



**Convention on
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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**

Sixth meeting

Hyderabad, India, 1-5 October 2012

**REPORTS OF THE INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE FOR THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE**

1. In accordance with decision BS-I/3, the Secretariat periodically seeks assistance from an Informal Advisory Committee (BCH-IAC) with a focus on providing guidance to the resolution of technical issues associated with the development of the Biosafety Clearing-House.
2. The Executive Secretary is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the summaries of outcomes of the two past meetings held in Montreal, on 30 March – 1 April 2011 and 28-30 March 2012.

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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.

SUMMARY OUTCOMES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The sixth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC) was held in Montreal from 30 March – 1 April 2011.

2. The meeting was attended by experts selected from: Latvia, Germany, Mauritius, Costa Rica, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Ghana, Colombia, Mexico, European Union (EU), New Zealand and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Representatives of the Governments of Canada and of the United States of America as well as from three organizations (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), EcoNexus and Global Industry Coalition) also took part in the meeting as observers. Experts were also invited from Belarus, Chad, Japan, Palau, Poland, Rwanda, South Africa and Tajikistan but were unable to attend.

3. The meeting was convened by the Executive Secretary, in accordance with section E of the modalities of operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (decision BS-I/3, annex of the Conference of the Parties Serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol (COP-MOP)) to seek guidance with respect to technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH).

4. The meeting was opened by Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a statement emphasizing the importance of the BCH and the work of the BCH-IAC.

5. Ms. Julieta Fe L. Estacio from the Philippines served as Chairperson of the meeting and Dr. Joachim Bendiek from Germany served as Rapporteur.

6. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/6/1). The following principal items were discussed by the Committee:

(a) Strategic plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP decision BS-V/16): its relevance to the Biosafety Clearing-House and future challenges;

(b) Latest developments in the Biosafety Clearing-House and ongoing projects;

(c) Collaboration with the UNEP-GEF BCH II Capacity-Building Project; and

(d) Implementation of COP-MOP decision BS-V/2.

7. Presentations were made by the following: Mr. Charles Gbedemah, Senior Environmental Affairs Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Strategic plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP decision BS-V/16): its relevance to the Biosafety Clearing-House and future challenges; Mr. Giovanni Ferraiolo, Programme Officer, Biosafety Division (BCH), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the latest developments in the Biosafety Clearing-House and ongoing projects; Dr. Aleksej Tarashev, BCH Regional Advisor on UNEP-GEF BCH Project, on the Study of BCH Users and Potential Users; Ms. Manoela Miranda, Environmental Affairs Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on proposed changes to the Living Modified Organism (LMO) Common Format; Mr. Philippe Leblond, Computer Information Systems Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on graphic

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representations of data; and Ms. Ileana Lopez, Project Manager - BCH Project, UNEP-DELC, on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House II project.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

8. Having discussed the items outlined in the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/6/1), the Informal Advisory Committee agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations, attached hereto as annex I, for consideration in the implementation of the programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House. Annex II to this report contains the list of participants to the meeting.

9. In the interest of using the available time for discussions, it was agreed that the Secretariat would present a draft of the meeting report by email to all members for their comments prior to its final publication.

10. Ms. Estacio thanked all of the meeting participants for their kind inputs and closed the meeting at 12.45 p.m. on Friday, 1 April 2011.

Annex I

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OF THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AT ITS SIXTH MEETING**

