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LIAISON GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR BIOSAFETY

Eighth meeting

Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 7–8 April 2011

REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE LIAISON GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR BIOSAFETY

INTRODUCTION

1. The eighth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety was held from 7 to 8 April 2011 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. It was attended by 18 participants from 12 countries and 6 organizations.
2. The countries represented were: Austria, Bolivia, Cambodia, Czech Republic, Germany, India, Liberia, Mexico, Moldova, Spain, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.
3. The organizations represented were: ECOROPA, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), GenØk - Centre for Biosafety, Global Industry Coalition, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
4. The list of participants is contained in annex II to this report.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. The meeting was opened by Mr. Charles Gbedemah on behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Mr. Gbedemah welcomed the participants and thanked the Government of the Republic of Moldova for hosting the meeting. Mr. Gbedemah noted that the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 5), in its decision BS-V/3, requested the Liaison Group to give advice on the organization of the workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms (LMOs). Accordingly he noted that the meeting would be providing advice on, among other things, the preparatory activities proposed by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and on the organizational aspects of the workshop. In addition, the meeting would provide advice on the proposed process for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan and exchange on possible improvements to the Action Plan and its Coordination Mechanism. Mr. Gbedemah expressed hope that the Liaison Group would provide concrete advice to help to guide the two processes.

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ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

6. After the opening session, the participants elected Mr. Andreas Heissenberger (Austria) to serve as Chair and Ms. Georgina Catacora-Vargas (Bolivia) to serve as Rapporteur.

7. The meeting then adopted the following agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/8/1) which was proposed by the Executive Secretary:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Organizational matters:
 - 2.1 Election of officers;
 - 2.2 Adoption of the agenda;
 - 2.3 Organization of work.
3. Issues for in-depth consideration:
 - 3.1 Organization of the workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms and other related activities;
 - 3.2 Second comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol.
4. Other matters.
5. Conclusions and recommendations.
6. Closure of the meeting.

8. The participants also adopted the organization of work for the meeting, as contained in annex I to the annotated agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/8/1/Add.1).

ITEM 3. ISSUES FOR IN-DEPTH CONSIDERATION

3.1 Organization of the workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of living modified organisms and other related activities

9. A representative of the Secretariat gave a presentation introducing the agenda item. She outlined past deliberations on the issue of socio-economic considerations and on capacity-building for addressing it. She then described elements of section IV of decision BS-V/3, including the requests to the Executive Secretary to convene regional online conferences on socio-economic considerations and a workshop on capacity-building for research and information exchange on socio-economic impacts of LMOs. The decision also requests the Liaison Group to give advice to the Executive Secretary on the organization of the workshop. The representative of the Secretariat further described the planned activities on this issue, namely online discussion groups, the regional real-time online conferences and the workshop. She also pointed out that a Portal on Socio-Economic Considerations had been created in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) to serve as a source for more information and as a platform for the online discussion

groups and the real-time online conferences.¹ Finally, she presented some points and questions on which the Liaison Group could provide advice regarding the organization of the workshop. These included questions regarding the format and structure of the workshop, the duration of the workshop, the number of participants and the criteria for selecting participants, the themes and topics to be discussed, the presentations to be made and the possible keynote speakers and resource persons, the background materials to be used and preparatory work for the workshop.

(a) Format and structure of the workshop

10. After the presentation, the Group discussed the various points and questions mentioned by the Secretariat and also raised additional points. With regard to the format and structure of the workshop, the Group suggested that both plenary sessions with presentations by keynote speakers and resource people as well as small group discussions be considered. It was noted, however, that the specific format for the workshop would depend on the issues and material to be discussed and also on the total number of participants. It was also suggested that the small group discussions could include discussions in regional groups. It was further suggested that specific topics and questions for consideration in the small group discussions be identified ahead of time. The Group noted that the preparatory work from the online activities should allow the workshop to move quickly to the small group setting.

