



CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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COORDINATION MEETING FOR GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENTING OR FUNDING BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Montreal, Canada

26 to 27 January 2005

Agenda item 3.4 of the provisional agenda *

MECHANISMS FOR FACILITATING ONGOING COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING BETWEEN DIFFERENT BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVES

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision BS-I/5, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol adopted a Coordination Mechanism to facilitate exchange of information with a view to promoting partnerships and maximizing complementarities and synergies between various capacity building initiatives. Among other elements, the Coordination Mechanism comprises two inter-linked elements which are particularly important means of facilitating ongoing collaboration, networking and exchange of views and experience between different biosafety capacity-building initiatives, namely: the Coordination Meetings and the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network. The present note discusses modalities for operationalizing these two elements, including mobilization of the necessary financial resources to support their implementation.

2. Section 2 discusses the operational procedures for the coordination meetings for governments and organizations implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities. It discusses issues such as: the frequency, timing and duration of the meetings; responsibility for organizing the meetings and mechanism for setting the agenda; criteria for selection of participants; election of officials for the meetings, the procedures and style of conducting the meetings, the working language(s), documentation and reports of the meetings, and other organizational matters.

3. Section 3 outlines draft terms of reference and modalities of operationalizing the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network, including a description of its mandate and functions, the membership criteria, and operational tools and procedures.

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4. Section 4 discusses the need for, and options of, mobilizing financial and other resources for implementing the Coordination Mechanism, in particular for organizing coordination meetings and implementing agreed follow-up activities and for operationalizing the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network.

2. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE COORDINATION MEETINGS

5. Face-to-face coordination meetings are some of the practical mechanisms that can help to “jump-start” and foster ongoing coordination, collaboration and dialogue between governments and organizations involved in implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities. However in order for such meetings to function effectively and efficiently and to produce the desired results, it is important to define, at the outset, a consistent framework to guide their organization and management, including agreed modalities and standard operational procedures.

6. In its decision BS-I/5, Annex IV, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol provided a general description of the overall nature, mandate and operational modalities for the coordination meeting and workshops.

7. The present note provides, in Annex 1, proposals for operational procedures to guide the organization, conduct and management of future coordination meetings. The items discussed include the following: (i) purpose of the meetings; (ii) frequency, timing and duration of the meetings; (iii) responsibility for convening the meetings; (iv) mechanism for setting the agenda; (v) participation in the meetings; (vi) procedures and style of conducting the meetings; (vii) election of officials; (viii) documentation and reports; (ix) Ad hoc working groups/ taskforces; and (x) other organizational matters.

8. Participants may wish to review and adopt the operational procedures and guidelines for the coordination meetings, recognizing that these may need to be modified and further elaborated on the basis of emerging operational experience.

3. MODALITIES FOR OPERATIONALIZING THE BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING NETWORK

9. In its decision BS-I/5, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol established a Biosafety Capacity-Building Network as part of the Coordination Mechanism. The decision noted that the network would provide a forum through which individuals from Governments, donor agencies and other relevant organizations that are involved in biosafety capacity-building activities can interact and exchange information, knowledge, views and experiences on an ongoing basis.

10. In particular, the network will provide a mechanism to facilitate ongoing interaction and exchange of information among participants of the face-to-face coordination meetings and to follow-up on the agreed activities inter-sessionally.

11. The need for operationalizing the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network is urgent. A number of biosafety capacity-building activities have been initiated over the last few years but currently there is limited interaction and inter-linkage between them. Moreover, some are operating in competitive, duplicative and isolated/fragmented ways and not leveraging each other's comparative strengths. It is hoped that the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network will provide an effective and sustainable mechanism to foster interaction, coordination and collaboration between the different initiatives. This is particularly important because no single agency has the resources and expertise to “go it alone” to address the

enormous need for capacity-building in biosafety in most developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

12. In order to make the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network a reality, it is important to define and to put in place its modalities of operation and tools to support its functioning.

