application for new membership shall be approved by the General Assembly".

16. Finally, the Amendment of the Rules was discussed and amendment on a consensus basis rather than through voting was agreed.

B: Task Force on Asian BRC Network

The next item on the agenda was "Task Force on Asian BRC Network: Terms of Reference". Chairman Isono confirmed that while the Terms are similar to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommendation, they are independent of the OECD network.

Individual points discussed are as follows:

1. As for the first item, the participants discussed in particular on the expression

"analyzing the needs for ...". It was argued that, since the discussion in March clearly indicated that the needs exist and that was why we agreed to form a task force on this issue, we have to seek the mechanism with which to establish the network. Also, some member institutes may have materials other than microorganisms the information about which are relevant to other members, it was agreed to state "a biological resource center network" instead of "a microbial resource center network". However, since some other wordings on this issue could not immediately be finalized, a break was proposed.

Coffee break

After the break, item 1 was proposed to state: "The Task Force shall be responsible for analyzing the needs for, and seeking the way to establish, a biological resource center network in Asia." and accepted.

2. Moving on to item 2 (changed into 5; see below), the participants agreed with the statement: "Outline of the discussion of the Task Force shall be compiled into a report which shall be submitted to the General Assembly of ACM".

3. With regard to item 3 (changed into 2; see below), a suggestion was made that the number of Task Force members be identified. By a show of hands, eight out of eleven countries present expressed their willingness to join the Task Force. Since eight is not too many and information will in any way be distributed to all ACM members, the Task Force is established to incorporate all those who wish to join and the statement: "The Task Force shall consist of experts who are nominated by members of ACM" was adopted.

4. As for item 4 (changed into 3; see below), the "chair" was understood to refer to a convener whose responsibilities include sending e-mails to members, collecting opinions, promoting discussion and organizing those into a report to be presented at ACM.

5. Item 5 (changed into 4; see below) was explained to indicate that the working plan/program will be distributed to member countries via e-mail. At this point, it was proposed to change the order of items into: 1, 5, 2, 3, 4. This proposal was discussed and accepted, and further discussion was made as to the difference between "report" (stated in new item 5) and "working plan" (new item 4). It was then agreed to interpret

that the report will be finalized months or years later after a working plan is proposed.

6. Task Force on Human Resource Development

The final item on the agenda was Task Force on Human Resource Development. In line with the changes made to the Task Force on Asian BRC Network, the ordering of the items was changed to 1, 5, 2, 3, 4, and the individual items were modified, discussed and accepted.

By a show of hands, ten out of eleven countries expressed their wishes to become a member of the Task Force.

It was argued that the delegates of the ACM meeting represent only the institute to which they belong and that, once ACM becomes more established, together with other institutes they will appeal to the country (government) to get involved. Chairperson Isono expressed his understanding and explained that this issue should be discussed on an individual basis rather than at a General Assembly.

It was noted that there will be another ACM meeting on 15 October in Room 406 after the closing ceremony of ICC-10 and that any incorrect information in the list of participants etc should be reported to NITE-DOB for correction.

The first day of the meeting was then brought to a close.

**The First Meeting of the Asian Consortium for
the Conservation and Sustainable Use of
Microbial Resources (ACM)**

Summary of the Concluding Meeting

Date: 15 October 2004

Venue: Room 406, Epochal Tsukuba
Tsukuba, Japan

Documents distributed (*the distributed documents are subject to minor modifications and will be re-distributed to all the ACM delegates by e-mail*):

- ✧ **The First Meeting of the Asian Consortium for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Microbial Resources (ACM): Summary** (6 pages)
- ✧ **Administrative Rules** (revised; 3 pages)
- ✧ **Terms of Reference for the Task Force on Human Resources** (revised; 1 page)
- ✧ **Terms of Reference for the Task Force on Asian BRC Network** (revised; 1 page)

Before the discussion started, it was explained by Chairperson Isono that the documents listed above contained changes including the order of some items by reflecting the first day's discussion. Aside from the pending issue of vice-chairperson(s), the documents were approved by all delegates. It was further explained that factual or typographical errors may be corrected afterwards if reported by any of the delegates.

