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**INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE  
BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**Montreal, 9-10 November 2004  
Item 4.2 of the provisional agenda\***REVIEW OF THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE, INCORPORATING  
RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE***Note by the Executive Secretary*

1. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of members of the Informal Advisory Committee of the Biosafety Clearing-House, preliminary results from the review of the Biosafety Clearing-House undertaken by the Secretariat in accordance with decision BS-I/3, paragraph 12, of the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP-1).
2. The review is based on a user survey undertaken by the Secretariat during August and September 2004, together with database statistics and website analytics compiled after the launch of the operational phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House on 27 February 2004.
3. Overall, survey respondents were satisfied with the design of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the services received from the Secretariat. However, concerns were expressed regarding delays with provision of information to the Biosafety Clearing-House by Governments. Detailed findings are presented in the preliminary discussion of results of the review (attached).
4. Analysis of the results of the review is expected to provide the basis for suggestions for improvement that may be incorporated into a multi-year programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

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

**BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE REVIEW 2004  
PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Users of the Biosafety Clearing-House were invited to participate in a survey carried out in August and September 2004, and 80 responses were received. Results of the survey, taken in conjunction with various analytical data relating to the database content and website usage, form the basis of the review of the BCH. Key findings from the review include:

- General level of user satisfaction
  - Most survey respondents considered the design of the BCH to be satisfactory or very satisfactory.
  - Most survey respondents were very satisfied with the assistance received from the Secretariat regarding the BCH.
  - Most survey respondents were satisfied with the options available to register information with the BCH.
- Use of the Central Portal
  - Users from the Government sector are generally more satisfied with the operation of the BCH than other sectors. For example, Government users are easily able to find information in the BCH; however, users from other sectors, such as industry and NGOs experience some difficulties in locating information.
- Information content and management
  - The greatest concern with the BCH is incomplete information, including delays experienced in Governments providing information, particularly that which the Protocol requires Parties to submit to the BCH.
  - Online help functions and documentation are important to BCH users and need to be maintained.
  - Flexibility of the Secretariat in modifying the central portal in response to user needs was greatly appreciated by survey respondents.
- Capacity-building and use of non-Internet or non-Web options
  - There are concerns regarding timely access to BCH information using the non-Internet options.
  - New BCH information services that are being introduced by the Secretariat are well-received, in particular the Current Awareness Service that sends email updates of new records registered with the BCH.
  - Many survey respondents would like to use the BCH to access a broader range of biosafety information.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### a) Background information

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) was established in accordance with Article 20, paragraph 1, of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as part of the clearing-house mechanism under Article 18, paragraph 3, of the Convention, in order to (i) facilitate the exchange of information on, and experience with, living modified organisms, and (ii) to assist Parties to implement the Protocol.

Background information regarding the structure and development of the Biosafety Clearing-House prior to the launch of the fully operational phase on 27 February 2004 is available in the pre-sessional documentation prepared for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Of particular relevance, document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/1/5 contains a short introduction to the development of the Biosafety

Clearing-House (section I); a status report of the progress in the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (section II); and an update on activities undertaken to identify and address the capacity needs of countries to access and use the Biosafety Clearing-House (section IV). This document can be accessed via the website of the Convention at <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/bs/mop-01/official/mop-01-05-en.doc>.

**b) Conduct of the review**

**i) Terms of reference**

In its 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.

The purpose of this review, undertaken by the Secretariat, is to collect information that will assist the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in its review of the implementation of the BCH, and to provide a basis for developing elements of a longer-term programme of work for the BCH.

**ii) Available resources**

The Secretariat conducted this review using the following resources:

- Results from a user survey conducted by the Secretariat during August and September 2004, analyzed using SPSS 13.0 for Windows;
- BCH database statistics obtained through Microsoft OLAP (Online Analytical Processing) Services;
- Website analytics covering the period of 1 March to 30 September 2004, compiled through the use of WebTrends 7 log analyzer;
- Personal communication with BCH users.

Further information about the conduct of the survey is provided in Section 2(c) below

**iii) Constraints**

The review elicited views from existing users of the BCH, and focused primarily on the content and operations of the central portal of the BCH. Although the website makes information available in six languages of the United Nations, the survey was conducted in English only. In completing the survey, some Governments submitted a single questionnaire that combined the views of multiple users, while others submitted individual responses for each user.

Survey respondents were self-selecting, and certain users of the BCH may not have had an equal chance to participate; main areas where the results may show a bias exist in the intensity of BCH usage, and language of the users. Where relevant, survey responses were cross-tabulated against regional origin and/or user demographics to establish or discount any dependencies in the results.

The findings from this sample therefore provide an interesting range of responses that can be used to extract some larger themes and trends, rather than being a definitive characterization of attitudes and beliefs of all BCH users.

**c) BCH Survey**

**i) Methodology**

A BCH questionnaire containing 26 questions was made available to users between 16 August and 17 September 2004. A notification inviting participation in the survey was sent directly by fax or email to all BCH and Cartagena Protocol National Focal Points (or CBD National Focal Points, where Protocol NFPs have not yet been designated), as well as being publicized on the Secretariat website. Additionally, a link was provided prominently on the home page of the BCH and a “pop-up” box was installed that was activated on the first visit of any user to the BCH home page during the survey period, which invited users to participate in the survey. Individual reminders were also sent on 9 September 2004 to all users who had registered for a BCH account by that date. The survey was made available online, as a downloadable PDF file, and as a MS Word document. An option was provided for surveys to be submitted anonymously, to encourage accurate reporting of experiences.

**ii) Participation**

A total of 80 survey responses were received (see annex I for the list of countries from which survey responses were sent). In some cases, multiple responses were received from a single country. In other cases, organizations or institutions submitted a single survey combining multiple responses.

**iii) Survey structure**

The BCH survey was structured in seven parts, namely:

- (i) An introduction, which provided a few paragraphs of background information regarding the BCH and the reasons for the survey;
- (ii) Overall impressions and user experiences with the BCH, which contained additional sections for those users that had registered information with the BCH;
- (iii) BCH Services, which addressed the types of information that could be found on the BCH;
- (iv) Non-Internet options, including capacity-building needs;
- (v) IT Environment;
- (vi) User demographics; and
- (vii) Additional information.

Each section also included space for respondents to provide comments, suggestions and further information. The full text of the survey is available in annex I.

### **3. DETAILED FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW**

This section describes the detailed findings of the review as they relate to: (a) characterization of BCH users; (b) BCH structure and design; (c) Finding information in the BCH; (d) Registering information with the BCH; (e) BCH information services; (f) use of non-Internet or non-web options; (g) Secretariat assistance; and (h) proposed follow-up.

**a) Characterization of BCH Users**

**i) Web visitor trends**

During the reporting period, the BCH received approximately 230 visits per day, with an average visit length of 14 minutes, and a median visit length of 5 minutes. Page views steadily increased over this time, from 9,807 in March 2004 to 18,782 in September 2004.

