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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

Fifth meeting

Nagoya, Japan, 11-15 October 2010

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

REPORT ON THE ROSTER OF BIOSAFETY EXPERTS

Note by the Executive Secretary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 14 of decision EM-I/3, on the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol and interim arrangements, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity established a roster of experts nominated by Governments to provide advice and other support, as appropriate and upon request, to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition, to conduct risk assessment, make informed decisions, develop national human resources and promote institutional strengthening, associated with the transboundary movements of living modified organisms. In paragraph 27 of decision VI/29, the Conference of the Parties also established, on a pilot basis, a voluntary trust fund to support eligible countries to pay for the use of experts selected from the roster.

2. In its decision BS-I/4, Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Protocol adopted Interim Guidelines for the Roster describing its administrative and operational modalities. The Parties also adopted Interim Guidelines for the Pilot Phase of the Voluntary Fund for the Roster. In the guidelines, the Executive Secretary is requested to submit to each regular meeting of the Parties to the Protocol reports on both the status and operations of the roster and on the use of the voluntary fund for the roster.

3. At their fourth meeting, the Parties, in decision BS-IV/4, adopted new criteria and minimum requirements for experts to be nominated to the roster. They also adopted the substantive guidelines for the roster, including a revised nomination form. Accordingly, Parties and other Governments were requested to make fresh nominations in accordance with the new criteria and minimum requirements, using the revised nomination form. In paragraph 4 of the same decision, the Executive Secretary was requested to remove all existing records in the roster within three months and refill it with the experts

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nominated or re-nominated by Parties and Governments. Furthermore, in paragraphs 12 and 13 of decision BS-IV/4, the Parties agreed to revive the voluntary fund for the roster and invited developed country Parties and other donors to make contributions to the Fund.

4. In accordance with the above-mentioned decisions, section II of the present note provides a report on the current status and operations of the roster, section III contains a report on the status and use of the pilot phase of the voluntary fund for the roster, and section IV presents elements of a possible draft decision for the consideration of the Parties at their fifth meeting.

5. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is invited to consider the information provided in the present note and provide, as appropriate, further guidance regarding the future implementation of the roster of experts and the voluntary fund for the roster.

II. REPORT ON THE STATUS AND OPERATIONS OF THE ROSTER OF EXPERTS

6. In the guidelines for the roster, the Secretariat is required to prepare, for each regular meeting of Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, a report on the status and operations of the roster, including information on the number of experts on the roster as well as a breakdown of the composition of the roster by region, gender and discipline (main areas of expertise). The report may also include information on direct contacts initiated by Parties and their results or contacts facilitated by the Secretariat and their results, including the individual experts contracted by each requesting Party, as well as a description of the assignment and the results of the work undertaken.

7. In accordance with decision BS-IV/4, the Secretariat revamped the roster and re-launched it through the Biosafety Clearing-House (<http://bch.cbd.int/database/experts>) in August 2008. The new design allows governments to make nominations online through the management centre of the BCH and makes it possible for the nominated experts to upload and regularly update their curriculum vitae online.

8. As of 30 June 2010, the roster contained a total of 87 experts nominated by a total of 28 Parties and two non-Parties.¹

9. The regional breakdown of the roster is as follows:

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of Governments with nominations</i>	<i>No. of experts nominated</i>	<i>Percentage of the total number of nominations</i>
Africa	5	14	16%
Asia and the Pacific	6	35	40%
Central and Eastern Europe	6	7	8%
Latin America and the Caribbean	7	17	20%

¹ The Parties which made nominations are: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Barbados, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, European Union, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Yemen. The non-Parties which made nominations are: Australia and the United States of America.

Western Europe and Others	6	14	16%
TOTAL	30	87	100%

10. The composition of the roster by gender is follows:

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Number of experts</i>	<i>Percentage of total no. of experts</i>
Female	30	35%
Male	57	65%
Total	87	100%

11. The composition of the roster by discipline (main areas of expertise) is as follows:

<i>Area of expertise</i>	<i>No. of experts*</i>	<i>Percentage of the total number of experts in the roster*</i>
1. Scientific and technical expertise		
• Botany, forestry and plant agricultural sciences	26	30%
• Zoology, aquaculture and animal agricultural sciences	5	6%
• Microbial sciences	9	10%
• Human health sciences	4	5%
• Ecological and environmental sciences	8	9%
• Socio-economic sciences	0	0%
• Information and communication technology	1	1%
• Biosafety Clearing-House	7	8%
• Other	3	3%
2. Legal expertise	1	1%
3. Policy and regulatory expertise	4	5%
4. Biosafety systems development and implementation	19	22%

** It should be noted that some experts indicated multiple areas of expertise.*

12. Currently, the roster is generally not well balanced in terms of regional representation, gender composition and coverage of the different areas of expertise. The majority of experts on the roster (more than 70 percent) have scientific and technical expertise. Approximately 22 per cent of the individuals on the roster have expertise in the development and implementation of biosafety systems, about 5 per cent have policy and regulatory expertise and only one expert has legal expertise. Among the scientific and technical experts, the majority (26 experts or 30 per cent of the total number of experts on the roster) have background in botany, forestry and plant agricultural sciences, and so far the roster has no single member with expertise in socio-economic sciences.

