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

First meeting

Kuala Lumpur, 23-27 February 2004

Agenda item 6.3 of the provisional agenda *

CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY (ARTICLE 22, ARTICLE 28)

Operational guidelines for the Coordination Mechanism

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its third meeting, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), in its recommendation 3/5, proposed the establishment of a Coordination Mechanism for the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol. The Coordination Mechanism is intended to facilitate exchange of information with a view to promoting partnerships and maximizing complementarities and synergies between various capacity-building initiatives. It comprises five complementary elements, namely:

- (a) A liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety;
- (b) A biosafety capacity-building projects database;
- (c) An information-sharing and networking mechanism;
- (d) Coordination meetings and workshops; and
- (e) A reporting mechanism.

2. In addition, ICCP requested the Executive Secretary to develop and maintain in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) a page where countries can access information readily on available

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

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capacity-building support and those requiring support could indicate their specific capacity-building needs. In this regard, two searchable databases one for capacity-building opportunities and another for country capacity-building needs have been developed and are accessible through the Biosafety Clearing-House.

3. The ICCP recommendation defined the objective and the broad elements of the Coordination Mechanism as well as the functions of the Executive Secretary as its administrator. However within the time-frame available, ICCP was unable to consider operational modalities of the mechanism. The present note is intended to assist the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol in its consideration of the practical modalities of implementing the elements of the Coordination Mechanism. The note describes the overall guiding principles, the nature of the different elements, their roles and the possible modalities for their implementation. In its consideration of the ICCP recommendation, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to refine and integrate the proposals presented in the annex to this note in the final decision on the Coordination Mechanism.

4. Following the ICCP recommendation, the Executive Secretary initiated a number of activities, on a pilot basis, to implement the Coordination Mechanism. In November 2002, a meeting of a liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety was convened to provide advice to the Executive Secretary regarding possible practical modalities for operationalizing the Coordination Mechanism and for advancing the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan on capacity-building. Among other things, the liaison group recommended that the two databases on capacity-building opportunities and on country capacity-building needs, developed by the Secretariat at the request of ICCP, should be made an integral part of the second element of the Coordination Mechanism (i.e., the biosafety capacity-building projects database). In the discussion below, this element is expanded and re-named “capacity-building databases” comprising three databases for: (i) capacity-building projects; (ii) capacity-building opportunities and (iii) country capacity-needs. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to adopt this recommendation and adjust the second element of the Coordination Mechanism accordingly.

II. OVERALL PRINCIPLES FOR THE COORDINATION MECHANISM

5. The need for a Coordination Mechanism derives from the recognition that although there are several biosafety capacity-building initiatives under way, international efforts remain fragmented with little practical coordination and collaboration. Often there is duplication of effort and resources across different initiatives coupled with limited sharing of information and inconsistencies. This points to the need for Governments and organizations to better coordinate their efforts and to increase their understanding of the existing situation and ongoing efforts prior to initiating new projects or activities in order to minimize duplication and to ensure maximum impact. As well, regional and international efforts need to be linked and strengthened through improved cooperation and coordination in order to address the capacity-needs of individual countries more effectively. The Coordination Mechanism seeks to contribute to this goal.

6. The term “coordination” can be described in different ways. It can mean simply the exchange of information including lessons learned from past experience. It can also imply synchronization of operational activities (for example some players focusing on specific elements or geographic regions) or formal dialogue and regular interaction/cooperation to exchange or compare ‘notes’. Alternatively, it can mean harmonization of policies, procedures, approaches or reporting requirements. In its extreme form,

coordination could refer to centralized oversight or supervision and control or alignment of different initiatives to ensure consistency or adherence to prescribed rules or guidelines. ^{1/}

7. Essentially, the Coordination Mechanism is meant to serve as a means to facilitate sharing of information and knowledge between countries and organizations regarding capacity-building activities implemented in support of the Action Plan. This may include information on who is doing what and where as well as experiences gained, best-practices, lessons learned and new innovative ideas. In addition, the Mechanism is envisaged to provide a means of facilitating interaction, dialogue, collaborative sharing/pooling of resources and expertise between countries and organizations involved in implementing or supporting biosafety capacity-building activities. Furthermore, the Coordination Mechanism will contribute to promoting awareness of key issues and needs, fostering adoption of more integrated and cost-efficient approaches and facilitating cooperation between the different initiatives aimed at building capacity for biosafety, including biotechnology to the extent that it is required for biosafety. It is not envisaged to be a mechanism for overseeing, supervising or evaluating various initiatives.

