



Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/5*
21 February 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

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

Fourth meeting

Bonn, 12-16 May 2008

Item 6 of the provisional agenda**

REPORT OF THE MEETING THIRD COORDINATION MEETING FOR GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS IMPLEMENTING OR FUNDING BIOSAFETY CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-Building Activities was held in Lusaka, from 26 to 28 February 2007. It was attended by a total of 43 participants. The full list of participants is contained in annex II to this report.
2. The meeting was hosted by the Government of Zambia, through the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research (NISIR). The Government of Germany provided financial support for participants from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
3. The meeting was officially opened by the Honourable Brig. Gen. Dr. Brian Chituwo, the Minister of Science, Technology and Vocational Training (MSTVT). In his remarks, Hon. Chituwo underscored the importance of capacity-building in biosafety, including biotechnology to the extent that it is required for biosafety. He observed that if the issue of capacity-building is not adequately addressed, the effort that went into negotiating the Protocol will have been in vain. He also highlighted the importance of collaboration between Parties in building capacities for biosafety. In this regard, he commended the fruitful collaboration between the Governments of Norway and Zambia through which a National Biotechnology Laboratory was established. Hon. Chituwo informed participants that the third Coordination Meeting was timely, taking place shortly after the African Union summit that adopted the African Strategy on Biotechnology, whose implementation will require addressing biosafety issues.
4. Opening remarks were also made by Dr. Henry Mwenda, the Chairperson of the NISIR Board of Directors, Mr. Charles Gbedemah, the representative of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Ms. Eva Axthelm, the representative of the German Government.

* Previously issued as UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/3/3.

** UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/1.

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5. In his remarks, Dr. Mwenda welcomed the participants to Zambia. He observed that their effort to attend the meeting was a clear indication of their commitment to the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. He invited participants to visit the new National Biotechnology Laboratory, which he said is an important component of Zambia's effort to implement the Protocol.

6. On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Mr. Gbedemah thanked the Government of Zambia for hosting the meeting and the German Government for providing the financial support that enabled participants from developing countries and countries with economies in transition to attend the meeting. He highlighted the progress made in developing tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the Protocol and welcomed the efforts made by different governments and organizations in building the necessary capacities. He underscored the importance of ensuring coordination and cooperation among the different stakeholders at the country, subregional, regional and global levels and noted the role played by the coordination meetings in this regard.

7. Ms. Eva Axthelm, speaking on behalf of Mrs. Marita Steinke, Head of the Environment Division of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ), expressed the pleasure of the German Government in co-sponsoring the meeting. She highlighted the role played by the German Government prior to and since the adoption of the Protocol and pledged continued support for its effective implementation. She reported that the German Government, through the initiative entitled Capacity-Building for the Implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, launched in 2000, has supported a number of bilateral biosafety projects and the regional Africa-wide Biosafety Capacity-Building Project implemented by the African Union (AU) Commission. Ms. Axthelm emphasized the need for countries to put in place functioning biosafety frameworks and to build sufficient human resource capacities to implement the Protocol. In this regard, she noted that the Global Environment Facility (GEF)'s continued support to countries within the framework of the new GEF Biosafety Strategy is essential.

8. The participants elected Mr. Hartmut Meyer (Germany) to serve as Chairperson of the meeting and Ms. Regla Maria Diaz Jimenez (Cuba) to serve as Rapporteur.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

9. The meeting adopted its agenda on the basis of the provisional agenda that was provided in document UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/3/1. The following principal substantive issues were discussed by the meeting:

(a) Regional and subregional approaches to capacity-building in biosafety: issues, practical experiences and future strategies (agenda item 4.2); and

(b) Options for building national capacities for implementation of the living modified organism (LMO) identification and documentation requirements under Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Protocol (agenda item 4.3).

10. In addition, participants reviewed the progress made in implementing the conclusions and recommendations of the second coordination meeting, held 18-20 January 2006 in Tromsø, Norway (agenda item 3.1).