(b) Duration of the workshop

11. Regarding the duration of the workshop, the Group suggested that at least three days would be necessary. However some participants were of the view that three days might be short given the scope of the issues to be discussed.

(c) Participants

12. The Group considered the question regarding the appropriate number of participants for the workshop and the stakeholders that should be represented. The Secretariat indicated that the funds currently available could enable the participation of approximately 25 developing country participants, including representatives from stakeholder groups. The Group emphasized the need for a broad range of expertise and knowledge (including experts on social impact assessment, social scientists, economists, anthropologists and other disciplines) to be represented at the workshop. It also emphasized the importance of regional balance and balanced representation of stakeholder groups in the selection of participants. Furthermore, the Group underlined the need to ensure a proper balance between Parties and observers and also between developing and developed country representation at the workshop. Some members of the Group suggested that the experts (including resource persons and paper presenters) invited to the workshop should not be counted among the workshop participants.

13. Concerning the criteria for selecting participants to attend the workshop, the Secretariat indicated that priority would be given to those who would have taken part in the online discussion groups and the regional real-time online conferences. However, some members of the Group expressed concern about selecting participants for the workshop solely on the basis of their involvement in the online activities given difficulties with internet connectivity in some developing countries.

(d) Speakers and resource persons

¹ The portal is accessible at: http://bch.cbd.int/protocol/cpb_art26/portal.shtml.

14. The Group discussed whether independent professional moderators should be used to facilitate the discussions during the workshop. It was recommended that the possibility of using moderators from United Nations agencies at a low or no cost should be explored. It was also recommended that possible speakers/resource persons on different topics be identified. The co-chair of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was suggested as a possible keynote speaker.

(e) Workshop themes/topics

15. The Group emphasized the importance of linking the workshop to the themes and topics discussed in the online discussion groups and the regional real-time online conferences. It was suggested that the workshop should consider paragraph 1 of article 26 of the Protocol. Some participants however argued that it would be premature to include a discussion on the methodologies for socio-economic assessments in the workshop. The Secretariat reminded participants that paragraph 25 of decision BS-V/3 specified the main objectives of the workshop, i.e., (i) analysis of the capacity-building activities, needs and priorities and identification of options for cooperation in addressing those needs; and (ii) exchange and analysis of information on the use of socio-economic considerations in the context of article 26 of the Protocol. The Group recommended that discussions on the countries' capacity-building needs should be done on a regional basis, noting that the needs vary from region to region.

16. The Group discussed whether the workshop should focus on socio-economic considerations relating to LMOs that have already been commercialized in the agricultural sector or also look at other LMOs. Some members of the Group suggested that the workshop should also consider socio-economic issues relating to other LMOs, such as genetically modified mosquitoes and other LMOs in the medical and health field. The Group also discussed whether the workshop should include a component to consider broader socio-economic issues and social impact assessments. Some members suggested that the workshop should focus on LMOs noting that it would be too difficult linking general socio-economic considerations to LMOs. The Group agreed that information from Parties with experience in this area would be useful. It also suggested that non-governmental organizations could share their knowledge and experience.

(f) Background materials

17. The Group suggested that background materials including case studies should be prepared and made available well before the workshop. It was proposed that background materials could include reports on experiences with and lessons learned from socio-economic assessments and on the countries' capacity-building needs and priorities. It was also suggested that an introductory booklet in simple language on what the socio-economic considerations are, why they are important and how they could be taken into account in decision-making on LMOs would be useful.

18. The Group emphasized the need for diversity and regional balance in the selection of the case studies. The following were suggested as possible topics for the case studies:

(a) A comparative study on the integration of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on an LMO versus a non-LMO;

(b) A comparative study on the integration of socio-economic considerations in decision-making on a living modified crop versus another type of LMO;

(c) A study on socio-economic considerations in general environmental decisions, policies or projects;

(d) A study on a country that has included socio-economic considerations in its national biosafety framework;

(e) A study on a country that has not included socio-economic considerations in its national biosafety framework but wishes to do so;

(f) A study on socio-economic considerations in the absence of a legislative framework;

(g) Comparative studies of countries that have released LMOs and those that have not done so.

