



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**
Cali, Colombia, 21 October–1 November 2024
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*
Operation and activities of the Biosafety Clearing-House

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Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. The present document contains a status of the activities undertaken by the Secretariat pursuant to decision [CP-10/5](#), in which the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety requested the Executive Secretary to: (a) continue to maintain and make necessary improvements to the Biosafety Clearing-House, including by translating further pages of the Clearing-House to ensure its availability in the six official languages of the United Nations, exploring how the Bioland tool can be used to facilitate the linkage between national websites and the Clearing-House, and other mechanisms that allow national clearing houses to retrieve information from the Biosafety Clearing-House, and continuing to ensure that information in the Clearing-House is up to date; (b) develop capacity-building materials and conduct training on the new functionalities of the platform; and (c) continue to collaborate with other biosafety-related databases and organizations.

II. Progress on the implementation and administration of the Biosafety-Clearing House

A. Major improvements and developments in the Biosafety Clearing-House

1. Development of an online common format for the fifth national report on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol

2. In response to decision [CP-10/9](#), the online format for the fifth national report on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol was developed in the six languages of the United Nations and made available in the Biosafety Clearing-House in July 2024. In notification [2024-073](#) of 15 July 2024, the Executive Secretary invited Parties to submit their fifth national reports and provided information on how to publish the reports online.

* CBD/CP/MOP/11/1.

2. Translation

3. In response to the request in paragraph 7 (a) of decision [CP-10/5](#), the translation of the major parts of the platform in the six official languages of the United Nations was completed. It should be noted, however, that the translation of the pages of the platform in the six languages is an ongoing activity, as changes are constantly made to the Biosafety Clearing-House.

3. Exploring the Bioland tool to facilitate the linkage between national websites and the Biosafety Clearing-House

4. In response to the request in paragraph 7 (b) of decision [CP-10/5](#), the Secretariat conducted a survey to better understand the needs of countries for their national websites. The survey was distributed to the Cartagena Protocol and Biosafety Clearing-House national focal points by means of notification No. 2024-007 of 22 January 2024, as well as through the “BCH on BCH Forum”, with a final deadline for response of 1 March 2023.

5. The survey was completed by 86 respondents from all five geographical regions of the United Nations. On the basis of the results of the survey, the Secretariat designed the architecture of a model national biosafety clearing-house website and developed a mock-up, which was presented to the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House by videoconference on 19 June 2024 and was well received.¹

4. Development of capacity-building materials and training activities

6. In response to the request in paragraph 8 (a) of decision [CP-10/5](#), the Secretariat:

(a) Added to the Knowledge Base new help articles describing various functionalities of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(b) Developed more than 40 help videos focused on specific clearing-house tasks and posted them on the Knowledge Base;

(c) Improved the “Help” landing page to detail the various help materials available in the Biosafety Clearing-House and make them easily accessible;

(d) Improved the “Training Site” to provide additional instructions on how to obtain the appropriate roles to publish national records.

7. The Secretariat hosted four webinars² on the various features of the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and the Biosafety Clearing-House, as follows:

(a) A webinar on the overview of new and improved clearing-house features, held on 31 January 2023, to present in detail the main features of the “Search” interface;

(b) A webinar on questions and answers about publishing information in the clearing-houses, held on 23 February 2023;

(c) A webinar on scientific information in the Biosafety Clearing-House, held on 25 May 2023, to cover in detail the following records in the Biosafety Clearing-House: living modified organisms, organisms, genetic elements, risk assessments, virtual library resources and laboratories;

(d) A webinar on where to find help materials in the clearing-houses, held on 11 April 2024, to present the help materials available in the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House.

8. At the invitation of the United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) project for sustainable-capacity-building for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH III project), the Secretariat participated in two regional Biosafety Clearing-

¹ See CBD/CP/MOP/11/INF/3 for further information.

² Video recordings of the webinars are available on the Biosafety Clearing-House at bch.cbd.int/en/kb/tags/getting-help/VIDEO-recordings-of-webinars-on-clearing-houses/6436a820de0ec9bee614282e.

House training workshops, one for the Pacific region, held in Auckland, New Zealand, from 20 to 24 November 2023, and the other for the Central and Eastern European region, held in Ankara from 22 to 26 January 2024. The aim of the workshops was to improve countries' competence in using the Biosafety Clearing-House, build operational networks of cooperation to implement Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol, promote compliance with national and international requirements and enhance the exchange of information, public awareness, education and participation in biosafety issues. The Secretariat made several presentations during the workshops.