11. Under agenda item 3.2, participants made short presentations on the latest developments under their ongoing capacity-building projects and initiatives. Fifteen written briefs submitted prior to the meeting were compiled and made available to all participants in an information document (UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/3/INF/1). Four detailed case-study presentations (discussed below) were also made and copies posted on the Secretariat's website at: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=BSCMCB-03>

12. Under agenda item 3.3 (Consideration of the capacity-building needs and priorities of countries), participants, drawing on their experiences and the Secretariat's synthesis report (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/2/INF/7), discussed and identified the critical capacity-building needs for many countries. A priority-setting exercise was undertaken to identify issues for discussion at the next coordination meeting with a view to finding possible solutions.

13. Under agenda item 4.2 (Regional and subregional approaches to capacity-building in biosafety), the meeting had as one of its background papers a pre-session document (UNEP/CBD/BS/CM-CB/3/2) prepared by the Secretariat. The following detailed case-study presentations were also made under this item:

(a) Case-study on the African Union Commission-German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (AUC-BMZ) Africa-wide Biosafety Capacity-Building Project, by Ms. Mahlet Teshome from the Biosafety Unit of the African Union Commission;

(b) FAO Regional Project on Capacity-Building in Biosafety of GM Crops in Asia (GCP/RAS/185/JPN), by Mr. Abdoul Aziz Sy, FAO Research and Extension Unit, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department;

(c) The Organization of American States (OAS) Initiatives in Biotechnology and Biosafety (2002-2006), by Dr. Lionel Gil from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Chile, who is also Coordinator of the OAS Biosafety Project (AE192/3).

14. Following the presentations, three working groups were established to discuss the following issues:

(a) Criteria for determining issues that can best be addressed at the regional and subregional levels and examples of such issues;

(b) Criteria for determining institutional mechanisms to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation in biosafety capacity-building;

(c) Mechanisms and measures (ways and means) for promoting regional and subregional cooperation.

15. The meeting also discussed and adopted draft Guidance for Promoting Regional and Subregional Approaches to Capacity-Building in Biosafety, contained in annex I below. Participants agreed to forward the draft guidance to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Biosafety Protocol for consideration at its fourth meeting, which will be held in Bonn in May 2008.

16. Under agenda item 4.3 (Options for building national capacities for implementation of the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Protocol), the meeting heard a detailed case-study presentation by Dr. Chris Viljoen, GMO Testing Facility, University of the Free State. The presentation highlighted the experiences and lessons learned from the documentation and identification of LMOs in South Africa.

III. OTHER MATTERS

17. Under agenda item 5 (Other matters), participants exchanged views on possible agenda items for the next coordination meeting, as well as the tentative venue and date. A participant from the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests expressed his country's interest in hosting the next meeting. He promised to consult the relevant national authorities and inform the Secretariat in due course of the final decision including, if agreed, the date and venue. The Steering Committee was mandated to develop the agenda for the next meeting.

18. In accordance with the operational procedures and guidelines for the coordination meetings adopted at the first Coordination Meeting, participants elected the following persons to serve on the new Steering Committee for the next two years:

1. Dr. Chris Viljoen (South Africa) – Africa;
2. Dr. Manoranjan Hota (India) – Asia/Pacific;
3. Ms. Darja Stanic Racman (Slovenia) – Central and Eastern Europe;
4. Mrs. Lenia Arce Hernández (Cuba) – Latin America and the Caribbean;
5. Dr. Hartmut Meyer (Germany) – Western Europe and Others Group;
6. Ms. Helle Biseth (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) – Donors;
7. TBA – United Nations agencies;
8. Mr. John Komen (International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI) - Inter-Governmental Organizations.

19. Participants highlighted the need to expand the coordination function and mandate of the coordination meetings beyond the sharing/ exchange of information. It was agreed that the meetings should play a bigger role in fostering coordination among different players, for example, by facilitating interactions and inter-linkages between the donor agencies and the organizations implementing biosafety capacity-building activities. Some participants also recommended that the meetings should discuss ways of fostering linkages between biosafety and the broader development issues, plans and programmes, such as poverty alleviation.

