



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING ON
THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE
Beijing, 4-8 March 2002
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) stressed the important relationship between information-sharing and capacity-building. Accordingly, in its consideration of the agenda item regarding information-sharing, the ICCP urged Governments to submit to the Executive Secretary their priority needs regarding capacities to participate in the development of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House. It also recommended that the pilot phase should lead to the identification of capacity-building needs of those countries to be linked to the Biosafety Clearing-House, with a view to establishing a capacity-building programme addressing those needs (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/9, annex I, item 4.1). The importance of this objective was re-emphasized at the second meeting of the ICCP, which recognized the interconnection between national capacities, effective use of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and successful implementation of the Protocol (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/15, annex I, recommendation 2/8).
3. The Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House has been convened in support of this objective, with the generous support of the Government of the United States of America, and following the kind offer of the Government of China to host such a meeting, to provide countries of the region with an opportunity to express their needs and expectations with regard to the establishment of

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this pilot phase, and also to provide training on the use of the Biosafety Clearing-House. The Executive Secretary will compile the information received for a report to the ICCP at its third meeting, to be held in The Hague from 22 to 26 April 2002.

4. This Regional Meeting will be held jointly with a regional workshop on biosafety, organized by the GEF Coordination Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-GEF), which will focus both on increasing awareness of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and on the development of national biosafety frameworks in the countries of the region. According to the provisional agenda, it is envisioned that 4 March will be a joint introductory day, 5 and 6 March will focus on national biosafety frameworks and 7 and 8 March will focus on the Biosafety Clearing-House.

5. The meeting will consider issues relevant to the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House in the region. Specific objectives for the meeting include:

(a) To determine the information requirements and mechanisms in Asia and the Pacific needed to support information exchange activities under the Protocol at the local and national level, and to identify synergies in the implementation of the Protocol's Biosafety Clearing-House and the Convention's clearing-house mechanism in the region;

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

(c) To present and discuss existing and potential regional initiatives for information-exchange mechanisms related to the Protocol and to explore partnerships that would improve information-exchange mechanisms and reduce duplication of efforts;

(d) To provide training on the operation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

Participants

6. Each Asia and Pacific country Party to the Convention is being invited to nominate one participant to be supported by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and one participant to be supported by UNEP-GEF, 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 November 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 capacity building under the Protocol, and/or the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, 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 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (Regional Office in Bangkok), Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Beijing office), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Bank;

(b) Representatives from the following intergovernmental organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: Asian Development Bank, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research – International Rice Research Institute (CGIAR – IRRI), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), South Pacific Commission (SPC), South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP);

(c) Representatives from the following non-governmental organizations: China National Biodiversity Information Query System (CNBIQS), Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development (FIELD), Global Industry Coalition, IUCN-Regional Biodiversity Programme, University of the South Pacific, South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), Swaminathan Foundation, Thailand Biodiversity Center, Third World Network and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – South Pacific;

(d) Representatives of bilateral donors, particularly from those Governments that have indicated their interest in funding capacity-building activities to enable the active participation of developing countries in the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(e) Representatives of other regions that have held capacity-building meetings on the Biosafety Clearing-House (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe), to share their experience and ensure cross-fertilization among the regions, subject to the necessary financial resources being made available.

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 Asia and Pacific region with regard to the establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the operation of the Biosafety Protocol, 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 third meeting, to be held in The Hague from 22 to 26 April 2002. 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 Xiyuan Hotel, Beijing. The Meeting will be opened by the Secretariat at 9 a.m. on Monday, 4 March 2002.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

13. The Regional Meeting will be invited to elect its Chair and Rapporteur from among the participants. 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 contained in document UNEP/CBD/BCH/Asia.Reg/1/1.

2.3. Organization of work

15. A proposed programme of work for the meeting is contained 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 assessments in relation to capacity-building under the Protocol. To facilitate these discussions, it is suggested that the following issues be considered in depth:

(a) Information exchange under the Biosafety Protocol, including a review of the operation of the pilot phase and the outcomes of the previous regional meetings on the Biosafety Clearing-House (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe);

(b) Existing biodiversity and biosafety information exchange mechanisms in Asia and the Pacific; and opportunities for facilitating information exchange under the Protocol;

(c) Overview of the progress of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House and “hands-on” training in its operation.

17. Each of these headings will include a number of topics that encompass various relevant issues. Following the discussion of these items, participants would then be invited to prepare regional needs assessments for the Biosafety Clearing-House, and to determine the priorities for action.

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

18. Agenda item 3, the main substantive item of the agenda, contains three sub-items, which correspond to the issues 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 Biosafety Protocol and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House

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

(a) Information exchange requirements under the Biosafety Protocol;

(b) The Protocol’s Biosafety Clearing-House and the Convention’s clearing-house mechanism;

(c) Outcomes of the second meeting of the ICCP and the regional meetings on the Biosafety Clearing-House for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe.

20. These issues are elaborated upon in two background documents that were prepared for the first and second meetings of the ICCP (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/3, UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/4, UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/9

and UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/9/Add.1) and the reports of the African Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Clearing-House Mechanism (UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/2), the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/BCH/LAC.Reg/1/2), and the Central and Eastern European Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing, to be held in February 2002. These documents are available from the Secretariat for information purposes.

