



Convention on Biological Diversity

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AFRICA REGIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP ON PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION CONCERNING THE SAFE TRANSFER, HANDLING AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Kampala, 5-9 November 2012

WORKSHOP REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision BS-V/13, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP) adopted a programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms for the period 2011-2015. In this regard, the Secretariat organized a regional training workshop for Africa to enhance the capacity of Parties and other Governments to implement the programme of work and to facilitate the sharing of relevant experiences and lessons learned. The specific objectives of the workshop were:

(a) To introduce participants to key concepts, tools and legal instruments relevant to public awareness, education, access to information, and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs);

(b) To facilitate exchange of information, experiences and lessons learned in promoting public awareness and education, access to information and participation concerning LMOs; and

(c) To discuss strategies for enhancing regional and subregional cooperation in the implementation of the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation at the national and regional levels.

2. The workshop was hosted by the Government of Uganda through the National Forestry Resources Research Institute (NAFORRI), with funding from the Government of Japan. A total of 37 participants from 29 countries and 3 organizations attended it. Nine resource persons, including three staff from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Secretariat), serviced the workshop. The list of participants and resource persons is attached as annex III.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

3. The workshop was opened at 9.30 a.m. on Monday, 5 November 2012 by Mrs Rachel Musoke, Commissioner for Forestry in the Ministry of Water and Environment, on behalf of the Minister of State

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for Environment. Mrs Musoke thanked the CBD Secretariat for accepting Uganda's offer to host the workshop. She observed that the workshop had come at an opportune time when most African countries were embarking on the implementation of their national biosafety frameworks, which included, "systems for public awareness, education and participation". She noted that Uganda was among the first countries in Africa to ratify the Protocol and to develop a national biosafety framework (NBF). Uganda adopted a national biotechnology and biosafety policy in April 2008 to encourage the utilization of biotechnology in a safe manner and in conformity with international agreements and also drafted the national Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill which was expected to be enacted into law soon. Mrs. Musoke noted, however, that like many other developing country Parties, Uganda lacked the necessary capacity to implement its policy and the new law when it was to come into force. She expressed hope that the workshop would go a long way in strengthening the capacity of African countries to operationalize their systems for public awareness, education and participation.

4. Opening remarks were also made by Mr. Francis Esegu, Director of the NAFORRI and Mr. Charles Gbedemah, Principal Officer in-charge of the Biosafety Division at the CBD Secretariat, on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In his remarks, Mr. Esegu welcomed the participants to Uganda and expressed his organization's pleasure in hosting the workshop. He underscored the importance of promoting public awareness of biosafety, noting that the public had to understand issues and facts regarding LMOs in order to maximize the benefits they could offer without compromising the safety of biological diversity and the environment. He noted that the workshop was taking place at the same time as the Parliament of Uganda was considering the national biosafety law.

5. In his statement, Mr. Gbedemah noted that the workshop was the first in a series of regional training workshops planned by the Secretariat. He highlighted the objectives of the workshop and urged participants to maximise the use of the five days of the workshop to acquire new skills and to freely share their experiences. He thanked the Government of Japan for its generous financial support for the workshop and the Government of Uganda for hosting it.

ITEM 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

6. Mr. Erie Tamale from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity presented the objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop and gave an overview of the workshop programme (annex I). Participants were then invited to state their expectations of the workshop. Most participants expressed the hope that the workshop would enable them to learn from other countries' experiences and help them to better understand how to apply the various available tools and methods to promote public awareness, to engage the public, policymakers and the media and to strategically plan and implement public awareness and participation programmes. Some of the participants hoped that the workshop would equip them to develop better messages, to identify the right target audiences, and to better communicate with the public. Each of the participants was provided with a folder containing the workshop training materials, either in English or French.

ITEM 3. INTRODUCTION TO THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY AND THE PROGRAMME OF WORK ON PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION CONCERNING LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISM

7. Under this item, a short video on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was shown in both English and French. Mr. Tamale from the Secretariat thereafter presented the key provisions of the Protocol relating to public awareness, education and participation and the current status of implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol based on the information that was provided by Parties in their second national reports. He also outlined decisions of the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol related to Article 23,

including the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning LMOs which was adopted at the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol in October 2010.

8. Mr. Gbedemah presented the Strategic Plan for the Protocol covering the period 2011-2020. He described the five strategic objectives of the plan and the operational objectives relating to public awareness, education and participation, i.e., operational objective 2.5 on capacity-building for public awareness, education and participation and operational objective 5.3 on communication and outreach. Mr. Gbedemah emphasized the need for participants to develop programmes and the necessary guidance to achieve the expected outcomes and indicators under the various elements of the Strategic Plan.

