



Convention on Biological Diversity

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LIAISON GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR BIOSAFETY

Eleventh meeting
Montreal, Canada, 14-16 March 2016

REPORT OF THE MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. In its decision BS-VII/3, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP) decided to undertake, at its eighth meeting, the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020, drawing upon information from the third national reports as a primary source, the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) and, where appropriate, additional data collected through dedicated surveys.
2. In the same decision, COP-MOP requested the relevant subsidiary body¹ entrusted with the task of reviewing the implementation of the Protocol, including contributions from the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building, to review the information gathered and analysed by the Executive Secretary with a view to contributing to the third assessment and review of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol (decision BS-VII/3, para. 5).
3. In response to the above decision, the eleventh meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building was convened to review the analysis of the status and trends in the implementation of the Protocol prepared by the Executive Secretary, and considered general conclusions and recommendations to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation.
4. The meeting was attended by 15 members from 13 Parties (Austria, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, European Union, Liberia, Malaysia, Mexico, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Uganda and Ukraine) and two organizations (ECOROPA and African Union Commission (AUC)). Members from three other Parties (India, Norway, and Saint Kitts and Nevis) and three organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Industry Coalition) were invited but were unable to attend.

ITEM 1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

5. The meeting was opened by Mr. Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, at 9 a.m. on Monday, 14 March 2016. In his remarks, Mr. Dias

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¹ A Subsidiary Body on Implementation was established through decision XII/26 of the Conference of the Parties. Its mandate includes supporting COP-MOP in keeping under review the implementation of the Protocol.

noted the crucial role the meeting was expected to play in contributing to the third assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan for the Protocol for the period 2011-2020. He invited the participants to critically examine the analysis of the status and trends in the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol prepared by the Secretariat and to propose, for consideration by the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, concrete recommendations on possible ways and means to advance the implementation of the Protocol and foster its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. Mr. Dias used the opportunity to thank Parties that had submitted their third national reports in a timely manner and urged those that had not yet done so to submit their reports as soon as possible. He thanked the Global Environment Facility for providing, through the United Nations Environment Programme, the funding support that had enabled many developing country Parties to prepare their reports.

ITEM 2. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2.1 Election of officers

7. The Liaison Group elected Mr. Andreas Heissenberger (Austria) as chair and Mr. David Hafashimana (Uganda) as rapporteur of the meeting.

2.2 Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

8. The Liaison Group adopted its agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda prepared by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/11/1). The Liaison Group also adopted its organization of work on the basis of the proposal made by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/11/1/Add.1).

ITEM 3. STATUS AND TRENDS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

9. Under this agenda item, the Secretariat made short presentations on the process and methodology used by the Secretariat in the collection, compilation and analysis of information on the implementation of the Protocol and on the online national report analyzer tool² developed by the Secretariat. The Secretariat also presented the status and trends in the implementation of the Protocol based on the information contained in the 105 third national reports submitted by the deadline of 31 December 2015.

10. The Liaison Group commended the Secretariat for developing the national report analyzer noting that it would be a very useful tool for Parties, relevant stakeholders and the public. The Group discussed the status and trends in the implementation of the Protocol based on the analysis of the indicators under the various operational objectives of the Strategic Plan, which was made available in document UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/11/2. The findings were discussed under the following 12 broad areas: national biosafety frameworks; coordination and support; risk assessment and risk management; living modified organisms (LMOs) or traits that may have adverse effects; liability and redress; handling, transport, packaging and identification; socioeconomic considerations; transit, contained use, unintentional transboundary movements and emergency measures; information sharing; compliance and review; public awareness and participation, biosafety education and training; and outreach and cooperation.

A. National biosafety frameworks (operational objectives 1.1 and 2.1)

11. The Secretariat introduced the main developments with respect to national biosafety frameworks by providing the status and trends of the five indicators in the Strategic Plan related to national biosafety frameworks. The Liaison Group noted with concern the slow progress reported by Parties regarding the establishment of legal, administrative and other measures for implementing the Protocol. The Liaison Group noted that the introduction of legislation was of crucial importance for effective implementation of

² The data used to carry out the analysis can be viewed in the National Report Analyzer, available at <http://bch.cbd.int/database/reports/analyzer>.

the Protocol, as legislation provided for the establishment of legal and administrative structures and, in many jurisdictions, formed the basis for receiving budget allocation for biosafety activities.

