



## **Minutes of the First Steering Committee Meeting of the GEF-REPCar Project**

### DAY 1

#### 1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened at 9:00am by the Coordinator of UNEP-CAR/RCU, Mr. Nelson Andrade Colmenares. He welcomed all the participants, invited organizations, Mr. Ricardo Sanchez of UNEP-ROLAC and Mr. Jan Betlem from UNEP-DGEF.

In his opening remarks he presented an overview of the GEF Project “Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua – Reducing the Pesticides Runoff to the Caribbean Sea” (GEF-REPCar Project) and highlighted its benefits to the participating countries. He also acknowledged the work of Carlos Hernandez, former Director of Continuing Education & Outreach Program of EARTH University. He pointed out that the convening of this First Steering Committee meeting was a celebration for the REPCAR project’s advancement from theory to practice and expressed his regret on Panama’s non-participation in the project. He also pointed out that the active participation of the countries will be needed to accomplish the objectives of the REPCAR project under the mandate of the Cartagena Convention.

The Director of UNEP-ROLAC then thanked the UNEP-CAR/RCU for the opportunity to participate in the meeting. He expressed hope that the project’s goals will be achieved in a timely manner and pointed out some common problems that the countries may face, for example in promoting agriculture and reducing poverty. He reinforced the need for the project to be implemented according to the mandates of the relevant convention. He also pointed out that the project goes beyond controlling the use of pesticides; it is also about monitoring their impacts and urged the countries to take advantage of the long-term benefits of the project. In his remarks he recognized Mr. Julio Calderon and Mr. Mark Griffith, from the ROLAC office, and cited their interest in the REPCAR Project.

Mr. Jan Betlem in his remarks noted that after a significant delay, the project is finally on stream and thanked the countries for their patience. He expressed hope for the project’s over the next 4-5 years and stated that it should continue in their respective countries. He also added that UNEP will be there to assist in the implementation of the various national activities but that the countries are responsible for running the project. He closed by wishing the meeting success.

The Coordinator of UNEP-CAR/RCU thanked Mr. Sanchez for his input and Mr. Betlem for highlighting the responsibility of all involved in the project.

The Project Coordinator, Mr. Alexandre Cooman, welcomed the participants and asked each person to introduce him/herself.

#### 2.

### Meeting organization

After the introductions Mr. Cooman proposed Mr. Helio Zamora from Nicaragua as Chairman of the meeting, being the only National Coordinator that was present during the PDF-phase. He also pointed out that the role of Chairman will be rotated between the National Coordinators, as mentioned in the terms of reference of the Steering Committee. Mr. Zamora accepted this appointment. Mr. Andrade then proposed Mr. Cesar Buitrago from Colombia as Rapporteur, who also accepted.

Mr. Cooman presented the global and specific objectives of the meeting. He explained that the overall objective of the first meeting is the formal launching of the REPCAR project, reconfirming the engagement of all parties and confirming the required national and regional mechanisms for project implementation. The more specific objectives are to:

- review and approve project workplan and budget;
- review and approve terms of reference for the regional Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the National Coordinating Committees (NCCs);
- review and approve terms of reference for the selection and implementation of demonstration projects;
- review and approve terms of reference of the advisory panels;
- clarify and agree with the participants on the administrative and reporting procedures for the project;
- share with the PSC the proposed national arrangements for project implementation; and,
- exchange information on national pesticide management practices.

The participants were informed about the contents of their meeting package. The two-day meeting agenda (Annex I) was presented which included presentations from the countries and sharing experiences from other projects and their methodologies. There was a minor change to the agenda; Mr. Alfredo Ruiz's (CropLife) presentation was brought forward due to his early departure. The Project Coordinator then handed over to the Chairman. The countries made comments on the need for time management and the fulfillment of the various tasks according to priority.

### 3. Project overview and background

The Project Coordinator then did his presentation on the project overview . He started by mentioning that the activities and workplan would be revised in more detail the following day. In his presentation he mentioned the technical background and context of the project, followed by the history of the project since the first short proposal was written in 1998. He then presented the problem tree which is the basis of the project and pointed out its main objectives. He emphasized that the project is also meant to support the countries in implementing the Protocol on Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution (LBS), one of the Protocols of the Cartagena Convention. This Protocol has been ratified by only Trinidad and Tobago and Panama, and is not yet in force. The stakeholders and participants of the project were presented, followed by the 6 activities and 3 components: Project Coordination; Demonstration Projects and; Strengthening of the Capacity to Reduce Pesticide Runoff. He pointed out that the only difference between the approved REPCAR project and the national action plans made in 2000, is the fact that the REPCAR project does not include actions in the field of environmental remediation. He ended his presentation summarizing the expected results for each component and showed the approved timetable.

Mr. Cooman then handed over to the Chairman.

4.