According to the website analytics, most visitors originated from North America (48 per cent), followed by Asia (17 per cent), Western Europe (16 per cent), Middle East (4 per cent), Eastern Europe (4 per cent), South America (3 per cent), Africa (3 per cent), Oceania (2 per cent), Small Island Developing States (2 per cent) and other countries making up the remaining 1 per cent. This information must be used carefully because it is based on Internet registration details (i.e. by looking up the visitor's IP address), and therefore may not always be an accurate identifier of the visitor's actual location. However, it is reasonable to conclude that the BCH website is visited more frequently by users located in the developed world.

**ii) Survey respondents**

The regional distribution of the 80 survey responses received (annex was as follows: Western Europe and Others, 51 per cent; Africa, 15 per cent; Asia and the Pacific, 15 per cent; Central and Eastern Europe, 10 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean, 9 per cent. Most of the survey respondents were frequent users of the BCH (85 per cent visited once per month or more, including 32 per cent visiting more than once per week).

A comparison of the geographic distribution of survey results with the website analytics suggests that the respondents were broadly representative of the wider population of BCH users (Table 1).

**Table 1: Comparison between regional location of survey respondents and website analytics for origin of user**

<b>Geographical origin</b>	<b>% survey respondents</b>	<b>% website visits</b>
Western Europe and Others	51	67
Asia and the Pacific	15	21
Africa	15	3
Central and Eastern Europe	10	4
Latin America and the Caribbean	9	5

Respondents were asked to categorize themselves according to their occupation or profession. After combining these responses according to broad overarching categories, 1/ these results can be used to provide a rough estimate of the primary demographic categorization of respondents at 51 per cent Government; 25 per cent industry; 10 per cent NGOs and IGOs; 8 per cent academic; and 6 per cent other categories.

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1/ National/Federal Government officials + State/Local Government officials + national focal points + national authorized users + biosafety regulators = government; academic researchers + students = academic; where users indicated membership in multiple categories, the following hierarchy was applied for categorization purposes: government > industry / NGO > academic > other

Most of the survey respondents were using the English version of the BCH website (93 per cent), followed by 24 per cent who used the French version, 8 per cent the Spanish version, 4 per cent the Russian and 1 per cent the Chinese version. 2/

**iii) Technological demographics**

Technological demographics of survey respondents were varied, even by geographic region (table 2). Many users were accessing the BCH over a Local Area Network or (LAN), but in a few regions, a significant proportion of Internet connections were still operating at 56k or less, such as Africa (70 per cent) and Asia and the Pacific (25 per cent).

**Table 2: Types of Internet connection for survey respondents**

Q.14 What sort of Internet connection do you have?

Access speed	Region (number of responses)					Percentage of total responses
	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Central and Eastern Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	Western Europe and Others	
LAN	2	6	4	2	24	<b>56</b>
Cable/DSL	0	1	2	2	5	<b>15</b>
56K	4	1	1	1	2	<b>13</b>
<33.6	3	2	0	0	0	<b>7</b>
ISDN	0	1	0	1	1	<b>4</b>
No net	0	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Other	1	0	0	0	1	<b>3</b>

Most respondents were using Internet Explorer 5.5 or more as their primary browser (85 per cent), followed by Netscape 6.0 or more (11 per cent), Internet Explorer 5.0 or less (10 per cent); Safari (6 per cent), Opera (4 per cent) and a few users with others such as Mozilla and Camino. 3/

**b) BCH Structure and Design**

**iv) Overall satisfaction**

BCH users were asked to rate their level of satisfaction when using the Central Portal of the BCH to find information (table 3). Overall, respondents considered the design of the BCH to be satisfactory or very satisfactory (82 per cent), with only a small number expressing dissatisfaction (5 per cent). A sample of comments is provided below:

- *“This is a well organized and useful site”*
- *“BCH is very useful for obtaining biosafety information especially to small islands with limited available information”*

2/ Note that multiple responses were accepted to this question, so percentages do not total 100.

3/ Note that multiple responses were accepted to this question, so percentages do not total 100.

- *“The design and information on the BCH is very helpful in planning biosafety activities*
- *“Each user can obtain very quickly the relevant ... information”*
- *“I find the BCH to be of great value and easy to use”*

Most users were happy with the relevance of information in the BCH, the loading speed and site performance and the appearance of the site (approximately 70 per cent satisfied or very satisfied; less than 10 per cent dissatisfied in these cases). Cross-tabulation of results reveals that dissatisfaction with loading speed and site performance was independent of user location, browser type and speed of Internet connection, which suggests that the BCH generally meets local expectations in these respects.

Respondents appeared somewhat split regarding the ease of finding information and the usefulness of search results, with about 55 per cent believing this was satisfactory, and between 15 to 20 per cent recording dissatisfaction. However, cross-tabulation of results revealed that user demographics significantly affected the satisfaction level in this area. Only one Government user expressed dissatisfaction with the BCH in these areas; most of the remaining “unsatisfactory” responses originated from NGO and Industry users. Frequency of use also had a direct relationship, with the user satisfaction rating increasing with the frequency that the BCH is accessed by the user. The main area where dissatisfaction was experienced more by non-Government users was in the categorization of information (and hence ease of use in finding it).

This partiality is not surprising, given that the primary audience for the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House was “the Governments that will register and retrieve data from the system” (Second note from the Bureau, 10 October 2001), and that therefore the initial design depended heavily on an understanding of Protocol provisions and classifications. A principal role of the BCH remains as assisting Parties to implement the Protocol (Article 20.1(b) of the Protocol); however, now that the user base of the BCH is expanding, it may be time to review the structure to make it more user-friendly to people not so intimately familiar with the Protocol in order to better facilitate the exchange of information on, and experience with, living modified organisms (Article 20.1(a) of the Protocol).

- *“it is relatively easy to find information in the BCH if you are an informed user (i.e. familiar with the requirements of the Protocol re the BCH) and the information is in the BCH”*
- *“very usable for users who have knowledge of the BCH; however, local users who are not directly involved with the negotiations...could experience difficulties in interpreting the information”*
- *“The first few times I used the database I was not able to easily find the information I was interested in, but with regular use it becomes obvious”*

#### **v) Areas of dissatisfaction**

The area of the BCH that caused the most dissatisfaction was the completeness of information in the BCH (38 per cent dissatisfied), with variety and timely availability of information also causing some concern (21 per cent and 26 per cent dissatisfied, respectively). Governments expressed particular concerns with the paucity of information regarding risk assessments and decisions on environmental releases. A few respondents noted the importance of including decisions taken prior to the entry into force of the Protocol, in order to gain a complete picture from the BCH. Although in some cases it is difficult to know what information is missing (as information comes from Governments and is not sourced by the Secretariat), it is clear that much information is not being provided in a timely manner to the BCH.

- *“Limited really useful information to date (e.g. on decisions and declarations”*
- *“No data on non-commercial events for deliberate release into the environment”*
- *“Lack of use and hence information-sharing by persons in the region”*

- “Most of my concerns with timely availability of information on the BCH and completeness are the result of countries not posting the required information rather than with the BCH structure itself.”
- “No information in AIA – is it possible?”