13. During the reporting period, two experts from the roster were selected by the governments of Cambodia and Uganda, through the Secretariat, to undertake assignments, which are described in paragraphs 16 and 17 below. The Secretariat provided assistance to the Government of Cambodia in identifying individuals from the roster with expertise in the area of LMO detection and helped to ascertain

the availability of the experts to undertake the assignment. The Secretariat also facilitated the initial contact with the expert that was finally selected. One of the main challenges encountered was the fact that experts identified from the roster were normally full-time civil servants and many were not available to carry out the assignments as experts on the roster. At their fifth meeting, the Parties may wish urge Parties and other Governments to establish arrangements to facilitate the release of the experts on the roster, and in a timely manner, when they are selected by to undertake assignments under the Protocol.

14. As of 18 August 2010, the Secretariat had not yet received information regarding direct contacts made by Parties and other Governments with the experts on the roster and no reports had been received regarding any assignments carried out by experts the selected from the roster. This has therefore limited to compilation of the full record of the operations of the roster for the current reporting period.

III. REPORT ON THE STATUS, OPERATION AND USE OF THE PILOT PHASE OF THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR THE ROSTER OF EXPERTS

15. In response to paragraphs 12 and 13 of decision BS-IV/4, the Government of Spain and the European Commission made contributions to the voluntary fund for the roster of experts during the reporting period. Consequently, the Executive Secretary issued a notification in September 2009 inviting eligible Parties in need of support to use experts from the roster to submit applications for funding in accordance with the Interim Guidelines for the Pilot Phase of the Voluntary Fund. As of 30 June 2010, the Secretariat had received requests from the Governments of Benin, Cambodia, Niger and Uganda.

16. The requests from Cambodia and Uganda were approved in May 2010 and the funds were disbursed in June 2010. The Government of Uganda requested for the funding from the Voluntary Fund to engage an expert from Egypt to prepare a risk-assessment toolkit for Uganda taking into account input and comments from relevant stakeholders at national level. The assignment will be carried during the months of August and September 2010.

17. The Government of Cambodia requested funding to hire an expert to train Cambodian laboratory staff and the scientific advisory team in LMO detection and analysis and to assess and provide advice for improvement of the equipment and facilities for the LMO detection laboratory. In this regard, the expert will undertake a mission to Cambodia and conduct a ten-day intensive hands-on training course in Phnom Penh, in September 2010.

18. The requests from Benin and Niger were not approved because they did not fully adhere to the eligibility criteria specified in section D of the interim guidelines of the pilot phase of the Voluntary Fund and also because the amount requested exceeded the maximum amount allowed per application. Also the funds available were not sufficient to cover the requests. The two countries were advised to revise and re-submit their application for future consideration if additional contributions are made to the Voluntary Fund.

19. At their fifth meeting, the Parties may wish to once again invite developed country Parties and other donors to make contributions to the voluntary fund in order to fully operationalize the roster, which would facilitate the implementation of the proposed Strategic Plan for the Protocol for the period 2011-2020.

IV. ELEMENTS OF A POSSIBLE DRAFT DECISION

20. The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety may wish to:

(a) Take note of the report on the current status and operations of the roster of biosafety experts and the voluntary fund for the roster (UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/4/Add.1);

(b) Urge Parties and other Governments that have not yet done so to nominate experts to the roster;

(c) Remind Parties and other Governments, in their nomination of experts to the roster, to take into account the need for gender balance and for balanced coverage of the different areas of expertise in the roster;

(d) Urge Parties and other Governments that have nominated experts to the roster to facilitate their release, and in a timely and flexible manner, when they are selected by to undertake assignments under the Protocol;

(e) Request the Executive Secretary, in preparation for the evaluation of the performance of the roster at the sixth meeting of the Parties, to review the experience with the use of the roster, identify the challenges faced and assess future needs of Parties and other Governments;

(f) Commend the Government of Spain and the European Union for making contributions to the voluntary fund for the roster;

(g) Request the Executive Secretary to propose, as appropriate, amendments to the nomination form based on the operational experience with the roster, for consideration at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol;

(h) Reiterate its invitation to developed country Parties and other donors to make contributions to the voluntary fund in order to fully operationalize the roster to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Protocol for the period 2011-2020.
