

Executive Report of the CETAF 52nd General Assembly November 23-24, 2022, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, Israel

Michelle Price, CETAF Vice-President & Ana Casino, CETAF Executive Director

The meeting began with a welcome address from the former Rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Prof. Barak Medina, who highlighted the importance of natural history collections in the biodiversity loss challenge. He stressed the key importance of CETAF in uniting natural history institutions and the strength of the current network, and especially its impact in raising awareness. Prof. Gila Kahila Bar-Gal, Director, then gave a brief history of the National Natural History Museum of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and its diverse research programme and teaching activities. The institution was founded in the early 1920's and although its collections are relatively recent, they are important for understanding biodiversity as they hold specimens of reference from the region that is the continental bridge between Europe and Asia.

The meeting was formally opened at 9:30 AM by Michelle Price (CJB Geneva: CETAF Vice-President, acting President). A total of 29 of 41 voting members were present or represented at the start of the General Assembly (GA). Note: 1 voting member joined the GA at 10:25.

The following items were approved in Session 1, CETAF Business and Annual reporting:

- The Agenda for CETAF52 (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour),
- The Records (minutes and annexes) of the CETAF51 meeting hosted by the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum on the 11 and 12 May 2022 - Minutes and Annexes 1-6 available in the meeting package (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour),
- CETAF Financial report from the first 3 trimesters of 2022 (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour)
- CETAF Financial procedures – the extension of the CETAF Business Model and associated Membership Fees for 1 year (until Autumn 2023) (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour),
- CETAF Budget proposal for 2023 - the separation of the current contingency amount into two separate budget lines was requested (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour),
- CETAF Bylaws. 1. Amendment of the Associate membership duration from 2 to 3 years (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour); and 2. Inclusion of the threshold for authorised financial expenditures of 10,000 Euros by the Executive Director (29 votes cast, 29 votes in favour).

The GA agreed that the CETAF EC would treat the comments on the Bylaws submitted on the standardisation of the affective periods of membership, and 2 issues raised from the floor, 1)

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indicate more clearly the difference between items that are approved already as part of EU funded projects and those that are approved via the CETAF GA (Art. 10); and 2) include indications on the submission term of items in advance of meetings (Art. 8). The final text will be uploaded for final consultation (4 weeks) and submitted for intersessional approval.

- Discharge of the Executive Committee (30 votes cast, 30 votes in favour)

The CETAF General Secretariat update (May 2022- Nov 2022) detailed the work carried out under three main axes: **1) Administration**, **2) Operations of project and initiatives**, and **3) Strategic actions**. The Secretariat was congratulated for its work and representation activities on behalf of CETAF.

The **CETAF Elections (2023-2027)** were opened during the CETAF 51 meeting. Nominations are sought for the 4 legal positions (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) and 4 general member positions. The deadline for nominations is the **31 December 2022**. Nominations should be sent to the CETAF EC Secretary, Gila Kahila Bar-Gal (gila.kahila@mail.huji.ac.il) of NNHC Jerusalem. The list of nominees will be sent to the membership on the 31 January 2023 and the elections will be held in the spring of 2023 at CETAF 53. The membership was encouraged to nominate motivated people, with strategic thinking capabilities, who are willing to engage time and effort for CETAF and the CETAF community.

Updating on CETAF activities and CETAF linked projects included presentations on the following:

The **CETAF E-SCoRe** award in 2023 will be awarded to PhD students and from here on the awards will alternate between Postdocs and PhD students. The 4th edition was officially launched, with details to be sent via email and made available via the CETAF website.

The CETAF community EU funded project **Transforming European Taxonomy through Training Research and Innovations (TETTRIS)** [HORIZON IA Innovation Action under HE-CL6-2022-BIODIV 01-02: Biodiversity and ecosystem services] will start on the 1 December 2022 (until May 2026) under the technical coordination of CETAF and the financial coordination of RBINS. The Kick Off meeting will be held on the 18-20 January 2023 in RBINS, Brussels. The programme will include Colombe Warin, the TETTRIS project officer from the European Commission, Gilles Doignon (DG Env) and Vujadin Kovacevic (DG Env). The project has a 6 Mi€ budget and will run for 38 months. It will include third party projects in support of taxonomic capacity building and information on this will be communicated to CETAF member institutions in upcoming CETAF GA' or via the CETAF mailing list.

