



# CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE  
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE  
Montreal, 9-10 November 2004  
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 serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP) adopted the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, which, *inter alia*, noted that the Secretariat would seek assistance from an informal advisory committee. This committee is to be 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. Pursuant to this decision, the Executive Secretary is convening this first meeting of the informal advisory committee of technical experts on the Biosafety Clearing-House.

##### *B. Anticipated outcome of the meeting*

4. Participants in the meeting will be invited to review technical aspects of the progress of implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and to consider the outcomes of the Biosafety Clearing-House review in the context of preparing elements for a longer-term programme of work for future consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

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\* UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/1.

### ***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 were also invited from the following intergovernmental 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), Small Islands Developing States Network (SIDSNet), a non-government organization representative (Third World Network), industry representative (Global Industry Coalition) and the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination (UNEP/GEF).

### ***D. Organization of work***

7. Members of the informal advisory committee will first be requested to review draft terms of reference and organizational procedures, and to adopt operational procedures for undertaking the work of the committee.

8. Participants will then 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 five substantive items, namely:

- (a) An introduction and overview of the function of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (b) A summary of the outcomes of the questionnaire on the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) An overview of partnership arrangements and discussion on methods to promote further collaboration;
- (d) Capacity-building activities for the Biosafety Clearing-House, including a discussion on options for non-Internet participation; and
- (e) Elements of a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

9. The meeting will take up the main substantive issues requiring detailed consideration as reflected under item 4 of the provisional agenda and further elaborated below. The meeting will endeavour to cover all the agenda items in the plenary.

10. 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**

11. The meeting will be held in CEC Conference room A, second floor, World Trade Centre, 393 St-Jacques Street, Montreal. It will be opened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 9 November 2004.

## **ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS**

### ***2.1. Election of officers***

12. Participants will be invited to elect a chairperson and a rapporteur from among themselves.

## **2.2. Adoption of the agenda**

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

## **2.3. Organization of work**

14. The meeting participants will be invited to consider the proposed organization and programme of its work as contained in annex I.

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

## **ITEM 3. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

16. Under this item, participants will be invited to consider the draft operational procedures for seeking assistance from the committee, prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of functions outlined in section C of the modalities of operation and contained in the note by the Executive Secretary on the subject (UNEP/CBD/BS/IAC-BCH/1/2). It is expected that the operational procedures may be further elaborated by the Executive Secretary as required, based on operational experience.

## **ITEM 4. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION**

17. In considering agenda item 4, 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.

18. The committee is also requested to consider financial and technological resource requirements under each of these topics, and where possible resource implications should be reflected in any recommendations made by the meeting.

19. Participants may also propose and discuss additional issues not necessarily anticipated by the Secretariat.

### **4.1. Introduction and overview**

20. 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 serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety on information-sharing and Secretariat activities in this regard.

### **4.2. Summary of outcomes of the questionnaire on the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House**

21. In paragraph 12 of decision BS-I/3, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety decided to review the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House at its second meeting, and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a progress report to that meeting, with a view to developing a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

22. As part of this review, the Secretariat sought views of Biosafety Clearing-House users through a questionnaire that was distributed to Cartagena Protocol Focal Points, Biosafety Clearing-House national focal points and institutional focal points. The questionnaire was also made available on the Biosafety Clearing-House website.

23. Under this item, the Secretariat will present a preliminary analysis of the results from this survey. committee members will be invited to provide advice regarding suggestions for improvement that have arisen from the review process.

#### ***4.3. Overview of partnership arrangements and methods to promote collaboration***

24. Decision BS-I/3, paragraph 4, encourages Parties, Governments and other users to develop national, regional, subregional and institutional nodes that are interlinked with the central portal, in accordance with minimum standards for partnership as outlined in section F of the annex to that decision. It is suggested that these nodes and/or partnerships would focus initially on:

(a) Providing searchable access to information to facilitate decision-making, particularly that required under the Advance Informed Agreement procedure and information required to implement Article 11 on the procedure for living modified organisms intended for direct use as food or feed, or for processing;

(b) Providing searchable access to any other information required by the Protocol to be made available to Parties through the Biosafety Clearing-House as outlined in section A of the annex to the present decision BS-I/3; and

(c) Facilitating access to and dissemination of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms.