The information that is contained in the BCH is discussed further in Section 3(c)(i) below.

Table 3: Percentage of survey respondents satisfied / dissatisfied with the BCH

Q.1: In general, how satisfied are you when using the Central Portal of the BCH to find information?  
Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied / 5 = Very Unsatisfied

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU
<b>Overall design</b> of the BCH	20	62	13	5	0
<b>First use</b> experience of the BCH	13	47	25	15	0
<b>Relevance</b> of information in the BCH	30	38	22	7	4
<b>Completeness</b> of information in the BCH	11	31	21	24	14
<b>Variety</b> of information in the BCH	12	32	36	18	3
<b>Timely availability</b> of information in the BCH	14	29	33	16	9
Ease of <b>finding information</b> in the BCH	12	42	25	17	4
<b>Usefulness</b> of search results	15	41	29	12	3
<b>Organization</b> of search results	14	54	26	5	1
Speed of <b>loading the page</b>	22	50	21	7	0
Reliability of <b>site performance</b>	16	56	22	6	0
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the website	25	49	20	5	1
<b>Online help</b> functions	13	32	45	7	3
Availability of information in <b>languages</b>	20	25	36	11	9
Quality of <b>translation</b>	9	26	52	9	4

#### vi) Comparison with other mechanisms

Despite any problems experienced with the BCH, in general respondents seemed happy with the operation of the BCH in comparison with other information-exchange mechanisms that were available: 65 per cent believed the BCH to be better than other existing mechanisms, 24 per cent that it was about the same, and only 12 per cent that it was somewhat worse (none thought that it was much worse).

Other biosafety information-exchange mechanisms that were used by the respondents included: national websites (such as USDA and Canadian Government websites), regional websites (such as the EC information-exchange databases SNIFF JRC and OECD databases), IGO websites (such as ICGEB and FAO), NGO information sites (such as RAFI), specialized sites (such as Agbios), and a variety of trade publications and news alerts.

**vii) Website navigation**

With regard to navigation of the BCH Central Portal website, 85 per cent found that most or all of the menu bar made sense, but the remainder found that it didn't make much sense or was very difficult to find information.

One of the respondents noted that the navigation bar is very useful as it provides a visible "proxy site map", but that some of the first level buttons on the navigation bar seem to be at too high a level of aggregation. Specific suggestions were received to improve usability for users who are less familiar with the Protocol requirements, such as raising the second order buttons and highlighting access to other types of information such as the resources section and the global search option.

Two respondents also suggested "lightening" the home page, replacing some of the detailed information with more general information on the site, who it is intended for, and a brief overview of what you can find or do with it.

Suggestions were also received regarding improvements for the common formats, such as including a "date of decision" field, and allowing users to more easily report additional information, such as "general description of the LMO", or permit numbers that might be relevant to field trials, if they wish to do so.

Cosmetic changes are not difficult for the Secretariat to implement, and would be expected to improve the usability of the Central Portal. Structural changes to the common formats could also improve usability, but need to be backwards compatible with existing interoperable information systems. Nevertheless, consideration must also be given to the ongoing training and capacity-building efforts being undertaken regarding use of the BCH, and how such ongoing improvements can be sustainably integrated into these activities, without restricting the flexibility of the BCH to be responsive to requests for improvements.

**c) Finding information in the BCH****i) Current BCH content**

Currently, the total number of records in the BCH is over 6500 (table 4). The number of records registered in the BCH by Governments varies widely by region and information type (table 5). Most Government-registered records are related to decisions under Article 11.1 of the Protocol (LMOs to be used for food, for feed or for processing) and most of these originate in developed countries, which accounts for the disparity of results in this information category. No decisions under the Advance Informed Agreement procedure (LMOs for intentional introduction into the environment) and no risk assessments have yet been registered with the BCH (although it is known that such information exists).

Given the level of dissatisfaction expressed among survey respondents regarding the amount of information that is registered with the BCH, it is crucial that mechanisms for encouraging Governments to post relevant information in a timely manner be determined. One respondent suggested that the Secretariat prepare for MOP a report on what records should theoretically be in the BCH compared to what is currently in the BCH (e.g. every party should have at least one competent national authority registered, with relevant information on its responsibilities).

**Table 4: Number of records in the BCH (at 30 October 2004)**

<b>Category of information</b>	<b>Number of countries represented</b>	<b>Number of records in database</b>
National focal points	194 <sup>4</sup>	303
Competent National authorities	83	167
National biosafety websites and databases	21	33
<b>Total records for national contacts</b>		<b>503</b>
National laws	43	103
Bilateral, multilateral and regional agreements	2	24
<b>Total records for laws &amp; regulations</b>		<b>127</b>
Decisions under AIA (introduction into the environment)	0	0
Decisions under Article 11.1 (LMO-FFPs)	11	339
Other decisions and declarations	6	16
<b>Total records for decisions and declarations</b>		<b>355</b>
<b>Total records for risk assessments</b>	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total records for unique identification</b>	(OECD records)	<b>64</b>
Capacity-building opportunities database	(organizations)	52
Capacity-building projects database	(organizations)	100
Capacity needs and priorities database	48	49
<b>Total records for capacity-building activities</b>		<b>201</b>
Roster of experts members	66	517
Reports on expert assignments	0	0
<b>Total records for roster of experts</b>		<b>517</b>
Relevant sites and tools	(SCBD records)	113
Bibliographic information	(ICGEB records)	4736
<b>Total records for other resources</b>		<b>4849</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF RECORDS</b>		<b>6616</b>

4/ This number includes countries which have only a CBD National Focal Point, as the Secretariat provides this contact information in the absence of the Protocol Focal Point for the purpose of communication under the Protocol.

**Table 5: Regional distribution of government records in the BCH**

Region (# countries in region)	Type of record				Total
	Contact details	Decisions & declarations	Laws	Roster of experts	
Africa (54)	109	10	10	156	285
Asia and the Pacific (52)	99	32	8	134	273
Central and Eastern Europe (23)	62	4	14	68	148
Latin America and the Caribbean (33)	77	39	29	58	203
Western Europe and Others 5/ (33)	151	272	66	101	590
Grand Total	498	357	127	517	

The large number of records in the decisions and declarations category mostly represents decisions under Article 11.1 (i.e. LMOs for food, feed and for processing) that are sourced through interoperability with the OECD’s BioTrack products database, the United States Regulatory Agencies Unified Biotechnology Website and the pilot phase of the Swiss Biosafety Clearing-House.

Several survey respondents made specific comments related to inconsistencies in data across countries for currently registered information, and noted the value of appointing a “central body” to review the categorization of data in the BCH that is made by individual Governments, as it appears that some Governments are misinterpreting what types of information should be included in which categories. Providing additional assistance during the data entry process of what information is expected in each category was also suggested as a solution.

