



**CONVENTION ON
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INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

Third meeting

The Hague, 22-26 April 2002

Item 4.1.3 of the provisional agenda*

INFORMATION-SHARING

*Progress report on the development and implementation of the pilot phase
of the Biosafety Clearing-House*

Addendum

**SUMMARY OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE PILOT PHASE OF
THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its first meeting, held in Montpellier from 11 to 15 December 2000, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP) requested the Executive Secretary to commission an independent and transparent review of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, utilizing feedback from participating countries and indicators to measure success against the objectives of the pilot phase.

2. Subsequent to the request from the ICCP in its recommendation 2/8, that the review should be carried out prior to the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/15), the Executive Secretary commissioned a consultant to undertake the independent review of the pilot phase.

* UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/1.

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3. The Bureau of the ICCP considered the question of the independent review at its meeting held in Yaoundé from 18 to 19 February 2002 and expressed the view that the main goal of the independent review was to identify the major strengths as well as weaknesses arising out of the implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, taking into account what was specified in the relevant recommendations of ICCP regarding the objectives of the pilot phase and the guidance on its monitoring and review, in order to assist ICCP at its third meeting make recommendations that will allow to develop a fully functional Biosafety Clearing-House at the time of entry into force of the Protocol.

4. The Bureau also requested the Executive Secretary to make available to Governments the following products in relation to the independent review of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House:

(a) The full report of the independent review prepared by the consultant commissioned by the Executive Secretary;

(b) A short summary, prepared by the Secretariat, of the report of the independent review; and

(c) A note to be prepared by the Bureau of ICCP highlighting recommendations for further development of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

5. The present note constitutes the second of the three products mentioned above, namely a short summary prepared by the Secretariat, while the full text of the independent review is available as an information document (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/INF/10). With regard to the third product, the Bureau of ICCP, in line with the mandate given to it by ICCP to provide management oversight on the implementation and development of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, will prepare a note for consideration by ICCP at its third meeting, highlighting recommendations for further development of the Biosafety Clearing-House on the basis of the strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the report of the consultant in conducting the independent review. In preparing these recommendations, the Bureau will seek technical advice from the liaison group of technical experts that has been involved in the formulation of technical recommendations for the development and implementation of the pilot phase so far. The recommendations of the Bureau will be circulated as document UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/5/Add.2.

II. SUMMARY OUTCOME OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW

6. The independent review concludes that the pilot phase of Biosafety Clearing-House has been successfully implemented in large part. The review also observes that, while the pilot phase provides a technological solution to meet the needs of most countries, capacity needs of participating countries need to be further addressed to enable full participation in the development and implementation of the pilot phase.

7. The review notes that the Internet provides an appropriate solution to implement the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, provided that developing countries and countries with economies in transition are provided appropriate financial and technical assistance to enable full Internet connectivity. The report notes that the website of the pilot phase¹ is in general attractive, well-designed and functional, and that the technology selected to implement the website provides for a useful and functional Biosafety Clearing-House.

1/ <http://bch.biodiv.org>

8. The review stresses that the thematic content of the Biosafety Clearing-House is of critical value, and notes that the pilot phase has been designed to include the majority of information types that are mandatory for the content of the Biosafety Clearing-House (e.g., to assist Parties to implement the Protocol, such as making available domestic decisions on living modified organisms that are intended for food, for feed, or for processing), but that the spread of countries providing information for inclusion in the pilot phase has been uneven. The review also notes that the pilot phase has not had a strong emphasis on including the non-mandatory information (e.g., to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms).

9. The review emphasizes the importance of addressing capacity needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in a long-term and sustainable manner. The most critical need that is not currently being addressed is access to funding and training opportunities. The review recommends that programmes designed to address these needs will need to be carefully planned, focus on the specific needs of countries and delegates, and will require good pedagogical design.