19. The Group noted that the case studies could help focus the discussions during the workshop and form the basis for discussions on general principles and meta-analysis. In this regard, it was suggested that visual presentations of the general issues from the case studies would be more appropriate and that the details of the case studies (including the detailed scientific data and technical analysis) should be presented in the online fora.

20. The Group agreed that the case studies might help in the analysis of capacity-building activities on socio-economic considerations as well as in the identification of needs and priorities. Some members of the Group emphasized the importance of focusing the discussions on the capacity-building activities, needs and priorities submitted to the BCH. Others suggested that an analysis of needs, priorities and targets should be done by the Secretariat after receiving proposals from Parties.

21. The Group noted the ranking of priorities for capacity-building on socio-economic considerations contained in the report on the outcomes from the survey on experience with and the application of socio-economic considerations in biosafety decision-making. There were also suggestions that the Secretariat send a common format or questionnaire to Parties for them to report their needs and priorities for capacity-building on socio-economic considerations. The Secretariat indicated that a general format for submitting capacity-building needs and priorities is already available.²

(g) Preparatory work for the workshop

22. The Group discussed how to mobilize participation in the online discussions and regional online conferences. It was agreed that mobilizing participation in the online activities and the submission of information on the capacity-building needs was key to the success of the workshop. It was suggested that the Secretariat could identify which Parties had made submissions in the past and which ones had provisions on socio-economic considerations in their national biosafety framework. The Group also suggested that the participation of countries with experience on socio-economic considerations should be encouraged. Using other institutional networks to distribute information on the activities was suggested as one possible means to mobilize participation. However, it was noted that communication with the national focal points was useful in order to avoid internal coordination difficulties within countries.

23. A number of other points were also raised during the discussions. It was suggested that the focus of socio-economic assessments should be aligned with national protection goals and that Parties need capacity-building on methodologies for conducting socio-economic assessments in order to implement their needs on this issue. The representative of the FAO pointed to an FAO publication on non-LMO biotechnologies and socio-economic considerations that may be relevant. The guidelines on socio-economic assessment that were developed under the Convention were identified as being relevant to the Biosafety Protocol as well.

² The questionnaire can be accessed at: <http://bch.cbd.int/managementcentre/edit/capacityBuildingNeeds.shtml>.

3.2 *Second comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol*

24. Under this agenda item, a representative of the Secretariat gave a short presentation in which he described the current capacity-building Action Plan and the proposed process for its comprehensive review. The presentation also described the capacity-building component (focal area 2) of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020, which was adopted by the Parties to the Protocol in decision BS-V/16.

25. The Group agreed that the new capacity-building Action Plan needs be aligned with the Strategic Plan to ensure consistency. In this regard it was suggested that the seven operational objectives under focal area 2 of the Strategic Plan, which focuses on capacity-building, should form the basis for the new capacity-building Action Plan.

26. The Group observed that some of the main weaknesses of the current Action Plan were that: (i) it does not identify clear priorities in terms of actions to be taken in the short term, medium term and long term; (ii) it does not include substantive activities undertaken to address each of the core elements; and (iii) it does not identify specific actors and the means (including financial resources) for its implementation. It was thus suggested that these omissions be addressed in the new the Action Plan.

27. The Group noted that the success of the process for the next comprehensive review of the Action Plan review process will depend on the timely and adequate submission of information by Parties and other Governments. It was emphasized that the review of the Action Plan should take into account the needs and priorities of Parties and other Governments. In this regard, the Group recommended that efforts should be made to encourage and assist Parties and other Governments to submit the required information and to complete their second national reports on the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety before the 30 September 2011 deadline.

28. It was further recommended that the independent evaluation should in particular analyse the projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on the implementation of the national biosafety frameworks and the regional capacity-building projects implemented since the Action Plan was adopted.