13. The present note proposes, in Annex 2, draft modalities of operationalizing the network with a view to facilitating initial discussions by the coordination meeting. The annex includes a description of: the mandate and possible functions of the network, guidelines for membership and participation in the network, electronic tools to facilitate discussion and exchange of information between the members and the principles and procedures that may guide operations of the network. A draft implementation plan for the preparatory phase of the network is also proposed.

14. Participants may wish to provide comments on the draft interim framework and operational modalities for the network and adopt the proposed implementation plan for the preparatory phase of the network, contained in Annex 3. Participants may also wish to establish a small taskforce of about 3 to 5 people to further elaborate the framework and operational modalities (which may be considered as the “blue-print”) of the network and to develop a strategy to publicize and promote membership of the Network.

4. MOBILIZATION OF FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COORDINATION MECHANISM

15. Effective implementation of the Coordination Mechanism requires reliable sources of funding in order to be able to plan and implement the coordination activities including organization of coordination meetings with some degree of certainty and predictability. Currently there are no reliable sources of funding for supporting activities of the Coordination Mechanism that are outside the primary functions of the Secretariat.

16. In its decision BS-I/5, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol emphasized the need to ensure that the Coordination Mechanism is implemented with as minimal additional resource requirements as possible. It requested the Executive Secretary to administer the implementation of the Coordination Mechanism in a phased manner and within existing resources of the Secretariat. For example the Executive Secretary was requested to organize coordination meetings and workshops for Government representatives, relevant organizations and donors, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its Implementing Agencies and other relevant organizations, subject to availability of funding.

17. While a few principal activities of the network, such as maintenance of the network website and communication tools, may be implemented within the core budget of Secretariat in accordance with the principles set by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol, implementation of some of the other network activities will require additional resources. Thus, there is a need to identify and mobilize funding to support implementation of key coordination activities including organization of coordination meetings and publication and dissemination of the useful products from the network activities.

18. One option is to invite members of the network who are in a position to do so, to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund of the Protocol for the specific purpose of supporting coordination and networking activities to promote sharing of experiences and lessons learned.

19. Another option would be to recommend to the Conference of the Parties to ask the Global Environment Facility, as the financial mechanism for the Protocol, to explore the role it could play in

supporting experience-sharing and lesson-learning, through the network, among Parties to the Protocol and relevant organizations.

20. A third option could be encouraging all biosafety capacity-building projects to include a budget line for collaboration, networking and sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned as part of their overall strategy for encouraging the magnification and replication of the results of their projects.

21. The meeting may wish to consider and expand on the proposals outlined above and provide other suggestions of mobilizing funding for operationalizing the Coordination Mechanism.

5. POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE MEETING

22. Participants may wish to:

- (a) Discuss and adopt the operational procedures for the coordination meetings.
- (b) Identify key issues that may require consideration at the global level, which could be focal topics for future coordination meetings or thematic workshops, and discuss the general criteria to be used in the prioritization and selection of issues to be considered by the meetings.
- (c) Provide initial comments and suggestions for improvement of the proposed draft modalities for operationalizing the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network.
- (d) Request the steering committee to further elaborate, if found necessary, the modalities of operation for Biosafety Capacity-Building Network and assist in publicizing and promoting membership of the Network among relevant organizations for consideration by the next Coordination Meeting.
- (e) Discuss and adopt the draft "Implementation Plan for the Preparatory Phase Activities" of the network, contained in Annex 3.
- (f) Identify relevant organizations, not participating in present meeting, that should be invited to participate in future coordination meetings and in the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network.
- (g) Discuss and recommend options of mobilizing financial and other resources for organizing future coordination meetings and implementing agreed follow-up activities and for operationalizing the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network.
- (h) Propose other strategies for enhancing ongoing interaction, collaboration, networking between different biosafety capacity-building initiatives including, for example, participants attending each others' meetings or workshops.
- (i) Identify potential challenges and constraints that might hinder effective ongoing interaction, collaboration, networking between different biosafety capacity-building initiatives and propose possible practical ways and means of dealing with them.
- (j) Discuss options for encouraging the linkages with existing regional and sub-regional networks for biosafety capacity-building, within the overall framework of the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network.

