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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
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MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CARTAGENA
PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY

Second meeting

Montreal, 30 May-3 June 2005

Item 6 of the provisional agenda **

**REPORT OF THE LIAISON GROUP MEETING ON CAPACITY-BUILDING
FOR BIOSAFETY**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety met in Montreal from 27 to 28 January 2005.
2. The meeting was attended by 15 participants. The list of participants is contained in an Annex to this report (Annex II).
3. The meeting was convened by the Executive Secretary, in accordance with decision BS-I/5 regarding the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Action Plan on Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which was adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol at its first meeting (Decision BS-I/5, Annex IV).

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** UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/2/1.

4. The Liaison Group is one of the five elements of the Coordination Mechanism, and its meetings are aimed at providing 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 Biosafety Protocol. ^{1/}

5. The meeting elected Desmond Mahon (Canada) to serve as its Chairperson, and Charles Mugoya (Uganda) to serve as Rapporteur.

6. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda provided in document UNEP/CBD/BS/LG-CB/2/1. The following main items were discussed by the meeting:

(a) Consideration of the terms of reference of the Liaison Group and its modalities of operation

(b) Review of the draft report on implementation of the Coordination Mechanism

(c) Measures to enhance the coordination and implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol

(d) Elements of the draft terms of reference for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol

7. The meeting considered and adopted terms of reference for the Liaison Group and its modalities of operation as annexed to this report (Annex I).

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The meeting agreed on the following main conclusions and recommendations:

A. Implementation of the Coordination Mechanism

9. Recognizing that lack of information and the variable quality of that information in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) is an impediment to implementation of the Coordination Mechanism, the liaison group noted that the effectiveness of the Coordination Mechanism depends on provision of information to the BCH databases, in particular on the needs of countries. In this regard, the group recommended that the Executive Secretary consider:

Enhancement of Information-Gathering

(a) Gathering information from countries, for example through use of a questionnaire, to determine the extent to which the common formats for the BCH databases and language are limiting the provision of information to the BCH;

(b) Emphasizing to governments that provision of information to the BCH databases will benefit the overall objective of capacity-building, through assisting donors and organizations providing assistance to tailor their initiatives to actual needs;

^{1/} The five elements of the Coordination Mechanism are: the capacity-building Liaison Group, the biosafety capacity-building databases, the information-sharing and networking mechanism, coordination meetings and workshops, and the reporting mechanism (reference COP-MOP Decision BS-I/5).

(c) Inviting national and international organizations involved in biosafety capacity-building such as UNEP-GEF that have in-country infrastructure to assist countries in providing information to the BCH;

(d) Establishing clear deadlines for countries to provide particular types of information to the BCH, in order to encourage countries not to postpone provision of information; and

(e) Providing an opportunity for countries to provide information to the BCH at COP/MOP meetings, and informing governments in advance that they bring the necessary information in order to take advantage of such opportunities.

Outcomes of the Coordination Meeting for Academic Institutions

(f) Implementing the recommendations of the October 2004 meeting of academic institutions, and in particular to consider making available the compendium of biosafety training and education programs on the BCH, and inviting governments and institutions to identify other institutions offering biosafety courses that could be encouraged to submit information to the BCH; and

(g) Analyzing use of the BCH databases as a means to relate what capacity assistance needs are being searched for, relative to the capacity-building initiatives that are available, and making that information available to donors, implementers, recipients, and the Coordination meetings.

B. Measures to Enhance the Coordination and Implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol

10. Regarding enhanced coordination and implementation of the Action Plan, the Liaison Group recommended that the Executive Secretary consider:

(a) Liaising with regional and sub-regional institutions to invite them to contribute to regional and sub-regional level capacity-building for biosafety, and facilitating the participation of relevant institutions in the Coordination Mechanism.

(b) Inviting the next Coordination Meeting to consider the need for and means to facilitate interaction between donors, implementers of capacity-building initiatives, and recipients, with a view to promoting coordination in the design of initiatives.

D. Terms of reference for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol

11. The Liaison Group noted that the Action Plan was formulated before capacity needs were well understood, and emphasized the importance of the review. The group agreed with the objectives and main components as outlined in the terms of reference.

Process for Collecting Information During the Review

12. The Liaison Group recommended that the review be based primarily on information provided by countries, and recommended that a questionnaire be a key tool to gather that information.

