



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN
REGIONAL MEETING ON THE
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE
Nitra, Slovakia, 5-9 February 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 Central and Eastern Europe 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

* UNEP/CBD/BCH/CEE.Reg/1/1.

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America, and following the kind offer of the Government of Slovakia to host such a meeting. The Meeting is intended to provide countries of the region with an opportunity to express their needs and expectations with regard to the establishment of 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, or to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties, as appropriate.

4. This Regional Meeting will be held jointly with a regional workshop on biosafety, organized by the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Environment Facility (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. In addition, the opportunity may be used for a meeting of the Steering Committee of the UNEP multi-year programme for capacity building and regional cooperation on safety in biotechnology in Central and Eastern Europe, which has guided the organization of the annual regional conferences for Central and Eastern Europe on collaboration in biosafety since 1995.

5. The provisional agenda provides that 5 February will be a joint introductory day, 6 and 7 February will focus on national biosafety frameworks, and 8 and 9 February will focus on the Biosafety Clearing-House.

6. 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 Central and Eastern Europe needed to support information-exchange activities under the Protocol at the local and national level, and to identify synergies in the implementation of the 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 Central and Eastern Europe;

(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

7. Each Central and Eastern European country Party to the Convention is being invited to nominate one participant to be supported by the Secretariat, 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 8 November 2001.

8. In order to further assist the deliberations of the Meeting, 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.

9. 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 and Specialised Agencies active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The World Bank and Global Environment Facility (GEF);

(b) Representatives from the following intergovernmental organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters;

(c) Representatives from the following non-governmental organizations and industry: Baltic Environmental Forum, Croatia Consumers Association, Friends of the Earth Slovakia, Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), Global Industry Coalition, Aventis Hungary and Monsanto Czech Republic;

(d) Representatives of bilateral donors, particularly from those Governments that 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;

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

Documents

10. A list of documents for the Meeting is attached as annex I below.

Anticipated outcome of the meeting

11. It is expected that the Meeting will facilitate a better definition of the needs of countries of the Central and Eastern Europe 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.

12. The recommendations of the Meeting will be communicated to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, or to the ICCP at its third meeting, as appropriate, 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

13. The Meeting will be held at Nitra, Slovakia. The Meeting will be opened by the Secretariat at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 5 February 2002.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

14. 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

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

2.3. Organization of work

16. A proposed programme of work for the meeting is contained in annex II below.

17. 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 and Latin America and the Caribbean);

(b) Existing biodiversity and biosafety information exchange mechanisms in Central and Eastern Europe; 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.

18. 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

19. Agenda item 3, the main substantive item of the agenda, contains three sub-items, which correspond to the issues referred to in paragraph 17 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

20. 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 and for Latin America and the Caribbean.

21. 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 report of the African Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Clearing-House Mechanism (UNEP/CBD/BCH/Afr.Reg/1/2) and the report of the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Meeting on the Biosafety Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/BCH/LAC.Reg/1/2) that are available from the Secretariat for information purposes.

3.2. Evaluation of existing biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Central and Eastern Europe, and opportunities for facilitating information-exchange under the Protocol

22. 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 Central and Eastern Europe (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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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

27. The Secretariat will make a short presentation on issues relevant to this item, based on documents prepared for the second meeting of the ICCP, and reporting on recent activities. In considering this item, the regional meeting 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.

28. 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;
- (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.

29. 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. PREPARATION OF REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

30. 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

31. The Regional Meeting will be invited to consider any other matters under this item.

ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

32. 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

33. 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.

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

ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

34. 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 CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN 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/CEE.Reg/1/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BCH/CEE.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)

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*Annex II***PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE REGIONAL MEETING ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE***Tuesday, 5 February 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, 6 February 2002

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

Thursday, 7 February 2002

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

Friday, 8 February 2002

- 9 a.m.—11 a.m. Evaluation of existing biodiversity and biosafety information-exchange mechanisms in Central and Eastern Europe, 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—1.00 p.m. Lunch break
- 1.00 p.m.—5 p.m. Pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House: overview and training session, continued (item 3.3)

Saturday, 9 February 2002

- 9 a.m.—noon Preparation of regional needs assessments 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)
