



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/16
3 March 2008

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SERVING AS THE
MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA
PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

Fourth meeting

Bonn, 12-16 May 2008

Item 17 of the provisional agenda*

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

Interim report on the status of implementation of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms (Article 23, paragraph 1 (a))

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its medium-term programme of work adopted in decision BS-I/12, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol agreed to consider, at its second meeting, “options for cooperation by Parties, as appropriate, with other States and international bodies, on the promotion and facilitation of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking into account also risks to human health (Article 23, paragraph 1 (a))”. In paragraph 17 of decision BS-I/5, the Parties to the Protocol also welcomed the outreach strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2003-2005) developed by the Executive Secretary and requested him to advance its implementation with the view to promoting awareness of the Protocol and fostering active participation and support of a broad range of stakeholders in the implementation of the Protocol.

2. At their second meeting, the Parties to the Protocol adopted decision BS-II/13 on public awareness and participation. In paragraph 12 of that decision, the Executive Secretary was requested to continue promoting public awareness and education on the Protocol including through, *inter alia*, its outreach strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2003-2005). In paragraph 13 of the same decision, the Parties to the Protocol agreed to consider, and review progress on the implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23 at their fifth meeting.

3. In order to facilitate the review of progress on the implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23, and the development, as appropriate, of a comprehensive programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms at their fifth meeting, the Parties to the Protocol will be invited to consider the current status of implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23, experiences gained and the lessons learned during the

* UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/1.

development of public awareness and participation during the interim period. They will also review the capacity needs and gaps with respect to public awareness, education and participation and take note of the new outreach strategy for the Protocol.

4. Section II of this note presents an interim report on the status of implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol, drawing on the information contained in the first national reports, the development and implementation of national biosafety frameworks and the Biosafety Clearing-House. Section III highlights some specific initiatives of relevant international organizations contributing to the implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23 of the Protocol and the experiences gained and the lessons learned. Section IV outlines the challenges encountered by Parties and other Governments in the implementation of Article 23 and explores the possible need for establishing a focused programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. Section V provides a brief review of the status of implementation of the outreach strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety developed by the Executive Secretary in 2003, and outlines the key elements of the revised strategy for consideration and guidance by this meeting. The last section provides conclusions and recommendations, including elements of a possible decision on public awareness and participation.

II. INTERIM REPORT ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

5. Since the adoption of the Protocol, Parties, other Governments and various organizations have undertaken a number of initiatives to implement paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23 of the Protocol. According to the information available in the capacity-building project database in the Biosafety Clearing-House, as of 13 December 2007, 66 out of the 134 (49 per cent) projects had components on public awareness, education and participation. Some of the activities undertaken include: awareness seminars and workshops, multimedia campaigns, dissemination of awareness materials, establishment of national databases, journalist training activities, biosafety education and training programmes and publications.

6. According to the information in the first national reports submitted by Parties, 47 per cent of the respondents reported having promoted and facilitated public awareness, education and participation to a limited extent, while 49 per cent promoted and facilitated public awareness, education and participation to a significant extent.

7. Some developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition reported that they have promoted and facilitated public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms to a large extent. Most countries (73 per cent) reported that they had done so to a limited extent; some (26 per cent) had done so to a significant extent; and a few reported they had not done so at all.

8. Parties and other Governments have undertaken a wide range of activities to implement paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23. In terms of public awareness, a number of countries reported organizing awareness seminars and workshops and disseminated awareness materials such as newsletters. Some countries (18 per cent), mainly developing countries, noted that they are utilizing radio and TV programmes to promote awareness about the Protocol. Many countries (46 per cent), mostly developed countries, also indicated that they set up websites and online databases such as registries on GMOs to facilitate public access to biosafety information. Media coverage has been promoted, for example, by inviting journalists to interview government officials, submission of news articles and issuance of press releases. Information documents were made available to the public and the media.

9. With regard to public education, many countries (44 per cent) reported organizing biosafety training workshops and seminars for government officials and other stakeholders. The goal was not only to educate stakeholders on the issues but also to describe the importance of the issues and the need to implement National Biosafety Frameworks. These activities were often organized with assistance from projects, such as those funded by the Global Environment Facility and other agencies. Countries have also developed educational materials such as booklets, posters and audio-visual materials, as well as

national guidance materials on a limited scale. Some of these have been shared through the Biosafety Information Resource Centre (BIRC) in the Biosafety Clearing-House. Since 2005, 74 Parties, other States, and relevant international bodies have posted their materials and case-studies about ongoing initiatives on public awareness, education and participation, including major accomplishments, success stories, best practices and lessons learned as well as limitations experienced in the BIRC as recommended in decision BS-II/13. Few countries have developed courses in biosafety to be offered at their educational institutions.

