



Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity



Press Release

GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING PROJECTS CONVENE IN COSTA RICA

San José, 6 March 2009 – More than 50 participants from Governments and organizations involved in the implementation and financing of biosafety capacity-building activities will meet in San José, Costa Rica, from 9 to 11 March to share experiences and discuss strategies for improving capacity-building efforts with regard to the assessment of risks of living modified organisms (LMOs), commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs). They will also explore ways to better integrate biosafety into broader sustainable development plans and programmes. The meeting will be held at the headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

This will be the fifth such meeting. The last meeting was held in April 2008 in New Delhi. These annual meetings were set up to provide a forum for policy makers, practitioners, academics and other individuals from government, relevant organizations and donor agencies involved in biosafety capacity-building activities to share information, experiences and lessons learned and to exchange views on ways of improving capacity-building for the effective implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Some of the concrete outcomes of the previous meetings include, “A guidance framework for promoting synergies and complementarities between biosafety capacity-building initiatives at the country level” and “Guidelines for facilitating regional and subregional initiatives and approaches to capacity-building in biosafety”.

Over the course of the three days, participants will review current status and the needs of countries and explore ways of improving efforts to strengthen national capacities in environmental risk assessment and post-release monitoring LMOs. Participants are also expected to make recommendations towards assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition on how to strengthen integration of biosafety into national development plans, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals.

The recommendations of the coordination meeting will be forwarded to the next meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP 5), which will be held in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan. At that meeting, the Parties are expected to consider those recommendations and make decisions towards further measures that need to be taken to advance the capacity-building efforts on the above two issues.

“Capacity-building is imperative to the successful implementation of the Biosafety Protocol”, said Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. “It is therefore critical for Parties to cooperate in developing and/or strengthening human resources and institutional capacities in all developing countries and countries with economies in transition, share experiences and learn from each other. The coordination meetings provide a unique opportunity to do so.”



Notes for Journalists

1. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was adopted in January 2000 as a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Its objective is to contribute to ensuring the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology that may have adverse effects on biodiversity, taking also into account risks to human health.

2. The Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003 and to date 155 States as well as the European Community have ratified it, the latest to do so being Malawi and Pakistan.

3. Article 22 of the Protocol states that: “Parties shall cooperate in the development and/or strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety, including biotechnology to the extent that it is required for biosafety, for the purpose of the effective implementation of this Protocol, in developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and in Parties with economies in transition, including through existing global, regional, subregional and national institutions and organizations and, as appropriate, through facilitating private sector involvement.”

4. A Coordination Mechanism under the Protocol on Biosafety has been established to promote partnerships, complementarities and synergies between various capacity-building initiatives. This is achieved through: sharing of information on existing initiatives, opportunities and needs; exchange of resource materials and reports; facilitating interaction and dialogue and fostering ongoing collaboration and networking, including through coordination meetings.

5. The first, second, third and fourth coordination meetings for governments and organizations implementing and/or funding biosafety capacity-building activities were held in Montreal from 26 to 27 January 2007, in Tromsø, Norway, from 18 to 20 January 2006, in Lusaka from 26 to 28 February 2007 and in New Delhi, India, 11 to 13 February 2008 respectively. Details about these meetings are available at: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/issues/meetings.shtml>

6. More information about the Fifth Coordination Meeting is available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=BSCMCB-05>

7. Additional information about the Protocol is available at the following websites:

CBD Web site: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety> and the Biosafety Clearing-House: <http://bch.biodiv.org>. Frequently asked questions at: <http://www.cbd.int/biosafety/faqs.asp>. Media and Outreach at: <https://www.cbd.int/biosafety/media.shtml>

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