



**CONVENTION ON
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AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING ON THE
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AND THE
CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM

Nairobi, 26-28 February 2001

Item 2.2 of the provisional agenda*

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety establishes a Biosafety Clearing-House as part of the clearing-house mechanism under Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention, in order to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity.
2. At its first meeting, held in Montpellier from 11 to 15 December 2000, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), requested the Executive Secretary to analyse the identified capacity-building and financial requirements of the developing countries, in particular the least developed and small island developing states among them, and countries with economies in transition, as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity, to enable their active participation in the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House.
3. This regional meeting for Africa has been convened in support of this objective, to provide countries of the region with an opportunity to express their needs and expectations with regard to the establishment of this pilot phase, keeping in mind the broader context of the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention.
4. This meeting is also in support of decision V/14, annex II, item (d), of the Conference of the Parties, under which the Executive Secretary is requested to convene regional workshops to support capacity-building for clearing-house mechanism activities, training and awareness, so as to enable and further strengthen their participation and collaboration in the use and future development of the clearing-house mechanism.

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5. The meeting will consider issues relevant to the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism in Africa. Specific objectives for the meeting include:

(a) To determine the information requirements and mechanisms in Africa needed to support information exchange activities under the Convention and the Protocol at the local and national level;

(b) To identify likely problems and suggest solutions in the implementation and ongoing development of the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House information-exchange activities in Africa;

(c) To explore partnerships that would improve information-exchange mechanisms and reduce duplication of efforts;

(d) To present and discuss existing and potential regional initiatives for information-exchange mechanisms related to the Convention and the Protocol.

Participants

6. Each African country Party to the Convention is being invited to nominate one participant to be supported by the Secretariat, preferably qualified in the fields of management of biosafety-related issues (such as notifications for decision-making); information-sharing systems and database-management; and/or experience with the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention. Nominations were requested from the national focal points under the Convention on 12 January 2001.

7. In order to further assist the deliberations of this workshop, Parties, Governments and relevant organizations were also requested to submit their views and needs with regard to the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and/or the clearing-house mechanism, as well as any other relevant information they may wish to convey prior to the meeting.

8. In addition to these Government-nominated participants, the following will also be invited to participate in the meeting as observers and/or resource persons:

(a) Representatives from the following intergovernmental organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Bank, Global Environment Facility (GEF), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);

(b) Representatives from the following non-governmental organizations: African Agency of Biotechnology (AAB), African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), IUCN—The World Conservation Union, Third World Network (TWN), and World Wildlife Fund (WWF);

(c) Representatives of bilateral donors, particularly from those Governments who indicated at the first meeting of the ICCP their interest in funding capacity-building activities to enable the active participation of developing countries in the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

Documents

9. A list of documents for the meeting is attached as annex I below.

Anticipated outcome of the meeting

10. It is expected that the meeting will facilitate a better definition of the needs of countries of the African region with regard to the establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the further development of the clearing-house mechanism, and will recommend possible solutions to overcome the identified constraints and impediments.

11. The recommendations of the meeting will be communicated to the ICCP at its second meeting, to be held in Montreal, Canada, from 1 to 5 October 2001. The report of the meeting will be made available

on the Convention website and will be made available to all Parties to the Convention and other States, and to interested national and international institutions and organizations, including funding agencies.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

12. The meeting will be held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The meeting will be opened by the Secretariat at 9 a.m. on Monday, 26 February 2001.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

13. The regional meeting will be invited to elect its Chair and Rapporteur from among its members. Proposals will be made from the floor.

2.2. Adoption of agenda

14. The regional meeting will be invited to adopt its agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda proposed in document UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/1.

2.3. Organization of work

15. A proposed programme of work for the meeting is shown in annex II below.

16. Participants will be invited to discuss the issues relevant to information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House as reflected in the work plan of the ICCP, as well as issues pertaining to regional needs assessment in relation to use and future development of the clearing-house mechanism. To facilitate these discussions, it is suggested that there should be four substantive sessions on, respectively:

- (a) Information exchange under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Biosafety Protocol;
- (b) Biodiversity and biosafety information exchange mechanisms in Africa;
- (c) Building capacity for information exchange under the Convention and the Protocol;
- (d) Synergies and distinctions in African implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism.

17. Each of these headings will include a number of topics that encompass various relevant issues.

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

18. Agenda item 3, the main substantive item of the agenda, contains four sub-items, which correspond to the sessions referred to in paragraph 16 above. Following an introduction to the topic, the regional meeting will be invited to discuss relevant issues, with a view to making recommendations relevant to the objectives for the meeting.

3.1. Information exchange under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Biosafety Protocol

19. The Secretariat will make a short presentation on issues relevant to this item, based on documents prepared for the first meeting of the ICCP. Accordingly, it is proposed that this item of the agenda should cover the following elements:

- (a) Overview and direction of the clearing-house mechanism;

- (b) Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) Information exchange requirements under the Biosafety Protocol;
- (d) Outcomes of the ICCP and possible implications for Africa.