The Informal Advisory Committee of the Biosafety Clearing-House

1. *Commends* the Secretariat for the progress achieved and the quality of the improvements made, stressing that the Biosafety Clearing-House has, as a result, become a more logical and user-friendly tool;
2. *Expresses* its sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generous offer to sponsor a limited number of participants to the Asia-Pacific regional workshop from countries that are not currently participating in the UNEP-GEF BCH-II Project.
3. *Recommends* that the Secretariat:
 - (a) Makes available in the BCH information about the percentage of pages accessed in different languages by BCH users;
 - (b) Adds an explanatory legend for icons used in the BCH and explores ways to make it available in languages other than the six official United Nations languages;
 - (c) Notifies countries that the content of the BCH pages may be made available, as courtesy translations, in languages other than the six official United Nations languages on condition that the translations are provided;
 - (d) On the Home Page, distinguishes between new records and updated records;
 - (e) Identifies if a decision/law record has been amended;
 - (f) Distinguishes between decisions on field trials and commercial releases;
 - (g) Reorders the decisions categories on the LMO page as follows: (1) food; (2) feed; (3) processing; (4) intentional introduction into the environment (with the subcategories: commercial release, field trial, other release); and (5) Other and adds a field in the decision common format that allows the BCH User to specify the other use under the environmental release;
 - (h) Adds links on detection methods to LMO records from the EU and CropLife International databases and provides short descriptions of these databases;
 - (i) Adds links to the Biotradestatus database on the commercial use of LMOs with a disclaimer that this information is not provided by Governments;
 - (j) Creates a contact detail registry of LMO developers;
 - (k) Provides Quicklinks on LMO pages;
 - (l) Streamlines the gene registry by eliminating redundancies;
 - (m) Removes Hermes instances that are not being used by countries and upgrades the others;

(n) Explores ways to make interoperable taxonomy databases such as the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), National Centre for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), etc.;

(o) Explores interoperability with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) and African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) capacity-building databases;

(p) Explores the scope and content of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and FAO/Codex Alimentarius Commission databases and invites representatives of these organizations to attend the next BCH-IAC meeting, if appropriate;

(q) Encourages National Focal Points for the BCH (BCH-NFPs) to be active and fulfil their responsibilities with respect to the BCH and considers making contacts with higher level persons than NFPs when NFPs are unresponsive;

(r) Explores ways to provide guidance on what information is required to be registered in the BCH and link this guidance to the Training Site;

(s) Allows greater flexibility regarding mandatory fields in records published prior to the common format changes. The BCH-IAC agrees to participate in a selection process for the identification of mandatory fields where greater flexibility can be exercised;

(t) Generates lists of records that need to be revised due to lack of completeness on a country-by-country basis. Sends this list to BCH-NFPs and places a link to these records in the Management Centre of the BCH;

(u) In the search outputs organizes categories according to correct hierarchies;

(v) On the search interface, provides an explanatory note on the green arrow / expand function;

(w) Promotes the use of the virtual library among BCH users (e.g. highlight the accessibility of collections via “Research4Life” in welcome messages to NFPs);

(x) Solicits the provision of additional content to the virtual library from expert groups;

(y) Explores ways to improve the search-ability of materials in the Biosafety Information Resource Centre (BIRC);

(z) Explores the possibility to facilitate interaction among detection labs (e.g. forum);

(aa) Explores the interest of Competent National Authorities (CNAs) in participating in the BCH on BCH forum;

(bb) Extends the opportunity to provide views on changes made to the BCH to additional groups other than Parties, Governments and relevant organizations (e.g. defined stakeholder groups);

(cc) Determines if allowing access to the BCH through hand-held devices can increase general accessibility to the BCH;

(dd) Adds an Really Simple Syndication (RSS) icon to the BCH News on the Home page;

(ee) Invites BCH-NFPs who receive the offline version of the BCH to provide (a) feedback on the BCH's accessibility and (b) ideas on alternative ways to make the BCH available to them;

(ff) Explores ways to establish cooperative twinning initiatives among countries, as additional training means, for the better use of the BCH;

(gg) Explores ways to support physical or virtual participation in regional and sub-regional workshops of the BCH II Project for countries that are not currently participating in the project. Also recommend that the BCH-II Project Manager informs the BCH-NFPs in non-participating countries that they may coordinate with the Project Manager in order to evaluate their potential participation if they are able to support their own participation to attend the meeting, depending on the availability of space;

(hh) Explores additional ways to support organization and wide participation in additional regional and subregional workshops on the BCH-II Project in regions and subregions that are highly under-represented or not represented at all among the limited number of project participating countries (Central and Eastern European (CEE), Central Asia, Pacific Islands) in order to fulfil requests from the COP-MOP, BCH-IAC and BCH users for global BCH capacity building activities with a special emphasis on regional and subregional levels;

(ii) Coordinates with the BCH-II project to obtain information on obstacles in the use of the BCH and BCH national nodes;

(jj) Further disseminates to BCH-NFPs the information that needs assessment tools are available through the BCH; and

(kk) Provides the outcomes of the implementation of the above recommendations at the next meeting of the BCH-IAC.