8. The Coordination Mechanism will be a simple and flexible system with minimal additional resource requirements. Its different elements will be implemented in a gradual, phased and incremental manner and improvements made as experience is gained over time. The initial focus will be on operationalizing the liaison group, strengthening the capacity-building databases and organizing coordination meetings and workshops. The other elements, namely the establishment of the information and networking mechanism and the reporting system will be pursued in due course.

9. At its third meeting, ICCP requested the Executive Secretary to develop and maintain in the Biosafety Clearing-House a page where countries can access information readily on available capacity-building support and those requiring support could indicate their specific capacity-building needs. Accordingly, the Secretariat has developed two searchable databases: one for capacity-building opportunities and another for country capacity-building needs.

10. The implementation and further development of the Coordination Mechanism will take into account the experiences and lessons learned from other relevant coordination and networking initiatives, such as the Inter-Agency Network for Safety in Biotechnology (IANB) coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ^{2/}, the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IW:LEARN) ^{3/} and the Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) which was established in 2000 by the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS). ^{4/}

III. THE NATURE, ROLE AND OPERATIONAL MODALITIES OF THE DIFFERENT COORDINATION MECHANISM ELEMENTS

11. At its third meeting, the ICCP recommended a Coordination Mechanism with five main elements, namely a liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety; a biosafety capacity-building projects database; an information-sharing and networking mechanism; coordination meetings and workshops; and a reporting mechanism. This section provides a brief description of those elements. A

^{1/} World Resources Institute, 1995. *Country-Level Donor Coordination in Support of Sustainable Development*. Washington, DC. Page 3.

^{2/} Details about the IANB can be obtained at the following website: <http://www1.oecd.org/ehs/biobin/IANB.htm>; <http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00008000/M00008256.pdf>.

^{3/} See details at: <http://www.iwlearn.org> and <http://www.iwlearn.net>.

^{4/} See details about INFOCAP at: <http://www.who.int/ifcs/infocap/>.

detailed description, including the nature and structure of each of the five elements, their specific roles in promoting coordination and their operational modalities is contained in the annex. The operational modalities described include some of the specific actions to be undertaken, how they will be implemented and by whom, as well as their management procedures/ delivery options.

12. *A liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety* would be an ad hoc group to be selected and convened as necessary by the Executive Secretary to provide advice on specific capacity-building issues/topics aimed at enhancing the coordination and effective implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. It would be a small group, flexible enough to respond rapidly to emerging needs, and its composition would be adjusted depending on expertise required for the specific issues to be addressed. Participants would serve in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their respective Governments or organizations. Subject to availability of resources, face-to-face meetings of the group would be organized by the Secretariat and wherever possible, electronic communication means, including e-mail listserv, electronic discussion forums or teleconferences, would be used as appropriate. The results of the work of the liaison group would be used by the Executive Secretary as appropriate, including in the preparation of relevant documents on capacity-building for Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

13. The *capacity-building databases* (i.e. for projects/programmes, capacity-building opportunities and for country needs and priorities), would be maintained and accessed through the Biosafety Clearing-House. Records in the databases would provide summary information (or what is referred to as metadata) about each project, opportunity or country's capacity needs with contact details and Web links where additional information could be obtained. The databases would provide a central "one-stop shop" where Governments, relevant organizations and other interested stakeholders would register and access information about existing biosafety capacity-building projects, opportunities and the capacity needs and priorities of different countries. This clearing-house function would facilitate sharing of information on the achievements, best-practices and lessons learned from different projects, enhance the leverage of available resources and expertise and ensure a more systematic tailoring of available assistance and other opportunities towards specific country-defined needs and priorities. More specifically, the databases would play the following respective roles:

- (a) The "capacity-building projects" database would:
 - (i) Facilitate the sharing of information about completed, on-going and planned biosafety capacity-building initiatives, including their coverage, achievements, experiences, best-practices and lessons learned in order to enhance the design and implementation of related initiatives;
 - (ii) Facilitate identification of the coverage, overlaps and gaps in the capacity-building efforts and help to minimize duplication of efforts and avoid non-beneficial overlaps;
 - (iii) Facilitate identification of opportunities for cooperation and promote synergies and complementarities between the different initiatives.
 - (iv) Ensure that all countries and relevant organizations are aware of ongoing activities in order to facilitate regional and international action and cooperation.

(b) The "capacity-building opportunities" database will enable countries and organizations to search and access, easily and promptly, up-to-date information about available or planned opportunities such as funding or training offered by various organizations, development cooperation agencies and others, and to be able to utilize them as appropriate.