20. Dr. Lionel Gil, a representative of the Organization of American States, offered to explore the possibility of publishing the results of the meeting in the Electronic Journal of Biotechnology produced by Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile. Participants welcomed the offer and asked Dr. Gil to liaise with the Secretariat on this matter.

21. On the last day, participants reviewed and adopted the draft report of the meeting covering the proceedings of the previous two days. The Secretariat was requested to incorporate proceedings of the last day and send the final draft to all participants for comments. The present report has been finalized on that basis.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. *Regional and subregional approaches to capacity-building in biosafety*

22. The main conclusions and recommendations of the meeting regarding regional and subregional approaches to capacity-building in biosafety include the following:

1 Criteria for identifying issues that could be addressed through regional and subregional cooperation

23. Participants noted that the identification of common issues among participating countries is a prerequisite for regional and subregional cooperation. It was recommended that the issue identification process should:

- (a) Be needs- and demand-driven;
- (b) Be by a step-by-step approach, beginning at the national level with stocktaking;
- (c) Be undertaken in a flexible manner, taking into account the needs and circumstances of different participating countries, subregions and regions;
- (d) Follow the criteria and terms of reference agreed upon by all participating countries;
- (e) Have political endorsement in all participating countries;
- (f) Involve the National Biosafety Focal Point and the National Competent Authority/ies;
- (g) Involve stocktaking and prioritization of the issues;
- (h) Be inclusive and participatory; and
- (i) Involve effective and transparent communication, both formal and informal.

24. The issues selected should:

- (a) Be relevant to the majority of countries in the region or subregion;
- (b) Respond to, and cut across, individual country needs;
- (c) Be relevant to assisting countries in meeting their obligations under the Protocol; and
- (d) Add value to, rather than duplicate, national efforts.

25. Some of the issues that could best be addressed at the regional or subregional levels, or for which regional and subregional cooperation would be useful, include the following:

(a) Development and sharing of scientific and technical expertise in areas such as LMO-detection, development of norms and standards, etc.;

(b) Development of common approaches to, and formats for, risk assessment and risk management, including:

- (i) Cooperation in the implementation of Article 17 of the Protocol on unintentional transboundary movement of LMOs likely to have significant adverse effects on biodiversity and human health, including determination of appropriate responses and initiation of necessary actions, including emergency measures;
- (ii) Cooperation in environmental LMO monitoring and evaluation;

- (c) Sharing information, experiences and best practices on different issues, including the development and implementation of legislation, LMO decisions, etc;
- (d) Development of regional and subregional websites and databases;
- (e) Development of criteria for undertaking research on, and addressing, socio-economic considerations;
- (f) Development of regional and subregional biosafety research initiatives, including the collection and sharing of (agro)-ecological baseline data and risk assessments;
- (g) Development of common approaches to public awareness and education;
- (h) Development of common curricula in biosafety for governmental institutions, academic institutions and other stakeholders; and
- (i) Cooperation in academic and in-service training in biosafety, including the development and sharing of training materials, transfer of credits, and exchange of staff and students.

26. It was noted that a number of provisions in the Protocol require or encourage countries to cooperate on many of the above issues.

2. *Institutional mechanisms for facilitating regional and subregional cooperation on biosafety*

27. It is important to identify and designate institutional mechanisms (bodies) to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation on capacity-building in biosafety. Such mechanisms could involve one lead institution or a group of interlinked institutions and/or organizations. It was recommended that:

- (a) The selection of the institution(s) should be country-driven and should be agreed upon by consensus based on established criteria, such as those discussed below;
- (b) Collaboration between partner countries, within the selected regional and subregional bodies, should be promoted at both formal and informal levels.

