

**From:** Professor Leif Schulman  
Director  
Finnish Museum of Natural History LUOMUS  
P.O. Box 17  
FI-00014 University of Helsinki  
Finland

**To:** CETAF Governing Board  
c/o Ana Casino, Executive Director  
Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences  
Rue Vautier, 29  
1000, Brussels  
Belgium

Helsinki, March 13, 2019

Dear Governing Board delegates,

This is my personal statement to introduce my candidacy for the position of **Chair of the Executive Committee** of CETAF.

I have worked in the field of biodiversity science since the mid-1990s, first as a researcher, later as a specialist in biodiversity collections and in progressively more senior managerial positions in natural-scientific collections and in research infrastructure development in the field of biodiversity informatics. My research has focused on peatland ecology, tropical botany, and conservation biology. In 2001, I was hired as Curator of the Botanic Garden at the University of Helsinki (UH). When the garden was transferred to the Finnish Museum of Natural History Luomus, which is an independent research institute within UH, I was nominated as Unit Director, first of the garden alone in 2004, later of the Botany Unit in 2009. In 2010, I was appointed Director of the whole institution; Luomus is a medium-sized CETAF member with a staff of c. 150, an annual budget of 11.5 M€, and collections numbering c. 13.5 M specimens. I am also Head of Delegation of Finland at the Governing Board of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility GBIF. As of 2012, I have led the development of FinBIF, a national data infrastructure in biodiversity informatics that combines the activities of GBIF, DiSSCo and iBOL at a national level (see [species.fi](http://species.fi)). A listing of my professional contributions can be viewed in the database of UH (<https://tuhat.helsinki.fi/portal/en/person/lschulma>).

I have a deep passion for natural-scientific collections and their tremendous potential in contributing to building a better future for us all. Instead of trying to describe my vision about the collections in words, I refer to two videos in the YouTube channel of Luomus (narration in Finnish but with English subtitles):

- <https://youtu.be/zvu-2ki-oZ4>
- <https://youtu.be/ASJE8IAJGY>

During the last EB meeting in Bratislava, when I was first asked to run for Chair of the EC, my initial reaction was 'No way!' Why? Because the outgoing Chair has shown such dedication to her job, and committed so much energy and time to it, that I felt I could never fill her boots. However, when the request was repeated later by another delegate, I re-considered carefully, and finally I decided to be at your disposal. Three reasons turned my mind:

1. I hold CETAF in high regard as a vehicle for fostering collaboration among collection institutions and for furthering our common goals.
2. The outgoing Chair and Executive Committee have done a tremendous job in organising and positioning CETAF. Much of the hard basic work is now done and there is an excellent foundation to build on.
3. The operational landscape of natural-scientific collections in Europe is at a turning point. Within the next couple of years, the relationship between CETAF and DiSSCo will have to be thoroughly evaluated and the future modes of collaboration, representation, and division of labour agreed on.

These points led me to decide that even though time is a serious constraint for me, point number two makes it possible to provide my expertise and experience for making an impact on point three. However, I want to be honest: I will not have the same possibilities to engage in developing CETAF at all fronts as the outgoing Chair has had to our great benefit. If elected Chair, I will need to prioritise my main contributions carefully. My focus in the coming two years would therefore be on point three of the above list. To this end, I would emphasise liaison among the leadership of CETAF member institutions. While collaboration under the auspices of CETAF otherwise is vigorous and fruitful, there is currently, in my view, a lack of director level engagement. Being the director of a CETAF member institution myself, I believe I could make a significant contribution to increasing the commitment of senior leadership of the members.

With this introduction, I leave it to your discretion to evaluate if my experience and expertise, and the level of commitment I can offer, are sufficient for the important position of Chair of the Executive Committee of CETAF.

Yours sincerely,



---

Professor Leif Schulman  
Director  
Finnish Museum of Natural History LUOMUS  
University of Helsinki