12. The Liaison Group discussed the need to identify the underlying causes for the slow progress in the establishment of fully functional national biosafety frameworks. It acknowledged the relationship between the absence of national biosafety legislation and the limited political support for biosafety at the national level as well as the lack of sufficient resources. The Group also noted the need to further efforts to develop the capacity of key stakeholders and raise the awareness of key policymakers and decision makers, and to mobilize adequate resources to this end.

B. Coordination and support (operational objective 1.2)

13. The Secretariat introduced the status and trends regarding the seven indicators under operational objective 1.2 on putting in place effective mechanisms for establishing biosafety systems with the necessary coordination, financing and monitoring support. The Liaison Group noted with concern the overall slow progress reported by Parties on all the seven indicators, particularly the decrease in the percentage of Parties that had in place national coordination mechanisms for biosafety capacity-building initiatives and the lack of predictable and reliable funding for strengthening the capacity to implement the Protocol.

C. Risk assessment and risk management (operational objectives 1.3 and 2.2)

14. The Secretariat introduced the status and general trends of the five indicators pertaining to the further development and implementation of tools and common approaches to, and the six indicators relating to building capacity on, risk assessment and risk management, in accordance with operational objectives 1.3 and 2.2. The Liaison Group stressed the importance of this objective and noted the positive trends with regard to the development and use of guidance on risk assessment, but also noted that a large proportion of Parties indicated that more guidance and training materials were needed. The Group also noted that the number of Parties having trained at least one person in risk assessment and monitoring during the third reporting period had decreased slightly in relation with the past reporting cycle.

15. The Group noted that the overall trends were positive. However, because the changes and trends under both these operational objectives were very discrete and data was available for only two time-points, the Group observed that the changes might have been due to “noise” in the measurement and noted that more information would be needed. Accordingly, the Group suggested that more in-depth analysis be conducted, for example by correlating the answers to different questions or asking additional questions to selected Parties to clarify their answers, with a view to reaching a better understanding of the information provided and the actual status of implementation. The Group also highlighted the need for refining the questions in the fourth national report, taking into account the possibility that changes to the questions in future reports could lead to a loss of baseline information if the questions were not comparable.

D. LMOs or traits that may have adverse effects (operational objective 1.4)

16. Following a presentation by the Secretariat on the trends under operational objective 1.4, the Liaison Group noted difficulties in interpreting the indicators related to this objective. Some members of the Group were of the view that those indicators could be removed for the mid-term evaluation while other members of the Group thought it was important to retain the indicators. Since no agreement among members of the Group was reached on how to deal with the indicators at this point in time, they agreed to include the indicators in the mid-term evaluation and recommend a possible rephrasing of the related questions for the fourth national report. The Group also noted the lack of progress towards the development of modalities for cooperation and guidance in identifying LMOs or specific traits that might have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account risks to human health.

E. Liability and redress (operational objectives 1.5 and 2.4)

17. The Secretariat made a short presentation providing an overview of the main developments reported by Parties on the four indicators related to liability and redress. The Liaison Group acknowledged that the introduction of systems for liability and redress was key to the success of the Cartagena Protocol and that the entry into force of the Supplementary Protocol was of great importance in this respect. The Liaison Group noted with concern the slow progress in ratification, acceptance, approval or accession by Parties to the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The Group acknowledged that the limited progress reported was probably linked to the politically sensitive nature of the topic and to the limited awareness and capacities at the national level. In this respect, the Liaison Group discussed the need for making available financial support to Parties for awareness raising and capacity-building activities.

F. Handling, transport, packaging and identification (operational objectives 1.6 and 2.3)

18. The Secretariat presented an overview of the analysis of the emerging trends regarding the indicators under operational objectives 1.6 and 2.3. The Liaison Group commended Parties that had made progress in implementing the requirements of the Protocol and COP-MOP decisions on identification and documentation requirements for LMOs; however, they also noted with concern that a large proportion of Parties had yet to implement mechanisms to fulfil their obligations to take measures requiring documentation accompanying LMOs as specified under Article 18. The Group highlighted the need for further investigation and analysis of the reasons for this slow progress.