28. The following criteria should be considered in the selection of a body or bodies to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation on capacity-building in biosafety. The body or bodies should:

- (a) Have a mandate for subregional/regional cooperation and such a mandate should include activities and elements relevant to biosafety;
- (b) Have previous experience and a good track record in implementing subregional/regional activities;
- (c) Preferably have previous direct or indirect involvement in promoting and catalyzing activities relevant to the implementation of the Protocol or related activities;
- (d) Be able to respond to the varying needs and levels of capacity in the operational area;
- (e) Have adequate human, financial, physical infrastructure and technical resources to deploy for biosafety activities so as to ensure sustainability;

(f) Have considerable influence among the participating countries; and

(g) Be able to build and maintain networks with relevant institutions outside of the operational area.

29. The above criteria should be applied in a flexible manner, taking into account the needs and circumstances of different participating countries, subregions and regions.

3. *Mechanisms and measures (ways and means) for promoting regional and subregional cooperation on biosafety*

30. Operational mechanisms and measures for promoting regional and subregional cooperation on biosafety vary between regions and on a case-by-case basis, depending on the issue(s) being addressed. They may also vary depending on the phases in development and implementation of national biosafety systems of the participating countries. In this regard:

(a) Regional and subregional mechanisms and approaches should be put in place only when needed and in cases where they would add value to capacity-building efforts; and

(b) Efforts should be made to identify existing relevant institutional mechanisms and determine the institutional gaps.

31. Countries may wish to consider putting in place the following institutional arrangements to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation in biosafety:

(a) Administrative and decision-making structures;

(b) Coordination mechanisms, including, among others, steering committees;

(c) Working and subject matter (thematic) groups (including rosters of experts);

(d) Regional and subregional centre(s) of excellence; and

(e) Networks linking national centres or institutions.

32. Some of the implementation mechanisms and processes that could facilitate regional and subregional cooperation in biosafety include the following:

(a) Continuous information-sharing through the Internet and other means;

(b) Frequent consultative meetings; and

(c) Regular and continuous monitoring of regional and subregional issues and developments.

33. Information exchange is a prerequisite for any regional and subregional cooperation effort. As such, it is important to put in place mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of information on capacity-building initiatives in any given region. Partly because its focus is limited to the Biosafety Protocol, the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) may not be sufficient to address the unique circumstances of different regions/ subregions. Accordingly, countries should consider developing regional and subregional biosafety websites and databases.

34. Regional and subregional mechanisms should not rely on external funding. They should, as far as possible, be funded from reliable local funding sources in order to ensure their sustainability.

B. Practical experiences in, and capacity-building needs for, the implementation of the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Protocol

35. During discussions under agenda item 4.3, participants observed that the issue of LMO documentation and identification has not yet been comprehensively addressed at the national level. It was noted that only a few countries had addressed this issue during the process of developing their national biosafety frameworks. This was partly because COP-MOP had not by then adopted a decision on LMO identification and documentation requirements. It was reported that some countries intend to address this issue through specific regulations for implementing their biosafety legislation.

36. It was further observed that many relevant stakeholders (including exporters, transporters, port authorities, customs officials and others) have not been sensitized and trained in the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18.2 of the Protocol.

37. In view of the above situation, participants concluded that it was not possible at this stage to comprehensively identify capacity-building needs and gaps in the implementation of the LMO documentation and identification requirements. In this regard, the following recommendations were made:

(a) This issue should be further discussed at the next coordination meeting and, in order to allow an informed and structured discussion, specific case-studies on practical national experiences in the implementation of the LMO documentation and identification requirements should be commissioned;

(b) Countries should be encouraged to carry out stocktaking exercises to identify policy/institutional gaps and capacity-building needs in this area;

(c) Training activities, including seminars and workshops, on the LMO documentation and identification requirements should be organized as soon as possible for key stakeholders involved in the export and import of LMOs, including: traders (importers and exporters), transporters, port authorities, customs officials and policy-makers;

(d) Tailored training packages on the LMO documentation and identification requirements should be developed for different stakeholders; and

(e) Countries should be encouraged to develop standard operating procedures on how to handle documentation accompanying LMO shipments.