- (c) The “country capacity needs” database would:
- (i) Provide a central point where countries can register their specific capacity-needs and priorities and where donor countries and organizations in a position to offer assistance can readily access this information. This would enhance opportunities for collaboration;
 - (ii) Promote better understanding of the priority needs of countries and the overall gaps and capacity-building challenges in order to devise strategic measures to address them;
 - (iii) Enable Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations in a position to offer assistance to tailor more systematically their financial and technical assistance towards specific country-defined needs and priorities.

14. *The information sharing and networking mechanism*, maintained in the Biosafety Clearing-House, would provide a central point where information and resource materials that is useful for the effective implementation of the Protocol could be widely publicized and easily accessed and also provide a platform where different stakeholders would interact to share views, knowledge and expertise. Over the last few years, a wide array of biosafety-related information, tools and other resource material has been generated. ^{5/} However, there is no central place where such information and resource materials can be searched and accessed. This has, in part, resulted in the development of a multiplicity of similar resource materials, often duplicating resources and effort. On the other hand, there is limited interaction between different players involved in, or interested in, capacity-building for biosafety in order to enhance their on-going and future efforts. There is an urgent need to establish mechanisms to ensure that available information and resource materials are widely publicized and easily accessible through a central gateway. This is critical to building the necessary capacities for the effective implementation of the Protocol. The information sharing and networking mechanism would address this need through two main components, namely the:

- (a) Biosafety information resource centre, focusing on sharing of available capacity-building resource materials and research information between different players;
- (b) Biosafety capacity-building network, focusing on facilitating interaction, dialogue and partnerships between individuals and organizations.

15. *The biosafety information resource centre* would be a form of a “virtual library” consisting of catalogues of, and links to, information and resource materials relevant for capacity-building in biosafety and the effective implementation of the Protocol in general. This component would facilitate broader dissemination, timely access, and maximum use of the available information and tools. The records would be based on common format, including the following key fields: title of the record, type of information (e.g., manual, case-study, workshop report, news article, etc.), thematic areas covered (based on the Action Plan elements), author, date of publication, name of publisher or organization, key words as well as an abstract or a book review. The common format would help to ensure consistency in the registration of information and facilitate easy and customized search for specific information. Each record would include contact details as well as hyperlinks to the relevant websites where further information or the actual materials could be obtained directly. The resource centre would be linked to the document search facility of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was developed to improve global search and access to information relevant to the implementation of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol. ^{6/}

^{5/} Information and resource materials produced include: training modules, publications, workshop reports and paper presentations, newsletters and scientific journals, technical manuals and guidelines or toolkits, case-studies on best-practices or lessons learned, legal documents, project profiles, project proposal preparation materials and others.

^{6/} The CBD document search page is accessible at: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/search.asp>. The facility allows access to different types of information through the CHM and allows users specify their information needs and query the system.

Customized searches for information through the resource centre would be made possible through an electronic catalogue, based on the common format used for registering the records.

16. *The biosafety capacity-building network* would be a platform that links key different individuals from Governments and relevant organizations that are interested or involved in designing, implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities, to interact and exchange views, knowledge and experiences in an informal manner. It would complement other existing relevant networks such as the Inter-Agency Network for Safety in Biotechnology (IANB), coordinated by the OECD.^{7/} The network would be administered through the Biosafety Clearing-House, which would serve as the “network hub”. Internet-based tools, including: e-mail listservs, bulletin boards, electronic discussion forums and electronic conferences, would be the primary means of interaction between the network members. *E-mail listservs* would be established to facilitate regular exchange of relevant information and views between all interested subscribed members. A *bulletin board* would allow ongoing posting of views, comments and new information on different biosafety issues. In addition, closed (i.e. password-protected) *electronic discussion forums* or *electronic conferences* would be organized, as necessary, to allow dialogue on specific themes/ topical issues over a defined period time. Interested participants would be invited to register with the Executive Secretary. Partner organizations would be encouraged to volunteer in co-sponsoring or moderating specific thematic discussions. The discussion forums may, as appropriate, result in specific products (e.g. reports/ proceedings) or in consensus around particular issues (e.g. agreed terminologies or approaches), which could also be published as hard copies and made available to interested countries. The primary function of the network would be to facilitate active interaction and sharing of knowledge, views, experiences and lessons learned among individuals, organizations and donor agencies interested in promoting biosafety capacity-building and research, in a timely, organized and effective manner. Among other roles, the network may:

- (a) Help to strengthen existing linkages between different organizations or individuals working on issues of mutual interest, in order to promote synergies and better coordination and collaboration;
- (b) Facilitate informal but systematic interactions and sharing of knowledge, ideas and expertise on issues of common interest as well as maximizing use of relevant experiences and lessons learned;
- (c) Leverage existing knowledge and expertise of partners to enhance biosafety capacity-building;
- (d) Promote dialogue and consensus-building around key issues, and facilitate adoption and application of broadly accepted concepts and common approaches to capacity-building;
- (e) Provide a means for the different players to keep each other informed of their ongoing or planned activities in order to avoid duplication of effort and to optimize the allocation of resources;
- (f) Facilitate linkages between on-the-ground experience and action and the relevant policy processes at the national, regional and global levels;
- (g) Contribute to the establishment of collaborative partnerships or twinning arrangements and foster the pooling of resources and expertise.

17. *Coordination meetings and workshops*, which allow face-to-face interactions, are vital in initiating and/or bolstering dialogue and cooperation between different individuals from organizations

^{7/} IANB was established in 1999 with the aim of enhancing exchange of information and facilitating cooperation. Its activities include: publication of a six-monthly newsletter, maintenance of a web page and organization of networking meetings. See details at: http://webnet1.oecd.org/document/3/0,2340,en_2649_34385_1890691_1_1_1_1.00.html.

involved in designing, implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities. Coordination meetings – which may take the form of roundtables, forums, or informal consultations – would provide a forum for individuals from various organizations, Government agencies, donors and other groups or individuals to meet, interact and share information, views and experiences, regarding their biosafety capacity-building activities and come up with new ideas to improve the delivery of biosafety capacity-building initiatives. They would also foster development of complementary rather than duplicative initiatives and promote joint action in order to reinforce synergies and avoid overlapping of activities. In addition, they would help key players to: gain a common understanding of the major issues, challenges and priority needs of countries; review the coverage and deficiencies in existing capacity-building efforts; discuss possible areas and options for collaboration to address existing gaps and to avoid unnecessary overlaps and over-coverage of certain issues or geographic areas at the expense of others; endeavour to harmonize conceptual frameworks and approaches; and identify areas of mutual interest where partnerships could be initiated or strengthened. Coordination meetings would be organized at different levels – national, regional and international. At the global level, the meetings would be organized by the Secretariat, subject to availability of funding, in collaboration with relevant partner organizations. The meetings would be as informal and flexible as possible in order to allow free exchange of information and ideas. In organizing the coordination meetings, it would be important to take into account a number of considerations, including the following:

- (a) Before each meeting, participants should be requested to submit to the organizers or share with participants relevant information and documentation, including project reports, work plans, summaries of their ongoing activities as well as an outline of possible opportunities for collaboration;
- (b) The meetings should ensure focused discussions on issues of mutual interest and facilitate identification of opportunities for partnerships and collaboration between different players;
- (c) The meetings should endeavour to come up with some actionable recommendations for strengthening coordination and collaboration among the different partners;
- (d) The proceedings and recommendations of the meetings should be documented and disseminated in timely manner in order to facilitate follow-up and monitoring of progress;
- (e) Participants should be encouraged to take advantage of other elements of the Coordination Mechanism and tools, such as the electronic forums, to share information and views so that the coordination meetings focus only on issues that require face-to-face dialogue;
- (f) Collaborating stakeholders should be encouraged to attend each others' meetings or workshops;
- (g) To the extent possible, potential members of the liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety would be encouraged to attend the coordination meetings.

18. *The reporting mechanism* would constitute a central system where relevant reports, including summaries of the accomplishments, best-practices and lessons learned from different capacity-building initiatives would be registered, easily accessed and widely shared. A database of available reports would be maintained in the Biosafety Clearing-House and links established to the detailed reports residing in the databases or websites of relevant organizations in order to minimize the need for countries and organizations to provide the same information to more than one place. The mechanism would enable Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to draw upon each other's experiences and accomplishments. Sharing of such reports is a key ingredient in promoting synergies, collaborative partnerships and shared mutual learning. The reports may include those on the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan and others that may be requested by the Conference of the Parties to

the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (see the note by the Executive Secretary on Capacity-building (article 22; article 28, para.3), UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/1/6). ^{8/} In addition, Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations would be encouraged to share, through that central mechanism, relevant reports on their capacity-building activities, including: project progress reports or end-of-cycle evaluation reports, project appraisal reports or mission reports as well as case-studies on success stories. The mechanism would not be used as a management tool for monitoring performance of the different capacity-building activities but a means to facilitate communication and sharing of reports on their experiences, best-practices and lessons learned, including what has worked and what has not under different circumstances. In addition, it would not override the reporting requirements under Article 33 of the Protocol and other reporting requirements by donors and relevant authorities, as the case may be for specific projects or programmes. In addition to promoting mutual learning, the reporting mechanism would play other important roles, including the following:

- (a) Provide a tool for developing an overall picture of the progress being made towards building capacities for the effective implementation of the Protocol;
- (b) Provide a means through which Governments, relevant organizations and donors can learn about each other's experiences, accomplishments and lessons learned, including what worked and what did not under different circumstances, in order to promote the positive aspects and avoid mistakes or "re-inventing the wheel";
- (c) Show case success stories and factors, including best-practices and lessons learned from the initiatives of different organizations, in order to promote their replication;
- (d) Facilitate the identification of opportunities for coordination and cooperation and promote the development effective and complementary, rather than duplicative, capacity-building initiatives;
- (e) Help to promote transparency and sharing of information about the accomplishments of different initiatives and facilitate identification of gaps and priorities that require action;
- (f) Help donors to develop focused funding strategies and programmes to assist Parties in the implementation of the Action Plan.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT

19. The primary functions of the Secretariat in the implementation of the Coordination Mechanism, as proposed in the ICCP recommendation 3/5 would include the following:

- (a) Maintain the capacity-building databases (on projects, opportunities and needs), including its regular updating based on submissions received from the participating Parties, Governments, relevant organizations and donors;
- (b) Develop and maintain in the Biosafety Clearing-House databases where countries can access information readily on available capacity-building opportunities and those requiring support could register their specific capacity-building needs;

^{8/} The ICCP in its recommendations invited Governments and relevant organizations to submit to the Executive Secretary progress reports to the implementation of the Action Plan (see documents: UNEP/CBD/ICCP/2/15 and UNEP/CBD/ICCP/3/10).

(c) Facilitate the dissemination of relevant information and lessons learned on biosafety capacity-building initiatives through the Biosafety Clearing-House and information documents to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(d) Prepare and disseminate synthesis of reports based on the submissions by Parties, Governments and relevant organizations on their progress in implementing various elements of the Action Plan, using a common format;

(e) Convene and service meetings of the liaison group on capacity-building on biosafety, as necessary;

(f) Organize, subject to availability of funding, periodic coordination meetings and workshops for Government representatives, relevant organizations and donors, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its Implementing Agencies and other relevant organizations;

(g) Promote broad and common understanding of the capacity-building needs for the effective implementation of the Protocol.

V. CONCLUSION

20. Coordination of different capacity-building initiatives is a critical action necessary in building effective and sustainable capacities for the implementation of the Protocol. The Coordination Mechanism described in this note will contribute to desired objective of maximizing complementarities and synergies between different initiatives, which may lead to greater efficiency and broader impact. Effective realization of this objective will require systematic and pragmatic effort at different levels – global, regional and national.

21. The operational guidelines outlined in this note provide possible ways and means of facilitating practical implementation of the Coordination Mechanism at the global level. However, it is important to ensure that implementation of the proposed measures at the global level will foster similar coordination efforts at the regional and national levels. Parties and Governments should consider establishing corresponding country-level coordination mechanisms in order to promote synergies between different capacity-building initiatives, strengthen mutually supportive linkages and address inconsistencies.

22. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to consider and refine proposals presented in this note as the basis for adopting the draft decision on the Coordination Mechanism presented below. For the purpose of streamlining the different elements of the Coordination Mechanism, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to adopt the suggestion made by a liaison group on capacity-building at its meeting in November 2002 to expand the second element which the ICCP had recommended as “Capacity-building projects database” into “Capacity-building database”, encompassing the projects, opportunities and country capacity needs as explained in paragraph 4 above.

VI. ELEMENTS OF A DRAFT DECISION

23. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety may wish to consider adopting a decision along the following lines.

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol,

Elements drawn from ICCP recommendations

Stressing the need for coordination between various capacity-building efforts and funding initiatives at all levels to maximize complementarities and synergies, and promote partnerships,

Welcoming the initiatives taken by the Executive Secretary to facilitate coordination of capacity-building activities in biosafety,

1. *Adopts* the Coordination Mechanism for the implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, contained in the annex to the present decision;

2. *Invites also* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to provide financial contributions and other support to facilitate the implementation of the Coordination Mechanism;

3. *Urges* Parties, Governments and relevant organizations to register information on their biosafety capacity-building initiatives in the Biosafety Clearing-House, including reports on the achievements, lessons learned and opportunities for cooperation;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to discharge, in a phased manner and within existing resources, the functions specified in the annex to the present decision in collaboration with other relevant agencies, to implement the Coordination Mechanism.