Presentations were given on recent achievements by CETAF Working Groups, initiatives or

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related projects, as follows:

e-Publishing group – L. Bénichou, MNHN Paris: This group has been very active and has focused on developing a series of taxonomy publishing Best Practices: 1) Joint statement on best practices for the citation of authorities of scientific names in taxonomy by CETAF, SPNHC and BHL. Benichou et al., 2022. RIO 8: e94338. <https://riojournal.com/article/94338/>, and 2) Recommendations for use of annotations and persistent identifiers in taxonomy and biodiversity publishing. Agosti et al., 2022. RIO 8: e97374. <https://riojournal.com/article/97374/>.

Scientific Research Group – G. Kahila Bar-Gal, NNHC Jerusalem: The group have launched a taxonomy expertise survey (https://darwin.naturalsciences.be/cetaf_service/dest_survey.html) – linked to the Catalogue of Life backbone – that aims to give an overview of expertise within CETAF in order to support the development of the CETAF Research Agenda, and the future activities of the group. Under the leadership of Katrin Vohland (NHM Vienna), the group submitted a COST Action Inno-Tax for Biodiversity that supports the networking of the community within the framework of the TETTRI's project.

CETAF training platform DEST – C. Voreadou, NHM Crete: The Distributed European School of Taxonomy (DEST) initiative is under new leadership and is in a phase of transition with its new strategy being developed, its new logo introduced, its new webpages launched (<https://cetaf.org/dest/>) and its mission established. The CETAF DEST offers education and training opportunities to students and professionals from any nationality who are studying, working or interested in the field of taxonomy, biodiversity, geodiversity and conservation. The DEST platform is now offering a wide range of training in three main programmes 1) Modern taxonomy; 2) Expert-in-training, and 3) Collection management. Courses are both online, physical and mixed courses. CETAF member institutions are encouraged to communicate on DEST and to join the growing DEST community by offering courses or training opportunities via the platform.

European Red List of Taxonomists (EU Service Contractor Pensoft; Partners: IUCN and CETAF) – L. Penev: This initiative was about the: 1) Assessment of the taxonomic human resources in Europe with a focus on the EU - for insects; 2) Analysis of the status quo, trends and threats by country and by insect order; 3) Proposing recommendations for improvement and development of taxonomy to the EC and 4) Communication and dissemination addressing institutions, policy makers, taxonomists & society. The report has just been published (<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/14039058-75ed-11ed-9887-01aa75ed71a1/language-en> or <https://doi.org/10.2779/364246>) and further information is available through the following link: <https://red-list-taxonomists.eu/>. A

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published copy of the report will be sent to each CETAF institution.

Biodiversity Community Integrated Knowledge Library (BiCIKL) – L. Penev (lead, Pensoft Publishers): The Horizon 2020 project Biodiversity Community Integrated Knowledge Library (BiCIKL) builds a new European community of key research infrastructures, researchers, citizen scientists and other stakeholders in biodiversity and life sciences. Together, the 14 partners will solidify open science practices by providing access to data, tools and services at each stage of and along the entire biodiversity research life cycle (specimens, sequences, taxonomic names, analytics, publications, biodiversity knowledge graph). BiCIKL has a special emphasis on biodiversity literature and develops new methods and workflows for semantic publishing and integrated access to harvesting, liberating, linking, and re-using of sub-article-level data extracted from the published content. The initiative is about **1)** Improved access to FAIR biodiversity data for both humans and computers bi-directional linking between RIs; **2)** Multi-directional linking and access across data domains; **3)** Testing workflows and linking mechanisms through Open Call TNA projects ; **4)** Design and building of the Biodiversity Knowledge Hub (BKH); and **5)** Building a new community of users. The key final outputs of BiCIKL is the Biodiversity Knowledge Hub (BKH), a one-stop portal, providing access to the BiCIKL services, tools and workflows, beyond the lifetime of the project. See <https://bicikl-project.eu/>) and articles under https://riojournal.com/topical_collection/105/.

Biodiversity Genomics Europe (BGE) (<https://biodiversitygenomics.eu/>) – D. Koureas (Naturalis). This initiative has just begun (3.5 years, 22 mi Euros) and will focus on unifying the initiatives BioScan Europe and ERGA and the scaling up of biodiversity discovery and modelling through mass-scale DNA-based approaches. The project builds on the existing networks for barcoding and genome sequencing, and on existing national investments in DNA-based monitoring and species descriptions, with the aim of uniting efforts towards the creation of a distributed and truly interconnected technical and social infrastructure for biodiversity genomics.

Session 2 was about **CETAF moving towards the future**. It focused on presenting different example of the roles CETAF has or may play in the biodiversity knowledge landscape. These roles are as a scientific advisor, as an information hub, as a recognized collaborator and as a service provider.