ITEM 4. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION

9. Under this item, three presentations were made highlighting the key regional and international legal frameworks underpinning public awareness, education, access to information and participation relating to matters concerning the environment.

10. Mr. Godber Tumushabe, Executive Director of Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) gave a presentation on *Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and its implementation in Africa*. He described the elements and importance of Principle 10 and outlined the progress made in its implementation since the 1992 Rio Summit. He outlined the main milestones reached in Africa, including the adoption of the Declaration of Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002), the NEPAD/Africa Peer Review Mechanism enhancing access to information (ATI) and the draft Africa model law on access to information. He also described The Access Initiative (TAI) and its implementation in Africa. Mr. Tumushabe concluded his presentation by highlighting the general trends and practices with regard to access rights, i.e. public access to information, public participation and access to justice.

11. Ms. Yelyzaveta Aleksyeyeva from Environment-People-Law, Ukraine gave a presentation on *"The Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and its Amendment on Genetically Modified Organisms (Gomes)"*. She gave an overview of the status and scope of the Convention and how it worked. She further described its three pillars, i.e. the right of access to information, public participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice. She also introduced the "Lucca guidelines on access to information, public participation and access to justice with respect to genetically modified organisms", which were adopted by the first meeting of the Parties to Aarhus Convention in 2002. She noted that the guidelines had been used by some countries to develop and implement their national frameworks and laws for the implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol.

12. Ms. Sylvia Nakabugu Biraahwa, Principal Information Officer, Directorate of Information and National Guidance in the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda gave a presentation on *"The Draft Model Law on Access to Information in Africa"*. She described the genesis of the model law and highlighted the main features of the law, including procedures and mechanisms for accessing information from public and private bodies, exceptions (circumstances under which information may be denied), mechanisms for the internal review of decisions and the oversight and judicial review mechanisms. Ms. Biraahwa noted that the model law provided minimum standards to guide African Union (AU) member States in their processes for the adoption or review of ATI laws and to provide benchmarks for evaluating their implementation. She reported that the number of African countries with ATI laws had increased from five to ten since the model law process was initiated. On the way forward, she underscored the need to promote public awareness of the model law at all levels and to encourage AU member States that had not yet done so to expedite the drafting of their ATI laws. She noted that

effective implementation of the model law would require strong political will and collaboration between Governments and civil society.

13. After the presentations, participants had a discussion on how the experiences and lessons learned from the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration and the Aarhus Convention and from the Africa ATI model law process could be applied and maximized in the implementation of Article 23 of the Biosafety Protocol and possible solutions for addressing existing gaps and challenges.

ITEM 5. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION CONCERNING THE SAFE TRANSFER, HANDLING AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS

14. Under this item, participants were introduced to various concepts, tools and approaches related to public awareness and education concerning LMOs. They were also introduced to the basic skills for proactive planning of public awareness activities and for engaging and using the media to promote public awareness. Three presentations were made, which were followed by individual and group practical exercises.

15. Mr. Tamale gave a presentation in which he described some of the key concepts including: public awareness, public education, public relations, public communications, public outreach, extension, social marketing and advertising. He noted that public awareness was more about informing, sensitizing or drawing the attention of the public to issues while public education, which was an interactive 2-way communication process, was aimed at imparting knowledge and increasing the public's understanding of issues. He also noted that outreach was normally about informing the public about an organization and its activities and seeking the support or involvement of the public. Mr. Tamale also described some of the tools commonly used for raising public awareness, including seminars and workshops, awareness materials (brochures, posters, videos, etc), exhibitions, public awareness events/campaigns, media (newspapers, radio, TV), visitors' and field days, websites and other internet-based tools and social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others).

16. Mr. Ivan Lukanda from the Department of Journalism and Communication at Makerere University gave two presentations. The first presentation focussed on "*Proactive Planning of Public Awareness and Communication Activities*". He discussed the importance of proactive planning of public awareness and communication work noting that it increased efficiency, helped to clarify intentions and guide direction, reduced risks and uncertainty, facilitated proper coordination and internal control and guided mobilization and effective allocation of available resources. He described the basic elements of an outreach strategy or communication plan, including: background information, goals and objectives, identification and analysis of the target audiences, tactics to be used under different situations, work schedule and timelines and a monitoring and evaluation system. He also discussed techniques for developing clear and compelling messages for different audiences and highlighted key points to consider in choosing appropriate channels of communication. In conclusion, he provided participants with key points to consider in planning and implementing their public awareness and communication activities.