10. In terms of public participation in biosafety issues, several countries had received stakeholder opinions and comments. Public participation often involved public debates or invitations of stakeholders to meetings; active public involvement in policy-making or decision making was limited. In countries with little biosafety infrastructure, NGOs often took the lead in informing and mobilizing public involvement in biosafety. Some developing countries and countries with economies in transition reported that they had facilitated and promoted public participation, while most did so continuously on a limited scale. The situation was reversed in developed countries: most of these countries facilitated and promoted public participation on a permanent basis. Information contained in the first national reports and the report of the fourth meeting of the Compliance Committee indicates that there has been a limited amount of work by respondents to consult the public in the decision-making process regarding living modified organisms and to make the results of such decisions available to the public in accordance with their respective laws and regulations. Many countries have established national coordinating committees, which involve a wide-range of stakeholders in making key decisions in biosafety issues. Some countries also incorporated public participation into their national biosafety laws.

11. Many countries (53 per cent) reported that they had cooperated with other States and international bodies in promoting public awareness and participation to a limited extent. A number of countries (31 per cent) had cooperated with other countries to a significant extent; many of these were within the European Community, where national biosafety regulations are already established. Overall, 50 per cent of the developed countries cooperated with other States and international bodies both to a significant extent and to a limited extent. In comparison, about 10 per cent of developing countries indicated that they cooperated with other States and international bodies to a significant extent. Many (60 per cent) did so to a limited extent and about 30 per cent did not do so at all.

12. From the above review, it is clear that the level of implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23 varies considerably among countries. It is also clear that more concerted effort is needed to implement Article 23 of the Protocol. The meeting of the Parties may wish to take note of the above interim status and remind Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to submit to the Executive Secretary and the Biosafety Clearing-House reports on their ongoing public awareness, education and participation initiatives in order to facilitate the review of the progress on the implementation of Article 23, paragraph 1 (a), of the Protocol at the fifth meeting of the Parties.

III. GLOBAL INITIATIVES CONTRIBUTING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

13. In decision II/13, paragraphs 7 and 11, the Parties to the Protocol invited Parties, other Governments and relevant international bodies to develop initiatives and maximise opportunities for cooperation to support the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol. There are various initiatives being carried out by international organizations, which Parties could draw on for support or through which they could cooperate. These include: the GEF-funded projects on biosafety, the Aarhus Convention, as well as initiatives by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and other international organizations.

A GEF-funded biosafety projects

14. Most biosafety projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) have contributed to the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol. In particular, the UNEP-GEF projects on the development and implementation of national biosafety frameworks made resources available to countries for promoting

public awareness and participation and development of mechanisms for public information and public participation as components of national biosafety frameworks. A comparative analysis of experiences and lessons from the UNEP-GEF biosafety projects, which was prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit in December 2006, shows that public awareness and education activities accounted for some 20 per cent of total project costs. All the participating countries carried out extensive public-awareness and education activities. In most participating countries, the process of developing national biosafety frameworks resulted in greater awareness of the importance of biosafety and the potential of biotechnology for development. Those countries were able to integrate biosafety into their national development planning processes. Similarly, the process of collecting and analysing information helped to highlight the importance of biosafety as a sustainable development issue. However, a small number of countries were not able to incorporate biosafety considerations into their development priorities, and the project has failed to make progress.

15. Countries have addressed Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol in various ways, depending on their particular social, political and economic situation. Under all the GEF-funded projects, almost all the participating countries organized workshops which were attended by government officials, parliamentarians, academics, special interest groups, and the general public. In addition, many countries promoted public awareness on biosafety through the media, including radio, television and newspaper articles. Furthermore, more than 40 countries also developed national websites and databases on biosafety and established links to the Biosafety Clearing-House. National websites have become a common avenue for public access to biosafety information.

16. One of the main lessons learned from the GEF-funded projects is that awareness and education are prerequisites for effective public participation. The comparative analysis of experiences and lessons from the UNEP-GEF biosafety projects showed that the initial emphasis on awareness and education during the project has helped to lay a foundation for the future involvement of stakeholders in decision-making.