Additional elements proposed by the Executive Secretary

5. *Invites* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to participate actively in the implementation of the Coordination Mechanism and share their expertise and resource materials through the Mechanism;

6. *Urges* Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to establish or strengthen, as appropriate, corresponding national or regional-level coordination mechanism in order to promote synergies between existing capacity-building initiatives;

7. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to prepare a report on the progress made, and lessons learned, in implementing the Coordination Mechanism for consideration at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

Annex

**COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON
BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY**

A. Objective

1. The overall goal of Coordination Mechanism is to facilitate exchange of information with a view to promoting partnerships and to maximize complementarities and synergies between various capacity-building initiatives being undertaken in support of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

B. Guiding Principles

2. The implementation of the Coordination Mechanism is guided by the following basic principles:

(a) It serves to facilitate the sharing of information regarding capacity-building activities implemented in support of the Action Plan. It is not as mechanism for controlling, supervising or evaluating different initiatives;

(b) Participation in, and exchange of information through the Coordination Mechanism is voluntary and open to all interested stakeholders involved in the implementation of the action plan;

(c) It is a simple, easily accessible and flexible system whose operation involves minimal additional resource requirements;

(d) It is implemented in a flexible, gradual, phased and incremental manner. Improvements made as experience is gained over time;

(e) It complements and adds value to existing relevant coordination and networking initiatives, avoiding duplication as much as possible.

C. Elements of the Coordination Mechanism

3. The Coordination Mechanism consists of the following five elements:

(a) Liaison group;

(b) Biosafety capacity-building databases;

(c) Information-sharing and networking mechanism;

(d) Coordination meetings and workshops;

(e) Reporting mechanisms.

1. Liaison group on capacity-building for biosafety

Nature and structure

4. The liaison group is a small ad hoc group, rather than a standing body, established by the Executive Secretary to address specific capacity-building issues/ topics, as need arises. Participants serve in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their Governments or organizations. They are

selected on the basis of their demonstrated expertise and experience with regard to the issue(s) to be addressed, a balanced geographical distribution between regions, and a fair representation of relevant stakeholders. Every effort is made to ensure any one meeting of the group includes some of the participants that attended the previous meetings in order to maintain some degree of consistency and institutional memory.

Role

5. The overall mandate of the liaison group is to provide expert advice to the Executive Secretary on ways and means to enhance the coordination and effective implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Among other tasks, it exchanges ideas and provides advice on overall strategic approaches as well as conceptual and possible practical operational measures for enhancing coordination of the capacity-building initiatives.

Operational modalities

6. The liaison group is established in accordance with the existing practice under the Convention on Biological Diversity, including guidance under decision IV/16, annex I and SBSSTA recommendation V/14. To the extent possible the liaison group undertakes its work using electronic communication means, including e-mail and teleconferences moderated by the elected chairperson with the technical support of the Secretariat. Face-to-face meetings of the Group are usually organized, subject to availability of resources, back-to-back with other meetings where most members of the Group are to be present. The Secretariat endeavours to obtain funding to facilitate the participation of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the meetings of the Group.

2. Biosafety capacity-building databases

Nature and structure

7. This element comprises databases on capacity-building activities, such as projects and capacity-building opportunities, as well as country capacity-needs, which are maintained and accessed through the Biosafety Clearing-House. The projects database includes initiatives that have a series of inter-linked activities implemented as integral components over a long period of time (at least over six months). Each record includes information on: the project location, funding details, objectives and activities, main outcomes, lessons learned and a brief background. On the other hand, the capacity-building opportunities database includes punctual/standalone activities (e.g. funding grants, training courses, scholarships or internships) that are not part of a larger project included in the projects database. Each record includes: the type of opportunity, its scope, timeframe, eligibility criteria, application process and contacts. Finally, the capacity-needs database includes submissions by countries of their prioritized needs, the desired means to address needs identified and an outline of measures being taken. Records in all the databases contain summary information about the project, opportunity or country needs and provide contacts or web links where further information can be obtained.

