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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
 BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE
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DRAFT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. BACKGROUND

1.   Section E (Technical oversight and advice), paragraph 5 of the Biosafety Clearing-House modalities of operation (annex to decision BS-I/3) provides for the Secretariat to seek assistance from an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, with a particular focus on providing guidance with respect to resolution of technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

2.   The present note has been prepared to elaborate operational procedures for seeking such assistance. These terms of reference, constitution and organization of the committee may be further elaborated by the Executive Secretary as required, based on operational experience.

II. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.   The primary role of an informal advisory committee for the Biosafety Clearing-House (hereafter referred to as the BCH-IAC) will be to provide technical advice to the Secretariat regarding development and operation of the central portal of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Drawing from the functions outlined in section C of the modalities of operation, as well as other responsibilities of the Secretariat set out in the modalities, the following mandate for the BCH-IAC is proposed:

        (a)   To provide input to the Secretariat regarding issues of relevance to the technical development and implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

        (b)   To provide feedback to the Secretariat on the development of the central portal and central databases to ensure the Biosafety Clearing-House is accessible, user-friendly, searchable, and understandable;

        (c)   To assist in identifying, reviewing and designing, as necessary, common formats for reporting information to the Biosafety Clearing-House;

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(d)   To advise on the development of national, regional, sub-regional and institutional nodes that are interlinked with the central portal;

(e)   To facilitate cooperation with relevant partner institutions through development and review of guidelines for information-sharing between partner institutions and the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(f)   To advise the Secretariat on such other functions as are directed by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

III.   CONSTITUTION

4.   The Executive Secretary will nominate recognized experts, qualified in the field of information sharing, to participate in the advisory committee for a limited duration (not normally exceeding two years, although nominations may be renewed). The IAC will be composed of at most fifteen experts, selected with due regard to geographic representation. Proxies with relevant expertise may be considered by the Executive Secretary on a case-by-case basis.

5.   The BCH-IAC should also draw on the existing knowledge and competence available within, and liaise with, international, regional and national organizations, as appropriate.

IV.   ORGANIZATION

6.   The BCH-IAC will meet at intervals to be determined by the Executive Secretary in order to ensure timely provision of advice. Normal operating procedures would allow for at least one meeting per year, which typically would not exceed three days.

7.   Members of the BCH-IAC may be called upon to provide additional advice on issues for which they have particular expertise as required. Where possible, the Secretariat will use available means of communication that reduce the requirement for face-to-face meetings in such instances.

8.   Where available, all efforts will be made to provide financial assistance for the participation of experts in the BCH-IAC from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, that are Parties to the Protocol.