17. GEF has provided significant support for promoting public awareness of biosafety. However, the 2006 evaluation report of the GEF support for biosafety concluded that the funding available for public awareness activities was low compared to the needs expressed at country level. In this regard, the evaluation recommended that the GEF should continue to emphasize awareness-raising and public-participation issues.

18. The support provided by GEF serves as a crucial starting point for further implementation of Article 23. With GEF support, more than 98 countries have incorporated systems for public awareness, information and public participation in their draft national biosafety frameworks and proposed specific measures for implementation. However, more support needs to be leveraged from different sources in order to sustain the public awareness and education activities.

B. The Aarhus Convention

19. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, known as the Aarhus Convention, is another important process contributing to the implementation of Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol. In 2005, the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention adopted, in decision II/1, the Almaty Amendment to the Convention setting out precise provisions on public participation in decision-making regarding the deliberate release into the environment and placing on the market of genetically modified organisms. ^{1/} In that decision, the Meeting of the Parties recognized the need to cooperate with other international organizations and fora, in particular the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, with a view to maximize synergy and avoid duplication of effort, *inter alia* through encouraging the exchange of information and further collaboration between the secretariat of the Convention and that of the Cartagena Protocol. The amendment has so far received ten

^{1/} In June 2008, Parties to the Aarhus Convention will review the progress in ratification, acceptance and approval of the Almaty Amendment and its implementation.

ratifications from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Community, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, Spain, and Sweden.

20. According to the first national implementation reports submitted to the Convention's Secretariat in 2007, 27 out of 30 Parties had initiated some form of public participation relating to information on GMOs and at least three Parties had initiated national laws on public awareness, education and participation regarding GMOs. Some of the Parties are making use of the Guidelines on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice with Respect to Genetically Modified Organisms, which were adopted in 2003. A number of activities on public awareness, education and participation with respect to genetically modified organisms have also been organized in the context of the Aarhus Convention. One of the main upcoming activities is the international workshop on good practices regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding GMOs, which will be held on 19-20 May 2008 in Cologne, Germany. The Aarhus Convention Secretariat is also planning to organize a side-event during the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol.

21. The Aarhus Convention provides an important option for cooperation by Parties in the promotion and facilitation of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. Several of the Parties to the Convention are also Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. According to submissions in first national reports to the CBD Secretariat, some Parties to the Cartagena Protocol believe that measures to implement the Almaty Amendment, the national biosafety frameworks, and Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol should complement each other. Parties to the Protocol should be encouraged to further explore opportunities for cooperation with Aarhus Convention at the national level.

C. Initiatives by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

22. The initiatives of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) contributing to the promotion of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms include the FAO website on "Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture" and the FAO Electronic Forum on Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture. The website (<http://www.fao.org/biotech/index.asp>) provides relevant information to the public including news updates concerning ongoing biotechnology and biosafety activities and existing publications. Likewise the FAO Electronic Forum on Biotechnology, which was established in March 2000, provides a platform for the exchange of views and experiences on biotechnology and biosafety. In February 2005, an online conference entitled "Public participation in decision-making regarding GMOs in developing countries: How to effectively involve rural people" was organized through the Forum. Over 500 people subscribed and 116 messages were posted. The FAO has also supported a number of biosafety projects, which included activities for promoting public awareness and education regarding living modified organisms.

D. Initiatives by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

23. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has supported a number of activities that are contributing to the promotion of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. These include the Biosafety Information Network and Advisory Service (BINAS), which monitors and communicates global developments in biotechnology regulatory issues and biosafety training. UNIDO has also produced and disseminated publications and updates on biotechnology and biosafety. Furthermore, UNIDO is supporting biosafety education and training, including distance learning courses in biosafety in collaboration with different universities and organizations around the world. ^{2/}

^{2/} The network consists of the University on Concepcion in Chile, the University of Malaya, Ghent University in Belgium, the Marche Polytechnic University in Italy, and the Pontifical Catholic University in Brazil.

E. Initiatives by other organizations

24. A number of other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are actively involved in promoting public awareness and participation on biosafety and biotechnology. They have organized and implemented a wide range of activities including: workshops and conferences, public surveys, awareness campaign, online information dissemination networks and publication of outreach materials such as biosafety news updates and booklets. For example, the Third World Network runs two online services: the Biosafety Information Service and the Biosafety Info Update, which disseminate news and information, including developments related to biosafety, through direct electronic mailing to subscribed members. In addition, the *Earth Negotiation Bulletin* of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) also provides an important service of documenting proceedings of major biosafety meetings and disseminating the results of these meetings to a wider public.

