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Third meeting

Curitiba, Brazil, 13 – 17 March 2006

**REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON EUROPEAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR BIOSAFETY
COOPERATION; 7 - 8 NOVEMBER 2005; KÖNIGSWINTER, GERMANY**

Note by the Executive Secretary

At the request of the Government of Germany, the Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants, a report of the workshop on European Responsibility for Biosafety Cooperation, which was held 7-8 November 2005 in Königswinter, Germany. The submission is being circulated as it was received from the Government of Germany.

European Responsibility for Biosafety Cooperation

Report

7 - 8 November 2005

Königswinter, Germany

Chairpersons: Olga Goldfain, Genok & Hartmut Meyer, GTZ

SUMMARY

Background

Recent discussions at the 2nd Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol in June 2005 revealed a lack of a coordinated European agenda on biosafety research and capacity building. Many European donors fund some capacity building measures indirectly through their contribution to the multilateral donor organisation Global Environment Facility (GEF), but only few have set up own policies and initiatives to support a broader range of activities. Most critically, the effective implementation of the Cartagena Protocol and the establishment of a comprehensive national framework also require other types of expertise which can not or only be partially developed in the GEF projects. For example, expertise has to be built up in the fields of:

- independent science that takes into account local environmental conditions and health-related issues, thus supporting the national authorities in risk assessments;
- public information and participation in developing national biosafety legislation and in decision-making;
- environmental monitoring of GMOs;
- segregation of GMO and non-GMO commodities;
- co-existence of GMOs with non-GMOs;
- socio-economic considerations in decision-making.

The "Königswinter workshop"

This workshop convened by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, Germany, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany and the Norwegian Institute for Gene Ecology (GenOk), brought together European researchers, regulators and donors who already work on or can contribute significantly to initiatives supporting research and capacity building measures in the developing countries aiming at implementing the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety under the Convention of Biological Diversity.

During the two-day workshop several resource persons gave presentations of examples of scientific research and capacity building projects addressing biosafety issues. The position and activities of the EU Member States concerning biosafety capacity building with regard to next meeting of the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP-3) and the bilateral biosafety cooperation projects of the European Commission were also presented.

The workshop discussed the specific requirements for coordination of biosafety research and capacity building, possible linkages between detection capacity, segregation & labelling and environmental risk assessments as well as scientific research and risk assessment, public participation, and socio-economic considerations as necessary preconditions to ensure informed consent in GMO decision making. This report has been compiled by the two chairpersons as their record and summary of the discussion.

Conclusions

In order to reinforce and create better synergies between the existing and future efforts in supporting biosafety research and capacity building in the developing countries the participants agreed to form a "European Network on Biosafety Research and Capacity Building". The Network aims to provide, based on its current involvement and expertise, the respective national administrations ideas and recommendations regarding biosafety research and capacity building in the developing countries on the issues of the review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the questionnaire for the comprehensive review of the Action Plan, and the decision documents for COP-MOP-3. This information can also be brought to the attention of the incoming Austrian Presidency, respectively the European Commission.

INPUT BY RESOURCE PERSONS

(The presentations can be downloaded at <http://www.genok.org/>)

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety - COP-MOP decisions on capacity building - International coordination and activities

- a) **Hartmut Meyer (GTZ/Germany & Chairperson of the Coordination Meeting Steering Committee)** on the Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organisations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-Building Activities
- b) **Jan Husby (Genok Norway)** on the provisions on biosafety research and capacity building in the COP-MOP decisions and other United Nations documents

Examples of scientific research and capacity building projects addressing biosafety issues

- c) **Helmut Gaugitsch (Federal Environment Agency/Austria)** on the assessment of GE crop & food application dossiers to the EU with regard to the information on toxicology and aliergenicity provided by the applicants, and on suggestions for capacity building in developing countries with respect to independent health risk assessment of GE crop & applications
- d) **Angelika Hilbeck (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich/Switzerland)** on the GMO Guidelines (now GMO ERA) Project developing and applying scientific field and laboratory methods for GE crop environmental risk assessment in Kenya, Brazil, and Vietnam
- e) **Gavor Lövei (Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences Flakkebjerg/Denimark)** on Biosafety Capacity Building in East Africa: the DANIDA -supported BiosafeTrain Project
- f) **Broder Breckling (University of Bremen/Germany)** on an EU project about modelling landscape effects of GE plants and biosafety implications on different scales based on examples from Northern Germany
- g) **Bryan Wynne (University of Lancaster/UK)** on the necessity of public participation for UN Biosafety Protocol Risk Assessment
- h) **Alexandra Müller & Hartmut Meyer (both GTZ/Germany)** on bilateral German biosafety capacity building projects in China and Algeria focussing on public information and participation, and on the BMZ/AU-project for biosafety capacity building in Africa focussing on regional policy issues

i) **Terje Traavik (Genok Norway)** on Gateways - Portals to Holistic, Independent Research and Biosafety Competence Related to Genetic Engineering and Genetically Modified Organisms in Developing Countries

Is biosafety capacity building and research a topic in the European development cooperation? Discussions on and propositions for national and European approaches and collaboration

j) **Matthias Buck (DG Environment - European Commission/Beigium)** on examples of relevant EC bilateral cooperation projects

k) **Helmut Gaugitsch (Federal Environment Agency/Austria)** on positions and activities of the EU concerning biosafety capacity building and research with regard to COP-MOP-3

RESULTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

1) Specific requirements of coordination of biosafety research and capacity building

The participants of the workshop identified necessary additional features of coordination besides the broadly recognized elements like enhancing information exchange, promoting synergies between activities etc.:

- coordination of scientific research should be undertaken by coordinative bodies involving a broad range of stakeholders, the coordination through purely scientific bodies - often consisting of potential applicants for grants - contravenes the necessary diversity of disciplines, approaches and methodologies;
- coordinative bodies should ensure:
 - that a diverse range of governmental and civil society organisations have access to and can participate in biosafety capacity building programmes;
 - that regulatory systems are developed accommodating existing public demands and that possibly can anticipate future public demands; that regulatory systems show enough flexibility to react to changing public demands.

