



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Second meeting

Geneva, 23-24 November 2006

Item 2.2 of the provisional agenda*

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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 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.

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. The modalities provided, *inter alia*, for the Secretariat to seek assistance from an Informal Advisory Committee with respect to technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

3. The first meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee was held in Montreal on 9-10 November 2004. The Executive Secretary is convening this second meeting of the Committee to review and provide guidance on progress and technical issues related to 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 implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House in the context of its multi-year programme of work, and to provide assistance to the Secretariat on issues 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 was determined by the Secretariat, taking into account the participants' demonstrated expertise and experience with the Biosafety Clearing-House, while ensuring regional and gender balance on the committee.

6. In addition to national experts, observers will also be invited from the following organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination (UNEP/GEF), a non-government organization representative (Third World Network), an industry representative (Global Industry Coalition), and an academic representative (Réseau Interdisciplinaire Biosécurité – Institut Universitaire d'Études du Développement) will also be invited.

D. Organization of work

7. Members of the Informal Advisory Committee will first be invited to discuss technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House. To facilitate these discussions, the provisional agenda organizes the issues under seven substantive items, namely:

- (a) An introduction and overview of the function of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (b) Progress of national implementation, including case-studies of emerging experiences;
- (c) An overview of existing partnership arrangements to share information;
- (d) Progress of the multi-year programme of work of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (e) An overview of capacity-building activities for information exchange and the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (f) A review of the common formats for reporting information; and
- (g) The Biosafety Clearing-House web service and backward compatibility issues.

8. 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 the agenda items in plenary session.

9. The proposed organization of work also provides for an opportunity for participants to raise any other relevant issues and suggestions to improve the development and modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House. In light of observations and suggestions made, the Committee may wish to identify strategic issues that might require further consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

10. The meeting will be held in Environment House, Geneva. It will be opened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 23 November 2006.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1. Election of officers

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

2.2. Adoption of the agenda

12. Participants will be invited to adopt the agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/2/1).

2.3. Organization of work

13. The meeting 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 critical agenda items within the time frame available.

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

15. In considering agenda item 3, the main substantive item of the agenda, the committee will be invited to provide the Secretariat with its views on a number of items identified as relevant to the 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, their resource implications should be reflected in any recommendations made.

17. Participants may also propose for discussion additional issues not necessarily anticipated by the Secretariat.

3.1. Introduction and overview

18. Under this item, a representative of the Secretariat will give a short presentation on the status of implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House. This presentation will address the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, the current status of implementation and main features of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and 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 Secretariat activities in this regard.

3.2. National implementation, and case-studies of national experiences

19. Under this item, some Committee members will be invited to share experiences of implementing the Biosafety Clearing-House at the national level, including any constraints on making information available in a timely manner and/or strategies to overcome these difficulties.

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

21. Committee members will also be invited to provide suggestions regarding mechanisms to encourage Governments to provide relevant information to the Biosafety Clearing-House as soon as possible, including information pertaining to decisions on the release or import of living modified organisms taken prior to entry into force of the Protocol.

3.3. Overview of information-sharing partnership arrangements

22. 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.

23. Under this item, a few representatives from organizations and Governments that have entered into information-sharing arrangements with the Secretariat will be invited to give a short presentation on their experiences in cooperation between their information-exchange resources and the Biosafety Clearing-House.

24. 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 collaborative arrangements.

3.4. Progress in the multi-year programme of work

25. 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.

26. 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 or additional elements for consideration in a future revision of the programme of work.

3.5. Capacity-building activities

27. 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 capacity-building activities in partnership with organizations such as the Division of Global Environment Coordination of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-GEF).

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

29. Committee members will then be invited to provide advice on meeting the needs of developing countries in use of and access to the Biosafety Clearing-House.

3.6. Review of common formats

30. Committee members will be invited to provide advice on the version 3.0 of the Biosafety Clearing-House common formats—including their corresponding XML schemas—and the new concept of relationship between documents introduced with this new version of the common formats. Further background information on this item, as well as on item 3.7, may be found in the note by the Executive Secretary on issues of interoperability prepared for the meeting (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/2/2).

3.7. BCH web service and backward compatibility

31. Committee members will be invited to consider discontinuing the support of versions 1.0, 1.1 and 2.0 of the BCH web service and common formats in order to encourage interoperable partners to support the new concept of relationship between documents introduced in the version 3.0 of the BCH web service. The note by the Executive Secretary referred to in paragraph 30 above provides additional background information on this item.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

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

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

34. The meeting is expected to be closed at 5 p.m. on Friday, 24 November 2006.

Annex

**PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

Thursday, 23 November 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:
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:
3.1. Introduction and overview. |
| 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | Coffee break. |
| 11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration (<i>continued</i>):
3.2. National implementation, and case-studies of national experiences. |
| 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. | Lunch break. |
| 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration (<i>continued</i>):
3.3. Overview of partnership arrangements;
3.4. Progress in the multi-year programme of work. |
| 3.30 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. | Coffee break. |
| 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: (<i>continued</i>)
3.5. Capacity-building activities. |

Friday, 24 November 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>)
3.6. Review of common formats. |
| 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | Coffee break. |
| 11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. | Item 3. Issues for in-depth consideration: (<i>continued</i>)
3.7. BCH web service and backward compatibility. |
| 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. | Lunch break. |

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.	Coffee break.
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.