- *“Do you differentiate commercial approval from trial approvals or are they all going into the AIA category?”*
- *“...Mistakes have been introduced in the BCH. For instance, MON-00810-6 is approved in Europe for deliberate release and marketing but appears in the BCH as only authorized for food, feed and processing.”*
- *“The BCH should also register LMOs approved before the entry into force of the Protocol.”*
- *“The types of data to be registered, and where each type shows up in the database and searching is not well documented.”*
- *“I found mainly commercial information and it seems that all have been entered as belonging to Article 11 although I believe some belongs to AIA category (although predating the entry into force of the Protocol).”*
- *“The most important thing at this point is that the Secretariat works with governments that post information in the wrong places (or do not understand the nature of the requested information) in a timely fashion so that others are not confused or misled by these errors and misunderstandings.”*

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5/ Includes records registered with the BCH on a government’s behalf through the OECD product database

**ii) Most popular information types**

The survey also addressed questions regarding the main purpose for which respondents use the BCH (table 6) and which types or categories of information were of greatest interest (table 7). These ratings are broadly supported by visit patterns to the BCH website.

The majority of respondents used the BCH to access scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms (74 per cent), as a general resource for biosafety information (64 per cent), and to find out which LMOs have been released in a particular area (53 per cent). In addition to popular Protocol-related information such as decisions and declarations, risk assessments and contact details, a significant number of users were interested in the LMOs database, including the registry of unique identifiers (70 per cent) and capacity-building activities (64 per cent).

**Table 6: Percentage of survey respondents using the BCH for a particular purpose**

*Q.3: For what purposes do you usually use the BCH?<sup>6</sup>*

%	Purpose of use
74	To access scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms
64	As a general resource for a broad range of biosafety information (including other relevant websites, organizations, bibliographic records, etc.)
53	To find out which LMOs have been released in a particular area
53	To look for updates to earlier information
48	To learn about available capacity-building activities
40	To assist your government or institution to fulfill obligations under the Protocol
33	Professional development
29	To access the roster of experts
29	To find a link to something else
28	As a tool for academic research

<sup>6</sup> Note that multiple responses were accepted to this question, so percentages do not total 100.

**Table 7: Percentage of survey respondents interested in using information types**

Q.3: What types of information that are available in the BCH are you most interested in using?7/

%	Type of information
80	Decisions and declarations
76	Risk assessments
70	Living modified organisms (including the registry of unique identifiers)
66	National contact information (including National Focal Points, Competent National Authorities, etc.)
64	Capacity-building activities
58	Discussion forums
50	Roster of biosafety experts
31	Biosafety news items
9	Laws and regulations

Although one respondent indicated that the purpose of the unique identifier database (UID) was unclear:

- *“Is the UID supposed to be a listing of UIDs to be used as a reference for developers, so they can correctly assigned a UID to a new product, or is the UID table supposed to be a cross reference between the decision tables? ... We would recommend dropping product description fields from the product information from the UID tables as this data is reported by countries within each decision.”*

Cross-tabulated results reveal that this database is especially popular with developing country Governments. Almost all Governments in non-WEOG countries are interested in accessing information on unique identifiers through the BCH (85 per cent), while only half of WEOG Governments have an interest in doing so (56 per cent). It is likely that this difference is due in part to the OECD member countries accessing this information directly through the source database maintained by the OECD Secretariat.

**iii) Requests for new features**

In line with the large number of respondents who use the BCH as a general resource for biosafety information (64 per cent), several responses to the question about possible new or expanded sections of the BCH included requests for access to a broader range of biosafety information, particularly from developing countries who may have limited access to such information.

- *“I am most interested in a broad range of biosafety information”*
- *“More biosafety research information should be made available”*
- *“Peer-reviewed scientific research, etc”*
- *“An overall section on general information about LVMS or GMOs*
- *“...[Interested in a] broad range of biosafety information that can be useful to implement the protocol”*

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7/ Note that multiple responses were accepted to this question, so percentages do not total 100.

It is worth noting that the Secretariat is at present developing a Biosafety Information Resource Centre in accordance with decision BS-I/5.18 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Resource Centre is intended to incorporate a broader range of information sources than it is presently possible to do through the BCH resources database (which is essentially a list of weblinks) and the biosafety bibliography (which is populated through the ICGEB biosafety databases). The Resource Centre will be a “virtual library” consisting of catalogues of information, scientific data and resource materials relevant to biosafety capacity-building, categorized using the BCH controlled vocabulary, and could therefore conceivably be linked to other types of records within the BCH if desired.

**d) Registering information with the BCH**

About half of the survey respondents had registered (or planned to register) information with the BCH, using either the Management Centre (41 per cent), the simple nBCH application (24 per cent) or interoperability mechanisms (18 per cent). This percentage break-down is not a reflection of actual information registration patterns for the BCH, where the vast majority of countries use the management centre, only three countries (Belgium, Switzerland, and United States of America) have established working interoperability with the BCH (plus two IGOs: OECD and ICGEB) and two countries (Belgium and Niger) have registered information using the simple nBCH (although some have carried out tests with the BCH training database).

**i) Management Centre**

The majority of users were satisfied with the design and use of the BCH management center (Table 8), although several noted that more online help functions could be provided. The level of satisfaction was directly related to the frequency of use of the BCH, so it was clear that operation of the Management Centre became easier with familiarity.

Many respondents noted that they were very satisfied with the Management Centre:

- *“Management centre is very well done – super easy to use”*
- *“The system is very user-friendly”*
- *“Very satisfied with this section”.*

Concerns expressed in the comments section reflected a lack of documentation for certain features (such as methods of adding multilingual information, explanations of user roles in the validation process, location of records in the database once registered) and a lack of funding and material assistance from the Secretariat to establish national BCH components (because the Secretariat is not a funding body, such requests are forwarded to the financial mechanism).

**Table 8: Percentage of survey respondents satisfied / dissatisfied with the Management Centre of the BCH**

*Q.2(i): Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using the Management Center to register information with the Central Portal. Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied / 5 = Very Unsatisfied*

	<b>1-VS</b>	<b>2-S</b>	<b>3-N</b>	<b>4-U</b>	<b>5-VU</b>
<b>Overall design</b> of the Management Centre	24	57	10	7	3
<b>First use</b> experience of the Management Centre	24	35	35	3	3
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the Management Centre	20	50	23	3	3
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>	32	46	7	7	7
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>	29	46	11	7	7
Operation of the <b>record validation</b> process	40	32	24	0	4
<b>Online help</b> functions	26	32	26	5	11
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat	15	8	3	1	1

## ii) Simple nBCH

The majority of users were generally satisfied with the simple nBCH option (Table 9), although there were some concerns about the difficulties of managing information in the system. One response noted that needing to enter recurrent information (such as contact details) would be annoying in the long-term. A suggestion was made to expand the functionality of the simple BCH in order to create an import-export facility that would allow users to download records from the Central Portal BCH to a local server to enable them to be accessed through the simple nBCH when not connected to the Internet.