5. Online forums and discussions

9. In response to the request in paragraph 8 (b) of decision [CP-10/5](#), a number of online forum pages were migrated from the legacy platform of the Biosafety Clearing-House to the new platform, such as the risk assessment and risk management forum page, to host:

(a) The open-ended online forum held from 10 to 25 April 2023, which was attended by 53 participants from Parties, other Governments and stakeholders and during which 130 interventions were made;

(b) The open-ended online forum held from 21 to 25 August 2023, which was attended by 37 participants from Parties, other Government and stakeholders and during which 94 interventions were made.

10. In addition, a number of new pages were created, such as:

(a) A page dedicated to the sampling, detection and identification of living modified organisms, to host the online discussions of the Network of Laboratories for the Detection and Identification of Living Modified Organisms, which were held from 17 to 28 November 2023 and attended by 25 participants from Parties and stakeholders. A total of 53 interventions were made;

(b) A dedicated forum page for the online discussions of the Liaison Group on the Cartagena Protocol held from 7 to 21 February 2024 to contribute to the development of the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in relation to Target 17. The Group submitted its report on the discussions to the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Indicators for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, providing advice on the wording of the binary questions suggested for the indicator of Target 17 and on other relevant aspects, including the complementary indicators, the methodologies to be used to compile the global indicators on the basis of the binary responses and the draft glossary of terms. The report was issued as information document [CBD/SBSTTA/26/INF/13](#) for the twenty-sixth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

11. The “BCH on BCH Forum” was migrated to the new platform and continues to be essential for distributing information about clearing-house developments and promoting the exchange of information on developments regarding the Biosafety Clearing-House.

12. Online forum pages dedicated to the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House and the UNEP regional advisers were also migrated to the new platform.

13. Furthermore, a series of changes were made to the interface to improve the functionality of forums and facilitate interactions, for example, by enhancing the visibility of replies to particular posts within a thread and providing a new functionality that enables users to quote portions of previous messages and to subscribe to or unsubscribe from particular threads. In addition, help videos describing how to navigate through a forum page and perform various functions were created by the Secretariat.

6. Development of other features and functionalities

14. The “Export” function of the “Search” interface, which enables users to export search results to and record information in a spreadsheet format, has been enhanced for all national and reference record types to allow for the generation of more comprehensive reports.

15. To give prominence to the important role played by laboratories for the detection and identification of living modified organisms, the laboratories (LAB) registry was created. The LAB registry provides a summary of information, in tabular view, on all laboratories registered in the Biosafety Clearing-House that are involved in the detection and identification of living modified organisms.

16. Since the launch of the new platform, users had been updating all linked records manually. The Secretariat has now simplified and streamlined this process by implementing an automated update of records (similar to the way the legacy platform functioned in the past), whereby the update to a record is automatically linked to all other records in which the original record was referenced.

17. In response to the request in paragraph 10 (i) of decision [CP-10/10](#), web pages dedicated to living modified fish and organisms containing engineered gene drives were created on the Cartagena Protocol website, under the “Risk Assessment” menu, and linked to the respective “Search” pages in the Biosafety Clearing-House with enhanced search functionality.

B. Twelfth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House

18. The Secretariat convened the twelfth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House on 15 and 16 May 2023 to review progress made since the previous meeting, in December 2020, and to seek further guidance on several areas, including ways to improve the functionalities of the Biosafety Clearing-House. The Secretariat has been working on the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Informal Advisory Committee,³ which are also taken into account in section V below, as elements for future priorities.

C. Status of information in the Biosafety Clearing-House

19. In response to the request in paragraph 7 (c) of decision [CP-10/5](#), the Secretariat continues to monitor on a daily basis the accuracy and completeness of records to ensure that the necessary information is made available in the Biosafety Clearing-House, by informing Parties of the gaps that exist in their decision records (Articles 10 and 11 of the Cartagena Protocol) as registered in the Clearing-House or required in an accompanying risk assessment report (or summary). Parties are also notified about any missing Biosafety national focal points, whose nomination is required under Articles 19 and 17 of the Protocol and paragraph 7 of decision [BS-I/3](#).

20. The Secretariat also reviews and validates some categories of records for publication in the Biosafety Clearing-House (e.g. records on living modified organisms, genes, organisms, biosafety virtual library resources and capacity-development initiatives). The Secretariat continues to address requests from Parties and others for technical advice and assistance related to the management of records and use of the new platform. It also continues to include peer-reviewed journal articles and publicly available sequencing information and patents on scientific records to improve the quality of information and strengthen access to scientific information on the Clearing-House.

21. In addition, the work of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol has contributed greatly to ensuring the accuracy, completeness and consistency of records in the Biosafety Clearing-House. In accordance with its cyclical organization of work, the Committee periodically reviews the consistency between information in national reports and that on the Clearing-House, to ensure that Parties fulfil their obligation to make mandatory information available in the Clearing-House, as required under the Protocol. The nineteenth meeting of the Compliance Committee was held in Montreal, Canada, from 30 April to 2 May 2024.⁴

³ See [CBD/CP/BCH-IAC/12/3](#) for the recommendations adopted by the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House at its twelfth meeting.

