



THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY: MAJOR MILESTONES

22 May 1992, Nairobi, Kenya

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is adopted under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, including Article 19.4 providing for Parties to “consider the need for and modalities of a protocol, including advance informed agreement (AIA) in particular, to ensure the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (LMOs) derived from modern biotechnology that may have an adverse effect on biological diversity and its components”.

3-14 June 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopts Agenda 21, the global programme of action on sustainable development which, in chapter 16, calls for development of international mechanisms for cooperation to ensure safety in biotechnology development, application, exchange and transfer through international agreement on principles to be applied on risk assessment and management.

28 November - 9 December 1994, Nassau, Bahamas

The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 1) establishes an Open-ended Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Biosafety to examine “the need for and modalities of a Protocol setting out appropriate procedures, including in particular advance informed agreement, in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of any LMO resulting from biotechnology that may have adverse effect on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity”.

24-28 July 1995, Madrid, Spain

The Open-ended Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Biosafety supports the development of an international framework on biosafety under the CBD, including all activities related to LMOs that may have adverse effects on biodiversity, transboundary movement of LMOs, release of LMOs in centers of origin/genetic diversity, mechanisms for risk assessment and management, procedures for AIA, information exchange and capacity-building.

6-11 November 1995, Jakarta, Indonesia

The second meeting of the Conference of the Parties calls for a negotiation process to develop in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs, a protocol on biosafety, specifically focusing on transboundary movement of any LMO that may have an adverse effect on biological diversity, setting out appropriate procedures for advance informed agreement”. COP-2 establishes an Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Biosafety (BSWG) to “elaborate, as a priority, the modalities and elements of the Protocol”.

22 - 26 July 1996, Aarhus, Denmark

The first meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Biosafety (BSWG-1) provides a forum for defining issues and articulating positions, characteristic of a pre-negotiation process.



12 - 16 May 1997, Montreal, Canada

BSWG-2 discusses a range of issues, begins to move from generalities to specifics and takes steps towards developing possible elements of the protocol. Despite the progress, some fundamental differences of opinion remain, particularly regarding the scope of the Protocol, which threaten to derail the process.

13-17 October 1997, Montreal, Canada

BSWG-3 produces a consolidated draft text to serve as the basis for negotiation of a protocol on biosafety. The meeting establishes two sub-working groups to address the core articles of the Protocol and a contact group to discuss institutional matters and final clauses.

5-13 February, Montreal, Canada

BSWG-4 further consolidates options contained in the draft text, while beginning the process of negotiation to clearly define divergent positions and to identify common ground for moving forward. Delegates produce consolidated text on most of the articles for a Protocol on Biosafety, including provisions on highly contentious issues, such as scope, advance informed agreement, risk assessment, liability and redress and socio-economic impacts.

4 - 15 May 1998, Bratislava, Slovakia

The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties extends the deadline for the negotiation of a Protocol from the end of 1998 to early 1999 and establishes an extra meeting to be followed by an Extraordinary Conference of the Parties to the CBD to adopt the Protocol in 1999.

17-28 August 1998, Montreal, Canada

BSWG-5 develops a revised consolidated draft of 40 articles. Thirteen articles remain entirely bracketed, indicating that delegates still have not agreed on the elements of the protocol and the contents of the articles.

14-22 February 1999, Cartagena, Colombia

BSWG-6 attempts to finalize a protocol on biosafety for adoption by the extraordinary meeting of the COP (ExCOP). However, the delegates fail to reach consensus. The Chair's text is forwarded to the ExCOP still containing brackets around contentious issues mainly relating to trade aspects, such as treatment of commodities and relationship with the WTO agreements.

22-23 February 1999, Cartagena, Colombia

The first extraordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (ExCOP) meets to adopt a protocol on biosafety. ExCOP President, Juan Mayr (the Colombian Environment Minister), establishes an informal working group, the "Group of 10", to debate the Chair's text adopted at BSWG-6. As no consensus is reached, the ExCOP finally decides to suspend its first meeting and to resume no later than the fifth meeting of the COP (May-June 2000). The ExCOP also



decides to name the future Protocol the “Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity”

1 July 1999, Montreal; 15-19 September 1999, Vienna, Austria

Informal consultation on the process to resume the Extraordinary Meeting of COP to adopt a protocol on biosafety are held on 1 July 1999 in Montreal between representatives of the negotiating groups to plan for the resumed session of the ExCOP. All representatives express their commitment to the conclusion of a Biosafety Protocol and agree to hold on 15-19 September 1999 in Vienna an open-ended informal consultation involving all Parties and Governments which participated in the earlier negotiations. Although a number of important outstanding issues remain, the groups make some progress on a conceptual basis.

20-28 January 2000, Montreal, Canada

The resumed session of the ExCOP negotiates the remaining core issues (including the scope, procedure relating to commodities, and relationship with other international agreements), as well as some other outstanding points. Finally, after the last minute compromise on the provision regarding documentation, delegates adopt the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety 29 January 2000.

15 - 26 May 2000

The Protocol is opened for signature at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya signed the Protocol on 15 May, making Kenya its first signatory.

November 2000

The Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the financial mechanism for the Protocol, approves the GEF initial strategy for assisting countries to prepare for the ratification, entry into force and implementation of the Protocol.

11-15 December 2000, Montpellier, France

The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP) recommends, among other things, that a pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) be developed and administered by the Secretariat under the oversight of the ICCP Bureau. ICCP-1 also invites UNEP and the Secretariat to organize an open-ended expert meeting to develop proposals on the implementation of capacity building provisions of the Protocol and requests the Secretariat to maintain the roster of experts and to make it available in the BCH.

