



## Convention on Biological Diversity

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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 8 of the provisional agenda\*

### COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, CONVENTIONS AND INITIATIVES

*Note by the Executive Secretary*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its fourth meeting, the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP) in decision BS-IV/6 on Cooperation, requested the Executive Secretary to continue pursuing, reinforcing and intensifying, as the case may be, cooperative arrangements with all the organizations referred to in decision BS-II/6 and to explore the potential of other relevant organizations and processes that can contribute, financially or otherwise, to the effective implementation of the Protocol, in particular with regard to building capacities in developing countries. The Executive Secretary was also requested to report to the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety at its fifth meeting on the implementation of the decision.

2. The present note provides an overview of the actions taken by the Executive Secretary in response to decision BS-IV/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 fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

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\* UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/1.

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## 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 became a partner in the Green Customs Initiative (GCI) in 2006. In their decision BS-IV/6, the Parties to the Protocol welcomed the participation of the Secretariat in GCI and encouraged the Secretariat to contribute to the organization of partnership meetings within available resources.

5. The GCI brings together the United Nations Environment Programme, the Secretariats of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 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 Convention), the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the World Customs Organization and Interpol. 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. GCI is designed to complement and enhance existing customs training efforts under the respective agreements.

6. The information and training that the Green Customs Initiative provides integrates the 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.

7. The Secretariat's main GCI-related work during the inter-sessional period was the organization of two regional training of trainers workshops on the documentation and identification of living modified organisms (LMOs) – one for Africa and one for Latin American and Caribbean countries. See document UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/8 for a more detailed description of these activities. Representatives from some of the GCI partners gave presentations during these workshops and copies of the Green Customs Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements were distributed.

8. During the inter-sessional period, the Green Customs Initiative and the World Customs Organization organized a number of national, sub-regional and regional Green Customs workshops in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The CBD Secretariat nominated resource persons to give presentations on the Protocol during these workshops.

9. The Executive Secretary participated in a GCI event held during the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNEP Governing Council in February 2009. The Secretariat also attended the fifth meeting of the partners in the Initiative which was held from 26 to 27 January 2009 in Brussels. During the meeting, the partners reviewed activities from 2008 under the Initiative and identified priorities for 2010. The CBD Secretariat provided a written report to the sixth meeting of the partners and participated via teleconference in an extraordinary meeting of the partners held in June 2010.

10. 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.

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

11. The Secretariat continued to liaise and cooperate with the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Executive Secretary renewed his request for observer status in relevant committees of the WTO and continued to follow discussions and negotiations in these committees, including by liaising with staff of the WTO secretariat. Briefings on pertinent decisions of the Conference of the Parties and the COP-MOP were provided to the Committee on Trade and Environment. 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 formal meetings of the CTE in special (negotiating) session.

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

12. The Secretariat signed in 2004 a memorandum of understanding with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group on Harmonization of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology whereby the OECD will pass on to the Secretariat automatically records of decisions of its member countries on living modified organisms (LMOs). However, most OECD countries have decided to directly submit their records to the BCH and the OECD is currently undertaking an analysis of the effectiveness of its Biotrack database. The Secretariat is also 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.

13. 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 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.

14. With regard to capacity-building, 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 directed to regional advisors and BCH national focal points, involving regional and subregional workshops.

### ***D. Cooperation with the International Plant Protection Convention***

15. In strengthening the collaboration between the Secretariats of the CBD and the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the third Joint Secretariat Meeting was held on 1 December 2009 at the Secretariat of the CBD in Montreal, Canada. Various issues discussed were directly relevant to the Biosafety Protocol including the development of standards of mutual interest under the IPPC and the development of guidance under the CBD and the Biosafety Protocol; joint activities in capacity-building and technical assistance; and further mechanisms for sharing information.

16. The Biosafety Division has also become part of the International Advisory Group on Pest Risk Analysis (IAGPRA) coordinated by the IPPC.

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

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

18. Pursuant to the above decision, the Secretariat continued to collaborate with the Aarhus Convention secretariat. At the last meeting of the Parties in Bonn, the two secretariats co-organized a side event on public participation in decision-making on biosafety. The two secretariats also collaborated in the organization of an international workshop on good practices regarding access to information, public participation and access to justice regarding GMOs, which was held in Cologne, Germany, on 19-20 May 2008, shortly after the fourth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. More than 70 participants from countries that are Parties to both treaties attended the workshop.

19. The two secretariats are currently collaborating in the organization of a joint CBD-Aarhus Convention workshop on public awareness, access to information and participation regarding living modified organisms/genetically modified organisms, which is expected to take place in Nagoya, Japan, just prior to the fifth meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

***F. Capacity-building***

20. Within regard to capacity-building, the Secretariat collaborated with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in organizing the fifth Coordination Meeting for Governments and Organizations Implementing or Funding Biosafety Capacity-Building Activities, which was held 9 - 11 March 2009 in San José, Costa Rica. The two organizations, together with the Autonomous National University of Mexico (Spanish: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM) also collaborated in organising the Latin America and the Caribbean regional training of trainers' workshop on the identification and documentation of living modified organisms under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety which was held in Mexico City from 23 to 27 November 2009.

21. Furthermore, the Secretariat collaborated with the University of Tsukuba and the Institute of Advanced Studies of the United Nations University (UNU-IAS) in organizing the third International Meeting of Academic Institutions and Organizations Involved in Biosafety Education and Training which was held in Tsukuba, Japan, from 15 to 17 February 2010.

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

22. At their fourth meeting, the Parties to the Protocol requested the Executive Secretary to organize an online forum on standards and gaps regarding the handling, transport, packaging and identification of LMOs. Accordingly, the Online Forum on Standards for LMO Shipments was held through the BCH from 18 May to 5 June 2009. The forum included an 'ask the expert' component whereby experts from the following organizations were available online to answer questions from participants: the World Trade Organization, the World Customs Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health, the IPPC, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the OECD and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in regards to the United Nations Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations. Some of the elements of a draft decision in section III, below, are derived from the

discussions during the Online Forum. More details on the forum and the participation of the experts can be found in documents UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/9 and UNEP/CBD/BS/COP-MOP/5/INF/23.

23. On 2 December 2009, representatives of the CBD and IPPC secretariats participated in a meeting with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to exchange information on efforts to reduce the movement and introduction of pests, including invasive alien species, by air transport.

#### ***H. Risk assessment and risk management***

24. Paragraph 13 of decision BS-IV/11 requests the Executive Secretary to coordinate and facilitate, along with other relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations, the development of training on risk assessment and risk management in relation to LMOs. In this context, the Secretariat collaborated with:

(a) United Nations organizations, namely: the Aarhus Convention secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the IPPC secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Environment Programme;

(b) Other international organizations, namely the Global Industry Coalition and Third World Network; and

(c) Educational institutions, namely the University of Canterbury and the University of Minnesota.

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

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

(a) 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;

(b) The need for necessary resources to enable the Secretariat to effectively engage with the other organizations, conventions and initiatives and enhance its collaborative actions;

(c) Requesting the Executive Secretary to:

(i) Pursue memoranda of understanding with the International Organization for Standardization, the European Committee for Standardization and the International Seed Testing Association to further cooperation with these organizations in the context of Article 18;

(ii) Initiate or continue participating in the relevant meetings of international standard-setting organizations, subject to the availability of financial resources.

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