29. After the initial general discussion, the Group embarked on an exercise to try to align the capacity-building Action Plan with the Strategic Plan. The Group identified possible specific activities that could be undertaken towards achieving each of the seven operational objectives under focal area 2 of the Strategic Plan. The outcomes of that exercise are presented in annex I below. It was clarified that the exercise was not intended to prejudice the outcomes of the comprehensive review process but rather to demonstrate how the alignment of the capacity-building Action Plan with the Strategic Plan could be done and to propose activities that could be considered for incorporation in the new Action Plan.

ITEM 4. OTHER MATTERS

30. There were no other matters raised.

ITEM 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

31. The main outcomes of the deliberations by the Group are summarised under Item 3 above.

ITEM 6. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

32. In the final session of the meeting, the participants reviewed and adopted the draft report of the meeting. The Secretariat was requested to incorporate the proceedings of the last session and send the draft report to all participants for comments before posting it on the Protocol website. The present report has been finalized on that basis.

33. The meeting was closed on Friday, 8 April 2011 at 3 p.m.

Annex I

**ELEMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE REVIEW OF THE CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTION PLAN
IN LIGHT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

VISION

Biological diversity is adequately protected from any adverse effects of living modified organisms

MISSION

To strengthen global, regional & national action and capacity in ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health and specifically focusing on transboundary movements

<i>Strategic Objective</i>	<i>Expected Impacts</i>	<i>Operational Objectives</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
<p>Focal area 2: Capacity-building 2. To further develop and strengthen the capacity of Parties to implement the Protocol</p>	<p>Increased safety in the transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms Effective and efficient regulatory, administrative and monitoring frameworks established by Parties for the implementation of the Protocol Necessary mechanisms put in place to enable</p>	<p>2.1 National Biosafety Frameworks To further support the development and implementation of national regulatory and administrative systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating institutional capacity for developing and implementing national biosafety frameworks (NBFs), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of legislative and regulatory frameworks for living modified organisms (LMOs) - Development of administrative frameworks and creation of biosafety coordination bodies - Development of mechanisms for follow-up, monitoring and assessment of implementation of NBFs • Establishing electronic systems for handling notifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Biosafety Frameworks developed and implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Parties with operational regulatory frameworks • Number of Parties with functional administrative arrangements