5 April 2001

The Secretariat launches the pilot phase of the BCH online, taking into account recommendations of the liaison group meeting of technical experts on the BCH which was held 19-20 March 2001 in Montreal.



30 April 2001

The Secretariat operationalizes, through the Biosafety Clearing-House, the roster of biosafety experts established by the extra-ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP) in decision EM-I/3 to “provide advice and other support, as appropriate and upon request, to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition, to conduct risk assessment, make informed decisions, develop national human resources and promote institutional strengthening, associated with the transboundary movements of LMOs”.

11-13 July 2001, Havana, Cuba

The Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Capacity-Building for the Implementation of the Biosafety Protocol develops a draft indicative action plan for building capacities for the effective implementation of the Cartagena Protocol for consideration by the ICCP at its second meeting.

1-5 October 2001, Nairobi, Kenya

The second meeting of the ICCP develops recommendations on the following issues to be forwarded to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP) for consideration: information sharing; capacity building; the roster of experts; guidance to the financial mechanism; decision-making procedures; handling, transport, packaging and identification; liability and redress; compliance; and monitoring and reporting.

22-26 April 2002, The Hague, Netherlands

The third meeting of the ICCP recommends to the first meeting of the COP-MOP draft procedures and mechanisms on compliance, a coordination mechanism for capacity-building initiatives and interim guidelines for the roster of biosafety experts. It also invites views on development of a unique identification system for LMOs and information on national, regional and international agreements in the field of liability and redress. It also forwards recommendations of the Technical Expert Meeting on Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification of LMOs.

13 June 2003

The Protocol receives its 50th instrument of ratification from the Republic of Palau.

11 September 2003

The Protocol enters into force, making it the first legally binding international agreement governing the transboundary movement of LMOs resulting from modern biotechnology.

23-27 February 2004, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The first meeting of the COP-MOP adopts a number of decisions elaborating rules, procedures and mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Protocol. These include the operational modalities for the BCH, the capacity-building Action Plan and its coordination mechanism, guidelines for the roster of biosafety experts and the compliance procedures and mechanisms, including a Compliance Committee. COP-MOP also establishes an Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts



on Liability and Redress under the Protocol. Furthermore, it adopts identification requirements for documentation that should accompany LMOs for contained use and LMOs for intentional introduction into the environment and initiates a process to elaborate the detailed documentation requirements with respect to LMOs intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing.

14-16 March 2005 - Montreal, Canada

The Compliance Committee under the Protocol holds its first meeting to, for instance, review general issues of compliance by Parties with their obligations under the Protocol and develop draft rules of procedure for its meetings.

25-27 May 2005, Montreal, Canada

The First meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of Legal and Technical Experts on Liability and Redress under the Biosafety Protocol embarks on process for the elaboration of international rules and procedures regarding liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of LMOs in the context of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

30 May-3 June 2005, Montreal, Canada

The second meeting of the COP-MOP approves the rules of procedure for meetings of the Compliance Committee, adopts a multi-year programme of work for the BCH, establishes an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Risk Assessment and urges governments to develop programmes and leverage opportunities for cooperation in the promotion of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs.

20-24 February 2006, Montreal, Canada

The second meeting of the Open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Liability and Redress reviews available information to develop a common understanding on a number of specific issues relating to liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary movements of LMOs, analyzes general issues relating to potential and/or actual damage scenarios of concern and develops an indicative list of criteria for the assessment of the effectiveness of any rules and procedures referred to in Article 27 of the Protocol.

13-17 March 2006, Curitiba, Brazil

The third meeting of the COP-MOP reaches consensus on the detailed identification requirements for documentation accompanying shipments of LMOs intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing, adopts a revised Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol and also endorses a format for the first regular national reports on implementation of the Protocol and the schedule and process for their submission.

19-23 February 2007, Montreal, Canada

The third meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Liability and Redress develops a blueprint for a possible COP-MOP decision on international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress for damage resulting from transboundary



movements of LMOs, discusses a synthesis of proposed operational texts on approaches, options and issues identified and integrates into the working draft additional operational texts submitted by several representatives.

22-26 October 2007, Montreal, Canada

The fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Liability and Redress streamlines the operational texts on approaches and options in the working document and revises the blueprint considered at the third meeting to reflect the agreed changes regarding the form and contents of some of the elements under consideration.

12-19 March 2008, Cartagena, Colombia

The fifth meeting of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Liability and Redress revises the working draft on the elaboration of options for rules and procedures, agrees to some core elements and reduces options for operational text identified pertaining to liability and redress.

7-9 May 2008, Bonn, Germany

Friends of the Co-Chairs of the fifth meeting of the Open-Ended Ad Hoc Working Group on Liability and Redress engage in closed door negotiations of proposed operational texts on liability and redress.

12-16 May 2008, Bonn, Germany

The fourth meeting of the COP-MOP 4 agrees to work towards international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress that would comprise legally binding provisions focusing on the administrative approach and some non-legally binding provisions on civil liability. Parties also adopt several other decisions, including new measures for improving the quality and effectiveness of the roster of experts; a revised set of indicators for monitoring the updated capacity-building Action Plan, measures to further improve the BCH and a comprehensive decision on risk assessment and risk management covering a series training activities and a process for elaboration of further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment and risk management.

11 September 2008

Parties mark the fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Protocol.