## Project management

Mr. Cooman presented the terms of reference of the PSC (Annex II). He mentioned that the PSC will serve as the primary decision making body, guiding the overall implementation of the project. He showed an organizational chart and explained the interaction between the stakeholders at the regional level. He then proposed the frequency of the meetings, the possibility to organize advisory panels, and presented the terms of reference as they were proposed in the project document. He mentioned that:

- despite the fact that FAO had withdrawn itself from the project during the PDF phase, they were invited to the PSC meeting but were only present for the opening of the meeting;
- IICA was invited through its offices in Jamaica and Colombia. The Jamaican office proposed the participation of Mr. Everton Clarinton Ambrose, but due to the late response he could not be invited. Mr. Ambrose is IICA's Agricultural Health and Food Safety specialist for the Eastern Caribbean and will be invited to the next PSC meeting;
- as stated in the terms of reference, two Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) should be invited to the PSC meetings however, Mr. Cooman wanted to have the consensus of the PSC prior to inviting NGOs. One NGO should be from the environmental sector while the other one should represent the interests of farmers. He mentioned that one of the projects in which UNEP-CAR/RCU is involved as a partner (International Coral Reef Action Network - Mesoamerican Reef Alliance project, ICRAN-MAR), is having the successful participation of several NGOs. He proposed to consider the participation of WWF as an environmental NGO and of Rainforest Alliance or Fundación Hondureña de Investigación Agrícola (FHIA) in representation of the agricultural community.

Mr. Ruiz commented on the importance and convenience of NGO involvement in the project stating that they are very involved and have done scientific and educational work. He agreed on the selection of the NGOs proposed by the Project Coordinator, especially the involvement of WWF and Rainforest Alliance.

Mr. Buitrago questioned what mechanism should be used for selecting NGOs and how representatives will be selected. He then suggested that this be left for the next meeting when proposals for potential NGOs can be presented.

The Chairman reinforced the need for the involvement of NGOs in the project as these can give substantial inputs.

Mr. Vargas from Costa Rica joined in the support of NGOs, especially in participating countries, to provide technological support but pointed out that by enlarging the forum the discussions may become more complicated, and concluded that the PSC should be selective.

Mr. Piedra from Earth University informed the meeting that in order to reach the core of pesticide management, the involvement of the private sector is important. He stated that Earth University is located on a farm surrounded by pineapple and banana crops, and that there are protests from most communities because of pesticides run-off.

The Chairman suggested that at the national and regional levels pesticide commercialization companies are already included in the forum through the participation of Croplife LA.

Mr. Canales from Nicaragua pointed out that the operational factor and cost should be considered, to avoid ending up with a forum and not a steering committee. CropLife however insisted that the involvement of the private sector is important since they are either major agricultural producers, who tend to have better pesticide management systems, or small- and medium-scale farmers, who contribute greatly

to the pesticide run-off problem. From his experience in this field he revealed that the problem lies with the smaller producers.

It was not clear to Mr. Piedra if the selection of NGOs would be agreed on now. He stated that if it were to be postponed then there would be a gap in input from other entities. It was agreed that representatives should be proposed by the national committees.

Mr. Buitrago recommended that the approval of the terms of reference for the selection of NGOs be done after the meeting and that the NGOs should have a regional scope and be active in the topic of Good Agricultural Practices – Best Management Practices for pesticides. It was proposed that 2 persons should work on it and present it to the meeting the following day. Based on the criteria mentioned before (regional scope and active in the project's topic), it was agreed that each National Coordinating Committee (NCC) should propose NGOs for the participation in the next PSC before the end of June. The Project Coordinator informed the meeting that he will compile the information sent by the countries and work on a consensus by e-mail.

Mr. Cooman then presented the terms of reference of the National Coordinating Committees (NCCs, second part of Annex II). He pointed out that the NCCs will guide the overall implementation of the project at the national level and provide recommendations to the PSC through the National Coordinators (NCs). He presented an organizational chart, explained the interaction between the stakeholders at the national level and emphasized the need for ample stakeholder involvement from the private sector in the NCCs. He then mentioned that the NCCs should meet with variable frequency depending on needs, and presented the terms of reference as proposed in the project document.

During the Project Coordinator's presentation on National Coordinating Committees Mr. Garcia from Nicaragua made an intervention stating that an important element in the national committee was not considered, namely inviting educational authorities since the project needs sustainability. He emphasized that the Ministry of Education of the countries should be invited to gain long-term results in educating future generations about the consequences of our actual resource management. Agricultural growers should be influenced but the citizens need to be aware of bad practices and this is what will give the best results at a low cost.

The Project Coordinator accepted the proposal for the inclusion of the authorities in the national committees as a good recommendation to the NCCs.

The Rapporteur, Mr. Buitrago, then stated that the countries should establish their own terms of reference (members) for the NCCs. He believes that they should approve and address them based on the specific needs of each country.

Mr. Canales of Nicaragua proposed that the chairing of the NCCs be shared with the NC and co-chairman coming from MARENA (Ministry of Environment) and that it should serve as the secretariat. The Project Coordinator, Mr. Cooman, however suggested that the shared role of chairman should be between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment, for example with MARENA being the focal point and national executing agency. The Rapporteur, Mr. Buitrago, added that the Ministry of Environment should be the Chairman and the Ministry of Agriculture the technical secretariat. Mr. Cooman then pointed out that there should be a strong link between the two.

Mr. Vargas pointed out that the exact term for the co-chair as quoted in the documents is Vice-Chairman.

Ms. Bochno from Colombia stated that the NCC should be the one to decide on the secretariat. The Rapporteur agreed that it should be left open for the NCC to decide who would support the secretariat, but

that from a logical point of view it should be the Ministry of Environment acting as secretariat and ensuring that secretarial services are provided to the NCC.