**Table 9: Percentage of survey respondents satisfied / dissatisfied with the simple national BCH application**

Q.2(ii): Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using the simple nBCH to register information with the Central Portal. Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied / 5 = Very Unsatisfied

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU
<b>Overall design</b> of the simple national BCH application	31	50	6	6	6
<b>First use</b> experience of the simple national BCH application	13	40	33	7	7
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the simple national BCH application	7	53	33	0	7
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>	25	44	25	0	6
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>	7	57	14	14	7
Ease of managing information <b>at a local level</b> (i.e. off-line / before uploading information)	8	62	15	15	0
<b>Online help</b> functions	0	46	46	0	8
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat	29	50	14	0	7

### iii) Interoperability

Respondents indicated which of the interoperability mechanisms they had used: sending records using the BCH web service (36 per cent); sending records through the simple nBCH (27 per cent); and crawling / BCH downloading regularly XML records from a website (crawling) (18 per cent). Users of this service seemed generally satisfied with the options available to them (table 10).

**Table 10: Percentage of survey respondents satisfied / dissatisfied with Interoperability mechanisms**

Q.2(iii): Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using the simple interoperability to register information with the Central Portal. Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied / 5 = Very Unsatisfied

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU
<b>Range of choice</b> of the interoperability mechanisms	25	75	0	0	0
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>	0	88	12	0	0
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>	0	75	25	0	0
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat	22	56	22	0	0

**e) Other BCH information services****i) Current awareness service subscriptions**

On 1 July 2004, the Secretariat launched a Current Awareness Service that allows users to receive regular updates summarizing new information that has been added to the BCH, sent directly to users by email (or to a specified fax number). The categories of information to be included in the summaries and the frequency of their delivery are individually customizable to the user. BCH National Focal Points are automatically subscribed to the service, while other users must elect to receive the notices. Currently, 123 users are subscribed to the Current Awareness Service to receive email notifications, and 1 user is subscribed by fax.

Although the current awareness service was not addressed in the survey, a number of respondents added specific comments on its usefulness, and the Secretariat has received several direct communications that indicate this service is widely read and valued.

**ii) Online / email conference**

On 18 October 2004, the Secretariat opened the first online conference on the BCH “Biosafety Considerations in the use of Genetically Modified Organisms for Management of Animal Populations”, which will run until 15 November 2004. Over 400 participants subscribed to the conference, over 90 per cent of which were new registered users of the BCH. The conference was web-based and threaded; however, by default all users were registered to also track the conference by email. It was also possible to participate in the conference exclusively through email (and approximately 25 per cent users did so), or to register a fax number to receive a daily digest of posts by fax (1 user registered for this option).

Participants who registered or updated their profile through the website were able to indicate from which region they were participating: 35 per cent WEOG; 14 per cent Asia and the Pacific; 12 per cent Latin America and the Caribbean; 10 per cent Africa and 4 per cent Central and Eastern Europe. However, because 25 per cent of users did not access the website, their regional origin is unknown: it is reasonable to assume that a greater percentage of developing country users would take advantage of the email-only option, which suggests that the bias towards developed country participation may be somewhat less pronounced than it appears.

**iii) Discussion forums**

The Secretariat opened the Discussion Forums section of the BCH in November 2003. The main topics of the general discussion forums include a “Getting Started” forum for BCH novices; a user support forum, intended mainly for NFPs or regulators experiencing difficulties in using the BCH; a feature requests forum to request improvements; a capacity-building forum to discuss biosafety capacity-building needs; and an un-moderated “test” forum to allow users to test the forum system. The two technical discussion forums are related to interoperability, which allows users to share solutions to technical problems; and the Simple National BCH Application to discuss issues related to the nBCH software tool.

Although fully functional, the forums have not proved particularly popular (825 users have contributed 73 posts, with the bulk of these made in the “test” forum during training workshops), but they do continue to receive very occasional posts. The most read forums are the capacity-building forum and the interoperability forum. Interestingly, 58 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they were interested in using the discussion forums in future (table 6), which suggests that this feature may still be a useful tool if forums are targeted appropriately.

**iv) BCH News functions**

In August 2004, a feature was added that allowed registered National Focal Points of the BCH to submit their own national (or regional) biosafety news to be featured on the BCH. This feature was intended to allow governments to ensure that their information is circulated widely to all users of the BCH (BCH News is also available as a RSS feed). Although a notification in this regard was sent by the Secretariat to all National Focal Points, no Government has yet taken advantage of this feature.

**f) Use of Non-Internet or non-web options**

BCH users were requested to indicate current usage of non-Internet options to access the BCH, as well as future plans to make use of these options (table 11). The majority of respondents are using the web-based Central Portal to access the BCH (70 per cent); however, approximately 10 per cent are searching for information on the CD-ROM versions of the BCH (the most recent version was released in February 2004). Of the survey respondents, 13 per cent are storing local information on the simple nBCH application, and 8 per cent reported that they were uploading this information to the Central Portal (however, only two records on the “live” BCH have been uploaded through this mechanism, although several countries have been testing the system with the training database). A small number of users are making use of printed summaries of information (such as the compendium of the roster of experts that is circulated annually in accordance with COP-MOP decision BS-I/4).

**Table 11: Percentage of survey respondents using or planning to use non-Internet options to access and use the BCH<sup>8/</sup>**

*Q.10: Which of the following non-Internet options have you used?*

*Q.11: If you will continue to use, or plan to make use of non-Internet options, which of the following options would you be likely to use in the future?*

<b>Capacity-building option</b>	<b>% use currently</b>	<b>% will use in future</b>
Searching for BCH information on CD-ROM	11	20
Storing local information via the simple nBCH application developed by the Secretariat	13	11
Uploading information via the simple nBCH application developed by the Secretariat	8	13
Searching printed summaries of information on the BCH (e.g. roster of experts compendium)	9	8
Accessing a regional or national help desk	6	8
None – I am happy using the Internet-based BCH options	70	69
None – I would have used these non-Internet options, but I didn't know they were available	5	N/a

Respondents from developing country regions all expressed concerns with the speed and expense of accessing information through the Internet, although most of these respondents indicated that they will continue to use the Internet-based options regardless:

- *“Internet connection is unreliable as well as very slow”*
- *“Internet connection is available but expensive”*,

<sup>8/</sup> Note that multiple responses were accepted to this question, so percentages do not total 100.

- *“Internet connection is too slow, unreliable and therefore forced to use public Internet café that now becomes expensive”.*

Respondents noted that the CD-ROM and nBCH applications were very useful in regions that did not have good Internet connectivity, but they expressed particular (and well-founded) concerns regarding timeliness of accessing information through these mechanisms. In view of the expected growth of users of the CD-ROM option (11 per cent currently using it; 20 per cent plan to use it in future), ways and means to improve this option to meet the needs of users with respect to timely availability of information should be explored:

- *“I would prefer to use the CD-ROM option, but I do not think that the information that we get will be as new as online system”.*

#### **g) Secretariat assistance**

Half of the survey respondents addressed the section on the assistance they had received from the Secretariat (Table 12). Respondents were generally very satisfied with the assistance from the Secretariat; the one complaint noted was to do with a lack of financial assistance (which the Secretariat is unable to provide). Many respondents specifically mentioned their appreciation of the responsiveness of the Secretariat to suggestions for improvement.

