



## Convention on Biological Diversity

Distr.  
GENERAL

UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/6  
2 April 2008

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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 8 of the provisional agenda\*

### COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, CONVENTIONS AND INITIATIVES

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its third meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP) in decision BS-III/6 on Cooperation, requested the Executive Secretary to continue to pursue, reinforce and intensify, as the case may be, cooperative arrangements with all the organizations referred to in decision BS-II/6. The Executive Secretary was also requested to explore the potential of, and endeavour to enhance synergies with, other processes and initiatives that can contribute to the effective implementation of the Protocol, in particular with regard to enhancing capacity-building.
2. The present note provides an overview of the actions taken by the Executive Secretary in response to decision BS-III/6, and further cooperative actions undertaken between the Secretariat and other organizations, conventions and initiatives with a view to creating synergy in biosafety-related programmes in general, and ensuring the effective implementation of the Protocol in particular.
3. Additional information on the collaborative activities with regards to specific areas in the biosafety programme of work is reported, where relevant, in the respective pre-sessional documents that are made available for the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

---

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

/...

In order to minimize the environmental impacts of the Secretariat's processes, and to contribute to the Secretary-General's initiative for a C-Neutral UN, this document is printed in limited numbers. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

## II. OVERVIEW OF ONGOING COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

### A. *Green Customs Initiative*

4. At their second and third meetings, the Parties to the Protocol requested the Executive Secretary to follow developments in competent regional and international organizations with a view to exchanging experience and building capacity, and to establish cooperation with relevant customs and transport organizations. To this end, the Secretariat joined in 2006 the Green Customs Initiative (GCI) as one of the partners.

5. This initiative, which was established in 2001 and currently being coordinated by the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics-OzonAction Branch of UNEP, is a partnership of international organisations and secretariats cooperating to promote the objectives of their respective instruments by offering a concerted assistance to national customs control systems of eligible countries. The partnership brings together the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Secretariats of the Basel Convention, the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam Conventions), the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and Interpol.

6. The objective of the Green Customs Initiative is to enhance the capacity of customs and other relevant enforcement personnel to monitor and facilitate the legal trade and to detect and prevent illegal trade in those environmentally-sensitive goods or substances covered by the relevant treaties. This is intended to be achieved through awareness-raising of all the relevant international agreements as well as the provision of capacity-building tools to the enforcement community. Green Customs is designed to complement and enhance existing customs training efforts under the respective agreements.

7. The information and training that Green Customs Initiative provides integrate trade-related aspects of the various conventions and processes into one comprehensive package. This has proved more cost effective, efficient and far-reaching than separate training activities on each individual agreement. The initiative also provides an opportunity for collaboration and exchange of information among the partners. The involvement of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in the initiative focuses specifically on the Biosafety Protocol. The Secretariat believes that participation in the Initiative would enable it assist Parties to the Protocol in the implementation of the requirements of Article 18 on handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs moving across borders, as well as Article 25 on illegal transboundary movements of LMOs. As soon as it joined the Initiative in 2006, the Secretariat contributed a module on the Cartagena Protocol Biosafety for inclusion in the Green Customs Initiative training manual, namely "Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements". The contribution was essentially a summary of the Protocol provisions and the decisions of COP-MOP that are relevant to customs control. The Secretariat also participated in May 2007 in conducting a training session on the identification and documentation requirements of living modified organisms under paragraph 2 of Article 18 of the Biosafety Protocol at the Green Customs Train-the-Trainer Workshop, which was held in Shanghai, China. The Secretariat also contributed resource materials to the training workshop organized in August 2007 for Indian Ocean Small Island States, in Mauritius and for West Africa in Dakar, Senegal.