Role

8. The overall function of the databases is to provide a central point where up-to-date information, or sources of information, about biosafety capacity-building projects, opportunities and country needs are registered and accessed easily and in a timely manner. The databases play a “clearing-house” role where countries requiring assistance and those providing assistance interact, thus facilitating systematic tailoring of available assistance towards specific country-defined priority needs and promoting partnerships between seekers and providers of support. The databases also facilitate identification of opportunities for promoting synergies, collaboration and partnerships. The projects database in particular facilitates

sharing of information about the coverage, achievements, experiences, best-practices and lessons learned under different projects. It also facilitates the identification gaps and minimization of unnecessary overlaps or duplication of efforts and resources.

Operational modalities

9. The capacity-building databases are managed and accessed through the Biosafety Clearing-House. Common formats are used to assist all countries and organizations to submit information in a consistent manner and facilitate customized searching of the databases. Relevant information can be registered in the databases either online or by hardcopy. Under the first option, persons designated by Government or relevant organizations can register information directly into the database through the management centre using a password system. Those without Internet access can fill and return to the Secretariat hard copies of the common formats for incorporation in the databases. The databases are maintained by the Secretariat, which periodically reminds owners of the records in the database to update them as appropriate.

3. Information-sharing and networking mechanism

10. This element consists of two components namely: (a) biosafety information resource centre and (b) biosafety capacity-building network.

(a) Biosafety information resource centre

Nature and structure

11. The biosafety information resource centre is a “virtual library” consisting of catalogues of information, scientific data and resource materials relevant to biosafety capacity-building produced by various organizations and Governments. These may include: training materials, course catalogues, operational toolkits or guidelines, workshop reports, paper and presentations, case-studies, technical publications, newsletters and journals, legal documents, project profiles, project proposal preparation materials and others in form of publications, CD-ROMs or other media. Records are based on common format with the following key fields: title of the record, type of information (e.g. manual, case-study, or workshop report), thematic areas (based on the Action Plan elements), author, date of publication, name of publisher or organization, key words as well as an abstract or a book review. Each record includes contact details and/or links to the relevant websites or databases where detailed information could be obtained are provided.

Role

12. The biosafety information resource centre provides a central gateway to relevant biosafety information, scientific data and resource materials available at different sources with the view to ensuring their broader dissemination, easy and timely access, and their maximum use. In addition, it helps those planning to produce new materials to avoid duplicating what is already available and focus on areas not yet addressed or “adding-value” to existing materials.

Operational modalities

13. The biosafety information resource centre is maintained in the Biosafety Clearing-House and linked to the document search facility of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Governments and organizations are invited to register their relevant information and resource materials using a common format or provide copies to the Secretariat for entry in the information resource centre. Records are searchable, through an electronic catalogue, by type of information, thematic area, author, date of publication or by the publisher or owner of the information. In addition, a full text search using keywords

is possible. Where possible hard copies or CD-ROMs of uncopyrighted materials are made available to countries without Internet access, upon request. Users of materials from the resource centre are encouraged to indicate their specific information needs and provide feedback on their experiences in using the resource centre in order to facilitate ongoing improvement of the system.

(b) Biosafety capacity-building network

Nature and structure

14. The biosafety capacity-building network is a platform that links key different individuals from Government agencies, research institutions and other relevant organizations who are interested in or involved in designing, implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building and research activities, to interact and exchange views, knowledge and experiences, informally. It complements other existing relevant networks such as the Inter-Agency Network for Safety in Biotechnology (IANB) coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Role

15. The primary role of the biosafety capacity-building network is to facilitate active interaction and sharing of knowledge, views, experiences and lessons learned among individuals, organizations and donor agencies interested in promoting biosafety capacity-building and sharing scientific knowledge, in a timely, organized and effective manner. It seeks to foster contacts and strengthen existing linkages between different organizations in order to leverage expertise and promote synergies, partnerships and mutual support as well as dialogue and consensus around key issues, including adoption common concepts and approaches. It also enables scientific experts to share biosafety research results and to exchange professional viewpoints on specific issues. It also provides a forum for interested scientists to discuss and build consensus around specific technical and scientific issues related to biosafety.

Operational modalities

16. The biosafety capacity-building network is administered through the Biosafety Clearing-House, which serves as the “network hub”. It operates primarily using Internet-based tools, including e-mail listservs, bulletin boards, electronic discussion forums and electronic conferences. Prospective members of the network can register with the Secretariat through the Biosafety Clearing-House and be issued with a password to enable them access and participate in the relevant e-discussions, in accordance with the established rules and procedures. Network members are encouraged to volunteer information and to take lead in organizing and moderating specific thematic discussions, in collaboration with the Secretariat. The discussions may result in specific outputs (e.g. proceedings) that could be published and made available to all countries, as appropriate or lead to consensus around particular issues (e.g. agreed terminologies or approaches).