- *“The CBD Secretariat has done a fantastic job with the development of the BCH and I appreciate that everyone is always open to input”*
- *“Secretariat response has been very good to any request for help whether made by phone or email”*
- *“Secretariat has been very open to ... feedback and has been very responsive in accommodating input or suggestions wherever feasible.”*
- *“The Secretariat ... has been very responsive to suggestions and concerns.”*
- *“Always interested in continuing the excellent working relations we have had to date with the Secretariat”*
- *“Very pleased with both the speed and usefulness of the information provided”*
- *“Keep up the good work”*

**Table 12: Survey respondents’ satisfaction with Secretariat assistance**

Q.7: If you have contacted the Secretariat for assistance, how satisfactorily were your problems resolved?

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU
<b>Overall quality</b> of the assistance	44	36	18	0	3
<b>Timeliness</b> of the response	42	26	26	3	3
<b>Clarity</b> of the response	50	32	16	0	3
<b>Usefulness</b> of information provided	49	30	16	3	3
<b>Technical competence</b> of the assistance	53	29	16	0	3

#### **h) Proposed follow-up**

Several respondents commented that the survey was seen to be a very useful way of eliciting responses and it could be useful to repeat the survey at a later date to compare against this baseline data.

- *“Congratulations on your initiative to undertake this survey”*

- *“I hope the questionnaire should be coming quite often so that any emerging issue can be addressed promptly”*

#### **4. IMPLICATIONS FOR A MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BCH**

This section examines some of the key findings of the review in further detail, with a view to assisting in determining elements for a longer-term programme of work for the BCH. Draft recommendations for a multi-year programme of work arising from the results of this review are discussed in document on the elements of a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/4).

##### **General level of user satisfaction**

- Most respondents considered the design of the BCH to be satisfactory or very satisfactory.
- Most survey respondents were very satisfied with the assistance received from the Secretariat regarding the BCH.
- Most survey respondents were satisfied with the options available to register information with the BCH.

The Secretariat should endeavor to continue to maintain the BCH services taking into account the feedback received from the users of the BCH.

##### **Structure and function of the Central Portal**

- Government users are able to easily find information in the BCH; however, users from other sectors, such as industry and NGOs experience some difficulties in locating information.

Without making major changes to the design and use of the Central Portal, the structure of the BCH should be reviewed with a view to making it more intuitive to find and register information. Several individual survey responses included specific suggestions in this regard that will be reviewed by the Secretariat to find common areas for improvement.

Particular areas that may be targeted for improvement include the aggregation of information through the navigation bar, the amount of information on the home page, search functionality, and improvements to the common formats for reporting information.

##### **Information content and management**

- The greatest concern with the BCH is incomplete information, including delays experienced in Governments providing information, particularly that which the Protocol requires Parties to submit to the BCH.

Mechanisms to encourage Governments to provide relevant information to the BCH in a timely manner must be elaborated and implemented. A number of capacity-building activities are being undertaken in this regard, but this will not address the lack of information being reported from developed countries.

Many documents have been produced that outline the categories of information that should be provided to the BCH, and the Protocol clearly stipulates certain time-limits that must be met for reporting certain categories of information. Some of this information could be made more visible on the BCH itself, to assist Governments in providing appropriate data. User documentation and online help functions could be reviewed and updated to provide more assistance during the data entry process of what information is expected in each category (more intuitive categorization of information, as discussed above, may also help in this regard). In addition, the Secretariat could be requested to take a more active role in reviewing the categorization of information in the BCH databases.

- Flexibility of the Secretariat in modifying the central portal in response to user needs was greatly appreciated by survey respondents.
- Online help functions and documentation are important to BCH users and need to be maintained.

BCH users are generally very appreciative of the Secretariat's flexibility in responding to suggestions, and there is no question that the design of the BCH benefits greatly from implementing these suggested improvements. However, the Secretariat does not currently have the resources to create and maintain sophisticated documentation and online help facilities in response to persistent changes.

Without restricting the flexibility of the BCH to be responsive to requests for improvements, consideration must also be given to the ongoing training and capacity-building efforts being undertaken by external agencies, and how such ongoing improvements can be sustainably incorporated into training packages produced by these activities.

#### **Capacity-building and non-Internet accessibility**

- New BCH information services that are being introduced by the Secretariat are well-received, in particular the Current Awareness Service that sends email updates of new records registered with the BCH.

Information services that are targeted to specific users should continue to be examined by the Secretariat, and implemented where time and resources allow. In particular, services that make use of email functionality may be more cost-effective in areas where web access is very expensive.

- There are concerns regarding timely access to BCH information using the non-Internet options.

The feasibility of expanding the functionality of the simple BCH to allow users to download records from the Central Portal of the BCH to a local server could be further examined. It may also be beneficial to circulate CD-ROM versions of the contents of the Central Portal more frequently to those users without good access to the website. However, resources to undertake these activities would need to be secured.

#### **Sharing information on and experience with LMOs**

- Many survey respondents would like to use the BCH to access a broader range of biosafety information.

The Secretariat should continue to develop the Biosafety Information Resource Centre. Governments and interested organizations and institutions should also be encouraged to provide information to this facility, to enable BCH users to access a broad range of biosafety information, and to establish links to the Resource Centre on their own national websites.

#### **Further review**

The BCH survey yielded many useful and interesting results. It would be beneficial to consider undertaking a future survey in order to compare the impacts of the improvements that have been elicited throughout the current process.

#### **Elements of a longer-term programme of work**

The results of this review are further discussed in document UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/1/4 ("Elements of a longer-term programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House"), where they form the basis of draft recommendations for a multi-year programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House.

*Annex I*  
**LIST OF COUNTRIES FROM WHICH SURVEY RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED**

<b>Country of origin</b>	<b># responses</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b># responses</b>
Australia	3	Namibia	1
Bahamas	1	Netherlands	3
Bangladesh	1	Niger	1
Barbados	2	Nigeria	1
Belarus	1	Niue	1
Belgium	4	Norway	1
Bhutan	1	Philippines	1
Bulgaria	1	Poland	1
Canada	3	Portugal	1
China	1	Republic of Moldova	1
Colombia	1	Saint Lucia	1
Comoros	1	Senegal	1
DPR Korea	1	Slovakia	2
Denmark	1	Spain	1
Ecuador	1	Sri Lanka	1
Ethiopia	1	Sudan	1
Finland	1	Swaziland	1
France	5	Sweden	1
Germany	1	Switzerland	2
Ghana	1	Tajikistan	1
Greece	1	Thailand	1
India	1	Togo	1
Italy	2	Tonga	1
Japan	1	United Kingdom	2
Kenya	1	United Republic of Tanzania	1
Latvia	1	United States of America	8
Malaysia	1	Viet Nam	1
Mexico	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>

*Annex II*

**STRUCTURE OF THE BCH SURVEY**

Dear Biosafety Clearing-House User:

As you may know, the Secretariat is in the process of preparing a longer-term programme of work for the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). We would like to seek your views to assist us in this task. The attached questionnaire has been prepared for this purpose. It contains 26 questions and it has been designed to allow you to complete it very quickly by selecting the most appropriate answer option provided for each question. However, there are several opportunities to provide additional comments, and we would encourage you to provide this additional information where possible, as it will be very valuable to the Secretariat in designing future improvements to the BCH.