	<p>Parties to make science-based risk assessments</p> <p>More transparent and expeditious decision-making</p> <p>Full use of information exchange systems</p>	<p>2.2 Risk assessment and risk management</p> <p>To enable Parties to evaluate, apply, share and carry out risk assessments and establish local science-based capacities to regulate, manage, monitor and control risks of LMOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on risk assessment and risk management • Capacity-building on risk assessment and risk management • Developing guidance documents (e.g., the roadmap) and other relevant documents • Undertaking scientific biosafety research relating to living modified organisms • Certification of LMO laboratories and training of the technicians • Handling of confidential information • Taking into account risks to human health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources, including human resources required to assess risks of living modified organisms are available and administrative mechanisms are in place • Training materials and technical guidance on risk assessment and risk management developed and used by Parties • Infrastructure and administrative mechanisms established for the management of risks of living modified organisms at national, subregional or regional level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ratio of risk assessment summary reports as against number of decisions on LMOs on the BCH • Number of risk assessment summary reports in the BCH that are in compliance with the Protocol • Number of people trained on risk assessment, as well as in monitoring, management and control of LMOs • Number of Parties that have infrastructure, including laboratories for monitoring, management and control • Number of Parties that are using the developed training materials and technical guidance • Number of Parties that are of the opinion that the training materials and technical guidance are sufficient and effective
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		<p>2.3 Handling, transport, packaging and identification</p> <p>To develop capacity for handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing methodologies and protocols for sampling and identification of LMOs and/or adapting existing validated protocols • Developing strategies for the management of LMOs during transport, handling and storage • Developing tools and systems for traceability and labelling of LMOs • Implementing the documentation requirements under article 18.2 of the Protocol • Establishing infrastructure for and training of human resources in detection of LMOs, including accreditation of laboratories • Establishing and implementing measures for the detection, prevention and management of illegal transboundary movements of LMOs • Enabling relevant agencies to report findings under article 18.2 and article 25 to the BCH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customs/border officials are able to enforce the implementation of the Protocol's requirements related to handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms • Personnel are trained and equipped for sampling, detection and identification of LMOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of customs officers and laboratory personnel trained • Percentage of Parties that have established or have reliable access to detection laboratories • National and regional laboratories certified with the capacity to detect LMOs • Number of certified laboratories in operation
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		<p>2.4 Liability and Redress</p> <p>To assist Parties to the Protocol in their efforts to establish and apply the rules and procedures on liability and redress for damage resulting from the transboundary movements of living modified organisms</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An institutional mechanism or process identified or established to facilitate the implementation of the international rules and procedures on liability and redress at the national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of eligible Parties that received capacity-building support in the area of liability and redress involving living modified organisms • Number of domestic administrative or legal instruments identified, amended or newly enacted that fulfill the objective of the international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress
		<p>2.5 Public awareness, education and participation</p> <p>To enhance capacity at the national, regional and international levels that would facilitate efforts to raise public awareness, and promote education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening national systems for public awareness, education and participation (PAEP) • Developing tools including guidance materials for implementing PAEP for different groups using differentiated methodologies • Strengthening mechanisms on public rights and access to information • Strengthening or establishing mechanisms for dissemination of information and public consultation in the decision-making process (in relation to article.23.2 of the Protocol) and other processes relevant to the implementation of the Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties have access to guidance and training materials on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs • Parties are enabled to promote and facilitate public awareness, education and participation in biosafety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Parties having in place mechanisms for ensuring public participation in decision-making concerning LMOs not later than 6 years after accession to/ratification of the Protocol • Percentage of Parties that inform their public about existing modalities for participation • Number of Parties having in place national websites and searchable archives, national resource centres or sections in existing national libraries dedicated to biosafety

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering joint debate with other complementary international agreements (e.g., the Aarhus Convention) 		<p>educational materials</p>
		<p>2.6 Information sharing</p> <p>To ensure that the BCH is easily accessed by all established stakeholders, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing/maintaining infrastructure for access to the BCH • Training in the use of the BCH at the national level (including development of toolkits) • Developing national systems for gathering and management of information for submission to the BCH in accordance with the obligations under the Protocol • Establishing mechanisms for translation of information in the BCH into official national languages and vice versa • Enhancing and supporting the BCH coordination mechanism at the national level • Monitoring and encouraging ongoing use of the BCH at the national level and addressing gaps • Developing programs to facilitate the use of the BCH by other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to information in the BCH and sharing of information through the BCH by users in developing countries and countries with economies in transition • Tools to facilitate implementation of the Protocol are easily accessible through the BCH • Information on the BCH is easily accessible to stakeholders including the general public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of submissions to the BCH from developing countries and countries with economies in transition • Amount of traffic from users to the BCH from developing countries and countries with economies in transition

		<p>2.7 Biosafety education and training</p> <p>To promote education and training of biosafety professionals through greater coordination and collaboration among academic institutions and relevant organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and applying lessons learned to existing biosafety education and training initiatives • Developing modules for use by biosafety education and training initiatives • Creating regional and subregional platforms for sharing experiences and best practices in biosafety education and training • Strengthening national biosafety education and training initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable pool of biosafety professionals with various competencies available at national/international levels • Improved biosafety education and training programmes • Increased exchange of information, training materials and staff and students exchange programmes among academic institutions and relevant organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of academic institutions by region offering biosafety education and training courses and programmes • Number of biosafety training materials and online modules available
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Annex II

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