C. Capacity-building needs and priorities for the implementation of the Protocol

38. Participants identified the following, in order of priority, as the most critical capacity-building needs for many countries:

(a) Implementation of the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18, paragraph 2, of the Protocol;

(b) Environmental risk assessment and post-release LMO monitoring and evaluation;

(c) Building critical masses of expertise at the national, subregional and regional levels;

(d) Socio-economic considerations/ issues related to LMOs, including the effects of intellectual property rights (IPRs) associated with biotechnology products and processes;

(e) Inter-linkages between the Protocol and other relevant international agreements, including the WTO agreements and Codex Alimentarius;

(f) Development of national strategies for capacity-building in biosafety;

(g) Integration of biosafety into broader national development plans, strategies and programmes, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the national programmes for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

(h) Information sharing through regional and subregional nodes of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

(i) Handling of liability and redress issues at the national level;

(j) National reporting under Article 33 of the Protocol.

39. It was agreed that the following four issues should be addressed at the next two coordination meetings:

(a) Socio-economic considerations related to decision-making on LMOs;

(b) Integration of biosafety into broader national development plans, strategies and programmes, such as PRSPs and the national programmes for achieving the MDGs;

(c) Implementation of the LMO identification and documentation requirements under Article 18.2 of the Protocol; and

(d) Environmental risk assessment and post-release LMO monitoring and evaluation.

40. The Steering Committee was mandated to decide which of the above four issues should be addressed at the next meeting.

41. Participants were requested to send the Secretariat suggestions of possible case-studies on topics to be agreed upon by the Steering Committee for presentation at the next meeting. The Secretariat was also requested to explore the possibility of commissioning a few case-studies on the selected topics.

Annex I

**DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR PROMOTING REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL
INITIATIVES AND APPROACHES TO CAPACITY-BUILDING IN
BIOSAFETY**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Article 22 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety requires Parties to “cooperate in the development and/or strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety (...) including through existing global, regional, subregional and national institutions and organizations and, as appropriate, through facilitating private sector involvement.” It states that such cooperation includes scientific and technical training in the proper and safe management of biotechnology and the use of risk assessment and risk management for biosafety, and in the enhancement of technological and institutional capacities in biosafety.

2. Many developing-country Parties and Parties with economies in transition require significant investments in human resources development, institutional building and technological capacities in the area of biosafety. Addressing those needs would require effective collaboration and coordination between governments and other stakeholders, including both the private and public sectors, at different levels.

3. The purpose of this guidance is to assist Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations to catalyze and/or strengthen regional and subregional approaches and initiatives for building capacities in biosafety, and biotechnology to the extent that it is required for biosafety, for the purpose of the effective implementation of the Protocol.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4. Regional and subregional approaches and initiatives to capacity-building in biosafety should:

- (a) Take into account the needs and circumstances of the different participating countries;
- (b) Set clear and realistic objectives and priorities;
- (c) Focus on issues or needs that can best be addressed through regional and subregional-level collaborative interventions (and avoid duplication of national efforts);
- (d) Adopt a demand-driven approach;
- (e) Focus on activities with added-value to national efforts;
- (f) Produce tangible benefits;
- (g) Secure strong political commitment;
- (h) Encourage participatory stakeholder involvement;
- (i) Establish clear and transparent governance and management structures;
- (j) Maximize and strengthen existing bodies and structures;

- (k) Promote synergies with relevant initiatives;
- (l) Establish effective leadership; and
- (m) Promote effective communication and networking.

III. CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING BIOSAFETY ISSUES THAT COULD BE ADDRESSED THROUGH REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION

5. The process for identifying common biosafety issues to be addressed through regional or subregional cooperation should:

- (a) Be needs- and demand-driven;
- (b) Be by a step-by-step approach, beginning at the national level with stocktaking;
- (c) Be undertaken in a flexible manner, taking into account the needs and circumstances of different participating countries, subregions and regions;
- (d) Follow the criteria and terms of reference agreed upon by all participating countries;
- (e) Have political endorsement in all participating countries;
- (f) Involve the National Biosafety Focal Point and the National Competent Authority/ies;
- (g) Involve stocktaking and prioritization of the issues;
- (h) Be inclusive and participatory; and
- (i) Involve effective and transparent communication, both formal and informal.

