



**CONVENTION ON
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/5/Add.2
22 April 2002

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**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

**THIRD NOTE BY THE BUREAU OF THE ICCP ON TECHNICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED
WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PILOT PHASE, AND PREPARATION FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

I. BACKGROUND

1. Subsequent to the completion of the independent review of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, ^{1/} the Bureau of the ICCP, in line with the mandate given to it by the first meeting of the ICCP to provide management oversight on the implementation and development of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, has adopted the present note in order to assist the ICCP at its third meeting in its efforts aimed at developing a fully functional Biosafety Clearing-House at the time of entry into force of the Protocol.

2. The present note contains recommendations for further development of the Biosafety Clearing-House, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the report of the consultant in conducting the independent review, taking also into account the recommendations arising from the regional meetings held on the Biosafety Clearing-House, as well as what has been specified in the relevant recommendations of the ICCP regarding the objectives and operation of the pilot phase and the guidance on its monitoring and review.

* UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/1.

^{1/} UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/5/Add.1; UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/INF/10.

/...

3. In preparing these recommendations, the Bureau considered the outcome of the report of the independent review, the lessons learned to date in the development and implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and sought technical advice from the technical experts that had participated in previous liaison group meetings involved in the formulation of technical recommendations for the development and implementation of the pilot phase so far.

4. The Bureau recalled that one main objective of the pilot phase was to build experience and provide feedback for the development of a functional and accessible Internet-based Biosafety Clearing-House, and considered that it has been able to demonstrate that a primarily Internet-based system, using open protocols and standards in order to enable the setting of a distributed system, provides a useful and satisfactory model for efficient information exchange under the Biosafety Protocol.

5. The Bureau also noted that, while the pilot phase provides a technological solution to meet the needs of most countries, another main objective of the pilot phase was to identify and address the capacity needs of countries with respect to the Biosafety Clearing-House. Increased participation of all countries, including the issue of capacities development, needs to be further addressed to enable full participation in the development and implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, in order to achieve the objective of providing appropriate feedback on the development of the pilot phase.

6. The Bureau recognizes also that the issue of the non-Internet based component of the Biosafety Clearing-House needs to be appropriately addressed with a view to cover the interim period at the time of entry into force of the Protocol, until all capacities necessary for full participation in the Internet-based component are in place.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued use of the Internet for implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House pilot phase

(a) Ensure the provision of up-to-date information in the Biosafety Clearing-House by encouraging and facilitating countries and organizations to remain custodians of their own data, and through enhanced and continued use of a distributed Internet-based system for sharing data during the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, and thereafter.

(b) Provide access to information and documents available through the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House in different formats (such as HTML, XML, PDF, compressed files and other major document formats), where possible.

Central database

(a) Ensure security of the Biosafety Clearing-House databases through the use of 'best practice' procedures (e.g. firewalls, data encryption, etc.).

(b) Recalling the recommendation that countries establish a national focal point for the Biosafety Clearing-House, which will be responsible for validating data registered on the Biosafety Clearing-House for that country, ensure greater integrity of the Biosafety Clearing-House databases through standardization of validation procedures within partner organizations and user countries, and through the automated generation of reports relating to changes in the data to detect unauthorized registration or modification of data.

(c) Due to its sensitive regulatory role within the Protocol procedures, as well as other future aspects, maintain and further develop the central database of the Biosafety Clearing-House as an autonomous entity, technically and operationally independent from other information-exchange activities.

Participation in the pilot phase.

(a) Continue to urge all Governments, relevant intergovernmental organizations and other participants to further contribute information to the pilot phase, as soon as possible, and to actively participate in its development and use, prior to the entry into force of the Protocol.

(b) Continue the use of open protocols and standards, and encourage partners to the Biosafety Clearing-House to adhere to and fully implement the interoperability guidelines for the Biosafety Clearing-House in initial and further development of their information systems.

(c) Promote collaboration between information-technology experts, national biosafety clearing-house focal points and partner organizations through, for example, the use of electronic discussion groups to facilitate cooperation and discussion.

(d) Continue the development and distribution of the offline Biosafety Clearing-House on CD-ROM.

(e) Develop templates and models (available online and on CD-ROM), to assist Governments in developing their own national biosafety databases that will be interoperable with the Biosafety Clearing-House.