⁴ See www.cbd.int/meetings/CP-CC-19 for the documents of the meeting.

22. The number of records published and updated in the Biosafety Clearing-House has increased since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, as shown in the table below.

Number of records published and updated in the Biosafety Clearing-House, excluding national reports

Record type	Number of records		Increase (percentage)
	As at 31 December 2022	As at 15 July 2024	
National records			
National focal points (Protocol, Biosafety Clearing-House, emergency measures contacts (Article 17))	.. ^a	340	.. ^a
Competent national authorities	350	402	15
Supplementary Protocol competent authority	10	16	60
Biosafety laws, regulations, guidelines and agreements	1 092	1 157	6
Countries' decisions or any other communications	2 671	2 809	5
Risk assessments generated by a regulatory process	2 571	2 695	5
National biosafety websites or databases	141	150	6
Biosafety experts	332	362	9
Reference records			
Biosafety virtual library resources	1 565	1 587	2
Biosafety organizations	366	392	7
Laboratories for detection and identification of living modified organisms	72	78	8
Living modified organisms	872	987	13
Genetic elements	823	861	5
Organisms	263	272	3
Risk assessment generated by an independent or non-regulatory process	32	32	0
Capacity development initiatives	422	425	1
BCH news	558	562	1
Submissions ^b	525	624	19
Contacts	2 416	2 494	3
Total	15 081	15 905	6

Abbreviation: BCH, Biosafety Clearing-House.

^a Owing to the changes made to the various national contact databases during the migration process, the Secretariat is unable to generate accurate data for this metric. The total number of records also excludes the national contacts.

^b See details in paragraphs 21–23.

23. To streamline the submission process of responses to notifications, the Secretariat has made the “Submissions” format used for submitting information in response to notifications issued by the Secretariat accessible to all users, thus replacing the manual upload of those types of records by the Secretariat.

24. Furthermore, the “Submissions to notifications” landing page was deployed in March 2023 and became accessible from the “Search” drop-down menu, thus allowing for submissions in response to notifications to be viewed in isolation from other Biosafety Clearing-House content. The process for submitting responses follows the same workflow as all other reference records, that is, the submission of a record is reviewed by relevant staff before its publication. Since the implementation of the new process, submissions have been received and published in the Clearing-House in response to notifications Nos. [2023-006](#), [2023-007](#), [2023-100](#), [2023-109](#), [2023-111](#), [2023-129](#), [2023-133](#), [2024-003](#) and [2024-027](#). Of the 99 submissions received in response to those notifications, 52 were from Governments and 47 from organizations.

25. The online submission process in the Biosafety Clearing-House proved to be very efficient and was extended to submissions under other workflows. Parties, other Governments and relevant stakeholders are encouraged to continue to submit information online in response to notifications issued by the Secretariat. In addition, the Secretariat developed a help article and a video explaining how to submit this type of information in the Biosafety Clearing-House.⁵

III. Collaboration with other biosafety-related organizations

26. In response to the request in paragraph 8 (c) of decision [CP-10/5](#), the Secretariat continued to collaborate with other biosafety-related organizations.

27. The Secretariat implemented a seamless linkage with the CropLife International Detection Methods Database, in addition to the linkage with the European Union Reference Laboratory for Genetically Modified Food and Feed. Detection method information is now dynamically imported from the two databases. When a user submits a living modified organism record, detection methods from the other databases are automatically appended and the information will be visible when viewing a living modified organism record that has associated detection methods in either database.

28. Users creating decision and risk assessment records in the Biosafety Clearing-House related to living modified organisms for commercial use may choose to have the records forwarded to the Secretariat of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), for possible inclusion in the BioTrack Product Database, and the Secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), for possible inclusion in the FAO GM Foods Platform. The mechanism for the automated forwarding of those types of records to both the OECD and the FAO Secretariats is now operational.

29. The Secretariat continued to follow discussions with OECD on the plan of action for developing and applying the unique identifiers for living modified animals. At the invitation of OECD, the Secretariat participated in the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth meetings of the Working Party on the Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology, held in April 2023 and March 2024, as well as a number of online discussions concerning the development of unique identifiers for living modified animals.

30. The Secretariat has been collaborating with the European GMO Initiative for a Unified Database System (EUGinius) with a view to simplifying the sharing of information relevant to the standardized abbreviation of genetic elements and facilitating interlinkages between the Biosafety Clearing-House and the EUGinius database. The Secretariat currently inputs the links to the EUGinius database manually every time a living modified organism record is uploaded or updated and checks the genetic element names in the database before publishing the record in the Clearing-House. Discussions are under way regarding the possibility of automating that task using an application programming interface, which would facilitate data exchange between the two databases.

