



Convention on Biological Diversity

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Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety Eleventh meeting

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

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Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The Secretariat continues to pursue cooperation with other relevant organizations, bodies established under other conventions, and initiatives that contribute to the work undertaken under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The present note contains an overview of the actions taken by the Secretariat in that respect to create synergies among biosafety-related programmes in general and ensure the effective implementation of the Protocol in particular.

2. Goal B.4 of the Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety,¹ which was adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its tenth meeting, includes, as part of the “enabling environment”, specific elements, including specific indicators, aimed at ensuring that Parties enhance cooperation and coordination on biosafety issues at the national, regional and international levels.

II. Overview of ongoing cooperation activities

A. Green Customs Initiative

3. The Secretariat continued to collaborate as a partner in the Green Customs Initiative. The objective of the Initiative is to enhance the capacity of customs and other relevant border control authorities to monitor and facilitate legal trade and to detect and prevent illegal trade in environmentally sensitive goods and commodities covered by trade-related conventions and multilateral environmental agreements.

4. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat participated in the seventeenth and eighteenth coordination meetings of the partners of the Green Customs Initiative. At each meeting, partners of

* CBD/CP/MOP/11/1.

¹ Decision [CP-10/3](#), annex.

the Initiative shared an overview of relevant activities undertaken since the previous meeting and of those planned for the following year, with a view to coordinating capacity-building activities and identifying opportunities for collaboration. Partners also discussed the translation of the *Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements* into Arabic, Chinese and Russian, as well as initiatives for resource mobilization and improving the visibility and impact of the work of the Initiative.

B. Cooperation with the World Trade Organization

5. The Secretariat continued to liaise and cooperate with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to follow discussions and negotiations in committees established under that organization, including by liaising with staff of the WTO Secretariat. Briefings on relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol were provided to the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment. The Secretariat holds observer status in the regular sessions of that committee.

C. Working Group on Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

6. The Secretariat continued to collaborate with the Working Group on Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and participated in its thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth meetings. The Secretariat was thus able to contribute to discussions on topics of relevance to the Cartagena Protocol, including by renewing the request for assistance with the development of unique identifiers for living modified animals and microorganisms, which is currently under consideration. The consensus document on environmental considerations for risk/safety assessment for the release of transgenic plants² was adopted by the Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology Working Party at its thirty-seventh meeting and has been made available as a resource in the Biosafety Clearing-House library.

D. Cooperation with the Aarhus Convention on access to information and public participation

7. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity continued to collaborate with the Secretariat of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

8. The Secretariat co-organized in Geneva the fourth joint round table of the two conventions on public awareness, education, access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding living modified organisms and genetically modified organisms, on 11 and 12 December 2023.³

E. Cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme on the Biosafety Clearing-House

9. The Secretariat worked closely with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)-Global Environment Facility project for building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (phase III) by providing assistance with training activities directed to regional advisers and Biosafety Clearing-House national focal points.

10. The Secretariat also collaborated with UNEP to host and organize two regional training workshops on the Biosafety Clearing-House, one in Ankara, for the Central and Eastern European region, and one in Auckland, New Zealand, for the Pacific region.

² ENV/CBC/MONO(2023)30. Available at [https://one.oecd.org/document/ENV/CBC/MONO\(2023\)30/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/ENV/CBC/MONO(2023)30/en/pdf).

³ See [ECE/MP.PP/WG.1/2024/6](https://www.unep.org/biosafety/clearing-house/activities/round-table).

F. Other cooperation on technical and scientific issues

11. The Secretariat continued to collaborate with relevant organizations in its efforts to facilitate capacity-building and technical cooperation among Parties within the context of risk assessment, synthetic biology and the detection and identification of living modified organisms.

12. The Secretariat convened a global in-person workshop under the theme “Advances in risk assessment – twenty years of theory and practice”, in Montreal, Canada, on 30 and 31 October 2023. Participants in the workshop considered the advancement of practices related to risk assessments and risk management of living modified organisms aimed at ensuring the safe and responsible use of those organisms in a way that protects human health and the environment.

13. The workshop was attended by 43 participants and provided a platform for experts and stakeholders from around the world to come together and exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices. The workshop was focused on enhancing understanding of regulatory frameworks, methodologies and decision-making processes surrounding risk assessments of living modified organisms, as well as exploring emerging challenges and potential solutions.⁴

14. The Secretariat also collaborated with the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety and the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany, the Julius Kühn Institut and the European Commission Joint Research Centre to convene the International Conference on GMO Analysis and New Genomic Techniques in Berlin, from 14 to 16 March 2023. A total of 463 participants from 55 countries attended the conference, 270 of whom attended remotely. Of that total, the Government of Germany generously supported the participation of 17 participants from 17 Parties who attended in person, as well as 3 participants from 3 Parties who attended remotely. The event provided an opportunity for experts to learn about recent developments in the field of the detection and identification of living modified organisms, facilitated technical, science-based discussions on those developments and provided a networking opportunity for international collaboration.

15. The Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development continued to collaborate towards more harmonization, where appropriate, of the information submitted through the Biosafety Clearing-House, the FAO GM Foods Platform and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development BioTrack Product Database. In addition, the Secretariat liaised with the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety and Wageningen Food Safety Research to strengthen the interlinkages between the European GMO Initiative for a Unified Database System and the Biosafety Clearing-House.

16. The Secretariat also continued its cooperation with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology. In response to decision [CP-10/10](#), the Secretariat commissioned the preparation of a detailed outline of additional guidance materials on risk assessment of living modified organisms containing engineered gene drives, which was reviewed by the Open-Ended Online Forum on Risk Assessment and served as a basis for the development of the additional voluntary guidance materials by the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment.

17. The Secretariat further continued its collaboration with the World Health Organization as part of the United Nations Biorisk Working Group. The Group’s mandate has been extended by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the Secretariat took part in the coordination meetings of the Group. The Group continued to work in accordance with its terms of reference, including by discussing a digital information and knowledge-sharing hub, a staff exchange programme and the development of standard operating procedures for system-wide response measures to a deliberate biological event.

⁴ See [CBD/CP/RA/OM/2023/1/2](#).

III. **Conclusions**

18. Cooperation with international organizations, bodies established under other conventions, and initiatives, including relevant entities at the national and regional levels, continues to be a key element in the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol and the work of the Secretariat. The continued participation of the Secretariat in cooperative activities will depend on the availability of resources.

19. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol is invited to take note of the present report.