8. Furthermore, the Secretariat participated in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol in September 2007 and jointly received an Ozone Protection Award in the partnerships category for its involvement in the Green Customs Initiative. In January 2008, the Secretariat participated in the partners' meetings of the GCI, which was convened in Paris during which the partners reviewed the activities from 2007 under the Initiative and identified priorities for 2008. The Secretariat's continued participation in the initiative, however, will depend on availability of resources since each partner organization needs to bring on board its own resources. The Parties to the Protocol may wish to consider allocating some resources in the budget of the upcoming biennium to sustain the work of this Initiative. <sup>1/</sup>

### ***B. Cooperation with the World Trade Organization***

9. The Secretariat continued to cooperate with the World Trade Organization (WTO) in exchanging relevant information. It still pursues its applications for observer status in the relevant bodies of WTO. The Executive Secretary held a bilateral meeting with the WTO Director-General on 29 May 2006, and *inter alia*, discussed the status of the application for observer status in the WTO Committees on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade.

10. The Secretariat holds observer status in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) in regular session and is invited, on a regular basis, to the meetings of the CTE in special (negotiating) sessions. Since the third meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, the Secretariat has continued to follow the discussions in the CTE in regular and in special sessions.

### ***C. Cooperation in information-sharing***

11. The Secretariat continued to collaborate with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Working Group on Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology. Recently an arrangement was initiated whereby the OECD will pass on to the Secretariat automatically records of decisions of its member countries on living modified organisms (LMOs). This arrangement allows interoperability of the OECD database with the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). However, many OECD countries are also directly submitting their records to the BCH. The Secretariat is further exploring the possibility of collaborative arrangements with the OECD and LMO developers in order to better integrate with the BCH, the procedures for the registration of newly developed LMOs in the Unique Identifier registry.

12. The Secretariat also continued its cooperation with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). From the BCH, it is possible to search the Scientific Bibliographic Database, which is maintained by the ICGEB. The database contains records of scientific articles (full reference and abstract) published in national and international scientific periodicals from 1990 onwards. Each record is vetted by ICGEB scientists for its contribution to the numerous scientific debates concerning genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The output of the search through the BCH provides basic information about the scientific paper (title, author / creator, date, rights, source, link to the resource, contact details, subject, other keywords) and a link to the abstract on the ICGEB server.

13. With regard to capacity-building to enable the active participation of countries in the Biosafety Clearing-House, the Secretariat has worked closely with the UNEP/GEF Project for Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the BCH by providing technical assistance on the development of national nodes as well as training activities and direct participation in training activities directed to BCH national focal points, involving several regional and subregional workshops.

---

<sup>1/</sup> Participation of Secretariat staff in one meeting per year during the biennial in the GCI process costs \$10,000. Organization of training workshop for customs officers from Parties (one per year) costs \$100,000.

***D. Cooperation with Codex Alimentarius Commission and the International Plant Protection Convention***

14. The Secretariat collaborated with the Codex Alimentarius Commission during the intersessional period. In particular, the Secretariat contributed to the Seventh Session of The Codex Inter-Governmental Task Force on Foods Derived from Biotechnology, which was held in Chiba, Japan from 24 to 28 September 2007 by providing a written submission on the activities of the Convention/Protocol that are of direct relevance to the work of the Codex Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Taskforce on Foods Derived from Biotechnology. These included follow-up to COP-MOP decisions on the following issues: (i) detailed identification requirements for documentation accompanying LMOs-FFP (decision BS-III/10); (ii) the need for and modalities of developing standards with regard to identification, handling, packaging and transport practices for the transboundary movement of LMOs in consultation with other relevant international bodies (Article 18 of the Protocol, paragraph 3, decision BS-III/9); and (iii) risk assessment and risk management of LMOs (decision BS-III/11).

15. The Secretariat has a plan to participate in the 36th Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL), which will be held in Ottawa, Canada, from 28 April to 2 May 2008. Among the topics to be discussed at the meeting include the labelling of foods and food ingredients obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification/genetic engineering.

16. In strengthening the collaboration between the secretariats of the CBD and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), a meeting was held on 18 February 2008 at the margins of the thirteenth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), in Rome, Italy. Among the issues discussed, the following were directly relevant to the Biosafety Protocol: development of standards of mutual interest under the IPPC and under the CBD and the Biosafety Protocol; capacity-building and technical assistance; mechanisms for sharing information through the International Phytosanitary Portal, the clearing house mechanism of the CBD and the Biosafety Clearing-House of the Biosafety Protocol. It was also re-affirmed at this meeting that the two secretariats will work together to avoid duplication, encourage cooperation at both the international, regional and national levels and use one another's expertise as appropriate.