It was agreed that in the terms of reference of the National Coordinating Committees, an additional paragraph should be included between 1.2 and 1.3: The Ministry of Agriculture will co-chair the NCC with the representative of the Ministry of Environment.

The Administrative/Fund Management Officer of UNEP-CAR/RCU, Ms. Yatagai, did her presentation on the management guidelines by highlighting the particulars of the UN Administrations in project implementation. She emphasized the importance of complying with the UN rules and regulations. She presented on the two main administrative documents which the Project Steering Committee members and the other project stakeholders may often come across during the project implementation, i.e. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Travel Authorizations. She stated that there is a need for a clear Terms of Reference (TORs), workplan and budget for the drafting of MOUs, and in principle, at least three comparators are to be evaluated in the selection process to select the best one to be contracted. With regard to Travel Authorization, she explained that a participant was not allowed to travel prior to the receipt of the Travel Authorization from the UN and that the traveler was responsible for his/her own health, life and other insurance. She urged the PSC members to allow enough lead time for the demo projects and other project activities since often times the administrative process could take longer than anticipated to draft/approve the MOUs and Travel Authorizations and to effect payments. She also asked the members to keep the Project Coordinator informed of any changes in the conditions of the MOUs and/or itinerary of the Travel Authorizations for him to make amendments in coordination with UNEP-CAR/RCU. She then continued on the roles and division of responsibilities of the UNEP team and the reporting requirement of the project. She requested the National Coordinators to submit the co-financing report, which according to the Project Document, should amount to USD 5,625,000 including cash and in-kind contributions from the participating countries and other entities such as Croplife LA. It was agreed that the National Coordinators would provide the details of their co-financing with the PC by end June 2007.

With regard to the co-financing, the Costa Rican participant, Mr. Vargas, inquired about the commitment his government arrived at. The Fund Management Officer however pointed out that it has been years since that commitment and that it needed to be reviewed, but that the global sum committed by each country needed to be maintained.

The Project Coordinator emphasized that good and concise reporting should be done. The reports should be made by the NCs and be revised and endorsed by the NCCs, before sending to the Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator will make a form to facilitate short, concise and homogeneous reporting by the countries.

Clarification was sought with regard to cash and in-kind contributions and if these were the governments' responsibility. It was explained that the governments have the responsibility but they may come from the governments, private organizations and other sources.

Mr. Piedra from EARTH University noted that UNEP disburses funds to the countries, but that the NCs themselves should not manage these funds.. The Project Coordinator clarified that funds will not be disbursed to the ministries but directly to the implementing agencies (demo-projects), unless the ministry is directly responsible for implementation of a particular activity. MOUs will be established between UNEP-CAR/RCU and the agency responsible for executing the demo-projects and disbursements made directly, since going through the ministry may be more complicated. On the other hand, the NCCs have to supervise the implementing agencies and will authorize disbursements.

Based on the figures presented (US\$1,770,000 for the total co-financing of Colombia), the Rapporteur suggested that each country should have a new allocation since that fiscal year ended in 2002, meaning that it would be complicated to mobilize the funds and they could seek aid from companies. Verification that the money is available is the first thing that should be done. He understood that funds for project are managed through UNEP and monitored by the governments. However, he thought that it would be convenient to have a MOU signed between UNEP and the implementing agencies and pointed out that it would be more complicated if the funds were to go through the government.

Mr. Canales pointed out that the management of funds should go according to the country's legislation.

Mr. Vargas endorsed the fact that the funds would not go through the government. He also reemphasized the need to know the exact commitment of his country so he can address it.

The Chairman however pointed out that administrative issues vary from country to country and that from his knowledge, grants should be registered as part of the national financial treasury.

With regard to the commitment from the countries involved in the project, the Project Coordinator stated that he had letters from Costa Rica and Colombia but that the details need to be worked out, maintaining the commitment previously made, and that the interpretation of cash and in-kind contribution is understood so as to be clear on determining input. He recalled previous discussions held with the countries to this effect and reminded Nicaragua of the need to make a commitment for co-financing.

Mr. Ruiz from CropLife stated that CropLife will provide cash and in-kind contribution. The in-kind contribution would include training material and the time of technical experts.

#### 5. Country National Coordinators' status reports on the coordination and administration at the national level

The participating countries did presentations on the status of the coordination and administration at the national level. The presenters were as follows: Mr. Helio Zamora (Nicaragua), Mr. Elidier Vargas (Costa Rica) and Mr. Cesar Buitrago (Colombia).

##### 5.1. Nicaragua

Mr. Zamora presented on the work of MARENA. He stated that between 2005 and 2006, Nicaragua (MARENA) developed a series of activities and publications on chemical safety especially within the framework of Persistent Organic Contaminants, among others, with other institutions and organisms. These activities have reinforced coordination between government institutions (especially with the agriculture-, health-, work- and transport sectors), education and the civil society. The National Policy for the Integrated Management of Dangerous Substances and Residues has been made official and diagnostics for the elimination of outdated and obsolete pesticides from contaminated sites and other hazardous chemicals were also developed. A communication strategy, proposals for the reform of the pesticides regulation and also the capacities and needs of the country on chemical safety were also developed as well as a National Plan for the Application of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants with specific focus on chemical safety for good agricultural practices, improved environmental practices and better technologies. Nicaragua is now at an advanced stage with regard to chemical safety to integrate the topic and the activities in the country's national development plan.