4. Coordination meetings and workshops

Nature and structure

17. Coordination meetings provide a forum where individuals from relevant organizations, Government agencies and donors involved in designing, implementing or funding biosafety capacity-building activities meet face-to-face, in an informal setting, to exchange information, knowledge and lessons regarding their capacity-building efforts. They may be in the form of roundtables, workshops or informal consultations. The meetings are informal, flexible and not too structured in order to allow free exchange of information and ideas.

Role

18. The primary goal of the coordination meetings is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, views and operational experience between different organizations regarding their biosafety capacity-building activities, with the view to fostering synergies, partnerships and harmonization of efforts. In particular, the meetings help relevant organizations to develop a common understanding of the major biosafety capacity-building issues, challenges and priority needs of countries. They also provide a means to review the coverage, gaps and overlap in ongoing activities and to identify possible solutions to address the gaps, minimize overlaps and avoid over-coverage of certain issues or geographic areas at the expense of others. Finally, the meetings facilitate exchange of innovative ideas to improve the delivery of capacity-building assistance to countries and to promote strategic and systematic efforts, tailored to specific country-defined needs and priorities in order to realize maximum impact.

Operational modalities

19. Coordination meetings are organized by the Secretariat, in collaboration with interested organizations, subject to availability of funding. Wherever possible, they are organized on the margins of other major events where most of the relevant organizations are present, in order to optimize participation. The agenda and duration of the meetings is determined by the co-organizer(s). The meetings do not necessarily follow a regular schedule but are adaptive and take advantage of strategic events. Prior to each meeting, participants are encouraged to submit to the organizers relevant information including updates on their on-going activities, to be shared with other participants.

5. *Reporting mechanism*

Nature and structure

20. The reporting mechanism is a central system comprising a database of reports and/or web links to reports related to capacity-building in biosafety which are produced by Governments and relevant organizations. These include progress reports on implementation of the Action Plan as requested by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol as well as voluntary reports from relevant organizations, such as project progress reports or end-of-cycle evaluation reports, project appraisal reports or mission reports as well as case-studies on success stories covering experiences, accomplishments and lessons learned.

Role

21. The reporting mechanism provides a central point where relevant reports or case-studies of success stories of initiatives relevant to capacity-building in biosafety can be deposited, accessed and shared. The primary purpose is to make such information easily and widely accessible in order to enable Parties and relevant organizations to draw upon each other's experiences and accomplishments to enhance the implementation of the capacity-building Action Plan. Sharing of such reports is a key ingredient in promoting synergies, collaborative partnerships and mutual learning. In particular, the mechanism has the following functions: assist in developing an overall picture of the progress made in capacity-building; showcase success stories and factors and facilitate their replication, facilitate identification and promotion of positive best-practices and avoidance of pitfalls or "re-invention of the wheel".

Operational modalities

22. A database of biosafety capacity-building reports is maintained in the Biosafety Clearing-House where Parties, Governments and relevant organizations submit and access the available reports using a common format. Wherever possible, links are made to existing national, regional or organizational databases, websites and other contacts where such reports can be accessed in order to minimize the need

for countries and organizations to provide the same information to more than one place. The reports are organized in a searchable format with a number of fields including: type of report, timeframe, organization, thematic areas and key words (for example to facilitate search for best-practices and lessons learned).

C. Administration of the Coordination Mechanism

23. The Coordination Mechanism is administered by the Executive Secretary, whose primary functions include the following:

(a) Maintaining the capacity-building databases (on projects, opportunities and country needs), including their regular updating based on submissions received from the participating Parties, Governments, relevant organizations and donors;

(b) Facilitating the dissemination of relevant information and lessons learned on biosafety capacity-building initiatives through the Biosafety Clearing-House and information documents to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(c) Preparing and disseminating synthesis reports based on the submissions by Parties, Governments and relevant organizations on their progress in implementing various elements of the Action Plan, using a common format;

(d) Convening and servicing meetings of the Liaison Group on capacity-building on biosafety, as necessary;

(e) Organizing, subject to availability of funding, periodic coordination meetings and workshops for Government representatives, relevant organizations and donors, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its Implementing Agencies and other relevant organizations;

(f) Promoting broad and common understanding of the capacity-building needs for the effective implementation of the Protocol.
