



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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International Day for Biological Diversity



Biodiversity and Climate Change

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31 October 2007

NOTIFICATION

New version of the Biosafety Clearing-House

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am pleased to announce the release of a new version of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) that will be accessible, starting 1 November 2007, at the following URL: <http://bch.cbd.int/>. Web browsers directed to the old website will be automatically redirected to this new URL.

The Biosafety Division of the CBD Secretariat has, over the past several months, revamped the BCH in order to significantly improve its user-friendliness. This was done in accordance with Programme element 1 of the multi-year programme of work of the BCH on “Structure and function of the central portal”, which was adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP) in its Decision BS-II/2. Also, in accordance with Programme element 2 of the multi-year programme of work on “Information content and management”, a major effort has been undertaken to improve the quality of the data accessible through the BCH. The details of the major changes that have been made with respect to these two programme elements are contained in the Annex to this Notification.

I am also pleased to inform you that the CBD Secretariat, in collaboration with the UNEP-GEF BCH Project, has also scheduled a training workshop on the revamped BCH for relevant National Focal Points in accordance with both paragraph 10 of the COP-MOP Decision BS-III/2 and Programme element 4 of the multi-year program of work on “Capacity-building and non-Internet accessibility”. The workshop will be held on 9 and 10 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany, immediately prior to the fourth meeting of the COP-MOP. A Notification will be issued to BCH Focal Points regarding the details of this workshop in due course.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to invite your feedback regarding the new BCH as this will be of invaluable help to the Secretariat in continuing to improve this primary tool for implementing the Protocol.

Please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Ahmed Djoghlaif
Executive Secretary

To: BCH National Focal Points

c.c. Cartagena Protocol National Focal Points or
CBD Focal Points where Biosafety Focal Points have not yet been nominated



Annex: Changes made to the new BCH

The general layout as well as the homepage of the BCH and the first three sections on the new horizontal navigation bar (i.e. 'The BCH', 'The Protocol' and 'Finding Information') have been fully revamped. Much work remains to be done, especially on the sections 'Registering Information', 'Resources' and 'Help' as well as on the completion of the translation of the entire site in all 6 UN languages.

The third meeting of the BCH's informal advisory committee, convened in Montreal, 4-5 October 2007, welcomed the changes the BCH has undergone and the final report of the meeting will soon be available at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=BCHIAc-03>.

URL:

- The new URL of the Biosafety Clearing-House is <http://bch.cbd.int/> and an automatic redirection is active from the previous URL.

User-friendliness

- The layout of the BCH is now in sync with the new CBD website that was released in May 2007. Also, navigation tools similar to the new CBD website have been optimized in order to allow for better identification of the primary sections of the site.
- All common content between the BCH and the CPB websites has been unified and consolidated so that the BCH and the CPB websites mirror one another in this respect. This was done in order to avoid duplication and facilitate browsing.
- All the primary search interfaces in the 'Finding Information' section - which represents the "core" of the BCH - have been merged as much as possible in order to facilitate access to cross-referenced data and maximize the capacity of BCH users to retrieve information from the Central Portal. For example, the new version of the BCH contains approximately 40 primary links and 10 search interfaces as opposed to the 85 primary links and 22 search interfaces contained in the previous version.
- Optional advanced search functions have been integrated into each primary search interface in order to reduce search time without compromising ease of use.
- Grouping options have been enhanced in all search interfaces in order to allow for queries of all major geographical or political groupings of countries.
- Decisions and risk assessment reports referring to a specific LMO have been combined on a single page for ease of reference and are accessible through graphic "tabs" that appear on each LMO record.
- There is added functionality to multiple languages support for Hermes, BCH Ajax Plug-In and the Central Portal. Also, national languages, other than the 6 UN Official languages, may now be technically implemented in all BCH features pending the availability of text translations from interested countries.

Quality control

- A revised LMO registry, including all current OECD Unique Identifiers, has been consolidated in order to optimize the management of information available in the BCH. The registry is accessible at <http://bch.cbd.int/database/organisms/uniqueidentifiers/>.
- Documentation available in the Biosafety Information Resource Centre (BIRC) has been divided into two databases. The first is for purely scientific articles published in international scientific journals and is maintained by the ICGEB (available at <http://bch.cbd.int/database/bibliographic-references/>). The second contains "grey" literature (e.g. reports and case studies; journals and newsletters; teaching materials, manuals, toolkits, presentations, etc., available at <http://bch.cbd.int/database/resources/>). Thanks to the kind contribution of the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project, there has also been a significant increase of "grey" BIRC records (from 242 to over 700).