During his presentation, Mr. Zamora handed out two (2) publications published by the Ministry of Environment. He concluded his presentation by emphasizing the need for bringing the project up-to-date since a long period has elapsed since its formulation. He also mentioned the meetings of the NCC that have been held and named some of the NCC members.

## 5.2. Costa Rica

Mr. Vargas briefly presented the structure of the project unit within the Ministry of Environment and the composition of the NCC in Costa Rica. He then gave more details on the areas per crop and the use of pesticides in Costa Rica. He indicated that the area of several important crops might reduce in the near future and the area grown with other crops (e.g. pineapple) is increasing very fast. He concluded his presentation stating that it would be very convenient to have market-oriented projects that also consider production costs.

After Mr. Vargas' presentation the UNEP-DGEF participant, Mr. Betlem, pointed out to the meeting that there are three (3) years of practical budget implementation (November 2005 to November 2008) and then announced that the project extension would be granted until November 2009, since no activities had been in place from November 2005 to November 2006; hence no money from the budget had been spent during the first project year.

The Coordinator of UNEP-CAR/RCU highlighted the need to establish partnership opportunities and to clarify the time frame so that the project may start off fully grounded.

## 5.3. Colombia

Mr. Cesar Buitrago presented on the institutional framework in Colombia for the execution of the project. He mentioned the institutions that were involved in the National Committee and gave information on the responsibilities and major activities of each institution. He informed the meeting on previous and ongoing projects that are related to the present project and gave some details on the regulations that govern pesticide management in Colombia. He ended his presentation with a short summary of the action plan Colombia proposed during the PDF phase.

Following Mr. Buitrago's presentation, Mr. Betlem from UNEP-DGEF highlighted that detailed baseline information should be included in the workplan of the countries during the first year in order to monitor global project advances over 4 years and a longer period of time. This baseline information should include data such as the areas that are grown for each crop, the amount and types of pesticides used per crop, and the methods of application. The aim of the project is to reduce pesticide use as well as reduce pesticide run-off to the sea. There is also the need to concentrate on changes in the type of pesticides used.

Mr. Zamora outlined some of the baseline work that had been done in Nicaragua in terms of pesticides used and approximations of the extent of run-off. He further recommended the importance of the exchange of information on pesticide monitoring and lessons learnt among the participating countries.

Mr. Cooman emphasized that the exchange of information is one of the objectives of the project including the development of a web page that would facilitate the exchange of information of the coastal monitoring program between all stakeholders, as well as partners from the industry. He also added that Costa Rica and Nicaragua could benefit from the advances of the coastal monitoring programme that had been put in place in Colombia by INVEMAR.

Mr. Ruiz emphasized the importance of promoting sustainable agricultural practices and stated that one has to be careful not to overestimate runoff and coral damage caused by pesticides. He used the example of the ICRAN-MAR project and the low level of pesticide residues detected thus far. He also mentioned the knowledge being acquired in various projects and the importance of applying new norms and standards in pesticide use, including the development of new pesticides with lower environmental impact.

Mr. Vargas reinforced the importance of the criteria to be used in priority setting in the selection of pilot projects, crops, pesticides and technologies to be used. He further outlined that there were good

experiences at the local level which could be shared and made available to other countries. He then highlighted the importance of working closely with and understanding the needs of the producers and private sector, especially if it involves changes in practices and technologies. Mr. Cooman pointed out that these remarks are valid and that they were considered in the terms of reference of the demo-projects which will be presented on Friday.

#### 6. Related UNEP project experiences

Mr. Betlem declined the offer of making a presentation on GEF and UNEP-DGEF and requested that one hour be allotted to him at the next steering committee meeting to elaborate on the GEF strategy within UNEP.

Mr. Corbin presented the AMEP subprogramme of UNEP-CAR/RCU and elaborated on the IWCAM project. He mentioned the lessons learnt from the IWCAM project as it has several similarities to the present project in terms of the many challenges faced. Mr. Corbin made special emphasis on the strong ownership that is required from the participating countries in order to have successful project implementation and sustainability in the achievements.

Mr. Mario Piedra from EARTH University then presented on the Small Grants Project for Agricultural Best Management Practices. He presented the objectives, the mechanisms used for project implementation and the results obtained so far.

Mr. Vargas queried how sufficient was the available budget (\$5,000) for each demo project in the Small Grants Program. Mr. Piedra responded by stating that it was \$7,000 dollars with no overheads involved, and that the \$5,000 dollars is to support the site.

Mr. Piedra added that the UNEP paperwork was too complicated for a \$5,000 project and Mr. Andrade responded by stating that he could evaluate to see how the process can be simplified and how to increase the value of the grants.

The CropLife participant related his experience and lessons that could be used (e.g. identifying where there are problems with farmers who do not want to change the plant protection products that are used).

Mr. Piedra pointed out that the more people exposed to what is being done, it will bring more credibility to the work.

At the end of the first day of the meeting, the participants were asked to read the documents in preparation for discussions the following day.



