



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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MEETING OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS ON
THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE
Montreal, 11-13 September 2000
Item 2.2 of the provisional agenda*

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. On 29 January 2000, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP) adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at its first extraordinary meeting. It also adopted decision EM-I/3, in paragraph 13 of which it requested the Executive Secretary to commence preparatory work on the functioning of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) referred to in Article 20 of the Protocol. At its fifth meeting, in May 2000, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to convene, prior to the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), the meeting of technical experts on the Biosafety Clearing-House referred to in the table at the end of decision EM-I/3 (decision V/1, para. 3).

2. 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.

3. The Meeting of Technical Experts will consider issues relevant to information-sharing requirements and the Biosafety Clearing-House as reflected in the work plan of the ICCP endorsed by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (decision V/1, annex). These include:

- (a) Determination of needs of Parties;
- (b) Overview of existing activities/systems and possibilities for cooperation;
- (c) Design of data input systems;

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- (d) Development of common formats for reporting, e.g., decisions, national legislations, points of contact, focal points, summaries of risk assessments, etc.;
- (e) Development of operational systems, information management policies and procedures for receiving and making information available, including quality-assurance procedures;
- (f) Means to ensure confidentiality of information;
- (g) Financial and technological resources requirements;
- (h) Other issues (such as Article 5).

Participants

4. Experts will be drawn from a roster of Government-nominated experts, qualified in the fields of management of biosafety-related issues, information-sharing systems and database-management, establishment of clearing houses and/or the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Nominations were requested from the national focal points under the Convention on 26 May 2000 and a reminder letter was sent on 1 July 2000.

5. In addition to these Government-nominated experts, the following persons will also be invited to participate in the meeting as observers:

(a) The Chairman and members of the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

(b) Representatives from the following intergovernmental organizations active in biosafety and/or information-exchange issues: Global Environment Facility (GEF), International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), European Commission Joint Research Centre, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and

(c) Representatives of the Global Industry Coalition and the NGO community.

Documents

6. A list of documents for the meeting is attached as annex I below.

Anticipated outcome of the meeting

7. The recommendations of the Meeting of Technical Experts will be communicated to the ICCP at its first meeting, to be held in Montpellier, France, from 11 to 15 December 2000. The report of the meeting will be published on the Convention website and will be made available to all Parties to the Convention and to interested national and international institutions and organizations.

Item 1: Opening of the meeting

8. The meeting will be held at the office of the Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada. The meeting will be opened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention at 9 a.m. on Monday, 11 September 2000.

Item 2: Organizational matters

2.1: Election of officers

9. The Meeting of Technical Experts will be invited to elect its Chair and Vice-Chair as well as its Rapporteur from among its members. Proposals will be made from the floor.

2.2: Adoption of agenda

10. The Meeting of Technical Experts will be invited to adopt its agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda proposed in document UNEP/CDB/BS/TE-BCH/1/1.

2.3: Organization of work

11. A proposed programme of work for the meeting is shown in annex II below.

12. The Meeting of Technical Experts 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. To facilitate these discussions, the provisional agenda organizes the issues under three headings, namely:

- (a) Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (b) Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) Partnership opportunities.

13. Each of these headings will include a number of topics that encompass the various issues outlined under the information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House item in the work plan of the ICCP.

Item 3: Issues for in-depth consideration

14. Agenda item 3, the main substantive item of the agenda, contains three sub-items, reflecting the headings referred to in paragraph 12 above. For each sub-item, a working paper will be prepared and introduced by one of the experts or the Secretariat. Following an introduction to the topic, the Meeting of Technical Experts will be invited to consider the issues raised and the options proposed in the paper, with a view to making recommendations for the ICCP. Participants may also propose and discuss further options not necessarily anticipated in the paper.

15. The Meeting of Technical Experts is invited to consider financial and technological resource requirements under each item for discussion, and resource implications should be reflected in each recommendation made by the expert meeting.