17. Mr. Lukanda gave another presentation on *Engaging and Using the Media to Promote Public Awareness of Biosafety*. He discussed the importance of media and highlighted the need to maintain good media relations and contacts. He listed different types of mass media (including newspapers, radio and TV, magazines and documentaries) and highlighted important points to consider in selecting the type of media to use and in dealing with different media. He noted that journalists wanted stories that were relevant and interesting to readers, novel, newsworthy, exciting, accurate, factual, timely, well-written or involving prominent personalities. He also pointed out that journalists worked under very tight deadlines so it was very important to provide them with information in a timely manner.

18. Furthermore, Mr. Lukanda discussed different ways of engaging with the media, including through press releases and media advisories, media interviews and press conferences. He described the role and basic elements of a press release. He noted that a press release should be brief, accurate and should read like a news story. The main elements of a press release included a headline, a lead paragraph, the body and the concluding section. The headline should be short and catchy and able to capture the salient points of the press release. The lead paragraph (1-2 sentences) should provide the basic facts of the news story (i.e. who, what, when, where, why, and how?). The body should give relevant details – the background, further explanation, statistics and other details. Typically a press release should end with a call to action and a brief background about the organization issuing the release (i.e. “the about section”, also called the “boilerplate”). He advised participants to avoid using scientific or technical jargons and always put the most important information at the top of a press release.

19. Mr. Lukanda also provided participants with guidelines on how to prepare for and handle a media interview, including how to respond to questions/speak to the media, how to behave during media interviews and what to do after the interviews. He also advised participants on how to run a press conference, including how to prepare for it, how to engage the press, how to manage time and how to make follow-ups after the press conference.

20. Under this item, two case-study presentations were also made by Dr Manjusha Sunil from the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) and Ms. Betty Kiplagat from the African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE). Dr. Sunil shared experiences from the Public Understanding of Biotechnology Programme (PUBP). She reported that the PUBP had supported a number of activities, including: public perceptions surveys, media round tables, workshops, industrial theatre plays, schools debates, exhibitions and media (print, radio and TV) programmes and dissemination of awareness materials - fact sheets, posters, etc - on various topics. Ms. Kiplagat gave a presentation on the *ABNE Guideline on Communication for Biosafety Regulators*. She described the key components of a communication strategy and outlined the main topics covered in the ABNE guideline (including the purpose of biosafety communication, principles of communication, communication strategy development, channels and tools for communication, communicating biosafety decisions, media interaction, emergency communication protocols, agency-specific communication, monitoring and evaluating communication and strengthening of communication capacity).

21. After the presentations, participants took part in a practical exercise. Each participant prepared and handed in a draft press release regarding a decision taken by his/her country to approve the growing of Bt maize. Copies of all the draft press releases were collected and circulated and participants invited to provide feedback to each other during the plenary session, taking into account what they learned from during the presentation. Participants were asked to revise and send their final press releases to the Secretariat after the workshop.

22. Under this item, participants also made short presentations on their experiences and lessons learned during the development and implementation of initiatives on public awareness, education and participation within the context of the national biosafety frameworks.

ITEM 6. PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SAFE TRANSFER, HANDLING AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS

23. Under this item, three presentations covering various issues and experiences regarding public access to information were made by Ms. Ulrika Nilsson from the Secretariat of the Convention, Ms. Biraahwa from the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda and Ms. Aleksyeyeva from Environment-People-Law, Ukraine. The participants from Botswana and Mali also presented case-studies on their countries’ national profiles and action plans on public access to information (ATI), public participation

in decision-making and access to justice related to environmental matters which were developed within the context of the Pilot Programme that was supported by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

24. Ms. Nilsson gave a presentation on the basic concepts and core elements of national ATI regimes and observed that ATI was considered to be a right in most national laws. She noted that ATI facilitated informed public participation in decision-making, fostered greater accountability and transparency and contributes to improved implementation, among other things. Ms. Nilsson described the following common core elements of national ATI systems: procedures for requesting information, systems for handling ATI requests, timelines for responding to ATI requests, fees for ATI requests, the format and language of access, method of access (electronic or hardcopy), confidentiality of the information, grounds for exemptions and exclusions as well as mechanisms for appeal and review in case of denial of information. Finally, Ms. Nilsson outlined means of active dissemination of information, including websites, publications/CD-ROMs, discussion groups, public meetings, media, bulletins, online tools (e.g. e-mail alerts, Webinars) and social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, etc).