⁵ Available at bch.cbd.int/en/kb/tags/submitting-information/How-to-upload-a-Submission-in-response-to-a-CBD-Notification-video-65294bcc05aa4d43a9bf1ceb.

IV. Collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility project for sustainable capacity-building for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House

31. The Secretariat continued to undertake a number of collaborative activities with the UNEP-GEF project for sustainable capacity-building for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH III project).

32. As part of the collaborative activities, the BCH III project provided funds to enable the Secretariat to hire two web development consultants to support its information technology team in the ongoing front-end development of the Biosafety Clearing-House. In accordance with the joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House,⁶ the work of the consultants was undertaken concurrently on the latter two clearing houses, thereby ensuring that the development of functionalities led to major improvements in both clearing houses.

33. At the invitation of the BCH III project, the Secretariat actively participated in two regional training workshops on the Biosafety Clearing-House (see para. 7 of section II above for detail).

34. The BCH III project concluded in mid-2024. It would be beneficial to the work of the Cartagena Protocol if potential donor countries could provide financial support for the continuation of the project, thus ensuring its sustainability, and if the network of regional advisers was maintained, given their instrumental role in the implementation of the project at the regional level.

V. Priorities for the future implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House

35. The activities planned for developing the Biosafety Clearing-House comprise:

(a) Making further improvements to various sections of the new platform, including improvements recommended by the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House at its twelfth meeting;

(b) Enhancing the record-maintenance functionality to enable users to better manage and update records in the Clearing-House and improve data quality and completeness;

(c) Enhancing the various features of the “Search” interface and the presentation of search results in response to requests by the Conference of the Parties in various decisions, including in relation to information pertaining to synthetic biology and avoiding the need for creating new thematic pages;

(d) Developing a customized functional national biosafety website using the Bioland tool, to enable direct linkages with the new platform;

(e) Developing further online help materials to demonstrate various features of the platform.

VI. Draft decision

36. In view of the above, and taking into consideration the recommendations of the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol relating to the Biosafety Clearing-House,⁷ the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

⁶ Decision [14/25](#), annex. See also decisions [CP-9/2](#) and [NP-3/3](#).

⁷ CBD/CP/MOP/11/3, annex.

1. *Welcomes* the improvements made to the central portal of the Biosafety Clearing-House in accordance with the joint modalities of operation for the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity,⁸ the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House,⁹ as endorsed in decision CP-9/2 of 28 November 2018;
2. *Urges* Parties to make all required information systematically available on the Biosafety Clearing-House, including legal measures for implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety,¹⁰ decisions on the import or release of living modified organisms and cases of unintentional or illegal transboundary movements;
3. *Requests* Parties to review their national records published in the Biosafety Clearing-House for accuracy, including by verifying that the information made available on the Biosafety Clearing-House is up to date and complete and that the actual documents containing the information are uploaded correctly or, in cases where links to the documents are provided, that the links are functional, noting that the Compliance Committee under the Cartagena Protocol will be reviewing the completeness of information on the Biosafety Clearing-House at its twentieth meeting;
4. *Invites* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to submit scientific information, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and sequence data, to improve the quality of information published in the Biosafety Clearing-House;
5. *Urges* Parties to start the preparation of their fifth national reports on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol and ensure the publication thereof in the Biosafety Clearing-House in a timely manner;
6. *Welcomes* the successful implementation of the United Nations Environment Programme-Global Environment Facility project for sustainable capacity-building for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House and urges potential donor country Parties and other Governments to provide funds to continue the project and other capacity-building projects related to the Biosafety Clearing-House and to support the network of regional advisers;
7. *Requests* the Global Environment Facility to continue to make funds available in support of activities related to the Biosafety Clearing-House;
8. *Welcomes* the collaborative activities of the biosafety-related organizations and the Secretariat;
9. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:
 - (a) To continue to maintain the Biosafety Clearing-House and to make necessary improvements to it, including those recommended by the Informal Advisory Committee and those requested by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, to the functionalities of various parts of the platform, so as to avoid creating new thematic pages;
 - (b) To continue to translate pages of the Biosafety Clearing-House, including new features and content as they are developed, to ensure the availability of the platform in the six official languages of the United Nations;
 - (c) To develop a customized functional biosafety national website using the Bioland tool and to make it available to Parties wishing to build a national biosafety website with linkages to the Biosafety Clearing-House;
 - (d) To continue to develop capacity-building materials and to provide training on the new functionalities of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

⁸ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1760, No. 30619.

⁹ Decision 14/25, annex.

¹⁰ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2226, No. 30619.

- (e) To continue to collaborate with other biosafety-related databases and organizations.