ANNEX 1

DRAFT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE COORDINATION MEETINGS

Purpose of the meetings

1. The primary objective of the coordination meetings will be to facilitate interaction and exchange of information, views and experience with a view to promoting synergies, complementarities and partnerships between various capacity building initiatives and enhancing their impact. Specifically, the meetings will *inter alia* seek to:

(a) Enhance mutual awareness among participating organizations of the ongoing and planned activities with a view to identifying their coverage, overlaps and deficiencies and gaps.

(b) Minimize the unnecessary overlaps and duplication of effort and resources, including through synchronizing the ongoing initiatives.

(c) Facilitate sharing, leveraging and learning from each other's experience, good practices and lessons learned from the biosafety capacity-building initiatives.

(d) Enhance mutual understanding of the emerging capacity-building issues and priority needs of countries and endeavor to identify possible solutions and steps to address them.

(e) Promote cross-fertilization of ideas to improve coordination and delivery of capacity-building initiatives with a view to enhancing their effectiveness in responding to the needs and priorities of countries and realizing maximum impact.

Frequency, timing and duration of the meetings

2. The meetings will be convened whenever necessary, subject to availability of funding, and will take advantage of the opportunities presented by other forums where most participants are present. Initially it is envisaged that at least one meeting a year may be needed. Each meeting will normally not exceed three days.

3. Announcements of the meetings and the provisional agenda will be publicized through the Protocol web site and the Biosafety Clearing-House, at least two months before the meeting.

4. Intersessionally, participating organization will communicate and exchange information and views through the electronic communications tools for the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network, including e-mail or electronic discussion forums and e-conferences, as appropriate.

5. The meetings will be held sufficiently in advance of the next meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol so that issues requiring its attention are discussed and relevant recommendations forwarded to it for consideration.

Responsibility for convening the meetings

6. The meetings will be organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with other relevant organizations, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its Implementing Agencies, subject to availability of funding.

7. Organizations interested in sponsoring or co-organizing coordination meetings at the international or regional level will be invited to inform the Secretariat and enter into a memorandum of cooperation. Invitations for attending such meetings will be extended by both the Secretariat and main sponsoring organization.

Agendas of the meetings

8. The organization(s) offering to sponsor/ host a coordination meeting will develop the agenda for meeting in consultation with the Secretariat and the steering committee elected at the previous meeting, taking into account the agreed standing items for all coordination meetings and the issues agreed at the previous meeting for consideration by the next meeting. For the time being, the following will be standing substantive items on the agenda:

- (a) Review of the report of the previous meeting.
- (b) Presentations by participants on their ongoing activities, new planned activities and emerging opportunities for collaboration and other relevant developments since the last meeting.
- (c) Consideration of the priority needs of countries and specific requests for capacity-building support.

9. As much as possible, the deliberations of the meetings will focus on understanding the key capacity-building issues and priority needs of countries and on identifying how best to assist countries to build their capacities to effectively implement the Protocol. The meetings will also seek to facilitate participants in identifying opportunities for establishing partnerships and collaboration with different players.

Participation

10. The meetings will be open to governments and organizations that are implementing or funding capacity-building projects for the effective implementation of the Protocol. Potential participants will be invited to express their interest through the Secretariat along with details of their ongoing activities.

11. To the extent possible, members of the liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety will be encouraged to attend the coordination meetings as one of the strategies for cross-linking the coordination meetings with the other elements of the Coordination Mechanisms.

Financing of the meetings

12. Organization of the meetings will, inter alia, be funded through voluntary contributions from the sponsors/co-organizers of each meeting and from donors. Participants will be expected to cover the costs of their participation in the meetings.

Procedures and style of conducting the meetings

13. The meetings shall be as informal and flexible as possible in order to allow a free interaction and sharing of information, experience and ideas. They will not aim at reaching consensus on particular issues but at promoting broad exchange of information, views and opinions and allowing a free flow of ideas through brainstorming. Different viewpoints of participants will be recorded and emerging issues requiring further consideration identified. The meetings may come up with specific recommendations and follow-up actions, as appropriate.

