



Convention on Biological Diversity

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FIRST REGIONAL REAL-TIME ONLINE CONFERENCES ON RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT UNDER THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

28 January (Europe), 3 February (Latin America), 10 February (Africa), 17 February 2009 (Asia)

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

1. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP), in its decision BS-IV/11, established an Open-ended Online Expert Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management through the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). The Parties to the Protocol also established an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Risk Assessment and Risk Management.
2. The Executive Secretary was requested to convene ad hoc online discussion groups, two AHTEG meetings and at least one real-time online conference per region prior to each of the two AHTEG meetings which will take place prior to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, in October 2010.
3. To implement decision BS-IV/11, the Secretariat, with the approval of the COP-MOP Bureau, launched a continuous process comprising the following events: a) an open-ended online forum, b) discussion groups on specific topics, c) two series of regional real-time online conferences (one prior to each AHTEG meeting) and d) two AHTEG meetings.
4. Participants were nominated by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to the Forum using the criteria and common format adopted by the Parties to the Protocol for the nomination of biosafety experts to the Roster of Experts, on the basis of their expertise on risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms (LMOs).
5. Online Discussion Groups under the Open-ended Online Expert Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management were held in November and December 2008 on the following eight topics:
 - (a) Risk assessment and risk management of transgenic fish;
 - (b) Risk assessment and risk management of transgenic trees;
 - (c) Risk assessment and risk management of transgenic microorganisms and viruses;
 - (d) Risk assessment and risk management of transgenic pharmaplants;
 - (e) Risk assessment and risk management of LMOs with stacked genes or traits;
 - (f) Post-release monitoring and long-term effects of LMOs released into the environment;
 - (g) Risk assessment and risk management of specific receiving environments; and

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(h) Flowchart (“Roadmap”) for risk assessment: the necessary steps to conduct risk assessment according to Annex III of the Protocol.

6. Following the successful discussion of the above topics, the next phase in the established series of events is the launching of the regional real-time online conferences. A total of four conferences will take place for, respectively, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia with the objective of identifying major issues related to the specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management contained in the terms of reference for the AHTEG.

7. With regards to participation in the real-time online conferences, participants in the Forum who had already been nominated by Parties were automatically registered in their respective regional conference. It is noted that due to the low number of experts nominated from the Caribbean region, the experts opted, after being consulted, to participate in other regional conferences. Participants nominated by non-Parties and Observers were given the option to choose one regional real-time online conference in which to participate. In addition, all forum participants will also be able to watch the conferences of other regions as “guests”. However, guests will not be able to post interventions.

8. The outcomes of the online Discussion Groups and Real-time Online Conferences will serve as inputs for the deliberations by the AHTEG.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

9. The conferences will be opened at 10 a.m. on 28 January 2009 for Europe, at 3 p.m. on 3 February 2009, for Latin America, at 10 a.m. on 10 February 2009, for Africa and at 3 p.m. on 17 February 2009, for Asia (all times are indicated in UTC/GMT). Each conference will last for 3 to 4 hours.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Adoption of the agenda

10. The provisional agenda reflects the issues defined by the Parties to the Protocol as the work for the AHTEG during its first meeting as set out in the Terms of Reference for the AHTEG contained in the annex to decision BS-IV/11.

11. A Chairperson, approved by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol for each of the conferences, will introduce the provisional agenda and the participants to the conference will be invited to consider and adopt the provisional agenda as circulated by the Executive Secretary.

2.2. Organization of work

12. The conferences for Europe, Africa and Asia will be held in English. The conference for Latin America will be held in Spanish. Interpretation will not be available.

13. The conferences will take place online in the form of a “chat room” where participants will be able to post written interventions. A list of all participants will be visible to all who are logged in to the conference. Participants will need to request the floor when they wish to make an intervention. Participants will be able to consult with the Secretariat in case of technical difficulties through an online “Helpdesk” or by telephone. Prior to the conferences, instructions on the technical details such as how to log in, post interventions, etc., will be made available and participants will be invited to test the conference system.

14. Documents recommended by the Parties to the Protocol to the AHTEG, submissions by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations in preparation for the AHTEG, as well as a list of selected readings and introductions to the topics of the online discussions are available at the online forum at http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/readings_ra.shtml. All interventions made at the online discussion groups are also available at http://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/discussiongroups_ra.shtml.

ITEM 3. SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES**3.1. *Development of a "roadmap", such as a flowchart, on the necessary steps to conduct a risk assessment in accordance with Annex III to the Protocol***

15. In accordance with paragraph (d) (i) of the annex to decision BS-IV/11, during its first meeting the AHTEG shall develop a "roadmap", such as a flowchart, on the necessary steps to conduct a risk assessment in accordance with Annex III to the Protocol and, for each of these steps, provide examples of relevant guidance documents;

16. The participants to the real-time online conferences will be invited to consider the interventions made during the online discussions and the mandate of the AHTEG. Participants may wish to provide, as appropriate, further guidance to the AHTEG on information that may be needed in developing a roadmap/flowchart other than that contained in Methodology and Points to consider of Annex III to the Protocol. Furthermore, participants may also wish to provide guidance materials that are directly applicable to the steps and points to consider listed in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Annex III to the Protocol.

3.2. *Development of further guidance material on specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management*

17. According to paragraph (d)(ii) of the annex to decision BS-IV/11, during its first meeting, the AHTEG shall also prioritize the need for further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment and define which aspects should be addressed first, taking also into account the need for and relevance of such guidance, and availability of scientific information.

18. The participants to the real-time online conferences will be invited to consider the interventions made during the online discussions and the mandate of the AHTEG and may wish to recommend to the AHTEG, as appropriate, the topics of the Discussion Groups in order of priority, the availability of scientific information on these topics, the main knowledge gaps, and any other specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management that may be considered for the development of guidance materials.

3.3. *Defining an action plan for the development of guidance materials on specific prioritized aspects as well as the "roadmap"*

19. The terms of reference for the AHTEG also specify that, at its first meeting, the Group shall define an action plan to produce, prior to the second meeting of the Group, modalities for the development of guidance documents on the specific aspects that were identified as priorities and for testing of the roadmap. This action plan should include the details of a process for monitoring and reviewing the progress made on each of the specific aspects;

20. The participants to the real-time online conferences will be invited to consider the interventions made during the online discussions and the mandate of the AHTEG. The participants may wish to provide, as appropriate, recommendations to the AHTEG on the action plan for the development of guidance materials and the roadmap. Furthermore, the participants may also wish to identify the necessary expertise for the development of guidance materials and the roadmap.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

21. Under this item, the participants in the conference may wish to consider other matters raised and accepted for discussion in accordance with the rules of procedure.

ITEM 5. CLOSURE OF THE CONFERENCE

22. It is expected that the conference will be closed by its Chairperson after three to four hours of discussion. The entire content of the conferences will be made publicly available through the Biosafety Clearing-House.