25. Ms. Biraahwa's presentation discussed the status of ATI laws in Africa and Uganda's experience with the implementation its Access to Information Act, 2005 and ATI Regulations, 2011. She reported that as of September 2012, 93 countries worldwide had national ATI laws and in Africa, only 8 countries (Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe) had ATI laws, and two (Niger and Tunisia) had actionable ATI regulations. With regard to Uganda's experience she reported that sensitization of various stakeholders had been undertaken in collaboration with civil society organizations. Manuals had been published by some ministries and organizations, and an implementation programme had been drawn. Some of the challenges encountered included: lack of strong political will, a deeply-embedded secrecy culture, low levels of public awareness, illiteracy, inconsistent laws, poor record keeping systems and other institutional, logistical and financial challenges. She highlighted the need for good communication from top to bottom, clear organizational structures and responsibilities, well designed and monitored work plans and accountability through regular monitoring and reporting as critical elements for effective implementation of ATI laws.

26. Ms. Aleksyeyeva shared experiences and lessons learned from the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) region regarding ATI in the context of the Aarhus Convention. She outlined the ATI provisions in the Aarhus Convention and the Lucca Guidelines on GMOs and described the general trends in their implementation within the subregion. She reported that many countries in the subregion had developed ATI laws but many of them were not yet effectively implemented. She highlighted examples of good practices from some countries. In general, ATI requests were satisfied within one month (in some countries information was provided within 5 working days) and as a rule, information was provided free of charge regardless of the volume requested. Under the appeals systems, the public could refer cases directly to the courts. Authorities were also required to actively publish information and maintain an accessible register of documents. However, in practice, active dissemination of information was problematic and web-pages were poor. Some of the challenges faced included low levels of awareness, poor enforcement and lack of compliance. Ms Aleksyeyeva reported that so far cases of violations of ATI laws had been brought by the public to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee against six countries in the subregion. She described specific examples of violation of ATI laws from some of those cases.

27. The participants from Botswana and Mali gave overviews of their countries' national profiles and action plans with respect to public access to information on environmental matters and shared the experiences, including opportunities and challenges, regarding their development and implementation. The participant from Botswana reported that his country's action plan was published and copies were sent out to various stakeholders for implementation. The main challenges faced included: lack of legislation obliging holders of environmental information to avail it to the public, barriers such as

information being too technical and available mostly English, inappropriate methods for dissemination of information to the majority of the public and lack of adequate funds to implement the action plan. The participant from Mali reported that the UNITAR-UNECE programme to develop the national profile and action plan contributed to the improvement of government relations with the public and supported the training of government officials in skills to facilitate access to information.

28. After the presentations, participants were divided into two focus discussion groups. The groups were invited to identify issues, challenges and strategies for facilitating public access to biosafety information and also identify possible elements of national framework and action plans for public access to information concerning LMOs. Reports from the two groups were presented and discussed in the plenary. A summary of the main points from the discussions is presented in annex II (sub-section 2.1). Participants were requested to develop their national frameworks and action plans for public access to information concerning LMOs and submit the drafts to the Secretariat.

ITEM 7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CONCERNING THE SAFE TRANSFER, HANDLING AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS

29. Three presentations were made under this item, by Dr. Florence Kyazze, a Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Extension at Makerere University, Mr. Alex Owusu-Biney, Portfolio Manager for Biosafety, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and by Ms. Aleksyeyeva from Environment-People-Law, Ukraine. Dr. Manjusha Sunil from SAASTA and Dr. Phumzile Zanele Dlamini from the Regional Agricultural and Environment Initiatives Network-Africa (RAEIN-Africa) also gave case-study presentations.

30. Dr. Kyazze gave a presentation entitled: *Public participation in biosafety and environmental decision-making: Key concepts, emerging good practices and lessons learned*. She discussed the meaning and importance of public participation and outlined the basic principles and conditions for achieving effective participation. She noted that effective participation required, *inter alia*: early notification, reasonable timing, accessibility to relevant information, sensitivity to community values, inclusiveness and effective representation, clarity of purpose and goals, well-defined structure and rules of the participation process, transparency, accountability and commitment of the staff to the process. Dr. Kyazze also discussed the various public participation methods and techniques (including workshops, stakeholder meetings, public hearings, surveys and comment/response sheets, etc). She noted that the choice of methods depends on the purpose and desired level/degree of participation.¹ The choice may also depended on the number and range of stakeholders to be involved and their geographical distribution; availability of communication media; the amount of time, resources and expertise available; the literacy level of the audience and the objectives of the project/ initiative. In conclusion, Dr. Kyazze noted that good facilitation was crucial to ensure clear and equal input from all participants. The facilitators needed to be active listeners and able to engage in effective questioning and paraphrasing of input from the public.