We would like all BCH users, or potential BCH users, to assist us in providing information through the questionnaire, so please feel free to make copies and distribute it widely among your colleagues. The questionnaire is available in hard-copy or electronically from the Secretariat, or via the BCH website address: <http://bch.biodiv.org/survey.aspx>, where it can be downloaded as a PDF or MS Word document, or completed on-line.

Thank you for taking the time to share with us your experiences in using the BCH. We sincerely appreciate your honest opinion, and will take your input into consideration for future design of the BCH. The information that you provide will also be considered by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its second meeting during its review of the operation of the BCH.

Yours sincerely

Hamdallah Zedan  
Executive Secretary

**Further information**

If you have any comments or questions about this survey, please contact:

Kirsty Galloway McLean  
Scientific and Technical Information Officer, Biosafety  
393 Rue St-Jacques, Suite 300  
Montreal QC H2Y-1N9  
Canada  
Email: [kirsty.mclean@biodiv.org](mailto:kirsty.mclean@biodiv.org)  
Tel: +1 (514) 287-7039

**Please return completed questionnaires before Friday, 17 September 2004 to:**

***CBD Secretariat***  
393 rue St-Jacques, Suite 300, Montreal QC H2Y-1N9, Canada  
Tel: +1 (514) 288-2220; Fax: +1 (514) 287-7039; email: [bch@biodiv.org](mailto:bch@biodiv.org)

**Section I**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) is an information exchange mechanism established by the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to assist Parties to implement its provisions and to facilitate sharing of information on, and experience with, living modified organisms (LMOs). Information in the BCH is available through the central portal (available at <http://bch.biodiv.org>), and is provided by national governments and other partners. This questionnaire should be filled out by anyone who has used (or plans to use) the BCH, and the results will be collated for use in preparing a longer-term programme of work for the BCH.

**Section II**

**OVERALL IMPRESSIONS AND USER EXPERIENCES WITH THE BCH**

**Q. 1:** *In general, how satisfied are you when using the Central Portal of the BCH to find information? A list of elements is supplied below for your consideration, but please feel free to expand on your answers, or add any other matters that are important to you in the comments section.*

Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied / 5 = Very Unsatisfied / 6 = Not applicable/Don't know

	<b>1-VS</b>	<b>2-S</b>	<b>3-N</b>	<b>4-U</b>	<b>5-VU</b>	<b>6-NA</b>
<b>Overall design</b> of the BCH						
<b>First use</b> experience of the BCH						
<b>Relevance</b> of information in the BCH						
<b>Completeness</b> of information in the BCH						
<b>Variety</b> of information in the BCH						
<b>Timely availability</b> of information in the BCH						
Ease of <b>finding information</b> in the BCH						
<b>Usefulness</b> of search results						
<b>Organization</b> of search results						
Speed of <b>loading the page</b>						
Reliability of <b>site performance</b>						
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the website						
<b>Online help</b> functions						
Availability of information in <b>languages</b>						
Quality of <b>translation</b>						

*Comments (for example, please explain why you are particularly satisfied or unsatisfied with certain elements):*

**Q. 2:** *If you have had an opportunity to **register information with the BCH** (this would usually apply only to National Focal Points and other registered users), please let us know your experiences with using the registration functions of the BCH with which you have experience. Other respondents, please continue to Question 3. (Please select all answers that apply.)*

- I have used (or plan to use) the online Management Centre to register information with the BCH (please answer section (i) below)
- I have used (or plan to use) the simple national BCH application to register information with the BCH (please answer section (ii) below)
- I have used (or plan to use) interoperability mechanisms to register information with the BCH (please answer section (iii) below)
- I do not register information with the BCH (please continue to Question 3 below)

**Section (i)**

**MANAGEMENT CENTRE**

Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using the Management Center to register information with the Central Portal:

Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied /  
5 = Very Unsatisfied / 6 = Not applicable/Don't know

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU	6-NA
<b>Overall design</b> of the Management Centre						
<b>First use</b> experience of the Management Centre						
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the Management Centre						
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>						
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>						
Operation of the <b>record validation</b> process						
<b>Online help</b> functions						
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat						

Comments (for example, please let us know what you would improve about this method of registering information):

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*Section (ii)*

**SIMPLE NATIONAL BCH APPLICATION**

Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using the simple national BCH application to register information with the Central Portal:

Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied /  
5 = Very Unsatisfied / 6 = Not applicable/Don't know

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU	6-NA
<b>Overall design</b> of the simple national BCH application						
<b>First use</b> experience of the simple national BCH application						
<b>Style and appearance</b> of the simple national BCH application						
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>						
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>						
Ease of managing information <b>at a local level</b> (i.e. off-line / before uploading information)						
<b>Online help</b> functions						
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat						

*Comments (for example, please let us know what you would improve about this method of registering information):*

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*Section (iii)*

**INTEROPERABILITY MECHANISMS**

(a) What is your **preferred mechanism** for interoperability?

- I prefer the BCH to download regularly XML records from my site (crawling)
- I prefer to send the records using the BCH Web Service
- I prefer to send records from the simple national BCH application
- I don't know / not applicable
- Other (please specify): ...

(b) What **database platform** do you use (or plan to use)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft Access (JET)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft SQL
<input type="checkbox"/>	MySQL
<input type="checkbox"/>	Oracle
<input type="checkbox"/>	PostgreSQL
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know / not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

(c) Which **web development platform** do you use?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Java/JSP/J2EE
<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft ASP.NET
<input type="checkbox"/>	Microsoft IIS (ASP)
<input type="checkbox"/>	PHP
<input type="checkbox"/>	Zope
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know / not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

(d) Please comment on your satisfaction with the following elements when using interoperability mechanisms to register information with the Central Portal:

Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied /  
5 = Very Unsatisfied / 6 = Not applicable/Don't know

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU	6-NA
<b>Range of choice</b> of the interoperability mechanisms						
Ease of <b>registering new information</b>						
Ease of <b>managing existing information</b>						
<b>Support and assistance</b> provided by the Secretariat						

*Comments (for example, please let us know what you would improve about this method of registering information):*

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**Section III**  
**BCH SERVICES**

**Q. 3:** For **what purposes** do you usually use the BCH? (Please select all answers that apply.)

- |                          |                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To access scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To assist your Government or institution to fulfill obligations under the Protocol                                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To find out which LMOs have been released in a particular area                                                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To learn about available capacity-building activities                                                                                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To access the roster of experts                                                                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | As a tool for academic research                                                                                                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | As a general resource for a broad range of biosafety information (including other relevant websites, organizations, bibliographic records, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To look for updates to earlier information                                                                                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Professional development                                                                                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | To find a link to something else                                                                                                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify): ...                                                                                                                      |

Comments (for example, what is particularly helpful for your purposes, or what could be improved):

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**Q. 4:** What types of information available through the BCH are you **most interested** in using? (Please select all answers that apply.)