Scientific advisor; CETAF participates in a number of organisations or entities in this capacity (EU ABS Forum, CBD Scientific Partners, IPBES) where it relies on representation or expertise from within its bodies or membership. Based on the unique position of CETAF within Europe and its capacity to act as one voice for natural history institutions, natural history collections and collections centred research it may further develop this role as part of its transformative change.

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Information hub; an example of this was given using the CETAF European Initiatives Advisory Group. The group has changed its name to the **CETAF European Programme Advisory Group** and this group has drawn up **Guidelines** on how CETAF members may contact and engage with their National Contact Points (NCP's) in the context of Horizon Europe. These guidelines were created to raise awareness of NCP's among CETAF members; to encourage interaction with NCPs in the context of Horizon Europe programme; and to ensure benefits from strategic engagement with NCPs for the CETAF Community. This shows how dedicated individuals with specific expertise and contacts may channel information to members the CETAF. See: <https://cetafncpguidelines.my.canva.site/>.

Recognized collaborator; Hilde Eggermont from Biodiversa+ was invited to talk on potential collaborations with CETAF. **Biodiversa+** (presented in full at CETAF 51) invited CETAF to join it and become a recognized collaborator in the implementation of the Strategic Partnership for biodiversity monitoring in Europe. The CETAF EC will follow-up on this invitation.

Service provider; **PlutoF** – a collections data management platform, developed by Urmas Kõljalg and his team from NHM Estonia, was presented. PlutoF, if supported by the CETAF infrastructure, could become a service for small and medium sized collections. The meeting approved the creation of a CETAF collections data management platform working group to evaluate the PlutoF platform and other CMS's, and investigate integration into CETAF and long-term sustainability. See <https://plutof.ut.ee/>. The **CETAF DEST training platform** was presented in Session 1 and remains the unique European taxonomy training service. The **CETAF Registry of collections** is embedded in the CETAF website and is one of the key services to the community that will also contribute to the DiSSCo infrastructure by contributing reliable information on collections holding institutions. The collation of the data is ongoing and CETAF member institutions were invited to check and update their institutional information. See <https://cetaf.org/explore/search-by-collections/>.

Note: In link with transforming the way we communicate on biodiversity and the role of natural history museum's we should look at the "Nature Positive" approach that is being used to communicate on the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) to be adopted by the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) in December 2022.

On Day 2 of CETAF 52, hosted by the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History in Tel Aviv, Prof Tamar Dayan, Director, welcomed the participants and gave an overview of the founding and subsequent development of this young institution and its diverse collections, research, outreach and education activities.

In *Session 3*, a new perspective for CETAF, **CETAF Connect**, was presented in link with the

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creation of the new CETAF Business Plan. Reflections on the CETAF Business Plan by the CETAF EC were shown and a proposal from the CETAF EC on how to modify the functioning and form of the CETAF meetings alongside a plan for introducing transformative change were presented. A digital meeting (Business meeting, required for reporting under Belgian law) is proposed for the Spring for voting members and representatives, with a more dynamic and interactive physical meeting proposed for the Autumn, and an Advisory body composed of CETAF Directors convened when needed to deal with strategic questions and to meet with relevant partner institutions or policy makers. Under this new conceptual framework the participants identified strategic pillars, ambitions, actions and the means to achieve these, including the internal and external resources that may be needed. Results from the 2 breakout groups were presented during the meeting and will be compiled into a report by the coordinators for circulation after the meeting. The participants gave their approval of the CETAF Connect concept and encouraged the development of the Business Plan. The importance of having concrete and constructive contributions from all members to this process was stressed.

Session 4 focused on creating the framework for the **CETAF Research Agenda for European Natural History Institutions**. The workshops and outcomes from 2018 to 2021, with the formation of the CETAF Scientific Research Group, were outlined. Based on the cumulative outcomes and discussions held during the first meeting of the SciReg, attendees were invited to evaluate the themes that may frame the focus areas and activities to be contained within the CETAF Research Agenda. The groups also discussed topical or relevant issues that could be addressed and the activities that would take place under each one. Results from the 2 breakout groups were presented during the meeting and will be compiled into a report by the coordinators for circulation after the meeting. A task-force will be constituted to work on a preliminary draft for presentation at CETAF 53.

Results from the **CETAF 51 Think tank on the strategic pillars and topics for the CETAF strategy and strategic development plan 2025-2035** were presented. It is important for CETAF to develop its new strategic framework at this stage to ensure the adequacy of the business plan and to align ambitions, expectations and objectives with the financial situation. The new CETAF strategy will be under the responsibility of the new CETAF EC and will come into effect in the autumn of 2025.

The next CETAF General Assembly (CETAF 53) will take place in Göteborg, Sweden, on the 9-10 May 2023.