## DAY 2

### 7. Presentation of invited agencies: CropLife Latin America

The CropLife participant, Mr. Ruiz, thanked UNEP-CAR/RCU for the opportunity to participate in the meeting. He briefly presented the objective and scope of CropLife Latin America and then did a presentation on the measures his organization has taken with regard to research, production and distribution of products that would help growers to be more sustainable. Mr. Ruiz commented on the strengths and experiences of CropLife in the field of pesticide management training programmes. He also presented the positive experiences from the empty container recycling program. Mr. Ruiz ended his presentation offering CropLife's experience, trainers and training materials as an input for the project.

Mr. Garcia asked why Nicaragua was not included in the empty container management programme based on Mr. Ruiz's presentation and was told that it was due to lack of interest of their part.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Ruiz for his presentation and opened the floor for questions.

The UNEP-CAR/RCU Coordinator then thanked Mr. Ruiz for the presentation and the time taken to participate in the meeting. He found the containers recycling programme quite interesting and also mentioned the US\$100,000 the project will receive as a cash contribution from CropLife.

Mr. Vargas noted that it is an individual responsibility to promote sustainable development in their respective countries and that making money cannot be separated from achieving sustainability. He stated that the society is critical; it demands the responsible use of products and the production of safe food. He also stated that it is necessary to work with scientists and technicians with an objective approach to achieving goals, improving practices of the producers of pesticides.

Ms. Jimenez expressed her satisfaction for Mr. Ruiz's participation and that she learnt a lot about the various programmes that have been implemented regarding pesticide management.

The country participants questioned if they could get assistance from CropLife. Mr. Ruiz explained that US\$100,000 is available in the budget for assistance for the reproduction of training material and that they have experienced trainers available.

### 8. Project work program

The Project Coordinator first presented the global expected outcomes. Then he divided the presentation of the workplan in three parts (project components): project coordination; demo projects; and strengthening of the capacity to reduce pesticide runoff (Annex III). He presented the activities that are part of the approved workplan and the expected results for each component. He then informed the participants that modifications to the activities or to the time frame are possible. He also mentioned that a new Logical Framework Matrix will be done for the project based on the recommendations of this PSC meeting.

#### 8.1. Project Coordination

Mr. Cooman presented the projected activities and results related to project coordination. The only recommendation he gave was that there should be flexibility in the organization of missions to the countries.

Ms. Bochno expressed doubts about the PSC, wanting to know if the president of the PSC also has specific functions as President in between PSC meetings. Mr. Zamora explained that his role as President of the meeting ends at the end of the meeting.

The participants wanted to know if the National Coordination would be paid by the project. Mr. Cooman stated that the project was not specific in this regard but that it is expected as counterpart from the countries. He also pointed out that if the project finances the national coordinator there would be more support at the national level to attend to the different aspects of the project. On the other hand, if this post is financed by the project and this person leaves the organization, then this would be a loss of expertise which would not contribute to the sustainability of the project.

Mr. Canales expressed his view that the government has no funds for paying a dedicated project coordinator and that this should be financed by the project and that a commission be set up to have a midterm review of the project's activities and budget.

Mr. Cooman pointed out that the steering committee will have the opportunity to review the project and that it is expected that the country reports will show the progress. Also, there will be visits from himself and a possible midterm review by Mr. Betlem.

Mr. Betlem mentioned that country delegates should not pressure the project by asking for payment for the national coordinators; travel will be covered but not payment for services. He also pointed out that being coordinator is a commitment from the countries and that it should be reflected as co-financing in their budget.

Mr. Piedra offered the services of his institution (Earth University) to Costa Rica for the coordination of the NCC, thereby removing the responsibility from the ministry. He also offered the facilities of his institution for the convening of meetings of the National Coordinating Committee.

Mr. Cooman mentioned that Earth University's contribution was projected in Costa Rica's co-financing budget, which is the only detailed one.

Mr. Zamora stated that Nicaragua does not have the possibility that Costa Rica has to have internal support for project coordination and that it should be defined now.

Mr. Buitrago mentioned that the efforts of the ministry are important and to make the project more viable a coordinator is needed at any stage of the project. He also added that additional resources should be sought to hire a coordinator or finance the post from the project.

Mr. Cooman passed this issue to Mr. Betlem who said that it is not advisable to pay the project coordinator from the budget, reinforcing that it should be an in-kind contribution from the respective governments. He also mentioned that it is not feasible to obtain additional GEF-funding for coordination.

Mr. Cooman however questioned whether it would be feasible to add a new budget line. Mr. Betlem answered yes, it would be possible to add a new budget line but not more money. The funds for this new budget line would have to come from other budget lines.

Mr. Vargas added that the NCs are actually working full time for a ministry and that the project coordination is the responsibility of the ministry. Since it is not feasible to hire a new person, work overload would make the countries more and more inefficient. He does not expect the coordinator to be paid since in his country public officials are banned from earning extra income. He however stated that it is necessary to hire support services to assist in performing tasks.

Mr. Buitrago agreed that resources should be provided for supporting the coordination at the national level, without paying for the coordinator as such.

Mr. Zamora supported the idea and mentioned that support for the daily operations for the setting up and management of the project is required.

Mr. Canales mentioned that it is very important to sort this out. He pointed out that the coordination of the project is done by the government through the Ministry of Environment, and that it is correct to pay someone to support the official (the coordinator) which would be a smaller cost.

Mr. Cooman added that this person should be a professional with at least a few years of experience and should generate knowledge throughout the lifetime of the project. In light of the above, this person could be considered as a national consultant, integrating activities and expertise on the national level.