31. Mr. Owusu-Biney presented an analysis of the provisions for public participation in decision-making regarding LMOs contained in the laws and national biosafety frameworks (NBFs) of some African countries (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ghana, Liberia, Namibia and Tanzania). For example, he reported that in Burkina Faso, the National Biosafety Agency had to make non-confidential information publicly available after receiving a notification, and when necessary, it may decide to organize a public

¹ According to Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation", the levels could be grouped into 3 categories: non-participation (manipulation and therapy), tokenism (informing, consultation and placation) and empowerment/citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control) - see details at: <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>

consultation at the cost of the applicant. In Ghana, the Biosafety Act 2011 provides that the Board in reaching a decision on an LMO application shall take into account relevant comments submitted by the public (Article 21(c)). It also required the National Biosafety Authority (NBA) to promote public awareness, education and participation concerning biosafety matters for the benefit of the people and to publish notices of the final decisions concerning LMO applications in the Gazette and the media (Article 42). In Namibia, the Biosafety Act 2006 provided for consultation of persons or institutions, the appointment of persons or committees to facilitate public consultation or public hearing and for issuance of notifications on public hearing with 14 days (Article 24.1, sections a, b and c). Mr. Owusu-Biney made reference to relevant existing tools, including the UNEP-GEF toolkit on public consultation and analysis, and urged participants to make full use of them.

32. Dr Sunil shared the results of a research project on the practical lessons learned regarding public participation in environmental decision-making in South Africa, which was carried out by the University of Cape Town for UNITAR and published in 2007. The research analysed a number of questions, including: Who is the public? Which groups should be invited to ensure representation? Which participation techniques are most appropriate (notice/comment, face to face discussions, workshops)? At what stage in the decision making process should the public be involved? What type of information needs to be made available to ensure meaningful participation? How can participation processes be more efficient while remaining open and transparent? What skills and capacities are required to ensure that participation processes are professionally managed and implemented? How can governments ensure that stakeholders are satisfied with the procedural aspects of the decision process? It also examined the degree of inclusiveness, nature of deliberation and the sharing of decision authority. Among other recommendations, the research report advised the government to: make public participation a strategic priority within government departments; develop department-wide strategies on effective stakeholder engagement; strengthen stakeholder engagement and management skills of government staff; develop public involvement Plans for key policy, strategy, legal, planning and project processes; and support specific capacity-building interventions to ensure effective participation of underprivileged groups.

33. Dr. Dlamini shared relevant experiences and lessons learned from RAEIN-Africa's public awareness and public participation activities carried out in Southern Africa since 2005. She noted that linear/one-way methods, e.g. newspaper articles and brochures, were useful in reaching many people within a short time but when used as one-off activities with no follow up, the message could not be reinforced and hence change of attitude and behaviour required for participation was unlikely to occur. Similarly, one-off workshops and visits were not likely to lead to effective participation. Furthermore when there were too many messages that were uncoordinated or even contradictory the public gets confused. Dr. Dlamini noted that public participation in biosafety decision-making in Africa was affected by many challenges including: the complex nature of biotechnology, polarization of the debate at all levels, competing national/personal interests, political interference, the poor culture of public participation, lack of awareness of participation rights, multiplicity of languages, lack of ATI legislation, capacity constraints within government institutions and budgetary constraints. To achieve effective participation it was important to facilitate broad understanding of issues among the various stakeholders before attempting to engage them. Dr. Dlamini also noted that a one-size fits all approach was not effective because stakeholder groups had different interests, abilities and information needs.

34. After the presentations, the participants took part in focus group discussions to identify elements of an action plan for public participation in decision-making processes. The reports from the discussion groups were presented during the plenary session. A synthesis of the main points raised during the group discussions is presented in annex II (sub-section 2.2).

35. As part of this agenda item, the participants took part in a field visit to the National Crops Resources Research Institute (NACRRI) at Namulonge, which emphasizes participatory research. Scientists at the institute presented an overview of the ongoing laboratory work and field trials on

improved crop varieties (including LMOs) that are resistant to bacteria. They also described how farmers and other stakeholders are involved at various levels of research and development.

ITEM 8. THE WAY FORWARD: FOSTERING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON PUBLIC AWARENESS, EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION CONCERNING LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS

36. Under this item, Ms. Nilsson from the Secretariat gave a presentation on the synergies and ongoing collaboration between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and that of the Aarhus Convention. She noted that the two secretariats had in recent years organized several joint activities (including side events in the margins of the meetings of their respective governing bodies, two international workshops and an online forum on public access to information.² She urged participants to make full use of the relevant tools and information materials developed under the Aarhus Convention (e.g. the Lucca Guidelines) and through the ongoing CBD-Aarhus Convention cooperation.