19. The participants also noted that Parties were taking an active interest in enhancing their capacity to enforce the Protocol's requirements related to handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs, including by appropriately training and equipping personnel in the areas of sampling, detection and identification.

20. However they also noted that there were some possible sources of ambiguity in the reporting of Parties' status in these areas, particularly in limiting the scope of personnel who were responsible for inspecting shipments for the presence for LMOs to "border control officers", noting that in some countries such activities fall under the purview of quarantine officers or phytosanitary inspectors. Similarly, the Group noted that additional information regarding the capacity to detect unauthorized LMOs might need to include specifying whether trained laboratory personnel worked in regulatory or academic sectors, and clarity on the extent to which labs could detect unauthorized LMOs.

21. The Group stressed the importance of LMO detection and identification. It was also recognized that Parties were taking an increasingly active interest in this field and that progress was being made in terms of developing tools and guidance to enhance the Parties' capabilities to detect unauthorized LMOs. The Group further emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation and information sharing at the national and regional levels regarding the detection and identification of LMOs.

22. The Group noted the need for improved communication and collaboration among laboratories, relevant border personnel and regulators at the national level. They also noted the need to maximize the use of national resources through the establishment of multipurpose laboratory facilities that did not only work on the detection and identification of LMOs. At the regional level, while recognizing that Parties had been active in forming networks within their regions to facilitate the sharing of technical knowledge and encourage the harmonization and standardization of sampling, detection, identification and quantification methods for LMOs, the Group emphasized the increasing importance of such networks to facilitate Parties' ability to keep up with the new technological developments in the field, and facilitating access to detection laboratories, possibly through the establishment of regional reference laboratories.

G. Socioeconomic considerations (operational objective 1.7)

23. The Secretariat made a short presentation providing an overview of the main developments reported by Parties with regard to the four indicators related to socioeconomic considerations. The

Liaison Group noted the slow progress in developing approaches to facilitate the application of socioeconomic considerations in decision-making regarding LMOs. It also noted the negative trend reported by Parties in terms of taking into account socioeconomic considerations in decision-making.

24. The Liaison Group recalled the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG) on Socio-economic Considerations and agreed that a common interpretation would be useful to assist in the process of developing guidelines and national legislation. The Group also noted the importance of making available national best practices and in this context one participant pointed to the documentation made available by the European Union on the interface between international trade law implications and the application of socioeconomic considerations in decision-making on LMOs. Furthermore, the Group noted that the work of the AHTEG on developing conceptual clarity on socioeconomic considerations arising from the impact of living modified organisms on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and an outline for guidance would contribute to advancing progress towards achieving operational objective 1.7 of the Strategic Plan.

H. Transit, contained use, unintentional transboundary movements and emergency measures

25. Following the presentation by the Secretariat, the Liaison Group acknowledged the increase in the number of Parties regulating the transit and contained use of LMOs. However, the Group noted with concern the decrease in the number of Parties that reported that they had the capacity to take appropriate measures in case of unintentional release of LMOs. Furthermore, the Group discussed a possible link between Parties' ability to detect and identify LMOs and their capacity to take measures in the event an LMO is unintentionally released. The Group also noted some ambiguity in the phrasing of the questions in the national report format relating to this issue.

I. Information sharing (operational objectives 2.6, 4.1 and 4.2)

26. The Secretariat made a presentation on the developments with regard to operational objectives 2.6 (information sharing), 4.1 (BCH effectiveness) and 4.2 (BCH as a tool for online discussions and conferences). The Liaison Group welcomed the positive progress made with respect to all the indicators under the three operational objectives, in particular the marked increase in the number of information submissions to the BCH and the traffic of BCH users from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. It was noted that the success of the BCH had been due to a number of factors, including the dedicated work and effective support provided by the Secretariat, utilization of the latest information technologies by the Secretariat in the ongoing development of the BCH, the capacity-building support provided to Parties through the UNEP-GEF BCH-1 and 2 projects, and the application of advancements in information technologies which had enabled users to access the BCH via mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets. The Group noted the importance of keeping abreast of the technological developments. The Group also asked the Secretariat to further investigate why traffic coming from users in developed countries was not increasing and for further breakdowns of the analysis of the trends so that more information could be obtained with regard to the use of the BCH by individual Parties and the public.