Mr. Buitrago said that it should be made clear that the resources available are not for the services of the national coordinator nor a secretary.

Ms. Yatagai took note of all that was said and informed the meeting that bilateral meetings could be held to generate ideas on how to financially assist the countries in reducing the workload.

Mr. Garcia also proposed that a budget be established to cover the services of specialists to work on specific topics, for e.g. 6 months out of the year, to reduce the coordinator's workload.

Mr. Cooman again mentioned that "counterpart" (country co-financing) covers the coordinator and that discussions will be held to address the needs of the coordinator to enable him/her to carry out the project. He informed the meeting that the project contemplates advisory panels and consultants. It is expected that the advisory panels will carry out certain assignments such as the reviewing of documents.

The Chairman handed over to Mr. Ruiz to make brief observations before he left the meeting. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity of working together. He wanted to recommend reducing the scope of the Crop Certification Program since currently, growers and consumers are already overwhelmed by quality seals, creating problems for growers. He also informed the meeting that Croplife is willing to help with the train-the-trainers programme and that Croplife can also provide training materials for reproduction.

In continuing his presentation Mr. Cooman stated that the countries should make a proposal to UNEP-CAR/RCU, stating their expectations regarding the functions and financial aid required for assisting the National Coordinators. At the same time, the countries should clarify the budget for the country's counterparts and make a commitment. A June 30 deadline was agreed upon for the submission of this information.

## 8.2. Demonstration projects

Mr. Cooman presented the projected activities and expected results related to the demo projects. He recommended that:

- the training in monitoring and assessment (item 2.1.2 of the workplan) be postponed 2 to 3 months, until after the respective protocols have been developed
- the train-the-trainer programme (3.1.3) be considered part of the demo-projects, giving the implementing agencies responsibility in the organization of these training programs;

Mr. Vargas expressed his concern with regards to the late start of the field activities. He suggested that these should start sooner and the knowledge acquired from this be transferred to the growers.

Mr. Cooman reminded the countries that the approval of pilot farms was scheduled to take place during the PSC meeting to be held during the last quarter of this year.

Mr. Vargas pointed out that since persons will be trained for the demonstration projects, they will be the basis for transferring the knowledge. He added that if the small and medium growers are not involved in pesticides runoff they should not be considered for the demo projects.

Mr. Betlem indicated that a baseline study is to be done during the first year as well as establishment of a monitoring and evaluation plan. He indicated that the baseline should be established in the workplan. A baseline evaluation was also included for the demonstration projects.

Mr. Vargas sought clarification on the baseline evaluations. Mr. Cooman reemphasized that instead of only having a baseline of the demo project, there should be one for the project in general.

### 8.3. Strengthening of the capacity to reduce pesticide runoff

Mr. Cooman provided a summary of the activities projected in this component, especially as it relates to adopting best management practices in conformity with new trading requirements. His recommendations were as follows:

- include in the study of legislative and political reforms the evaluation of mechanisms to enforce the legal frameworks;
- reduce the scope of the Crop Certification Program, not establishing a new Crop Certification Programme but giving support to existing or starting crop certification programmes;
- consider the train-the-trainer programme (3.1.3) part of the demo-projects;
- start with the regional coastal monitoring programme in the beginning of the second project year, since important advances have been made in coastal monitoring in Colombia.
- consider the case studies (3.2.1) as formal evaluations of the progress and impact of the demo projects and part of the demo projects component, in the same way as there is an item for baseline monitoring

The participants agreed with the suggestions and the item on case studies would be moved from the third component to the demo projects' section. Information was provided on how the proposed project website would assist in information dissemination.

Mr. Buitrago expressed support for the suggestion to analyze and support existing Crop Certification Programmes as a replacement for the establishment of a new Crop Certification Programme. He also supported the possibility that the regional coastal monitoring programme could begin earlier but an assessment of each country is needed to determine the capacity and to evaluate the existing laboratories. He also suggested that during the first year of the project a group of experts from the respective institutions from the participating countries should start working on the design of this regional monitoring program.

Mr. Zamora raised questions related to laboratory accreditation. He mentioned that some labs are accredited to monitor water but that the levels of capacity differ from country to country. It was not clear what certification for the demo projects referred to. The clarification provided was that the certification referred to training, crops and best practices while accreditation was for the laboratories.

Mr. Vargas highlighted that crop certification is a complex process, depending heavily on growers involved and the trading opportunities. He suggested that since certification schemes already exist, efforts could be focused elsewhere. Perhaps one might wish to focus on added value from an environmental perspective.

Mr. Corbin explained that the rationale for including the case study in the third component was to emphasize the need for highlighting the lessons learnt. He stated that experiences should be documented

over the life of the project and not just compiled by a consultant at the end of the study. Consideration could be given to having representatives of the Agencies responsible for executing Demo Projects to be also representatives of National Coordinating Committees.

#### 9. Project budget

A detailed description of the budget allocations to each budget line was provided in both UNEP and GEF Formats (Annex IV). The Project coordinator highlighted the differences between UNEP and GEF figures for demo projects. He then proposed a revised budget with slight differences, associated with the 8% overhead costs of the UNEP-CAR/RCU as the executing agency which had been underestimated in the original budgets. Mr. Cooman then proceeded to present in more detail the original and proposed budgets for consultants, sub-contracts (demo projects and coastal monitoring), and meetings and conferences. He explained that the remaining budget items refer to costs that need not be discussed, such as the items that cover coordination and the UNEP-CAR/RCU overhead costs.