- |                          |                                                                                                      |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | National contact information (including National Focal Points, Competent National Authorities, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Laws and regulations                                                                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Decisions and declarations                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Risk assessments                                                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Living modified organisms (including the registry of unique identifiers)                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Capacity-building activities                                                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Roster of biosafety experts                                                                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Biosafety news items                                                                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Discussion forums                                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify): ...                                                                          |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 5:** Does the **organization of information through the menu** of items on the home page make sense to you?

- Yes, it makes complete sense to me
- Yes, most of it makes sense to me
- No, only some of it makes sense to me
- No, I find it very difficult to find information
- I don't know

*Comments (for example, if you have experienced difficulties in finding information, what would you change about the menu to make it easier to find information):*

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**Q. 6:** Have you experienced any **problems finding information** in the BCH?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know / I have not searched for information in the BCH

*Comments (for example, list any problems you encountered, such as having to try several searches to get the information you were looking for):*

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**Q. 7:** If you have **contacted the Secretariat** for assistance, how satisfactorily were your problems resolved?

Scale: 1 = Very Satisfied / 2 = Satisfied / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Unsatisfied /  
5 = Very Unsatisfied / 6 = Not applicable/Don't know

	1-VS	2-S	3-N	4-U	5-VU	6-NA
<b>Overall quality</b> of the assistance						
<b>Timeliness</b> of the response						
<b>Clarity</b> of the response						
<b>Usefulness</b> of information provided						
<b>Technical competence</b> of the assistance						

Comments (for example, please explain why you are particularly satisfied or unsatisfied with the assistance you received):

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**Q. 8:** Are there any specific sections of the BCH for which you would like to **propose an improvement**?

  

No  
Yes – please give details...

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**Q. 9:** Is there any **new section** that you would like to propose for consideration in the BCH?

  

No  
Yes – please give details...

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**Section IV**  
**NON-INTERNET OPTIONS**

**Q. 10:** Which of the following **non-Internet options** have you used? (Please select all answers that apply.)

- Searching for BCH information on CD-ROM
- Storing local information via the simple nBCH application developed by the Secretariat
- Uploading information via the simple nBCH application developed by the Secretariat
- Searching printed summaries of information on the BCH (e.g. roster of experts compendium)
- Accessing a regional or national help desk
- None – I would have used these non-Internet options, but I didn't know they were available
- None – I am happy using the Internet-based BCH options
- Other (please specify): ...

*Comments (for example, do you use non-Internet options mainly to search for information, or to upload information to the databases):*

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**Q. 11:** If you will continue to use, or plan to make use of non-Internet options, which of the following options would you be **likely to use in the future?** (Please select all answers that apply.)

- Searching for BCH information on CD-ROM
- Storing local information via the simple nBCH database developed by the Secretariat
- Uploading information via the simple nBCH database developed by the Secretariat
- Searching printed summaries of information on the BCH (e.g. roster of experts compendium)
- Accessing a regional or national help desk
- None – I will be using the Internet-based BCH options
- Other (please specify): ...

*Comments (for example, please list any other options that might be useful, or explain why certain options would not work for you):*

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*Section V*  
**IT ENVIRONMENT**

**Q. 12:** Which **Web browsers** do you use? (Please select all answers that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet Explorer 5.5 or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet Explorer 5.0 or less
<input type="checkbox"/>	Netscape 6.0 or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Netscape 4.0 or less
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safari
<input type="checkbox"/>	Opera
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have no web browser
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

**Q. 13:** What sort of **Internet connection** do you have? (Please select all answers that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Fast and reliable Internet connection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Slow, but reliable Internet connection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unreliable Internet connection
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet is easily accessible through the office
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet is available through the office, but access is restricted (e.g. shared with other people)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet is available at home
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have no Internet connection, but regularly access the Internet through a public Internet café (or equivalent)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have no access to Internet
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

*Comments (for example, is your Internet connection available but too expensive to use regularly):*

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**Q. 14:** *What is your **access speed** to the Internet?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	33.6 or less
<input type="checkbox"/>	56K
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cable / DSL
<input type="checkbox"/>	ISDN
<input type="checkbox"/>	LAN (office, high speed)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have no Internet connection
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

### *Section VI*

### **USER DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Q. 15:** ***Occupation / profession** – please check all that apply:*

<input type="checkbox"/>	National/Federal Government Official
<input type="checkbox"/>	State/Province/Local Government Official
<input type="checkbox"/>	BCH National Focal Point
<input type="checkbox"/>	BCH National Authorised User
<input type="checkbox"/>	BCH Institutional Focal Point
<input type="checkbox"/>	Biosafety regulator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Program Manager
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clerical/Secretarial officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	IT Professional
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capacity-building organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of Inter-governmental organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of non-governmental organization
<input type="checkbox"/>	Industry representative
<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic researcher
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify): ...

**Q. 16:** *How experienced would you say you are as an Internet user?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Expert
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good
<input type="checkbox"/>	Novice

**Q. 17:** *How long is it since you last used the BCH website?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 1 month
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 to 6 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 months to 1 year
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 to 3 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not use the BCH website

**Q. 18:** *How often do you usually access the BCH website?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Once a week or more often
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 to 3 times a month
<input type="checkbox"/>	About once a month
<input type="checkbox"/>	Every 2-3 months
<input type="checkbox"/>	A few times a year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Once a year or less often
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not use the BCH website

**Q. 19:** *Using which language versions do you usually access the BCH website? (Please select all answers that apply.)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	English
<input type="checkbox"/>	French
<input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Russian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not use the BCH website

**Q. 20:** Do you use **other** biosafety information-sharing mechanisms?

	No
	Yes

If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 21:** **Compared to other** information-exchange mechanisms that are available, would you say that the BCH is...

	Much better
	Somewhat better
	About the same
	Somewhat worse
	Much worse
	Don't know or never used others

Comments (for example, what additional features do other mechanisms offer that would be useful in the BCH):

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 22:** How did you **first learn** about the BCH?

	During an official meeting on the Protocol (e.g. ICCP or COP/MOP)
	Via a Secretariat notification
	Through a co-worker or word of mouth
	I followed a link on the CBD website
	I followed a link on another site
	Internet search engine
	I had not heard of it before today
	Other - ...

Comments (for example, was it difficult to find the website address for the BCH):

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 23:** Do you have a national or institutional **biosafety database**?

<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't know

Please provide web address if available via Internet: ...

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Please advise if you would like the Secretariat to contact you about partnership opportunities with the BCH: ...

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**Q. 24:** From **which country** do you usually access the BCH?

Please specify: ...

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**Q. 25:** What are your **contact details**? (Optional)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Please indicate if you would like the Secretariat to follow up with you on any of the items in this questionnaire: ...

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### *Section VII*

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Q. 26:** If you have **additional comments** for us about your experience with the BCH that have not been addressed in the survey, please provide them below.

*Comments:*

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Thank you for your feedback.

***Reminder: Please return completed questionnaires before Friday, 17 September 2004 to:***

***CBD Secretariat***

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