J. Compliance and review (operational objectives 3.1 and 3.2)

27. The Secretariat introduced developments with regard to operational objectives 3.1 and 3.2 and explained that the Compliance Committee had provided input into the assessment and review of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan at its thirteenth meeting, held from 24 to 26 February 2016, at the request of the COP-MOP (decision BS-VII/3). The Secretariat pointed out that the input of the Compliance Committee was based on an analysis of the progress under operational objective 3.1 and its related issues and noted that the input would be submitted to the Subsidiary Body on Implementation. The Liaison Group took note of the input and did not further deliberate on operational objective 3.1.

28. The Secretariat provided an overview of the main developments under operational objective 3.2 regarding the assessment and review process. The Liaison Group expressed concern about the low rate of submission of third national reports in comparison to the reporting rates of the second reporting cycle. The Group discussed how the delay in the disbursement of the funds made available by the Global Environment Facility due to the challenges with the introduction of a new United Nations administrative system, Umoja, might have contributed to the low reporting rate. The Liaison Group noted the need for following up with Parties that had not yet submitted their third national reports and requested the Executive Secretary to issue a notification to remind Parties of their obligation to submit their reports. The Liaison Group also highlighted the importance of preparing an updated analysis including the additional reports submitted after the deadline and making the updated document available to COP-MOP at its eighth meeting as an information document. It was recognized that while the updated analysis would not form the basis for the assessment and review of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan, it could provide useful information.

K. Public awareness and participation, biosafety education and training (operational objectives 2.5, 2.7 and 4.3)

29. The Secretariat presented an overview of the main developments as reported by Parties regarding public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs. The Liaison Group noted the modest increase under operational objectives 2.5, 2.7 and 4.3. The Liaison Group noted the positive role played by the Biosafety Clearing-House in facilitating public awareness raising and public access to information. The Liaison Group noted some of the areas where further efforts were needed, such as the development of specific academic programmes on biosafety or integration of biosafety into existing relevant programmes.

L. Outreach and cooperation (operational objectives 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3)

30. The Secretariat provided an overview of the main developments related to outreach and cooperation. The Liaison Group noted the modest progress with regard to operational objectives 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, and discussed the need to cooperate with additional organizations and the need for exchanging information on best practices and lessons learned.

ITEM 4. DRAFT CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

31. Under this agenda item, the Liaison Group discussed the draft conclusions regarding the third assessment and review of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the period 2011-2020, and made the suggestions summarized below on the possible way forward, including recommendations for improving the implementation, performance and effectiveness of the Strategic Plan.

32. The Group concluded that the strategic and operational objectives of the Strategic Plan were still relevant and needed to be maintained. Furthermore, in light of the analysis of third national reports, the Liaison Group recommended that for the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, the operational objectives relating to the development of biosafety legislation, risk assessment, detection and identification of LMOs, and public awareness be given priority consideration by Parties in view of their critical importance in facilitating the implementation of the Protocol.

33. The Group also noted the need for a more in-depth analysis examining potential correlations, if any, between indicators (for example the correlation between countries that have operational regulatory frameworks in place and those that have taken decisions on LMOs) and requested the Executive Secretary to prepare this analysis and make it available as an information document for COP-MOP, with a view to reaching a better understanding of the status and trends in the implementation of the Protocol.

I. General recommendations

34. The following recommendations were proposed by the Liaison Group as its contribution to the SBI's undertaking of the third assessment and review of the Protocol and the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

35. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity should undertake, subject to the availability of resources and in cooperation with Parties, relevant organizations and other stakeholders, a series of regional and subregional capacity-building activities on (a) integration of biosafety into national biodiversity strategies and action plans, national development plans, relevant sectorial policies and national strategies to achieve the 2030 sustainable development goals; (b) risk assessment; (c) detection and identification of LMOs; and (d) socioeconomic considerations. The capacity-building activities should include workshops, online consultations and distance learning and be undertaken while actively reaching out to include the participation of decision makers.