It was recommended that the two budget items for coastal monitoring could be combined into a single item. There was a proposal to include in the consultants budget an additional line for national consultants for the provision of additional technical and, as appropriate, administrative support to the national coordinator for the project.

Ms. Yatagai suggested that no new budget line should be created at this time but that some flexibility should be maintained on how to provide support for national coordination on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Betlem confirmed that countries would be given until June 30th to provide detailed proposals on monies that may be required for additional technical support so that an evaluation can be made of the implications for the budget.

It was further agreed that the funds allocated for demo projects should not be reduced to support national coordination. Emphasis was made that additional funding would not be available and that funds would have to be reallocated from existing activities without compromising the objectives of the projects. It was also agreed to avoid, as much as possible, reducing the allocation for coastal monitoring to support national coordination.

A question was raised on which budget lines were cast in stone and where some flexibility was allowed. It was clarified that the budget lines with some flexibility would be the ones that support the activities in the countries: consultants, sub-contracts and meetings (partially). Extensive discussions were held on how some of the regional activities could be done and to ensure equity in distribution of funding.

It was pointed out that if countries present proposals for budgets for assisting the national coordination, they should also indicate where to reduce budget allocations, considering that additional monies cannot be generated for these expenses; money for support has to come from budget lines with flexibility.

#### 10. Terms of reference for demo projects

The Project coordinator presented a draft with terms of reference for the selection of demo projects (Annex V). The presentation included the factors to be considered for the selection of the sectors and regions towards which the demo projects should be directed in each country. Next, he presented basic technical terms of reference, which included some details on the management of the demo projects and the acquisition of information in these projects. He then gave some suggestions on the training of the people involved in the demo projects and on the selection of implementing agencies. Here he highlighted the need to foster strategic alliances between farmers' associations and agronomical research and development organizations.

The countries were encouraged to produce proposals by the next steering committee. He finished his presentation by informing the meeting of some administrative guidelines, detailing that the duration of the demo project will be 2 years and that the eligible and non-eligible aspects will have to be defined. He highlighted some expenses that should or should not be permitted under the demo projects, considering that the project funds should only cover the incremental costs of implementing and monitoring innovative practices on existing farms.

Mr. Vargas mentioned that it is necessary to point out what can or cannot be financed. Mr. Betlem clarified by stating that GEF funds are used for achieving incremental benefits and that funding an additional activity to achieve less pesticide runoff may be possible. He also added that in order to apply best practices the organizations need to invest and that potential co-funding from entities for activities within the project would be good.

A question was raised on what timeframe can be used for the crops selected for use in the demo projects. The response was that two deadlines are necessary, one for the selection of sectors by the National Committees and another for comments on the draft TOR.

Mr. Vargas mentioned that this process would take some time so as not to impose on the persons present. The NCCs first have to be formed and then the test applied. He pointed out that June 30<sup>th</sup> was the deadline given for proposal for the crops (filling out the decision matrix). Since this should be done in agreement with the other NCCs, a May 30 deadline would be convenient for having the draft TOR for demo projects reviewed.

Mr. Garcia questioned what would happen when the selected crops are seasonal and not perennials. He asked if the project would monitor and evaluate one agricultural cycle for these cases. It was clarified that the demo projects should consider real and relevant cases and crops that can cause impact, independently of whether they are perennials or not. If a crop is significant and is only seasonal it should be considered within the project. The demo projects should thus have a farming-systems approach, evaluating consecutive growing cycles of the same or different crops.

It was agreed that due to the lack of time, the countries would send their remarks to the Project Coordinator on the presented document before the end of May and that the NCCs should make a pre-selection of subsectors (crops) before the end of June.

#### 11. Terms of reference of the advisory panels

Mr. Cooman presented the draft terms of reference of the advisory panels (Annex VI), one panel for the monitoring of the demo projects and one panel for training and education. He highlighted the responsibilities of the various panels, how members should be selected and how their activities should be carried out. He recommended that the Project Coordinator or one of the National Coordinators should attend the meetings and report to the Project Steering Committee. He concluded his presentation by stating that the panel for monitoring should produce a detailed guide for the acquisition of agricultural, socio-economical and environmental data for the demo-projects; the panel for training and education should produce a protocol for the agronomic management of the demonstration plots and the related training programme.

It was mentioned that advisory panels should begin their activities before the next PSC meeting, as this would facilitate the development of the demo projects.

It was mentioned that payment would be provided for certain activities such as consultants for extensive document preparation, but not payment to panel members for document revision and general recommendations.

Mr. Vargas pointed out that the panels would be national and that there is a cost related to the meetings. On the local level it is possible that there are experts from whom support can be requested, however payment is required.

Mr. Zamora pointed out that if a consultant were to be hired it would be a consultant for a specific activity and specific outcome.

There were discussions regarding the payment of the panel of experts.

Mr. Corbin explained the reason for having an unpaid panel of experts. The idea was not to have a panel of experts working together, but to establish it as a technical advisory group and someone from the group should be dedicated to doing the first draft and seek advice and guidance from a technical expert. He reminded the meeting that funding was not available for paying a series of experts, as this would otherwise mean that they are a series of consultants. Considerations however can be made for transportation and other costs.