Annex II

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SUMMARY OUTCOMES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE

I. INTRODUCTION

4. The Seventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC) was held in Montreal from 28 March to 30 March 2012.

5. The meeting was attended by experts selected from Belarus, Colombia, Costa Rica, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Latvia, Mauritius, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia and Thailand. The national focal points for the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-NFPs) of Canada and the United States of America and representatives from the following organizations also took part in the meeting as observers: Bayer CropScience, EcoNexus, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). A representative from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also participated in a discussion session via videoconference. Experts were also invited from the European Commission, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea and South Africa but were unable to attend.

6. The meeting was convened by the Executive Secretary, in accordance with section E of the Modalities of Operation of the Biosafety Clearing-House (annex to decision BS-I/3 of the Conference of the Parties Serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol) to seek guidance with respect to technical issues associated with the ongoing development of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH).

7. The meeting was opened by Mr. Bráulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, with a statement emphasizing the importance of the BCH and the work of the BCH-IAC.

8. Ms. Julieta Fe L. Estacio from the Philippines served as Chairperson of the meeting and Mr. Joachim Bendiek from Germany served as Rapporteur.

9. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda (UNEP/CBD/BS/BCH-IAC/7/1). The following items were discussed by the Committee:

- (a) Developments in the Biosafety Clearing-House and ongoing projects;
- (b) Outcomes of the conclusions and recommendations of the sixth meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House;
- (c) Collaboration with the UNEP-GEF project for continued enhancement of building capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-II, 2010-2012); and
- (d) Cooperation with international organizations regarding the provision of information on living modified organisms.

10. Presentations were made by the following participants:

- (a) Mr. Giovanni Ferraiolo, Programme Officer, Biosafety Clearing-House, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the outcomes of the conclusions and recommendations of the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;

- (b) Mr. Philippe Leblond, Computer Information Systems Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on Google Analytics statistics regarding the use of the BCH (Mr. Leblond also gave a brief presentation on the AJAX Plug-in);
- (c) Ms. Manoela Miranda, Environmental Affairs Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forum on Risk Assessment and Risk Management;
- (d) Mr. Erie Tamale, Programme Officer, Capacity-building and Outreach, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forum on Capacity-building,
- (e) Ms. Kathryn Garforth, Legal Officer, Biosafety Division, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, on the Online Forums on the Handling, Transport, Packaging and Identification of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs), Socio-Economic Considerations and the Detection & Identification Laboratory Network;
- (f) Ms. Ileana Lopez, Project Manager, BCH Project, UNEP-DELC, on the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Clearing-House II Project;
- (g) Mr. Ernesto Ocampo, BCH Specialist, BCH Project, UNEP-GEF, on the training materials developed by UNEP-GEF;
- (h) Mr. Aleksej Tarasjev, BCH Regional Advisor on the UNEP-GEF BCH Project, on the Information Sharing component of the Ninth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety convened 15-16 March 2012 in Prague; and
- (i) Mr. Peter Kearns, OECD Programme Officer in charge of the working group on the Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology and responsible for the Biosafety - BioTrack database.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

- 11. Having discussed the items outlined in the provisional agenda, the Informal Advisory Committee agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations, attached hereto as annex I, for consideration in the implementation of the programme of work for the Biosafety Clearing-House. Annex II to this report contains the list of participants to the meeting.
- 12. In the interest of using the available time for discussions, it was agreed that the Secretariat would present a draft of the meeting report by e-mail to all members for their comments prior to its final publication.
- 13. Ms. Estacio thanked all of the meeting participants for their kind inputs and closed the meeting at 1.15 p.m. on Friday, 30 March 2012.