3.1: Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House

16. In considering this item, the Meeting of Technical Experts is invited to consider the item of the ICCP work plan regarding determination of needs of Parties with respect to the establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House. Accordingly, it is proposed that this item of the agenda should cover the following elements:

- (a) An introduction to the objectives and development of the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (b) Elaboration of the information-exchange requirements and the role of Biosafety Clearing-House in implementing the Biosafety Protocol (including a discussion of all articles of the Protocol and their implications for the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, such as Article 5); and
- (c) Special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition.

17. These issues are elaborated upon in the note prepared by the Executive Secretary under this item (UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/2).

3.2: Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House

18. In considering this item, the Meeting of Technical Experts is invited to consider those items of the ICCP work plan that are associated with the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, namely: the design of data input systems; the development of common formats for reporting (e.g. decisions, national legislations, points of contact, focal points, summaries of risk assessments etc); development of operational systems, information management policies and procedures for receiving and making information available (including quality-assurance procedures); and means to ensure confidentiality of information.

19. These issues are elaborated upon in the note prepared by the Executive Secretary under this item (UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/3).

3.3: Partnership opportunities

20. In considering this item, the Meeting of Technical Experts will be invited to consider an overview of existing activities and systems for the exchange of information on biosafety, and to consider possibilities for cooperation.

21. These issues are elaborated upon in the note prepared by the Executive Secretary under this item (UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/4).

22. In addition, representatives from intergovernmental organizations active in biosafety and/or information-sharing activities will be invited to give a presentation on the opportunities for cooperation between these existing information-exchange resources and the Biosafety Clearing-House.

Item 4: Other matters

23. Under this item, participants will be invited to raise other matters related to the subject matter of the meeting.

Item 5: Conclusions and recommendations

24. The Meeting of Technical Experts will be invited to formulate its general conclusions and recommendations for the ICCP in line with the issues elaborated under the work plan.

Item 6: Adoption of the report

25. The Meeting of Technical Experts will consider and adopt its report, on the basis of the draft report of the meeting and draft recommendations to be presented by the Rapporteur.

Item 7: Closure of the meeting

26. It is expected that the meeting will be closed at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 September 2000.

Annex ILIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE EXPERT 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/BS/TE-BCH/1/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/1/Add.1	Annotations to the provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/2	Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/3	Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/4	Partnership opportunities

Information documents

UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/INF/1	Information for participants
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/INF/2	Decision EM-I/3 (Adoption of the Cartagena Protocol and interim arrangements)
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/INF/3	Decision V/1 (Work plan of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety)
UNEP/CBD/BS/TE-BCH/1/INF/4	Operation of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity

Annex II

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE MEETING OF TECHNICAL
EXPERTS ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

Monday, 11 September 2000

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| 9 a.m. | Opening of the meeting (Item 1) |
| 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. | Introduction (Item 1) |
| | Organizational matters: |
| | Election of officers (Item 2.1) |
| | Adoption of agenda (Item 2.2) |
| | Organization of work (Item 2.3) |
| 10 a.m.—1 p.m. | Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House (Item 3.1) |
| 1 p.m.—2 p.m. | Lunch break |
| 2 p.m.—4 p.m. | Establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House (<i>continued</i>) |
| 4 p.m.—5 p.m. | Discussion of recommendations under item 3.1 |

Tuesday, 12 September 2000

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| 9 a.m.—noon | Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (Item 3.2) |
| noon—1 p.m. | Discussion of recommendations under item 3.2 |
| 1 p.m.—2 p.m. | Lunch break |
| 2 p.m.—3.30 p.m. | Partnership opportunities (Item 3.3) |
| 3.30– 4.30 p.m. | Discussion of recommendations under item 3.3 |
| 4.30—5 p.m. | Other matters (Item 4) |

Wednesday, 13 September 2000

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| 9 a.m.—noon | Presentation and discussion of draft report and recommendations (Items 5 and 6) |
| 1 p.m.—2 p.m. | Lunch break |
| 2 p.m.—5 p.m. | Finalization and adoption of report and recommendations (Items 5 and 6) |
| 5 p.m. | Closure of the meeting (Item 7) |
