



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Third meeting

Montreal, 4-5 October 2007

Item 2.2 of the provisional agenda*

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Annotations to the provisional agenda

INTRODUCTION

A. *Background*

1. Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity establishes a Biosafety Clearing-House “as part of the clearing-house mechanism under Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention, in order to: (a) facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and (b) to assist Parties to implement the Protocol”.

2. In its decision BS-I/3, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol adopted the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Section 5 of the modalities of operation states: “The Secretariat may seek assistance from an informal advisory committee, constituted and coordinated by the Executive Secretary in a transparent manner, with a particular focus on providing guidance with respect to resolution of technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House.”

3. The first and second meetings of the Informal Advisory Committee were held respectively in November 2004 and November 2006. The Executive Secretary is convening the third meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee to review the progress and provide further guidance on the technical issues related to the enhanced implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

B. *Anticipated outcome of the meeting*

4. Participants in the meeting will be invited to review technical aspects of the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House in the context of its multi-year programme of work. They will also be invited to consider the draft questionnaire for a new review of the Biosafety Clearing-House to be undertaken in the context of preparing elements for a new programme of work for future consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

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C. Participants

5. The composition of the Committee is determined by the Secretariat and takes into account the demonstrated expertise of the members and their experience with the Biosafety Clearing-House. The Secretariat also seeks to ensure regional and gender balance on the Committee.

6. In addition to the national experts who constitute the Committee, observers have been invited from the following organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange: the Global Industry Coalition (GIC), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the Third World Network (TWN), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the UNEP-GEF project on capacity-building for the support for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

7. The meeting will be held at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Joke Waller-Hunter conference room, eighth floor, World Trade Centre, 413 St-Jacques Street, Montreal. It will be opened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 4 October 2007.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

8. Participants will be invited to elect a Chairperson and a Rapporteur from among the members.

2.2. Adoption of the agenda

9. Participants will be invited to adopt the agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/3/1).

2.3. Organization of work

10. Members of the Informal Advisory Committee will be invited to discuss technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House in the context of its multi-year programme of work. To facilitate these discussions, the provisional agenda organizes the issues under the following seven substantive items:

1. An introduction and overview of the status of the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
2. The progress of national implementation, including case-studies and emerging experiences;
3. An overview of existing partnership arrangements to share information;
4. The progress of the multi-year programme of work of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
5. An overview of capacity-building activities, including an introduction to the applications Hermes and BCH Ajax plug-in announced in the July 2007 release.
6. A draft questionnaire and survey strategy for a new review of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

11. The meeting will take up the main substantive issues requiring detailed consideration as reflected under item 3 of the provisional agenda and further elaborated below. The meeting will endeavour to cover all of the agenda items in plenary session.

12. The proposed organization of work also provides for an opportunity for participants to raise any other relevant issues and suggestions to improve the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House and its modalities of operation. In light of observations and suggestions made at the meeting, the Committee

may wish to identify strategic issues that will require further consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

13. The participants will be invited to consider the proposed organization and programme of its work as contained in the annex to the present annotations.

14. The proposal is intended to provide for an opportunity to consider, in depth, the agenda items within the time frame available.

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

15. In considering agenda item 3, the Committee will be invited to provide the Secretariat with its views on the items identified as relevant to the further technical development and implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

16. The Committee is also requested to consider the financial and technological resource requirements under each of these topics and, where possible, resource implications should be reflected in any recommendations that are made.

17. Participants may also suggest additional issues to discuss that have not been anticipated by the Secretariat.

3.1. Introduction and overview of the status of the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House

18. Under this item, a representative of the Secretariat will give a short presentation on the status of the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House. This presentation will, *inter alia*, address: (i) the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House; (ii) the current status of implementation; (iii) the main features of the Biosafety Clearing-House; (iv) an overview of the decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on information-sharing (and the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in this regard) and; (v) follow-up activities to the second meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee.

3.2. National implementation and case-studies of national experiences

19. Under this item, Committee members will be invited to share their experiences in implementing the Biosafety Clearing-House at the national level, including any constraints encountered in making information available in a timely manner and strategies adopted to overcome them.

20. Committee members will also be invited to propose appropriate mechanisms through which users of the Biosafety Clearing-House may best be encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences, particularly by providing case-studies with regard to the national management and validation of information.