Annex I

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INFORMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING-HOUSE AT ITS SEVENTH MEETING**

The Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH-IAC)

1. *Commends* the Secretariat for having implemented the majority of its recommendations since the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;
2. *Further commends* the Secretariat for improving the user-friendliness of the BCH;
3. *Recognizes* that the content registered by BCH users still needs improvement;
4. *Recommends* that the Secretariat:
 - (a) Complete the remaining recommendations from the sixth meeting of the BCH-IAC;
 - (b) Permit BCH users, in the Matrix (pivot) Display Type, to click on the statistic to access the associated BCH records;
 - (c) Continue to urge Parties to fully complete their records and to update incomplete records by registering information as it was available at the time country decisions were taken;
 - (d) Permit BCH users to update old records marked as incomplete and re-publish them even if some mandatory fields remain incomplete;
 - (e) Identify the role of BCH users registering information in the BCH by using Google Analytics;
 - (f) Provide greater visibility of links to other platforms (Macintosh, Linux, different web browsers, etc.,) in the interactive tutorial modules;
 - (g) Provide links to general introductory information on living modified organisms (LMOs) information and the processes undertaken in their development for the appreciation of lay persons;
 - (h) Modify the Common Format on country decisions according to the obligation under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to submit information on or about applicants, or importers and exporters, of LMOs according to Annexes I and II of the Protocol;
 - (i) Develop a Common Format that allows BCH users to submit recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of the BCH;
 - (j) Include European Union records on laws/regulations and decisions in all of the Country Profiles of the European Union Member States;
 - (k) Explore ways to inform BCH users that they are able to propose changes to any published Reference Records;
 - (l) Promote lesser known components of the BCH (e.g., the Biosafety Information Resource Centre or BIRC) on the BCH home page;

(m) Invite BCH National Focal Points (BCH-NFPs) to disseminate the Current Awareness Service to national stakeholders;

(n) Update the offline version of the BCH (i.e., in DVD-ROM format) to closely match the online version, whenever technically feasible, in order to include, for example, the tabs with decisions and risk assessments for LMOs in the offline version, etc.;

(o) Explore the possibility of diversifying into other languages in the online forums;

(p) Identify and define more clearly the target groups of online forums and their expected outcomes;

(q) Endeavour to widen the range of target groups of online forums to include organizations, NGOs, etc.;

(r) Involve BCH-NFPs in the process of increasing the participation of national-level target groups in online forums;

(s) Promote greater interaction among participants in online forums by proposing more focused topics within shorter time frames;

(t) Facilitate the understanding of BCH users regarding what information is missing in incomplete records;

(u) Encourage BCH-NFPs to discuss with their national stakeholders a process of coordinating the submission of information to databases on LMOs maintained by other international organizations (e.g., BCH vs. OECD);

(v) Extend the BCH AJAX Plug-in capabilities to display reference records such as LMOs, Genetic Elements and Organisms;

(w) Cooperate, including through coordination meetings, with other international organizations maintaining databases on LMOs and proposes interlinking among different systems (e.g., the use of the BCH AJAX Plug-in); and

(x) Promote the use of the BCH in national and international biosafety forums with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the BCH;

5. *Wishes to express* its support for the proposed outputs and activities on capacity-building for information sharing adopted by the Ninth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-building for Biosafety convened 15-16 March 2012 in Prague;

6. Following the success, to date, of the UNEP-GEF BCH I project and the extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH II Project (as requested by the Parties to the Protocol in decisions BS-IV/2 and BS-V/2), *supports* the extension of the UNEP-GEF BCH II project to all eligible countries (as requested by UNEP) in order to improve the quality and quantity of information registered in the BCH; and

7. *Supports* the increased exchange of information through the use of online meetings, in accordance with the request in decision BS-V/2 of the Parties to the Protocol, and *volunteers* to conduct a meeting in the online format to test its feasibility and evaluate its success.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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