20. These issues are elaborated upon in two ICCP documents that will be made available at this meeting (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/3 and UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/9).

3.2. Biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Africa

21. In considering this item, the regional meeting will be invited to review issues relating to the status of existing mechanisms of biodiversity and biosafety information exchange in Africa (such as electronic vs. non-electronic information exchange, major actors responsible for producing and disseminating information, availability and accessibility of existing information resources at a national and regional level).

22. Under this item, representatives from intergovernmental organizations, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations involved in enabling activities will be invited to give an overview of the aspects of these projects relevant to information-sharing activities in Africa for consideration by the meeting (for example, the clearing-house mechanism module under the national biodiversity strategies and action plans projects funded by GEF).

23. Possible group discussions that could be held under this item with a view to assessing regional needs include: (i) opportunities for dissemination of information and data required under the Biosafety Protocol by non Internet-based means; and (ii) problems and solutions involving electronic communication - technical, human resources, funding, etc.

3.3. Building capacity for information exchange under the Convention and the Protocol

24. In considering this item, the regional meeting will be invited to consider issues relevant to building capacity for information exchange under the Convention and the Protocol. It is proposed that this item of the agenda include the following elements:

- (a) Current information-exchange capacity (review of ongoing or completed projects by countries, feedback on relevant projects from the implementing agencies);
- (b) Key organizations in Africa that could act as information centres.

25. Under this item, representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved in enabling activities will be invited to give an overview of the aspects of these projects relevant to information-sharing activities in Africa for consideration by the meeting (for example, the biodiversity data management project funded by GEF).

26. Possible group discussions that could be held under this item with a view to determining options for regional capacity-building include: (i) implications of operating an electronic Internet-based Biosafety Clearing-House information-exchange system in conjunction with non-electronic information-exchange mechanisms; and (ii) opportunities for using the clearing-house mechanism to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation.

3.4. Synergies and distinctions in African implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism

27. In considering this item, the regional meeting will be invited to consider the synergies and distinctions in African implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism.

28. Possible group discussions that could be held under this item with a view to determining options for regional capacity-building include: (i) an overview of potential synergies between the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House and ways to make use of these; and (ii) an overview of potential differences between the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House and ways to overcome these.

ITEM 4. PREPARATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

29. Under this item, participants will be invited to prepare regional needs assessments for the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism, and to determine the priorities for action, based on these assessments.

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

30. The regional meeting will be invited to formulate its general conclusions and recommendations on the issues considered at this meeting.

ITEM 6. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

31. The regional meeting will consider and adopt its report, on the basis of the draft report of the meeting and draft recommendations to be presented by the Rapporteur.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

32. It is expected that the meeting will be closed at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 28 February 2001.

Annex I

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING ON THE BIOSAFETY
CLEARING-HOUSE AND THE CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM**

PLEASE NOTE:

**For reasons of economy, documents will be available at the meeting in a limited number.
Participants are requested to bring their copies of the documents to the meeting.**

Working documents

UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/1/Add.1	Annotations to the provisional agenda

Background documents

UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/3	Information-sharing (Article 20, Article 19) (paper prepared for the first meeting of the ICCP, 11-15 December 2000)
UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/4	Capacity-building (Article 22, Article 28) (paper prepared for the first meeting of the ICCP, 11-15 December 2000)
UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/9	Report of the first meeting of the ICCP

Annex II

**PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE AFRICAN REGIONAL MEETING
ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AND THE CLEARING-HOUSE
MECHANISM**

Monday, 26 February 2001

- 9 a.m. Opening of the meeting (item 1)
- 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. Introductory statements
- Organizational matters:
- Election of officers (item 2.1)
- Adoption of agenda (item 2.2)
- Organization of work (item 2.3)
- 10 a.m.—noon Information exchange under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (item 3.1)
- noon.—1 p.m. Lunch break
- 1 p.m.—2.30 p.m. Existing biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Africa (item 3.2)
- 2.30 p.m.—4 p.m. Group discussions
- 4 p.m.—5 p.m. Discussion of recommendations under items 3.1 and 3.2

Tuesday, 27 February 2001

- 9 a.m.—10.30 a.m. Building capacity for information exchange under the Convention and the Protocol (Item 3.3)
- 10.30 a.m.—noon. Group discussions
- noon—1 p.m. Lunch break
- 1 p.m.—2.30 p.m. Synergies and differences in the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the clearing-house mechanism in Africa (item 3.4)
- 2.30 p.m.— 4 p.m. Group discussions
- 4 p.m.—5 p.m. Discussion of recommendations under items 3.3 and 3.4

Wednesday, 28 February 2001

- 9 a.m.—noon Preparation of regional needs assessments and priorities for action (item 4)
- 1 p.m.—2 p.m. Lunch break
- 2 p.m.—5 p.m. Finalization and adoption of report and recommendations (items 5 and 6)
- 5 p.m. Closure of the meeting (item 7)
