



Convention on Biological Diversity

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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Seventh meeting
Montreal, 28-30 March 2012

SUMMARY OUTCOMES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Seventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC) was held in Montreal from 28 March to 30 March 2012.

2. The meeting was attended by experts selected from Belarus, Colombia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Latvia, Mauritius, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia and Thailand. The national focal points for the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-NFPs) of Canada and the United States of America and representatives from the following organizations also took part in the meeting as observers: Bayer CropScience, EcoNexus, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also participated in a discussion session via videoconference. Experts were also invited from the European Commission, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and South Africa but were unable to attend.

3. The meeting was convened by the Executive Secretary, in accordance with section E of the Modalities of Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (annex to decision BS-I/3 of the Conference of the Parties Serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol) to seek guidance with respect to technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH).

4. The meeting was opened by Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a statement emphasizing the importance of the BCH and the work of the BCH-IAC.

5. Ms. Julieta Fe L. Estacio from the Philippines served as Chairperson of the meeting and Mr. Joachim Bendiek from Germany served as Rapporteur.

6. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/7/1). The following items were discussed by the Committee:

- (a) Developments in the Biosafety Clearing-House and ongoing projects;
- (b) Outcomes of the conclusions and recommendations of the sixth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) Collaboration with the UNEP-GEF project for continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-II, 2010-2012); and

(d) Cooperation with international organizations regarding the provision of information on living modified organisms.

7. Presentations were made by the following participants:

(a) Mr. Giovanni Ferraiolo, Programme Officer, Biosafety Clearing-House, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the outcomes of the conclusions and recommendations of the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;

(b) Mr. Philippe Leblond, Computer Information Systems Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on Google Analytics statistics regarding the use of the BCH (Mr. Leblond also gave a brief presentation on the AJAX Plug-in);

(c) Ms. Manoela Miranda, Environmental Affairs Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management;

(d) Mr. Erie Tamale, Programme Officer, Capacity-building and Outreach, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forum on Capacity-building,

(e) Ms. Kathryn Garforth, Legal Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forums on the Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs), Socio-Economic Considerations and the Detection & Identification Laboratory Network;

(f) Ms. Ileana Lopez, Project Manager, BCH Project, UNEP-DELCO, on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House II Project;

(g) Mr. Ernesto Ocampo, BCH Specialist, BCH Project, UNEP-GEF, on the training materials developed by UNEP-GEF;

(h) Mr. Aleksey Tarashev, BCH Regional Advisor on the UNEP-GEF BCH Project, on the Information Sharing component of the Ninth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety convened 15-16 March 2012 in Prague; and

(i) Mr. Peter Kearns, OECD Programme Officer in charge of the working group on the Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology and responsible for the Biosafety - BioTrack database.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

8. Having discussed the items outlined in the provisional agenda, the Informal Advisory Committee agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations, attached hereto as annex I, for consideration in the implementation of the programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House. Annex II to this report contains the list of participants to the meeting.

9. In the interest of using the available time for discussions, it was agreed that the Secretariat would present a draft of the meeting report by e-mail to all members for their comments prior to its final publication.

10. Ms. Estacio thanked all of the meeting participants for their kind inputs and closed the meeting at 1.15 p.m. on Friday, 30 March 2012.

Annex I

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AT ITS SEVENTH MEETING**

The Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC)

1. *Commends* the Secretariat for having implemented the majority of its recommendations since the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;
2. *Further commends* the Secretariat for improving the user-friendliness of the BCH;
3. *Recognizes* that the content registered by BCH users still needs improvement;
4. *Recommends* that the Secretariat:
 - (a) Complete the remaining recommendations from the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;
 - (b) Permit BCH users, in the Matrix (pivot) Display Type, to click on the statistic to access the associated BCH records;
 - (c) Continue to urge Parties to fully complete their records and to update incomplete records by registering information as it was available at the time country decisions were taken;
 - (d) Permit BCH users to update old records marked as incomplete and re-publish them even if some mandatory fields remain incomplete;
 - (e) Identify the role of BCH users registering information in the BCH by using Google Analytics;
 - (f) Provide greater visibility of links to other platforms (Macintosh, Linux, different web browsers, etc.,) in the interactive tutorial modules;
 - (g) Provide links to general introductory information on living modified organisms (LMOs) information and the processes undertaken in their development for the appreciation of lay persons;
 - (h) Modify the Common Format on country decisions according to the obligation under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to submit information on or about applicants, or importers and exporters, of LMOs according to Annexes I and II of the Protocol;
 - (i) Develop a Common Format that allows BCH users to submit recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of the BCH;
 - (j) Include European Union records on laws/regulations and decisions in all of the Country Profiles of the European Union Member States;
 - (k) Explore ways to inform BCH users that they are able to propose changes to any published Reference Records;
 - (l) Promote lesser known components of the BCH (e.g., the Biosafety Information Resource Centre or BIRC) on the BCH home page;
 - (m) Invite BCH National Focal Points (BCH-NFPs) to disseminate the Current Awareness Service to national stakeholders;
 - (n) Update the offline version of the BCH (i.e., in DVD-ROM format) to closely match the online version, whenever technically feasible, in order to include, for example, the tabs with decisions and risk assessments for LMOs in the offline version, etc.;
 - (o) Explore the possibility of diversifying into other languages in the online forums;
 - (p) Identify and define more clearly the target groups of online forums and their expected outcomes;

(q) Endeavour to widen the range of target groups of online forums to include organizations, NGOs, etc.;

(r) Involve BCH-NFPs in the process of increasing the participation of national-level target groups in online forums;

(s) Promote greater interaction among participants in online forums by proposing more focused topics within shorter time frames;

(t) Facilitate the understanding of BCH users regarding what information is missing in incomplete records;

(u) Encourage BCH-NFPs to discuss with their national stakeholders a process of coordinating the submission of information to databases on LMOs maintained by other international organizations (e.g., BCH vs. OECD);

(v) Extend the BCH AJAX Plug-in capabilities to display reference records such as LMOs, Genetic Elements and Organisms;

(w) Cooperate, including through coordination meetings, with other international organizations maintaining databases on LMOs and proposes interlinking among different systems (e.g., the use of the BCH AJAX Plug-in); and

(x) Promote the use of the BCH in national and international biosafety forums with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the BCH;

5. *Wishes to express* its support for the proposed outputs and activities on capacity-building for information sharing adopted by the Ninth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety convened 15-16 March 2012 in Prague;

6. Following the success, to date, of the UNEP-GEF BCH I project and the extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH II Project (as requested by the Parties to the Protocol in decisions BS-IV/2 and BS-V/2), *supports* the extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH II project to all eligible countries (as requested by UNEP) in order to improve the quality and quantity of information registered in the BCH; and

7. *Supports* the increased exchange of information through the use of online meetings, in accordance with the request in decision BS-V/2 of the Parties to the Protocol, and *volunteers* to conduct a meeting in the online format to test its feasibility and evaluate its success.

Annex II

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