3.3. Overview of information-sharing partnership arrangements

21. In its decision BS-III/2, paragraph 1, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol urged “Parties, Governments and other users to participate in the Biosafety Clearing-House by contributing or continuing to contribute information as soon as possible, whether directly through the management centre of the Central Portal, or through the development of nodes that are interlinked and interoperable with the Central Portal, or other options for national participation as appropriate”.

22. Under this item, representatives from organizations and Governments that have entered into information-sharing arrangements with the Secretariat will be invited to give short presentations on their experiences regarding interoperability with the Biosafety Clearing-House.

23. Committee members will be invited to consider the experiences of existing partners in the context of the request from the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties

to the Protocol for further development of interoperable nodes and to provide advice on methods to improve the establishment and maintenance of future collaboration.

3.4. Progress in the multi-year programme of work

24. In paragraph 1 of decision BS-II/2, the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety adopted a medium-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

25. Under this item, the Secretariat will present a summary of activities underway for each of the elements of the programme of work. Committee members will be invited to suggest improvements and/or additional elements for consideration in a future revision of the programme of work.

3.5. Capacity-building activities

26. In paragraph 10 of its decision BS-III/2, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol requested the “Executive Secretary to continue to support [such] capacity-building activities in partnership with organizations, such as UNEP-GEF”.

27. Under this item, representatives from organizations and Governments that are undertaking capacity-building initiatives for the Biosafety Clearing-House will be invited to give short presentations on the lessons learned in undertaking their projects.

28. The Secretariat will also give a presentation on the ongoing development of its capacity-building applications Hermes and BCH Ajax plug-in.

3.6. 2007 Review of the Biosafety Clearing-House

29. In paragraph 16 of decision BS-III/2, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol requested “the Executive Secretary to undertake another survey of Biosafety Clearing-House users to compare improvements against existing baseline data, and to submit this information for consideration by the Parties at their fourth meeting as part of the review of the implementation of the Protocol envisaged in the medium-term programme of work”.

30. As part of this review, the Secretariat is planning to collect the views of users of the Biosafety Clearing-House through a questionnaire that will be distributed to Cartagena Protocol national focal points, Biosafety Clearing-House national focal points and institutional focal points. The questionnaire will also be made available in the Biosafety Clearing-House for completion by general users.

31. Under this item, the Secretariat will present an advance draft of the survey strategy and the draft questionnaire for the review. Committee members will then be invited to provide advice and suggestions for the improvement of the review process.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

32. Under this item, the Committee may wish to consider any other relevant matters.

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

33. The Committee will be invited to formulate its general conclusions and recommendations regarding the issues identified in the agenda.

ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

34. The meeting is expected to close at 5 p.m. on Friday, 5 October 2007.

*Annex***PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE***Thursday, 4 October 2006*

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 a.m. to 10.15 a.m. | Item 1. Opening of the meeting. |
| 10.15 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. | Item 2. Organizational matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Election of officers; 2.2. Adoption of the agenda; 2.3. Organization of work. |
| 10.45 a.m. to 11.15 a.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Introduction and overview. |
| 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | <i>Coffee break.</i> |
| 11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration (<i>continued</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2. National implementation and case-studies of national experiences. |
| 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. | <i>Lunch break.</i> |
| 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration (<i>continued</i>): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.3. Overview of information-sharing partnership arrangements; 3.4. Progress in the multi-year programme of work |
| 3.30 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. | <i>Coffee break.</i> |
| 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: (<i>continued</i>)
Capacity-building activities. |

Friday, 5 October 2006

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| 10 a.m. to 10.15 a.m. | Review of previous day's discussion. |
| 10.15 a.m. to 11.15 a.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: (<i>continued</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.5. Capacity-building activities (<i>continued</i>) |
| 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | <i>Coffee break.</i> |
| 11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: (<i>continued</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.6. 2007 Review of the Biosafety Clearing-House |
| 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. | <i>Lunch break.</i> |
| 1.30 p.m. to 2 p.m. | Item 4. Other matters. |
| 2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. | Item 5. Conclusions and recommendations. |
| 3.30 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. | <i>Coffee break.</i> |
| 3.45 p.m. to 5 p.m. | Item 5. Conclusions and recommendations. (<i>continued</i>) |
| 5 p.m. | Item 6. Closure of the meeting. |