On the issue of monitoring standards, Mr. Piedra pointed out that they do not depend on each country, they are already established by the various entities (e.g. in the field of agricultural best management practices). He stated that it would not be efficient to have panels working on the documents and that it would be much better if one entity such as Earth, could have the functions of the advisory panel and draft the required methodologies.

Mr. Vargas mentioned that Earth's offer was very interesting and that space should be given for a country's participation. He requested the postponement of discussion and that the package offered by Earth be considered.

It was agreed to put together the two panels of 6 experts each, in order to select a company, university or expert that would draft the required methodologies. The panel would also follow-up the selected consultants.

Mr. Buitrago also endorsed the proposal from EARTH. An entity that has expertise in research and development should be in charge of drafting the monitoring protocols and the management and training programme required for the demo projects.

It was agreed that 31st May would be the deadline for the receipt of comments on the TORs and for the proposal of experts for the advisory panels by UNEP-CAR/RCU.

## 12. Technical presentations from the delegates from the Ministries of Agriculture

The participating countries did presentations on their agricultural sector and policies. The presenters were as follows: Ms. Elzbieta Bochno (Colombia), Ms. Aura Jimenez (Costa Rica) and Mr. Rolando Garcia (Nicaragua).

### 12.1. Colombia

Ms. Bochno from Colombia presented on the agricultural sector of Colombia with regard to the management of pesticides and reduction of pesticides run-off. The presentation highlighted the objectives

of the Ministry and the organizational structure of the agricultural sector; the progress and challenges of the Colombian agricultural policy, and progress made in the management of pesticide, regulatory and organizational frameworks, promotion of good agricultural practices and ecological agriculture. She concluded her presentation by informing the meeting that the NCC in Colombia has met and did a pre-selection of sectors for the demo projects but that this selection will be reviewed, considering the TOR for demo projects discussed during the meeting.

Discussions followed relating to the possibilities of sharing information and experiences in each country on specific topics of relevance and concern.

### 12.2. Costa Rica

Ms. Jimenez provided an overview of Costa Rica's national agricultural development plan (2006-2010), stating that environmental sustainability is being considered in this plan. She then provided information on the different sectors within the agricultural sector, making specific mention of the regional differences in agricultural cultivation. She briefly explained the status of Good Agricultural Practices in the different sectors, stating the interest on the substitution of existing pesticides with less toxic and less persistent ones but with equal or greater effectiveness. She indicated that pilot projects should attempt to assess this concern.

### 12.3. Nicaragua

Mr. Garcia from Nicaragua, during his presentation, highlighted the Pesticides Law 274 which establishes the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest as the Regulatory Body for all the activities related to the import, export, distribution, sale, use and handling and the destruction of pesticides. This law establishes the inter-institutional coordination with the Ministries of Health, Environment, Transport, Work, Duty, as well as with the producers, agriculturists, agrochemicals industry and the civil society. One of the strategies of the government is to promote agricultural production to reduce hunger among the unprotected populations in the zones far away in the Atlantic Region, as long as it is sustainable with the environment in general. In order to achieve this, Good Agricultural and Livestock Practices are being encouraged.

## 13. Any Other Business

### 13.1. Press Release

Several suggestions were made regarding the draft press release (Annex VII). Mr. Ruiz from Croplife had left a written suggestion to indicate that "pesticides could threaten coral reefs", instead of "pesticides are threatening coral reefs". Other minor suggestions were included. The Project Coordinator will revise the press release for distribution to the National Coordinators, as soon as GEF approves the text.

### 13.2. Next PSC meeting

Mr. Andrade highlighted the importance of having countries host the next PSC Meetings. Mr. Betlem mentioned that it would be convenient to have the next PSC meeting in Kingston since by October there will still be no results to show, having then 3 more meetings to distribute among the countries. Mr. Andrade gave some arguments for having the PSC meetings outside of Jamaica. It was then agreed to have the next meeting in one of the participating countries.

Mr. Andrade highlighted the importance of maintaining industry representatives participating in the PSC meetings. Colombia tentatively agreed to host the next PSC meeting. It was suggested that future PSC meetings incorporate a field visit to relevant areas. The probable date for the next PSC meeting is October 2007.



It was agreed that Panama could participate in the PSCs as observer and at their expense. It was also agreed that opportunities be made available to ensure that Panama benefits from some of the capacity building, training and transfer of best practices, lessons learnt and technology.

#### 14. Closing of the meeting

At 6:45 pm, the Chairman of the meeting handed over to the UNEP-CAR/RCU coordinator to make some concluding remarks.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Andrade reminded the meeting that the project is now moving from the preparatory phase to actions. He recognized the participation of every person and the work of the Project Coordinator. He thanked Mr. Betlem and all staff of UNEP-CAR/RCU and also acknowledged the participation of the Government of Panama. He also recognized the continued support of CropLife and reinforced the importance of the contributions to UNEP-CAR/RCU. Information on the upcoming 4th LBS ISTAC Meeting was provided.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Betlem informed the countries that their ownership and contribution is necessary for the growth of the project. He was pleased that Panama would be included in the further project activities. He thanked the interpreters for their work.

The Meeting was formally concluded at 7:00 pm.