36. COP-MOP needs to adopt and recommend its evidence-based recommendations on key priority biosafety programme areas so that they can be taken into account by the GEF Council when it considers the new biodiversity focal area strategy and the funding modalities for its next replenishment.

37. Parties are invited to enhance efforts to raise the awareness of key policymakers, planners and decision makers in order to increase support for the mainstreaming of biosafety considerations into the national sustainable development agenda, the development cooperation strategies and the domestic budgetary allocations for that purpose, as appropriate.

38. Parties are invited to promote targeted capacity-building activities on biosafety, including through cooperation at national, subregional, regional and international levels and use the experiences and lessons learned from these activities in the further development and implementation of the Protocol.

39. At COP-MOP 10, Parties may wish to agree on a follow-up to the present strategic plan to further improve the implementation of the Protocol. The follow-up to the present strategic plan should, among other things, address the challenges identified through the mid-term and final evaluation of the current Strategic Plan.

40. The indicators of the follow-up to the present Strategic Plan need to be simplified and made more realistic while striving to maintain continuity with the current Strategic Plan to facilitate long-term analysis of trends. The follow-up to the present Strategic Plan also needs to take into account national and regional specificities as well as existing data collection systems and databases and analysed.

41. If the indicators in the follow-up to the present Strategic Plan are updated, the format and guidelines for subsequent national to be revised and the data sources and data acquisition methods would need to be reconsidered.

II. Recommendations relating to specific programme areas

42. The Liaison Group also invited Parties and relevant organizations to take note of the points highlighted below and the suggestions for improving the implementation, performance and effectiveness of the Strategic Plan, as appropriate.

National Biosafety Frameworks (operational objectives 1.1 & 2.1)

43. Note with concern that despite reported progress, to date, only about half of the Parties have fully put in place legal, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the Protocol, and urge Parties that have not yet fully done so, to put in place their national biosafety frameworks, in particular biosafety legislation, as a matter of priority.

44. Recommend to the COP to invite the Global Environment Facility to provide targeted support to enable eligible Parties that have not yet done so to further develop and put in place operational national biosafety frameworks.

Risk assessment (operational objectives 1.3 and 2.2)

45. Note the consistent progress made in further developing and supporting the implementation of scientific tools on common approaches to risk assessment and risk management.
46. Welcome the increases in the number of Parties conducting actual risk assessments of living modified organisms and those adopting common approaches to risk assessment and risk management.
47. Take note of the limited progress regarding capacity-building on risk management since the last reporting cycle, as well as the decrease in the number of Parties having at least one person trained in risk assessment or in monitoring of living modified organisms.
48. Recommend that more capacity-building activities be conducted by the Secretariat with a focus on risk assessment, risk management and monitoring of living modified organisms, taking into account the Guidance on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms and the Training Manual on Risk Assessment of Living Modified Organisms.
49. Also recommend that the Secretariat conduct further analyses of the information contained in the third national report in order to gain better understanding of the overall status of Parties' capacity to conduct risk assessment, risk management and monitoring, including requesting Parties to submit more information regarding their capacity and, based on that experience, consider the possibility to add new questions to format for the fourth national report.

LMOs or traits that may have adverse effects (operational objective 1.4)

50. Note the lack of progress towards the development of modalities for cooperation and guidance in identifying LMOs or specific traits that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account risks to human health.
51. Also note that indicator 1.4.2 leaves room for wide interpretation and recommend that the appropriate questions be rephrased for the fourth national report, while linking the indicator to other relevant Articles.

Liability and Redress (operational objectives 1.5 & 2.4)

52. Welcome the thirty-three instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety that have been deposited during the third national reporting period.
53. Urge those Parties that have not yet done so to ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Supplementary Protocol as soon as possible.
54. Invite the Global Environment Facility, donors and relevant organizations to make available financial resources and technical assistance to Parties for raising awareness and establishing national mechanisms on liability and redress, in preparation for the entry into force and implementation of the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Handling, transport, packaging and identification (operational objectives 1.6 and 2.3)

55. Recommend that questions in the next reporting cycle be appropriately modified or accompanied by explanatory notes to ensure that the full scope of information is captured.
56. With the view to further facilitating Parties' ability to detect and identify LMOs, recommend provision of capacity-building activities including expanding their scope to comprise training on sampling for relevant border personnel, training on the interpretation of results and training on new and emerging methods in the detection and identification of LMOs.