6. The issues selected should:

- (a) Be relevant to the majority of countries in the region or subregion;
- (b) Respond to, and cut across, individual country needs;
- (c) Be relevant to assisting countries in meeting their obligations under the Protocol; and
- (d) Add value to, rather than duplicate, national efforts.

7. Some of the issues that could best be addressed at the regional and subregional levels, or on which regional and subregional cooperation would be useful, include the following:

(a) Development and sharing of scientific and technical expertise in areas such as LMO detection, development of norms and standards, etc.;

(b) Development of common approaches to, and formats for, risk assessment and risk management, including:

- (i) Cooperation in the implementation of Article 17 of the Protocol on unintentional transboundary movement of LMOs likely to have significant adverse effects on biodiversity and human health, including determination of appropriate responses and initiation of necessary actions, including emergency measures;
 - (ii) Cooperation in environmental LMO monitoring and evaluation.
- (c) Sharing information, experiences and best practices on different issues, including the development and implementation of legislation, LMO decisions, etc;
- (d) Development of regional and subregional websites and databases;
- (e) Development of criteria for undertaking research on, and addressing, socio-economic considerations;
- (f) Development of regional and subregional biosafety research initiatives, including the collection and sharing of (agro)-ecological baseline data and risk assessments;
- (g) Development of common approaches to public awareness and education;
- (h) Development of common curricula in biosafety for governmental institutions, academic institutions and other stakeholders; and
- (i) Cooperation in academic and in-service training in biosafety, including the development and sharing of training materials, transfer of credits, and exchange of staff and students.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR PROMOTING REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION ON CAPACITY-BUILDING IN BIOSAFETY

8. It is important to identify and designate institutional mechanisms (bodies) to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation on capacity-building in biosafety. Such mechanisms could involve one lead institution or a group of interlinked institutions and/or organizations. The selection of such institution(s) should be country-driven and should be agreed upon by consensus, based on established criteria.

9. The following criteria should be considered in the selection of a body or bodies to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation on capacity-building in biosafety. The body or bodies should:

- (a) Have a mandate for subregional/regional cooperation and such a mandate should include activities and elements relevant to biosafety;
- (b) Have previous experience and a good track record in implementing subregional/regional activities;
- (c) Preferably have previous direct or indirect involvement in promoting and catalyzing activities relevant to the implementation of the Protocol or related activities;
- (d) Be able to respond to varying needs and levels of capacity in the operational area;
- (e) Have adequate human, financial, physical infrastructure and technical resources to deploy for biosafety activities so as to ensure sustainability;

- (f) Have considerable influence among the participating countries; and
 - (g) Be able to build and maintain networks with relevant institutions outside of the operational area.
10. The above criteria should be applied in a flexible manner, taking into account the needs and circumstances of different participating countries, subregions and regions.
11. Some of the institutional arrangements that could facilitate regional and subregional cooperation in biosafety include the following:
- (a) Administrative and decision-making structures;
 - (b) Coordination mechanisms, including, among others, steering committees;
 - (c) Working and subject matter groups (including rosters of experts);
 - (d) Regional and subregional centre(s) of excellence; and
 - (e) Networks linking national centres or institutions.
12. Countries may also wish to consider establishing institutional mechanisms, such as regular regional and subregional conferences of ministers responsible for biosafety and/or regional and subregional technical working groups on biosafety, where they do not exist.^{1/} The functions of such mechanisms would, *inter alia*, include:
- (a) Identifying and articulating regional and subregional biosafety issues;
 - (b) Developing long-term regional and subregional policies and strategies;
 - (c) Developing and prioritizing regional and subregional action plans;
 - (d) Enhancing regional and subregional cooperation and initiatives in biosafety and biotechnology, as appropriate;
 - (e) Resolving issues likely to hinder the achievement of regional and subregional visions and goals;
 - (f) Mobilizing resources and promoting partnerships.

V. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES AND MEASURES

13. Operational strategies and measures for promoting regional and subregional cooperation on biosafety vary between regions and on a case-by-case basis, depending on the issue(s) being addressed. They may also vary depending on the phases in development and implementation of national biosafety

^{1/} Some regional and subregional groupings have established such mechanisms. These include: (i) the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and Biosafety (SACBB); (ii) the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) Regional Working Group on GMOs; and (iii) the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ad-hoc Working Group of Experts on Biosafety.

systems of the participating countries. Strategies and measures that could be pursued include the following:

- (a) Collaboration through regional and subregional initiatives (including projects and programmes);
- (b) Enhancement of coordination and cooperation among relevant national government agencies in the formulation and implementation of policies and regional and subregional initiatives;
- (c) Strengthening of mechanisms for fostering coordination and collaboration among different regional and subregional partners;
- (d) Establishment of regional and subregional regulatory frameworks and procedures;
- (e) Training and technical issues;
- (f) Developing and testing best practices;
- (g) Public education and awareness-raising;
- (h) Sharing of information and knowledge and learning from each others' experiences, strengths and weaknesses;
- (i) Exchanges of experts, for example through short-term attachments, internships or fellowships.

14. Other mechanisms that may be employed to enhance regional and subregional cooperation in biosafety include the following:

- (a) Use of existing regional and subregional bodies, including: United Nations regional economic commissions, regional and subregional economic integration organizations, as well as research and development organizations or centres of excellence to help in fostering the exchange of information and expertise and undertaking regional and subregional activities in biosafety;
- (b) Creation or strengthening of regional and subregional centres of excellence, which could be mobilized to support countries in the implementation of the Protocol;
- (c) Establishment of regional and subregional Working Groups or coordinating committees on biosafety;
- (d) Creation of support networks at the regional and subregional levels to facilitate collaboration, sharing of knowledge and experience and ongoing interaction between experts in the regions;
- (e) Establishment of regional and subregional rosters of biosafety experts to mobilize and effectively use existing expertise within participating countries;
- (f) Exchanges of experts in order to enhance professional cohesion among countries and organizations in a region;
- (g) Establishment of regional and subregional biosafety information centres, databases or regional and subregional nodes of the Biosafety Clearing-House;

- (h) Publication of regional and subregional newsletters or appropriate information exchange tools and mechanisms to facilitate dissemination of regional news;
- (i) Organization of regional and subregional seminars and workshops that would provide useful forums for networking and sharing of experiences;
- (j) Organization of regional and subregional courses, fellowships and study tours to enhance the skills of biosafety policy-makers and practitioners in a region;
- (k) Exchanges of experiences and best practices in developing regional and subregional training and public awareness programmes;
- (l) Development of exchange programmes with regional and subregional centres and institutions in other regions;
- (m) Mobilization of funding for regional and subregional activities, including training, exchanges of scientists, conducting assessments and exchanges of information including, where feasible, the establishment of regional and subregional funds for technical cooperation in biosafety;
- (n) Identifying and sharing information on funding opportunities for regional and subregional initiatives;
- (o) Conducting joint risk assessments and post-release field monitoring of LMOs and policy analyses to demonstrate the applicability of regional and subregional approaches to biosafety regulations and practices;
- (p) Development of regional and subregional policy frameworks, guidelines or operational procedures on common biosafety issues relevant to the effective implementation of the Protocol.

15. For effective regional and subregional cooperation efforts, it is important to put in place mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of information on capacity-building initiatives in any given region. Partly because its focus is limited to the Biosafety Protocol, the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) may not be sufficient to address the unique circumstances of different regions/ subregions. Accordingly, countries should consider developing regional and subregional biosafety websites and databases.

16. Regional and subregional initiatives should foster effective and efficient use of existing expertise and infrastructure, for example through cross-border exchanges of experts.

17. Regional and subregional mechanisms should not rely on external funding. They should, as much as possible, be funded from sustainable local funding sources.

*Annex II:***LIST OF PARTICIPANTS****Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety****Bahamas**

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