37. After the presentations participants had a general discussion in the plenary on how to promote regional cooperation on the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol. Subsequently, the participants were divided into five subregional focus groups to discuss concrete actions that could be taken at the subregional level. The results from the discussions are presented in annex II (sub-section 2.3).

ITEM 9. WORKSHOP EVALUATION

38. During the last session, participants were invited to reflect on the proceedings during the week and write down three main take-home messages from the workshop with respect to public awareness and education, public access to information and public participation. Many participants highlighted the importance of developing outreach strategies or communication plans to facilitate proactive and systematic action in promoting public awareness and education concerning LMOs. Many participants also highlighted the importance of access to information in facilitating effective public participation in the decision-making process and the need to put in place enabling frameworks (including policies and laws on access to information). With regard to public participation, several participants noted the importance of developing a proactive public participation plan. At the end of the session, participants were requested to complete a workshop evaluation form.

ITEM 10. CLOSURE OF THE WORKSHOP

39. The workshop was closed by Dr. Daniel Babikwa from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA). In his remarks, Dr Babikwa noted that there was limited public understanding of the complex issues regarding LMOs in Africa due to various factors, including the low literacy levels in most countries. He therefore urged experts in the field need to learn the necessary skills to enable them communicate these issues for the easy understanding of the average person. He further expressed the hope that the workshop had made a significant contribution in this regard. Dr Babikwa also urged the participants to effectively utilise the new knowledge and skills they acquired from workshop and to continue sharing experiences amongst themselves. After the customary exchange of courtesies, Dr. Babikwa declared the workshop officially closed at 5.30 p.m. on Friday, 9 November 2012.

² See a report of the second workshop at: <http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/meetings/documents.shtml?eventid=3401> and the postings in the online forum at: https://bch.cbd.int/onlineconferences/portal_art23/pa_forum2012.shtml.

Annex I
WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

<i>DATE AND TIME</i>	<i>SESSION/ACTIVITY</i>
<i>Monday, 5 November 2012</i>	
9 a.m. – 9.45 a.m.	Item 1. Opening of the workshop
9.45 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Item 2. Introduction to the workshop
11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	Item 3. Introduction to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation
2 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.	Item 4. National, regional and international legal frameworks for public awareness, education and participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and its implementation in Africa • Introduction to the Aarhus Convention and its Amendment on Genetically Modified Organisms • The Draft Model Law on Access to Information in Africa
4 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country presentations on national experiences with the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol
<i>Tuesday, 6 November 2012</i>	
9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Item 5. Public awareness and education concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to public awareness and education concerning LMOs: Basic concepts, tools and approaches • Designing and implementing an outreach strategy or communication plan
11 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussions on development draft national biosafety outreach strategies or communication plans
2 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging and using the media to promote public awareness of biosafety issues • Individual exercise to prepare a press release on a topic to be provided by the facilitators
4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country presentations on national experiences with the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol
<i>Wednesday, 7 November 2012</i>	
9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	Item 6. Public access to information concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the basic concepts and core elements of national regimes on public access to information • Access to information laws in Africa and experience with Uganda's Access to Information Act 2005 • Experiences and lessons learned under the context of the Aarhus Convention and its GMO amendment

DATE AND TIME	SESSION/ACTIVITY
11 a.m. – 12 noon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case-study presentations on implementation of national laws and initiatives on public access to information
12 noon– 1 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussions on national frameworks and action plans for public access to information regarding LMOs
2 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Field trip to the National Crops Resources Research Institute
DATE AND TIME	SESSION/ACTIVITY
Thursday, 8 November 2012	
9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	<p>Item 7. Public participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public participation in environmental decision-making: Key concepts, emerging good practices and lessons learned Mechanisms for public participation in decision-making processes regarding LMOs in Africa: An analysis of approved national biosafety frameworks
11 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public participation in environmental decision-making in the context of the Aarhus Convention Presentation of case studies on public involvement in environmental decision-making processes
2 p.m. – 5 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group discussions on elements of national frameworks and action plans for public participation in decision-making Presentation of group discussion reports
Friday, 9 November 2012	
9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	<p>Item 8. The way forward: fostering regional and international cooperation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergies and ongoing collaboration between the CBD Secretariat and the Aarhus Convention Plenary discussions on how to promote regional cooperation on the implementation of the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning LMOs
11 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussions to develop sub-regional strategies to promote cooperation on the implementation of the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning LMOs
2 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of group discussion reports <p>Item 9. Workshop evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflections on the topics covered during the workshop and the take-home messages, <i>by Mr. Erie Tamale and Mr. Charles Gbedemah, CBD Secretariat</i> Evaluation of the workshop
5 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.	Item 10. Closure of the workshop