13. Regarding the design of the questionnaire, the Liaison Group recommended that

(a) The Executive Secretary use the Liaison Group to assist in its preparation

(b) The questionnaire be designed in a way that elicits the appropriate information from recipients, donors and/or implementers of capacity-building initiatives, in particular information on country priorities and on identified gaps;

(c) The questionnaire be easily accessible and simple to complete, for example through the use of check-boxes and yes/no questions, and should make use of the existing indicators for monitoring implementation of the Action Plan

14. The Liaison Group recommended that the review takes into account relevant information from external sources such as the results of the GEF evaluation of its activities under the GEF Initial Strategy on Biosafety, any information arising from the Coordination Mechanism, and the strategic plans of countries for capacity-building in biosafety prioritizing the needs for capacity building activities in the different components of the national biosafety framework, if available.

Facilitating Provision of Information

15. The Liaison Group recommended that in order to assist countries in responding to the questionnaire and to maximize the collection of information, the Executive Secretary could collaborate with national and international organizations and institutions which have in-country contacts and infrastructure, such as the UNEP-GEF projects;

Outcome of the review

16. The Liaison Group recommended that the main outcome of the review be development of strategic recommendations, based on identification of gaps and priorities for countries with respect to capacity-building needs for implementation of the Protocol, to be taken into account in the possible revision of the Action Plan in order to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness and sustainability of capacity-building measures.

17. Depending on the outcome of the review, the Liaison Group recommended that the Executive Secretary consider developing a draft revised Action Plan for consideration by the COP-MOP at its third meeting.

18. The Liaison Group offered to review the strategic recommendations with a view to providing advice to the Executive Secretary regarding implications for potential revision of the Action Plan.

ANNEX I

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE LIAISON GROUP ON CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR BIOSAFETY AND ITS MODALITIES OF OPERATION

Mandate

1. The overall mandate of the Liaison Group as stated in decision BS-I/5 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. Some of its tasks specified in the decision include: exchanging ideas and providing advice on overall strategic approaches as well as conceptual and possible practical operational measures for enhancing coordination of the capacity-building initiatives.

2. The Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety will be expected to undertake, *inter alia*, the following tasks, within its overall mandate and upon request by the Executive Secretary:

(a) Provide advice on conceptual frameworks and practical measures to enhance coordination and cooperation in building capacities for the effective implementation of the Protocol, including clarification of relevant technical issues and terminology;

(b) Identify and advise the Executive Secretary on available relevant scientific, technical and other information to ensure its use, as appropriate, in the preparation of documentation on capacity-building for relevant meetings under the Protocol;

(c) Peer-review, as necessary, relevant pre-session documents related to capacity-building;

(d) Assist the Executive Secretary, when necessary, in implementing specific capacity-building activities requested by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol;

(e) Review the development and implementation of other elements of the Coordination Mechanism and provide, as appropriate, feedback and advice to the Executive Secretary on possible improvements;

(f) Advise the Executive Secretary in developing tools and guidance to assist Parties and other Governments to assess their capacity-building needs;

(g) Assist in identifying opportunities for advancing capacity-building efforts for the effective implementation of the Protocol and for fostering coordination and cooperation;

(h) Propose ways and means to assist Parties in identifying and mobilizing the necessary financial, technical and other resources for building capacities to implement the Protocol;

(i) Perform any other relevant tasks as may be requested by the Executive Secretary in accordance with the decisions of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of Parties to the Protocol for the purpose of promoting and advancing capacity-building initiatives for the effective implementation of the Protocol.

Modalities of Operation

3. In accordance with decision BS I/5, the Liaison Group will be convened by, and will report to, the Executive Secretary. The normal operating procedures would allow for at least one face-to-face meeting per year. However the Executive Secretary may convene more meetings when a need arises for advice on specific capacity-building issues related to the coordination and effective implementation of the capacity-building Action Plan, subject to availability of funding. Each meeting will typically last no more than two days.

4. The Liaison Group will operate through face-to-face meetings and also through electronic means, including teleconferences, e-mail or e-discussion forums. A restricted website for the Liaison Group will be established to facilitate on-line discussions and minimize on the need for face-to-face meetings.

5. Each meeting of the Liaison Group will elect its Chair and Rapporteur from among the participants present. The Chair will be responsible for conveying the report of the meeting to the Executive Secretary. The Chair will also be responsible for mobilizing input from other members of the Liaison Group in cases of agreed follow-up activities and for moderating discussions that may be held via e-mail and other electronic means.

6. The composition of the Liaison Group will vary according to the expertise required to address a specific issue or issues. Participants will be selected on the basis of their demonstrated expertise and will serve in their individual capacity and not as representatives of their respective Governments or organizations. The Executive Secretary will endeavor to ensure a balanced geographical distribution between regions, and a fair representation of relevant stakeholders. Every effort will be made to ensure that any one meeting of the Liaison Group includes some of the participants that attended the previous meetings in order to maintain some degree of continuity and institutional memory.

ANNEX II

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