Working language

14. The working language of the international coordination meetings will be English. Regional coordination meetings may be organized in the language spoken by the majority of participants from the region.

Election of officials

15. A steering committee comprising the Chair, a rapporteur and [three][five] members will be elected at every meeting, with due regard to geographic, thematic and gender balance. The Chair and rapporteurs of each meeting, with the assistance of the Secretariat, shall be responsible for preparing and circulating to participants the reports of the meeting. The steering committee will be responsible for providing the necessary strategic direction and overseeing, until the next coordination meeting, implementation of the follow-up activities that fall outside the primary responsibility of the Secretariat.

Documentation and reports

16. The Secretariat will prepare, with guidance from the steering committee, relevant documentation on the agreed agenda issues to facilitate the discussions at the meetings. The documents will be distributed to participants at least four weeks before the meeting.

17. Prior to each meeting, participants will be invited to submit to the Secretariat relevant information and documents, including summaries of their activities undertaken in the preceding period, new planned activities or work programmes and an indication of potential opportunities for collaboration to be distributed to all participants.

18. The reports of the meetings will be distributed to all participants within two weeks of the close of the meeting. Specific recommendations requiring consideration by the Conference of Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol will be transmitted formally through the Secretariat. The reports and other relevant outputs of the meetings may also be submitted as information documents and made public through the Biosafety Clearing-House, as appropriate.

ANNEX 2

DRAFT OPERATIONAL MODALITIES FOR THE BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING NETWORK

Mandate and Functions

1. The primary purpose of the network is to facilitate and enhance active interaction and sharing of knowledge, views, experiences and lessons learned among individuals, organizations and donor agencies interested in promoting biosafety capacity-building and research, in a timely, organized and effective manner. The specific functions and activities/ services of the network will include the following:

(a) Helping to strengthen linkages and interactions between different organizations or individuals involved biosafety capacity-building activities, in order to promote synergies and better coordination and collaboration.

(b) Facilitating informal but systematic interactions to foster sharing and leveraging of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned with a view to enhancing mutual learning and maximum use of available knowledge and experience.

(c) Enabling different players to keep each other informed about their ongoing or planned activities in order to avoid duplication of effort and to optimize the allocation of resources.

(d) Fostering linkages between on-the-ground experience and action and the relevant policy processes at the national, regional and global levels.

(e) Facilitating the establishment of collaborative partnerships or twinning arrangements and foster the pooling of resources and expertise.

(f) Mobilizing expertise and information resources available through the network to provide technical assistance to Parties to the Protocol, upon request.

Membership and Participation in the Network

2. The network will be open to representatives of interested governments and relevant organizations that are implementing or funding capacity-building projects for the effective implementation of the Protocol.

3. Potential participants interested in joining the network will be invited to express their interest to the Secretariat and/or register through the Biosafety Clearing-House. Each participating government and organization will provide the Secretariat with the names and addresses of the main contact point for the network.

4. Members of the network will be encouraged share voluntarily their relevant information and experience through network and to advancing the goal and objectives of the network.

Administration and Functioning of the Network

5. In accordance with decision BS-I/5 of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol, the network will be administered by the Executive Secretary of

the Protocol and will be implemented primarily through the Biosafety Clearing-House, which will serve as the “network hub”.

6. The Steering Committee elected at the coordination meetings will provide overall policy guidance to the operations of the network and to oversee the implementation of its activities. Members of the Steering Committee will serve for a period of two years, renewable once. In order to maintain institutional memory, at least one third of the members will be retained when a new committee is elected. The Steering Committee will work mainly through the internet-based tools established for the network.

7. The network will operate primarily through Internet-based tools, including: e-mail listservs, bulletin boards, electronic discussion forums and electronic conferences, will be the primary means of interaction between the network members.