Annex II

SUMMARY REPORTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

2.1. SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION

1. The following is a summary of the main points from the two group discussions regarding key elements of a national framework and action plan for public access to information concerning LMOs:

(a) *Research and analysis*: There should be holistic stock-taking and analysis of the current situation regarding access to biosafety and environmental information. This could include an analysis through surveys and questionnaires. In particular, it is important to review laws, regulations, policies, guidelines, target audiences and administrative procedures;

(b) *Target audience*: Civil society (e.g. NGOs, consumers and farmer associations) in particular need to access biosafety information;

(c) *Capacity-building (legal and institutional frameworks) tactics*: Countries should consider the following: (i) develop and adopt a legal framework on ATI; (ii) put in place an institutional framework; (iii) develop a unit led by the Competent National Authority (CNA) to implement the legal framework; (iv) develop cross-cutting capacity-building initiatives, e.g. campaigns or training of government officials (e.g. ministers, senior executives, information agents) and other stakeholders; (v) make a list available of national experts on biosafety education and communication; (vi) hold training programs for biosafety educators and communicators at the national, regional and international level; and (vii) develop national systems to optimize the use of existing training tools and increase public awareness, education and public participation with regards to LMOs.

(d) *General tactics and methods*: Parties should consider the following activities: (i) employ a national e-governance system to effectively facilitate access to information; (ii) inform the public of its right to access to information; (iii) engage mass media; (iv) issue publications; (v) establish and/or maintain an information mechanism to record, retrieve and archive information (e.g. national BCH); (vi) inform and educate the public on how to access the Biosafety-clearing house (BCH); (vii) establish a mechanism for public announcements to inform the public about new information; and (viii) organize online forums and public hearings to collect opinions and comments on the release of LMOs. Each of the tactics and methods would also need an appropriate budget. Further, it is essential to develop a matrix with key indicators of success for each activity to be evaluated;

(e) *Monitoring and evaluation*: Parties need to consider several monitoring and evaluation methods (including feedback mechanisms such as surveys or reviews by independent organizations). There is also a need for a list of ministries, departments and agencies that are able to monitor and evaluate strategies and plans. Reporting of the results should take place on a quarterly basis.

2.2. SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES OF THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2. The following is a synthesis of the views from the two discussion groups regarding elements of a national framework and action plan for public participation in decision-making concerning LMOs:

(a) *Research and analysis*: It is essential to conduct and analyze results of surveys on possible public concerns and level of public support, in particular prior to the first shipment of LMOs. In doing so, Parties should make use of opinion surveys. Parties should also consider establishing a project,

including a project management committee, to conduct a stakeholder analysis. There is also a need to determine the level of public participation, such as engaging all stakeholders through a two-way communication process. Further, if a project is established, the project management committee could take a participatory approach to involve stakeholders, including local communities.

(b) *Objectives/goal*: The main objectives of the national action plan could be to: (i) involve the public in the decision-making process regarding LMOs; and/or (ii) minimize risks of the project failure and maximize the chances of project to succeed with regard to issues related to LMOs;

(c) *Target audience*: The national action plan should mainly include the following target audiences: government officials, industry, non-governmental organizations on a local, national and international level (e.g. consumer, farmer, women and youth associations), the media, academia and research communities, traditional leaders and strategic partners (e.g. donors).

(d) *Tactics (methods and tools)*: There is a need to determine the methods and tools depending on the stage in implementing and developing the national action plan. The general tools should include opinion surveys or polls, workshops, public hearings, publications, seminars, websites and media. Parties could also use specific tools for specific issues including: (i) press release for LMO release applications processed; (ii) engaging the communities in which LMOs may be released regarding socio-economic issues; (iii) involving socio-economic consideration regarding risk assessment issues; (iv) preparing a stakeholder matrix; and (v) providing appropriate messages. Parties also need to assign coordinating roles and responsibilities for the following: a project management committee, engaging stakeholders, building strategic partners and addressing the concerned population.

(e) *Timeframe*: The three main timeframes should be as follows: (i) Development of the project Coordination - Step 1: 03 months; (ii) Development of the Project Management Committee - Step 2: 1 months; and (iii) Implementation of Project Activities - Step 3: ongoing.

(f) *Monitoring and Evaluation*: The following could be considered: (i) a mid-term evaluation; (ii) indicator reports on the percentage of the public involved in public consultation; (iii) other sources that can be used to validate outcomes (e.g. media coverage); and (iv) other types of audits.