IV. CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 23 OF THE PROTOCOL AND THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF WORK

25. Despite the progress made at national and regional levels, overall implementation of paragraph 1 (a) of Article 23 faces major challenges. According to information contained in the first national reports, Parties face a number of challenges in the implementation of Article 23: most developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition lack the financial resources and technical capabilities to promote public awareness and education concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. Individually, many are finding it difficult to identify and systematically mobilize resources for implementing public awareness, education and participation activities. The 2006 evaluation of GEF support for biosafety also concluded that funding available for public-awareness activities was low compared to the needs expressed at the country level.

26. Furthermore, according to the information submitted to the capacity needs and priorities database in the Biosafety Clearing-House, many countries (60 per cent) have underlined a need for biosafety awareness materials and equipment. A number of countries (40 per cent) also emphasised the need for skills for public participation in decision-making and media engagement (28 per cent). Countries also expressed a need for public access to the Biosafety Clearing-House (23 per cent), risk communication skills and strategies (23 per cent) and timely public access to information on impending LMO import (13 per cent). In several cases, countries indicated that, to address the needs, technical assistance, training, tools and support materials, open dialogue forums, and funding would be necessary for implementing Article 23.

27. The ongoing awareness activities on biosafety at the national, regional and global levels involve many different organizations, priorities, constituencies, time scales, funding sources and resource constraints. There is a need for a cohesive and focused approach in order to harness available resources in a most effective manner. Globally, there is limited cooperation and sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned in the promotion of public awareness, education and participation concerning living modified organisms among Parties and relevant organizations. Such cooperation and knowledge sharing are crucial for enhancing the ability of Parties to collectively improve their implementation efforts and develop institutional and technical capacities to identify gaps and needs for the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol.

28. In this regard, the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to consider the need for developing global work programmes on public awareness and education concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms in order to enhance cooperation, co-ordination and exchange of information and experiences among governments and relevant organizations. The work programme could facilitate a more synchronized, coordinated and concerted approach to the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol, which could result in better cooperation among governments and relevant organizations. Furthermore, it could foster South-South cooperation and

facilitate the pooling of technical and financial resources to promote public awareness, education and participation concerning living modified organisms.

29. If the work programme is considered desirable, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to establish a process to elaborate its elements, including: possible operational objectives, scope of activities and outputs and the potential roles of the various entities in its implementation. In this regard, the Parties may wish to:

(a) Invite Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to submit to the Executive Secretary at least 12 months before their fifth meeting their views on the possible elements of a work programme on public awareness and education concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms;

(b) Request the Executive Secretary to prepare a draft work programme on the basis of the submissions made by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations and other relevant sources of information;

(c) Request the Executive Secretary to organize a meeting of experts to provide further input into the draft work programme.

V. OUTREACH STRATEGY FOR THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

30. In paragraph 17 of decision BS-1/5, which was adopted at their first meeting in 2004, the Parties to the Protocol welcomed the outreach strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (2003-2005), which was developed by the Secretariat to guide its activities to reach out to, inform and engage different audiences. ^{3/} The Executive Secretary was requested to advance its implementation with the view to promoting broader awareness of the Protocol and fostering the active participation and support of a broad range of stakeholders in the implementation of the Protocol. In paragraph 12 of decision BS-II/13, the Executive Secretary was also requested to continue promoting public awareness and education on the Protocol, including through the Protocol website, publications and other activities outlined in the outreach strategy for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/1/INF/16).

31. This section provides a brief review of the status of implementation of the strategy, the challenges encountered as well as the existing opportunities. It also outlines the key elements of the revised outreach strategy developed by the Executive Secretary (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/18).