25. 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.

26. Committee members will be invited to consider the experiences of existing partners in the context of the request from the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for further development of interoperable nodes, and to provide advice on methods to improve the establishment and maintenance of future collaborative arrangements.

27. 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.

#### ***4.4. Biosafety Clearing-House capacity-building activities, and discussion of options for non-Internet participation***

28. Decision BS-I/3, paragraph 9, requests the Executive Secretary to further develop non-Internet based Biosafety Clearing-House mechanisms that effectively interface with the Internet-based technology, and are consistent with the characteristics and administrative requirements detailed in the modalities of operation, and to make them available to Parties and Governments upon request.

29. In addition, paragraph 10 of the same decision requests the Executive Secretary to continue analysing the identified capacity-building and financial requirements of developing countries, 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, to enable their active participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House.

30. Under this item, the Secretariat will review current experiences in implementing non-Internet based mechanisms through the Biosafety Clearing-House. In addition, 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.

31. Committee members will then be invited to provide advice on further development of non-Internet mechanisms to meet the needs of developing countries in use of and access to the Biosafety Clearing-House.

**4.5. *Elements of a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House***

32. In decision BS-I/3, paragraph 12, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety decided to review the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House at its second meeting, and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a progress report to that meeting, with a view to developing a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

33. Under this item, committee members will be invited to review the proposed elements for a longer-term programme of work that will be prepared by the Secretariat (UNEP/CBD/BS/IAC-BCH/1/3), on the basis of feedback received during the Biosafety Clearing-House survey.

**ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS**

34. Under this item, the committee may wish to consider any other matters of relevance.

**ITEM 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**ITEM 7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

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

**ITEM 8. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

37. The meeting is expected to be closed at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 10 November 2004.

*Annex I*

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

*Tuesday, 9 November 2004*

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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.      |

*Tuesday, 9 November 2004*

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| 10.45 a.m. to 11.15 a.m. | Item 3. Operational procedures.  |
| 11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. | Coffee break.  |
| 11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. | Item 4. Issues for in-depth consideration:<br>4.1. Introduction and overview;<br>4.2. Summary of outcomes of the questionnaire.  |
| 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.  | Lunch break.   |
| 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.   | Item 4. Issues for in-depth consideration: <i>(continued)</i><br>4.2. Summary of outcomes of the questionnaire; <i>(continued)</i><br>4.3. Overview of partnership arrangements. |
| 3.30 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.   | Coffee break.  |
| 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.      | Item 4. Issues for in-depth consideration: <i>(continued)</i><br>4.4. BCH capacity-building activities and options for non-Internet participation.                               |

*Wednesday, 10 November 2004*

10 a.m. to 10.15 a.m.	Review of previous day's discussion.
10.15 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.	Item 4. Issues for in-depth consideration: ( <i>continued</i> )
	4.5. Elements of a longer-term programme of work.
11.15 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.	Coffee break.
11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.	Item 4. Issues for in-depth consideration: ( <i>continued</i> )
	4.5. Elements of a longer-term programme of work. ( <i>continued</i> )
12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.	Lunch break.
1.30 p.m. to 2 p.m.	Item 5. Other matters.
2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.	Item 6. Conclusions and recommendations.
3.30 p.m. to 3.45 p.m.	Coffee break.
3.45 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Item 6. Conclusions and recommendations. ( <i>continued</i> )
5 p.m.	Item 7. Closure of the meeting.

*Annex II*

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE  
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/1	Provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/1/Add.1	Annotations to the provisional agenda
UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/2	Draft operational procedures for the informal advisory committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House
UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/3	Review of the Biosafety Clearing-House, incorporating results from the questionnaire
UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/4	Elements of a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House

**The following documents from previous meetings and other relevant sources will also be made available to meeting participants\***

UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/1/15	Report of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Biosafety (decision BS-I/3 on information-sharing and the Biosafety Clearing-House, including the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House)
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SCBD brochure “A Guide to the Biosafety Clearing-House”

Explanatory Guide to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, IUCN, Environmental Policy and Law Paper No. 46, the guide on Article 20, pp. 131 to 136.

OECD Guidance for the Designation of a Unique Identifier for Transgenic Plants;

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\* Other materials may also be made available during the meeting.