2.3. SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE DISCUSSIONS ON REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION

3. The workshop participants discussed the role of the African Union in the implementation of the Protocol in general, and Article 23 in particular. With regard to former, the participants recommended that the African Union should:

- (a) Become a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol.
- (b) Strengthen the mandate, structure and budget to implement the Cartagena Protocol; and
- (c) Enhance the networking among national focal points to the Cartagena Protocol;

4. With regard to Article 23, the participants recommended that the African Union should:

- (a) Take a lead role in promoting regional cooperation on implementing Article 23;
- (b) Identify clear synergies on the national and regional levels to implement Article 23;

(c) Develop a regional action plan to promote biosafety awareness, education and participation, including access to information, taking into account national and subregional action plans;

(d) Mobilize human and financial resources for the implementation of Article 23; and

(e) Organize a high-level ministerial dialogue on issues related to biosafety and biotechnology to adopt a regional action plan on public awareness, education, access to information, and participation with regards to LMOs.

5. The following is a synthesis of the recommendations by the participants to Parties regarding strategies and activities for enhancing sub-regional cooperation on implementation of Article 23:

(a) Collaborate to harmonize existing national laws and policies on public awareness, education, access to information, and participation concerning LMOs;

(b) Strengthen capacities among scientists and media communicating biosafety and biotechnology issues;

(c) Take stock of capacities, resources and experiences in order to exchange information on best practices and methods in communicating with the public;

(d) Identify and cooperate with relevant regional and international bodies (e.g. networks, organizations and other platforms, including RAEIN-Africa and the Biosafety Clearing-House);

(e) Establish a sub-regional online network with a relevant sub-regional organization;

(f) Coordinate the development, implementation and evaluation of national and sub-regional action plans and frameworks as well as outreach strategies or communication plans, taking into account the outcomes from the workshop, in order to mobilize regional partnerships and financial resources;

(g) Request the Executive Secretary to establish an information exchange platform (e.g. online forum for experts) to strengthen regional cooperation on public awareness, education, access to information, and participation concerning LMOs through the BCH:

(i) Appoint two facilitators to moderate the discussions;

(ii) Designate national focal points to participate in the discussions;

(iii) Make available resource materials, including relevant laws and frameworks, regional notifications on events and a list of participants and other stakeholders; and

(iv) Establish, in parallel with the platform, social media (e.g. face book) sites.

(h) Organize sub-regional meetings and workshops to provide guidance regarding the online exchange platform and facilitate the exchange of information, including identifying and sharing tools;

(i) Enhance the facilitation of public access to information by: (i) establishing a national or sub-regional BCH website in areas where these mechanisms are non-existent; (ii) promoting the involvement of media to disseminate biosafety information; and (iii) strengthening political commitment to access biosafety information.

(j) Facilitate a high-level dialogue involving ministries and Heads of States and Governments to increase the level of public awareness, education and participation with regards to biosafety issues; and

(k) Enhance public participation in the decision-making process with regards to LMOs by: (i) collaborating with stakeholder on capacity-building initiatives (ii) developing and disseminating awareness materials; (iii) translating outreach materials into selected national languages; and (iv) enhancing public awareness and access to information for an effective public participation in the decision-making process of LMOs.

6. During the discussions the Secretariat suggested, and the participants agreed, that establishment of an online platform would help facilitate the exchange of information and experiences and foster regional and subregional cooperation with regard to implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol. For example, it would assist countries to share ideas and experiences in the development and implementation of their outreach strategies/communication plans or access to information action plans. In this regard, the Secretariat offered to create an online forum through the BCH and all participants agreed to join the forum by 31 December 2012. In addition, the following actions were agreed:

(a) Two separate online discussion groups will be established for Anglophone and Francophone countries;

(b) The participants will share their national outreach strategies/communication plans and national frameworks or action plans for promoting public access to information through the online portal;

(c) The participants may wish to first submit their draft plans to the Secretariat for review and comment before posting them in the online portal; and

(d) Each sub-region will identify and designate a facilitator who will, among other things, moderate the online discussions and also contact and mobilise other officials/stakeholders who were not able to attend the workshop to participate in the online discussions.

7. The participants nominated Mr. Abisai Mafa (Zimbabwe) and Mr. Gado Zaki Mahaman (Niger) to serve as facilitators/moderators of the online forum for the Anglophone and Francophone countries, respectively.

8. The different sub-regions also nominated the following to serve as facilitators of the online discussions for the respective sub-regions through the platforms to be established on the BCH:

- (a) Eastern Africa: Uganda assisted by Sudan
- (b) Central Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo
- (c) Southern Africa (SADC countries): Zimbabwe
- (d) West Africa (ECOWAS countries): Niger
- (e) North Africa: Morocco.

Annex III

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