3.2. *Evaluation of existing biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Asia and the Pacific, and opportunities for facilitating information-exchange under the Protocol*

21. In considering item 3.2, the Regional Meeting will be invited to review the status of existing mechanisms of biodiversity and biosafety information exchange in Asia and the Pacific (such as availability and accessibility of existing information resources at a national and regional level, and major actors responsible for producing and disseminating information) and to consider issues relevant to building capacity for information exchange under the Protocol.

22. Under this item, participants will be invited to give an overview of existing mechanisms of biodiversity and biosafety information exchange in their countries. Representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved in enabling activities will also be invited to give an overview of the aspects of projects relevant to information-sharing activities in the region for consideration by the Meeting.

23. It is proposed that this item of the agenda include the following elements:

(a) Current national, regional and sub-regional information-exchange capacity (review of ongoing or completed projects by countries, feedback on relevant projects from the implementing agencies);

(b) Key organizations in the region that could act as information centres.

24. Possible group discussions that could be held under this item with a view to determining options for regional capacity-building include: (i) opportunities for facilitation of information exchange by key organisations in the region; (ii) opportunities for dissemination of information and data required under the Biosafety Protocol by non Internet-based means; and (iii) problems and solutions involving electronic communication—technical, human resources, funding, etc.

25. This issue is further elaborated upon in the report of the Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Capacity-Building for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (UNEP/CBD/BS/EM-CB/1/3).*

3.3. *Pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House: overview and training session*

26. The Secretariat will make a short presentation on issues relevant to this item, based on documents prepared for the second meeting of the ICPC, and reporting on recent activities. In considering this item, participants will be invited to review the structure and operation of the pilot phase with a view to making recommendations on enhancing its accessibility to the region.

27. Accordingly, it is proposed that this item of the agenda should cover the following elements:

(a) Progress report on the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

* This report is also annexed to the note by the Executive Secretary on capacity-building, prepared for the second meeting of the ICPC (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/10).

(b) Short training session on the operation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(c) Opportunity for participants to explore the central portal and the management centre of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

28. These issues are elaborated upon in two documents prepared for the second meeting of the ICCP that will be available for information purposes (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/9, UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/10), as well as the report of that meeting (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/15).

ITEM 4. ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

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

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

30. Under this item, participants will be invited to raise any other matters of relevance for discussion.

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. The Regional Meeting will be invited to formulate its general conclusions and recommendations on the issues considered by it.

ITEM 7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

32. The Regional Meeting will consider and adopt its report, on the basis of its draft report and draft recommendations to be presented by the Rapporteur.

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

33. It is expected that the Meeting will be closed at 5 p.m. on Saturday, 9 February 2002.

Annex I

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL MEETING ON THE
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

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/Asia.Reg/1/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BCH/Asia.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 (11-15 December 2000)
UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/2	Report of the African Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Clearing-house Mechanism (26-28 February 2001)
UNEP/CBD/BS/EM-CB/1/3	Report of the Open-ended Meeting of Experts on Capacity-Building for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (11-13 July 2001)
UNEP/CBD/BCH/LAC.Reg/1/2	Report of the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House
UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/9	Information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House (Article 20): progress report on the implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House (paper prepared for the second meeting of the ICCP, 1-5 October 2001)
UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/9/Add.1	Information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House (Article 20): Technical review of the implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House

UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/10

Capacity-building (Article 22, and Article 28, para. 3)
(paper prepared for the second meeting of the ICCP, 1-5
October 2001)

UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/15

Report of the second meeting of the ICCP
(1-5 October 2001)

[Symbol to be determined]

Report of the Central and Eastern European Regional
Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House
(5-9 February 2002)

Annex II

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL
MEETING ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

Monday, 4 March 2002

- 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.—11 a.m. Introduction to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the UNEP-GEF national biosafety frameworks project
- 11 a.m.—noon Information exchange under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (item 3.1)
- Noon—5 p.m. UNEP-GEF national biosafety frameworks project

Wednesday, 5 March 2002

- 9 a.m.—5 p.m. UNEP-GEF national biosafety frameworks project

Thursday, 6 March 2002

- 9 a.m.—5 p.m. UNEP-GEF national biosafety frameworks project

Friday, 7 March 2002

- 9 a.m.—11 a.m. Evaluation of existing biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Asia and the Pacific, and opportunities for building capacity for information exchange under the Protocol (item 3.2)
- 11 a.m.—noon Pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House: overview and training session (item 3.3)
- Noon—1 p.m. Lunch break
- 1 p.m.—5 p.m. Pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House: overview and training session, continued (item 3.3)

Saturday, 8 March 2002

- 9 a.m.—noon Assessment of regional needs and priorities for action (item 4)
- Noon—1 p.m. Lunch break
- 1 p.m.—2 p.m. Other matters (item 5)
- 2 p.m.—5 p.m. Finalization and adoption of report and recommendations (items 6 and 7)
- 5 p.m. Closure of the meeting (item 8)