8. A restricted (password-protected) website will be established to allow exchange of views and information among members of the network and facilitate networking and access to information about the network activities. An e-mail listserv will also be established for all members to all dissemination of information and comments relevant to all members. A bulletin board may also be to allow ongoing posting of views, comments and new information on different biosafety issues. In addition, thematic or issue-specific e-mail listservs or electronic discussion forums may also be established as required, to allow exchange of information and dialogue on specific themes/ topical issues over a defined period time.

9. Partner organizations will be encouraged to volunteer in co-sponsoring or moderating specific thematic discussions or managing issue-specific e-mail listservs. The discussion forums may, as appropriate, result in specific products (e.g. reports/ proceedings), which may also be published as hard copies and made available to interested countries.

Responsibilities of the Secretariat

10. The Secretariat will service the network by:

(a) Developing and maintaining communication tools for the network, including a restricted website, e-mail listservs and electronic discussion forums for members of the network.

(b) Facilitating communication, interaction and exchange of information among members of the network.

(c) Maintaining records of the network membership and disseminating relevant reports and other outputs of its activities.

(d) Preparing progress reports and other relevant documentation for consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

(e) Undertaking other activities as requested by the network, subject to availability of funding.

Regional and thematic sub-networks

11. Thematic sub-networks or taskforces may be established to address specific issues or undertake specific activities and to avoid overloading the main work programme of the Network. The sub-networks may provide an effective mechanism for interested organizations working on

specific issues or thematic areas to consult with each other on their plans and activities, and to discuss practical ways and means of ensuring that the activities are mutually supportive.

12. Specific sub-networks will be established by, and will report progress of their activities to, the regular general coordination meetings of the network members. Members of the network would be requested to administer such sub-networks, when established and provide to the Secretariat only the relevant reports and other outputs that need to be shared broadly among all the network members.

13. Members may also establish regional and sub-regional nodes of the network or strengthen linkages with existing relevant regional and sub-regional networks dealing for biosafety capacity-building, within the overall framework of the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network, to address region-specific requirements. The lead organizations for the regional and sub-regional network will provide to the Secretariat the relevant information and report that need to be shared broadly among all the network members.

Funding of the Network

14. In accordance with the core principles of the Coordination Mechanism, implementation of the network will involve as minimal additional resource requirements as possible. Most of the core activities of the network, such as maintenance of the network website and communication tools will be implemented within the budget of Secretariat. Other activities of the network requiring additional resources will be funded, *inter alia*, through voluntary contributions from the members and willing sponsors/ donors.

Periodic Review of the Network

15. The operations of the network including the effectiveness of its activities, outputs and impact will be reviewed after three years and thereafter after every five years along the same schedule for the review of implementation of the Protocol.

ANNEX 3

DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE PREPARATORY PHASE OF THE BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING NETWORK

Introduction

1. In its decision BS-I/5 on capacity-building, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol noted that the Coordination Mechanism would be implemented in a flexible, gradual, phased and incremental manner and that improvements would be made as experience is gained over time. Accordingly, the Biosafety Capacity-Building Network will be implemented in phases.

2. The preparatory phase, which will run for two years, will focus on elaborating and putting in place the operational modalities of the network and on publicizing and promoting membership of the Network.

3. The following activities will be carried out on an interim basis, from February 2005 until the second coordination meeting of governments and organizations implementing and/or funding biosafety capacity-building activities, which is expected to be held before the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol:

Activity	Tentative Timeframe	Responsibility
1. Further elaboration of the operational modalities of the network	February – September 2005	Steering Committee with support from the Secretariat
2. Development and establishment of communication tools for the network, including: a restricted Website, e-mail listserv and electronic discussion forums	February - August 2005	Secretariat
3. Publicizing and promoting membership of the Network among relevant organizations	Ongoing	Secretariat and all members
4. Establishment of a database of the network members, including their contact details and short profiles	March – June 2005	Secretariat
5. Mobilization of financial and other resources for implementing the network activities	Ongoing	All members
6. Organization of the second coordination meeting to discuss and adopt the framework and operational modalities of the network	February 2006	Secretariat in collaboration with members interested in sponsoring it