Discussion on the 'vice-chairperson' issue continued from the first day meeting held on Saturday, 9 October

The vice-chairperson issue was then discussed. Since it was agreed in the first day's discussion that a representative of each of the countries in which the next ACM meetings will be held will become a vice-chairperson, the remaining question was to decide how many vice-chairpersons should be selected in the current General Assembly. On this issue, it was largely agreed on the first day that two vice-chairpersons might be suitable, one from the country where the second ACM meeting will be held, and another from the country where the third meeting will be held.

Several representatives supported Thailand to host the next (second) ACM meeting and proposed to select only one vice-chairperson for the sake of simplicity, namely if two vice-chairpersons are selected, then there might be confusion as to which one will become the next chairperson. In this way, they supported a delegate of Thailand to become a vice-chairperson.

On the other hand, since several delegates supported to select two vice-chairpersons in the first day's discussion, it was proposed to ask all delegates whether or not any

delegates would like to propose to host the third ACM meeting. To this proposal, the Chinese delegates expressed their willingness to host the third ACM meeting. Subsequently, Chairperson Isono asked those delegates who expressed earlier to select only one vice-chairperson whether or not they could agree to select two vice-chairpersons, one from Thailand and another from China. Since this was agreed by all delegates, it was finally decided to have two vice-chairpersons. Consequently, the expressions in the Administrative Rules related to this issue were to be modified accordingly.

It was confirmed and approved by all delegates including those from Thailand and China that the General Assembly of ACM will be held every year and that the next one will be held in Thailand in which a representative of Thai delegates will serve as a chairperson and Dr. Gao of China as one of the vice-chairpersons on the basis that the third General Assembly will be held in China (another vice-chairperson will be selected in the next General Assembly who will represent the country in which the fourth meeting will be held).

Discussion on other issues

1. Several delegates proposed to make the term of Secretariat permanent as oppose to the decision on the first day to fix it to NITE-DOB for the time being (three to five years). However, other delegates did not agree with it and it was suggested by Chairperson Isono not to discuss on this issue any further, as we have just started ACM and it will be possible to discuss on this issue whenever necessary in the future.

2. Then, the ACM membership was discussed. This was brought in to clarify whether the Consortium is to be an open organization or not. It was emphasized by Chairperson Isono that for the time-being it may be limited to the members listed in the attached Members' List. However, if there is an application for membership in the future from any new country or any new institute, then we will discuss the matter and, if agreed, incorporate that country or institute into the members as we discussed on the first day and as described in the Administrative Rules.

In this connection, an opinion was raised to consider in the future a balance between universities and research institutes. Also, a question was asked with

regard to the membership within Japan. To the latter point, it was explained by Chairperson Isono that ACM was proposed and initiated by NITE (the plan was introduced to the members of the Japan Society for Culture Collections (JSCC) in a meeting held in January 2004) and agreed by the participants of the Asian Experts' Conference held in March 2004 with the intention to promote collaboration and information exchange amongst Asian countries. Furthermore, the situation in other member countries may be similar as well, namely the current member institutes/organizations do not necessarily represent their countries.

It was further commented by Vice-Chairperson Gao that everything is very difficult to start and that as his institute under the Chinese Academy of Sciences is a member, he will voluntarily and happily try to be a coordinator for all the Chinese culture collections and/or related government bodies. He suggested that the member institutes of other countries could perhaps do a similar thing.

An additional concern was expressed with respect to the finances of ACM in the future, since it was not clear whether ACM could continuously be supported by NITE or not. However, this problem was not adopted for discussion on the ground that ACM was just formed and started and problems of this sort may be a matter of future discussion.

3. Subsequently, a few problems on the task force were discussed, in particular how to select 'experts' for the two task forces, as it was not discussed in detail on the first day except for the rules. In this connection, it was asked by Chairperson Isono whether it will be possible or not to form a task force by a representative(s) of each of the ACM members who will then consult any suitable individual(s) on the personal basis within his/her country. Since NITE-DOB is going to function as the ACM Secretariat, all necessary materials will be distributed later to those countries showing interest in becoming members of the Task Force and once the members are fixed, then the Task Force members will be asked to select a chairperson. His/her duty will then begin to initiate the task force discussion through e-mail exchanges.

With all these done, the concluding meeting of ACM was closed.