***E. Cooperation with the Aarhus Convention on public awareness and participation***

17. In its decision BS-II/6, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol requested the Executive Secretary to intensify cooperation with the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on matters of public awareness and participation.

18. The Secretariat continued to collaborate and exchange information with the secretariat of the Aarhus Convention. The Aarhus Convention provides an important option for cooperation by Parties in the promotion and facilitation of public awareness, education and participation concerning the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. Several of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention are also Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. According to submissions in first national reports to the CBD Secretariat, some Parties to the Cartagena Protocol are gradually tapping on the synergies between the two conventions to implement their National Biosafety Frameworks and Article 23 of the Protocol on Biosafety.

19. The two secretariats are currently collaborating in the organization of an international workshop on good practices regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding GMOs, which will be held in Cologne, Germany from 19 to 20 May 2008.

### ***F. Capacity-building***

20. Within the context of the Coordination Mechanism for the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol, the Secretariat established contact with several organizations, (including United Nations and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, industry and academia), that are supporting capacity-building initiatives in biosafety.<sup>2/</sup> A number of organizations were invited to the third and fourth coordination meetings, which were held in Lusaka, Zambia (26-28 February 2007) and New Delhi, India (11-13 February 2008) respectively.<sup>3/</sup> The Secretariat also initiated collaboration with a number of universities and other institutions involved in biosafety education and training. In this regard, the Second International Meeting of Academic Institutions and Organizations Involved in Biosafety Education and Training, was held from 16 to 18 April 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The meeting identified a number of measures to foster cooperation on biosafety education and training. The report of the meeting is available as information document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/6.

21. In March 2007, the Secretariat signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the area of biosafety capacity-building and information sharing. Through the Memorandum of Cooperation, the two organizations will cooperate to: (i) strengthen the capacity of developing countries with regard to the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; (ii) identify, design and implement, as appropriate, projects that contribute to biosafety capacity building efforts; (iii) strengthen collaboration in maintaining and facilitating the use of biosafety information systems consistent with the Biosafety Clearing-House of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety; (iv) cooperate in research projects of common interest; (v) pool resources together and organize joint workshops, conferences, and training programmes; (vi) prepare, jointly, training tools, modules and courses on biosafety; and (vii) provide opportunities for staff exchange. The Second International Meeting of Academic Institutions and Organizations Involved in Biosafety Education and Training mentioned above, was organized by the Secretariat in collaboration with UNIDO in accordance with this Memorandum of Cooperation.

### ***G. Handling, transport, packaging and identification of living modified organisms***

22. Within the context of Article 18, paragraph 3, regarding standards for identification, handling, packaging and transport practices of living modified organisms, the Secretariat established collaborative roles with the following: (i) the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in its capacity as the Secretariat for the United Nations Transport of Dangerous Goods Sub-Committee; (ii) International Organization for Standardization (ISO); (iii) Universal Postal Union; (iv) World Customs Organization; and (v) the International Air Transport Organization with a view to developing a harmonized approach for the handling and transportation of living modified organisms in preparation for the consideration of the need for and modalities of developing standards as specified under Article 18, paragraph 3 of the Protocol (decision BS-II/6, paragraph (f)). Collaborative activities with these agencies have been minimal.

## **III. ELEMENTS OF A DRAFT DECISION**

23. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol may wish to take note of the report provided in this note and consider:

---

<sup>2/</sup> Further information on this subject is found in the note by the Executive Secretary on the status of capacity-building activities (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/4).

<sup>3/</sup> The reports of both meetings are available at the present meeting as information documents UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/5 and UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/4/INF/23.

- (i) Whether there are aspects of cooperation with other organizations, conventions and initiatives, which are not adequately addressed in the agenda of its present meeting, and may wish to specify activities to address those aspects;
- (ii) The issue of lack of resources and decide on some remedial actions, such as including a budget for activities related to Green Customs Initiative, so that the Secretariat could make effective engagement with the other organizations, conventions and initiatives and enhances its collaborative actions.

-----