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## **REPORT ON SANBIO NETWORK DIRECTOR'S VISIT SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL & CONSERVATION SCIENCES (SBCS) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (UKZN), DURBAN, RSA**

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**Meeting Held at Prof. Pat Berjak's Office at UKZN 18<sup>th</sup> April  
2008**

### **Attendance:**

Pat Berjak  
Norman Pammenter  
Sershen Naidoo  
Luke Mumba

### **Welcome Remarks**

Pat welcomed Luke to the University and introduced the participants at the meeting. In response, Luke thanked Pat for accepting to host him at very short notice in spite of her very busy schedule. He observed that this was a clear testimony of Pat's commitment to the SANBio ideals and to the conservation of plant genetic resources in particular.

He highlighted the purpose of his visit as twofold;

- It was a follow up to the discussion he held last year on developing a regional project on Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources including

DNA banking. This was in line with the SANBio Business Plan which has a flagship Project on the Enhancement of gene banking capabilities in Southern Africa. The focus of the project will be on capacity building, R & D and technological innovation.

- The visit was also part his visits to the SANBio region to familiarise himself with the work that stakeholders institutions were doing in biosciences and to forge links among network countries.

## **Background**

Luke informed the meeting that last year he held two meetings with Pat at which the two discussed the prospects of developing a regional project on Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources. This would be within the context of the SANBio Business Plan which has a project on the enhancement of gene banking capabilities in the Southern African region. One of the things the SANBio Secretariat did was to submit a concept note to the Department of Science & Technology in South Africa (DST) for a grant 'Project Development Fund for a Regional Project on the Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources including DNA Banking. An amount of approximately R200 000 was approved in March 2008. The project is for a 1 year period.

Given this modest grant, how do we go about producing a 5 year project proposal with a regional focus and which is as inclusive of activities in the region as possible.

In this connection the purpose of Luke's visit was to seek inputs and advice in terms of how we can proceed with developing such a Regional Project. He was hopeful that the meeting would come up with some concrete steps or modalities and time frame for achieving this purpose.

He also noted that following last year's meetings Pat developed a questionnaire which could be used in a survey of gene banking facilities and capabilities in the region. Luke's view was that this work needed to be taken forward so that the outputs of the survey could make an input to the bigger picture of developing a Regional Project Proposal.

## **Decisions**

1. Constitute a task team of 8 experts to draft proposal. Team members to include :

Prof. Pat Berjak	UKZN
Mr. Sershen Naidoo	UKZN
Ms Thandie Lupupa	SPGRC
Mr. Barnabas Kapange	SPGRC

Prof. Jane Morris  
Dr. Andre Lezar  
Representative from  
Representative from

University of Pretoria  
ARC  
NPGRC  
NPGRC

2. Luke to consult with the SPGRC to see if the Acting Director could suggest one or two more names from the NPGRCs in the region to be part of the task team.
3. Network Director to draft letter of appointment to be signed by ABI Coordinator.
4. Request SPGR to Coordinate drafting of the Proposal and UKZN to be Co-ordinate for the exercise.
5. Network Director to draft TOR for the TT to be shared with Pat.
6. Task team to hold its first meeting from 2-3 June, 2008 at UKZN. TT members to arrive in Durban on 1<sup>st</sup> June and depart on 4<sup>th</sup>.
7. Task force members to be requested to respond to the survey Instrument and to make a short presentation at the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting. These submissions will form an input to the proposal.
8. Network Director to prepare a budget for the Project development process to cover, travel, accommodation and per diems for the TT and production of the report.
9. Task Team to meet twice. First meeting in June and the second meeting in September to consider and adopt project proposal. In between, the TT will interact through emails.
10. Network Director's Office to liaise with Prof Berjak on logistics for the first meeting.
11. Second meeting to be held at the SPGRC to afford TT members an opportunity to visit the facilities there.
12. Final proposal document to be submitted to DST in September so that it is in time for the 2009/10 Financial Year.

## **Conducted Tour Laboratory facilities and Research Projects**

- Conducted tour of postgraduate student projects, laboratory, glasshouse and lecture facilities. The research group has 26 post-graduate students (at Honours, M.Sc. and Ph.D. levels) looking at various aspects of seed biology including: cryo-preservation, biochemistry, physiology, biotechnology, and Micropropagation.
- Attended a laboratory session of third year students on seed biology.

The tour and discussions served to confirm that the facilities, expertise and appropriate modules make the SBCS at the UKZN the appropriate centre for training at all levels for capacity in the theory and practice of plant germplasm and its conservation.

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