Content of the Biosafety Clearing-House pilot phase

(a) Recognizing the role of the Biosafety Clearing-House in the implementation of the regulatory processes of the Protocol, ensure that access to information through the Biosafety Clearing-House (for example, scientific information) is provided on the basis of quality, neutrality, multidisciplinary and relevance to the needs of Parties.

(b) Continue to seek partnerships with other international organizations (such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO)), or other scientific sources of information (such as that available through the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, or ITIS or Species 2000) to add value and global relevance to the regulatory and scientific information provided through the Biosafety Clearing-House.

(c) Expand the capacity-building project database in the Biosafety Clearing-House (for example to include information on other available capacity-building opportunities, such as funding and training opportunities).

(d) Develop and implement, as soon as possible, harmonized unique identification systems for living modified organisms, on the basis of the work of other relevant international organizations, to facilitate efficient retrieval of information.

Development of the Biosafety Clearing-House tool-kit

(a) Continue to develop the links between specific sections of the Biosafety Clearing-House and the appropriate sections in the tool-kit.

(b) Further develop the tool-kit of the Biosafety Clearing-House to include more in-depth training materials, targeted for different audiences.

Capacity-building

(a) Recognizing that capacity-building is an ongoing process, and that capacity-building programmes should be developed with a long-term view to ensure sustainability, the Bureau noted that further development of capacity-building activities would be taken up by the ICCEP at its third meeting.

(b) Encourage Governments to take into account the synthesis of capacity-building needs identified by the regions for implementation of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/5/Add.3) in the consideration of the agenda item on capacity-building (UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/6).

(c) Invite the Global Environment Facility and other donors to take into account these identified needs in providing assistance to developing countries, in particular the least developed and the small island developing States among them, and Parties with economies in transition.

Administration

Recalling the establishment of the Biosafety Clearing-House under paragraph 1 of Article 20 of the Protocol, as part of the clearing-house mechanism of the Convention, to facilitate the exchange of relevant information on living modified organisms, and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol,

Recalling the recommendation of the first meeting of the ICCEP that, given the distinctly different roles that the clearing-house mechanism and the Biosafety Clearing-House have, the latter shall be run, at the technical and operational level, as a distinct element, 2/

The ICCEP Bureau recommends that the Biosafety Clearing-House be administered and operated in a manner that allows Parties to the Protocol to clearly recognize its status and identity as a tool to implement obligations under the Biosafety Protocol.

Transition between the pilot phase and the fully functional Biosafety Clearing-House

Recalling the ICCEP recommendation that the Biosafety Clearing-House should be fully operational and functional by the time of entry into force of the Protocol,

Recalling also the ICCEP recommendation that the Biosafety Clearing-House should be established in a phased manner beginning with a pilot phase, and taking note that following entry into force of the Protocol, there may be a period of time during which (i) the Protocol has entered into force for a State or regional economic integration organization and (ii) the Biosafety Clearing-House has acquired an official status, prior to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at which the modalities of the operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House will be considered and decided upon,

2/ UNEP/CBD/ICCP/1/9, annex.

The ICCP Bureau recommends that the transition phase of the official Biosafety Clearing-House be based on the pilot phase, pending consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol of the modalities of the implementation of the Biosafety Clearing-House, pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article 20 of the Protocol.

Monitoring and review

(a) The Bureau will continue to provide management oversight on the implementation and development of the Biosafety Clearing-House, as well as technical guidance on the development of the pilot phase of the Biosafety Clearing-House, utilizing the advice of technical experts, where appropriate.

(b) The Bureau is of the view that a Steering Committee or other such mechanism should be developed and gradually put into place, to replace the Bureau oversight function by the time of entry into force of the Protocol, in order to guarantee the integrity and full functioning of the Biosafety Clearing-House.

(c) Future review of the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House should aim to include consultation with a wide variety of countries and participating organizations.

Financial issues

Recognizing the importance of developing a fully functioning Biosafety Clearing-House by the time of entry into force of the Protocol, and of meeting the capacity needs of all countries with respect to implementation and use of the Biosafety Clearing-House, the ICCP Bureau invites developed country Governments and other donors to provide financial support to ensure that, where appropriate, these recommendations can be implemented, including the continuing development of regional activities and of essential tools such as the tool-kit and the templates to assist countries to develop their own national databases that are interoperable with the Biosafety Clearing-House.