32. A number of activities have been undertaken to implement the outreach strategy. Some of the main achievements include the following:

(a) Contact and communication with national focal points (and Biosafety Clearing-House Focal Points) improved significantly. An e-mail list for all national focal points and competent national authorities has been established to regularly send notifications and updates. An electronic mailing news service has been established through the Biosafety Clearing-House. Latest information and news updates are sent periodically to the national focal point and other subscribed users. National focal points can also submit their national or regional biosafety news for circulation through the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(b) The Biosafety Protocol website has been expanded and its user-friendliness improved to facilitate easy access to information on the Protocol and its processes;

(c) A number of biosafety publications (including brochures, newsletters and booklets) have been produced and disseminated. The latest publication is the bi-annual Biosafety Protocol News (BPN), which is intended to provide Parties, other Governments and other stakeholders with a medium to exchange information, news and experiences regarding their efforts to implement and promote awareness

^{3/} The strategy included activities aimed at improving the development and dissemination of printed materials, actively engagement of the mass media, foster effective use of electronic communication tools, utilize strategic meetings, events and establish partnerships with other outreach initiatives and networks. The primary target audiences were Governments, business and industry and the media (reporters and editors). The secondary targets were: environmental outreach networks and the academic and scientific community.

of the Protocol. The Secretariat also produced and posted on the Protocol website frequently asked questions and a simple guide to the Protocol and the Biosafety Clearing-House. It has also produced information kits and contributed to the CBD Year in Review and to the Green Customs guide on multilateral environmental agreements;

(d) A number of press releases related to the Protocol have been issued and several articles have been prepared and published in newsletters, journals and newspapers. The Secretariat has also established a media database and identified journalists who are covering environmental news in general and those actively reporting on biosafety-related in particular. Direct regular contact has been established with some of the journalists. Press kits have also been produced;

(e) The Secretariat has also developed a database of organizations and networks involved in activities relevant to implementation of the Biosafety Protocol. The database includes their contact information and summaries of their activities.

(f) Furthermore, members of Secretariat staff have made a number of presentations and statements about the Protocol at different meetings and workshops and have given lectures to students from different schools and universities, particularly those in and around Montreal.

33. The implementation of the outreach strategy has been constrained mainly by a lack of financial and human resources. The Secretariat has a limited budget for publications and outreach activities. Most of the planned activities in the strategy were not implemented due to limited human resources at the Secretariat. The recent recruitment of an Associate Information Officer for biosafety has helped accelerate the implementation of some of the activities. Hopefully, more will be achieved under the new revised outreach strategy.

34. Some progress has been made in implementing the outreach strategy but there is still more work to be done. In particular there is a need for a broader media strategy to reach out to more journalists and train media professionals in biosafety and to liaise with them regularly. Media needs to be provided with more updates on key developments, news clips and stories, interviews with key stakeholders as well as be monitored on the issues they write about on the Protocol and trained on how to formulate issues on biosafety. More work also needs to be done to establish partnerships and encourage more organizations to engage in biosafety outreach activities. Furthermore, there is a need to more proactively engage the academic and scientific community and to broaden biosafety education activities. The revised outreach strategy been designed to address the above-mentioned gaps. It identifies specific outreach objectives and outcomes for different target audiences and the strategic means to achieve them. The strategy targets the following key stakeholders: Governments, academic and research institutions, regional and international organizations and networks, the media, the private sector, customs officials, farmers, women, children and local communities.

35. Effective outreach requires a systematic and coordinated approach. The revised outreach strategy will help to ensure that outreach efforts are focused and integrated in order to maximize the use of existing communication tools and to leverage available outreach opportunities. It will also seek to foster more effective engagement of key stakeholders in promoting public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms.

36. The Parties to the Protocol may wish to:

(a) Take note of progress made by the Secretariat in implementing the outreach strategy for Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

(b) Endorse the revised outreach strategy for Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and request the Executive Secretary to advance its implementation;

(c) Invite Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to cooperate with, and support, the Executive Secretary in the implementation of the strategy;

(d) Request the Executive Secretary to report on the implementation of the Strategy at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

V. CONCLUSION

37. Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations have initiated a wide range of activities to promote public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms and clearly some progress has been made. However, major challenges still exist. Many countries lack the necessary financial resources, awareness materials and equipment and timely access to relevant information and tools. Many also lack experts with the required knowledge and skills. There is also limited cooperation, coordination and sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned in the promotion of public awareness, education and participation among Parties and relevant organizations.

38. There is a need for additional concerted effort to address the above challenges and to adopt new strategies to reinforce national and global efforts to promote public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. The proposed programme of work on public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms could contribute to greater cooperation, co-ordination and exchange of information and experiences among Parties and enhance their ability to collectively promote awareness of the Protocol and effectively harness available resources to develop institutional and technical capacities for the implementation of Article 23 of the Protocol.

39. The Parties to the Protocol are invited to consider the information and recommendations provided in the present note and take decisions, as appropriate, to further guide the implementation of Article 23, paragraph 1 (a).