57. Also recommend that the BCH be used as a platform to facilitate information exchange and the sharing of technical knowledge as well as the linking of publicly available LMO sequence information to the relevant LMO records.

Socio-economic considerations (operational objective 1.7)

58. Take note of the number of Parties that report having introduced specific approaches or requirements that facilitate how socio-economic considerations should be taken into account in LMO decision-making, and of those Parties that report having taken into account socio-economic considerations in decision-making in national decision-making process on import of LMOs.

59. Encourage Parties to share experiences on national processes and best-practices related to socio-economic considerations on LMO decision-making, as appropriate.

Transit, contained use (operational objective 1.8)

60. Note with appreciation that the large majority of Parties has introduced measures to regulate transit and contained use, yet express concern that regional differences are considerable.

61. Recommend that some clarity be provided in future national reporting formats to provide a scale of types of response measures that can be put in place or to provide Parties with the opportunity to provide further comments on such questions with the view to maintaining continuity of the questions through each reporting cycle while extracting additional information to clarify each answer.

Information sharing (operational objectives 2.6, 4.1 and 4.2)

62. Welcome the positive trends in implementation toward the three operational objectives related to information sharing, in particular the increase in accessibility and sharing of information by Parties that are developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

63. Note with appreciation that the success of the BCH is due, at least in part, to the support provided by UNEP-GEF through global BCH capacity-building projects.

64. Recommend to the Secretariat to extend and improve the analysis with a view to gathering more information relevant to the access and participation in the BCH of individual Parties and civil society.

Compliance and Review (operational objective 3.2)

65. Express concern about the lower rate of submission of the third national reports in comparison to the previous reporting cycle.

66. Welcome the funds that have once again been made available by the GEF to a number of eligible Parties to support the preparation of their national reports.

67. Urge the Parties that have not yet submitted their third national report to do so as soon as possible, and request the Secretariat to issue a notification to remind Parties of their obligation to submit their third national report as soon as possible, and to follow-up, through appropriate channels, with the Parties concerned.

Public awareness and participation, biosafety education and Training (objectives 2.5, 2.7 and 4.3)

68. Take note of the modest progress made towards enhancing capacity to raise public awareness, and promote education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs and promoting education and training of biosafety professionals.

69. Encourage Parties to continue to enhance capacity for public awareness, education and participation regarding LMOs, including putting in place relevant legislation and encouraging academic institutions and relevant organizations to make available biosafety courses/degrees.

70. Also encourage Parties to integrate public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs into national biodiversity and other environmental strategies and action plans, including the national biodiversity initiatives for communication, education and public awareness, initiatives for the Sustainable Development Goals, initiatives for adaptation of climate change and other environmental initiatives.

Outreach and Cooperation (operational objectives 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3)

71. Urge Parties to continue to develop mechanisms for public awareness, education and participation, including using the programme of work on public awareness, education and participation regarding LMOs adopted by the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, in particular:

(a) Programme element 2 to promote broader public awareness and education by using traditional methods to raise awareness;

(b) Programme element 3 to improve public access to information and guidance on Article 23 by using the Central Portal of the BCH, the national BCH nodes and the regional BCH nodes;

(c) Programme element 4 to promote public participation and establish a mechanism to monitor public participation activities in order to make available decisions taken in consultation with the public.

72. Request the Executive Secretary to enhance cooperation and collaboration in biosafety with other organizations, including, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Committees on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

ITEM 5. OTHER MATTERS

73. There were no other matters raised.

ITEM 6. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE MEETING

74. The participants adopted the draft report of the meeting as orally amended. The Secretariat was requested, in consultation with the chair, to incorporate the proceedings of the last session. The present report has been finalized on that basis.

ITEM 7. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

75. The meeting was closed by the chair at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 March 2016.

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