2) Relationship between economics and the ecological risks of GMOs

The participants of the workshop discussed possible linkages between segregation, labelling and environmental risk assessments. They described the current situation as follows:

- the Cartagena Protocol and European Union GMO legislation limit the scope of risk assessment on environment and health aspects, an European Union legislation for assessing socio-economic risks and taking them into account in decision making does not exist;
- many developing countries see the economic risks of GMOs in agriculture and food production in the context of access to those markets that demand segregation and labelling; market-oriented considerations are seen as essential elements of biosafety systems and risk assessments, European countries are asked for appropriate support in research and capacity building;
- the new European GMO legislation, based on the precautionary principle, takes into account the issues of uncertainty in risk assessments to provide provisions for post-marketing measures like monitoring, limited approval timeframes, or registers for field trials.

To find a way forward with regard to support developing countries in economic and environmental risk assessments the following considerations should be taken into account:

- decisions under the Cartagena Protocol should be based on the precautionary principle;
- the Cartagena Protocol states that Parties may take into account biodiversity-related socio-economic considerations in decision-making within the scope of the protocol;
- outside of the scope of the Cartagena Protocol, States may adopt post-marketing measures reflecting the inherent uncertainty in risk assessments;

- the methodology of risk assessments under the Cartagena Protocol itself links scientific uncertainty with post-marketing measures such as monitoring.

3) Necessary preconditions to ensure informed consent in GMO decision making

The discussion covered three topics that have been identified as highly relevant for GMO decision-making: scientific research and risk assessment, public participation, and socio-economic considerations. The following recommendations were made:

a) Scientific research and risk assessment

- Secure independent biosafety-related research
- Separate the promotion of modern biotechnology from biosafety issues
- Engage diverse expertise in research and risk assessment
- Base risk assessment on experimental work that follows good scientific practice and reporting rather than on assumptions
- Identify and mobilize expertise existing in developing countries
- Create "problem and needs" orientated research and training opportunities
- Develop (sub)regional biosafety capacity including GMO detection and identification capacity

b) Public participation in risk assessment and decision-making

- Engage non-scientific experts carrying relevant local knowledge (e.g. farmers, indigenous groups) in the risk assessment procedures
- Develop communication tools that take into account language barriers and illiteracy
- Effective public participation requires unrestricted access to public information and should build upon existing models of public participation
- Develop capacity that can deal with the consequences of the decisions made

c) Socio-economic considerations

- Collect and analyse existing studies on socio-economic impacts
- Plan and undertake field studies concerning socio-economic issues covering Art. 26 of the Cartagena Protocol and other emerging socio-economic issues

4) Coordinating biosafety research and capacity building activities in the developing countries

The participants suggested the following critical elements when planning and pursuing joint biosafety research and capacity building activities in developing countries:

- a) Planning and coordinating of joint activities:
 - Create synergies with existing biosafety research and capacity building activities in the developed and the developing countries
 - Sustain independence of research and capacity building activities
 - Specifically consider and avoid conflicts of interests
 - Coordinate short and long term training opportunities
 - Undertake regular evaluation of biosafety research and capacity building activities
- b) Pursuing the cooperation in the developing countries:
 - Create interdisciplinary multi-level expertise
 - Ensure access to complete information on existing GMO risk assessments
 - Promote South-South networks
 - Integrate communication training in biosafety research and capacity building activities
 - Transfer technology and methodology that work under local conditions
 - Develop infrastructure in the developing countries, e.g. laboratory facilities, training facilities
 - Develop a transition plans to support sustainability of research and capacity building activities
 - Make efforts to create appropriate employment opportunities after training
- c) Recommendations for project applications:

- Provide the potential donor with an analysis of the existing biosafety projects in the recipient country and make sure that projects fit into the "biosafety landscape" of the recipient country
- Document the interest of national stakeholders of projects
- Discuss co-funding opportunities and consortium-building
- Create and demonstrate strong ownership incentives (e.g. through matching funding from the recipient country)
- Ensure that the project is in line with the MOP decisions and the donor's country priorities; if the project supports the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals highlight and explain it

CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

1. The participants of the meeting agreed to form a "European Network on Biosafety Research and Capacity Building" for creating better synergies between the existing and future efforts in biosafety research and capacity building in the developing countries. The areas of cooperation within the "European Coalition on Biosafety Research and Capacity Building" should be defined by commonly identified knowledge as well as policy gaps and mapping our own resources.
2. In 2006, Genok will coordinate the activities of the Network. The internet-based Biosafety Clearing-House should be used to retrieve and disseminate information about cooperation and projects as well as assessment of need and priorities settings.
3. The "Königswinter Workshop" is recommended to be convened once a year. The next workshop is envisaged for May 2006 with the aim to foster the dialog between researchers, implementing organisations and donors.
4. Programmes and projects with developing countries should take into account the recommendations of the "Königswinter Workshop" on scientific research and risk assessment, public participation in risk assessment & decision making, and socio-economic considerations.
5. The "European Network on Biosafety Research and Capacity Building" will provide their respective national administrations with ideas and recommendations regarding biosafety research and capacity building in the developing countries on following issues:
 - a) Review of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
 - b) Questionnaire for the Comprehensive Review of the Action Plan
 - c) Decision documents for COP-MOP-3

This information can also be brought to the attention of the incoming Austrian Presidency, respectively the European Commission.

List of participants

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